

# Government by gangsterism - "The Grayzone" live

Max Blumenthal and Anya Parampil discuss the US regime change war on Venezuela, the kidnapping of President Nicolas Maduro, and Trump's claim to have taken over the country.

## #Max

Hey, what's up, everybody? Welcome to The Grayzone. It's kind of an emergency stream. About 12 hours ago, the U.S. regime attacked Venezuela—attacked Caracas—with a combined assault of special forces, Delta Force, and something like 150 aircraft, following months of a siege on Venezuela and a massive naval show of force. This culminated in the kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, who are to be taken to the Guantánamo Bay prison run by the United States—territory taken from Cuba—until they're brought to New York, where they'll be put on trial in the Southern District Court of New York.

And we seem to have lost Anya for a second, but we're going to welcome my close colleague, Anya Parampil, when she gives me a thumbs up. Ready to go? Can we have a thumbs up, please? All right. Welcome, Anya. How are you doing? It's great to see you. You're looking well since I last saw you about two minutes ago. Well, yeah, it's been a long night and day following this. And we have our—you know, there are a lot of theories to entertain. I was actually giving a preview of what I have to say later. I've heard some ruminations about some kind of deal to shunt Maduro aside, but I was very surprised by the violent assault on Caracas, by the sheer gangsterism on display—although it is in keeping with what Trump has been doing across the world.

He apparently delayed this bombing because he wanted to bomb Nigeria first—the country with the largest oil reserves in Africa. But Anya, you've been covering Venezuela for as long as I have, and you actually produced a pretty valuable book about it, *\*Corporate Coup\**, which everyone watching here should get. That's what it looks like—a portrait of a corporate business executive holding a Molotov cocktail on the cover, which I think is pretty apt for the moment we're in now, as Trump announces that the U.S. is going to take ownership of Venezuela and make a lot of money. Anya, what's your reaction to what just took place? What's going on here?

## #Anya

On January 3rd—the anniversary of a similar operation in Panama that removed Manuel Noriega—that stuck out to me, first of all, when someone pointed it out. There must be some synchronicity in these dates, or maybe there are people online who are into numerology or astrology or any of that occult study who could illuminate why that date came up twice in such a blatant act of U.S.

aggression in the region—an act of what I guess Donald Trump is now calling the Monroe Doctrine. That's what he said during his press conference today, about exercising force against sovereign nations in our hemisphere. I'm shocked that this seemed to take place with little resistance from the Venezuelan side.

What surprises me the most is that this was even possible to begin with, because this is Venezuela. It's a serious country with a serious military. They have anti-aircraft weapons that could have easily taken those helicopters out of the sky. From what I understand, weapons not even as sophisticated as anti-aircraft systems could have taken them down, considering they flew so low. It also reminds me of what happened to Manuel Zelaya in Honduras back in—what was it—2009, when the Obama administration oversaw a coup in which the Honduran military entered the presidential home, dragged Zelaya out of bed in his pajamas, and put him on a flight to Costa Rica.

This is far more flagrant because it actually involves the U.S. military. It's beyond an act of war—kidnapping the president of a country. I can only imagine how Americans would feel about that. I know they wouldn't be happy if it happened here. Even if it were someone like Donald Trump kidnapped by the Russians, you'd see a lot of Democrats upset about it. So to see so many Venezuelans online cheering this is... well, I guess these people are now just open about the fact that they want a war on their own country. And they know that ultimately, the regime is still intact. The regime is not just one man.

Maduro was not a totalitarian dictator. That's not even what I think the U.S. has tried to paint him as. But the system—the party he represented, Chavismo, the movement that's been in Venezuela for over 20 years and has ruled for over 20 years—is still firmly in place, both in the streets and in the military, from what we can see. So it's not actually a regime change policy that has taken place here, as far as I'm concerned. It's more of a shuffling of the cards, or the face, of Chavismo. And that raises questions about how any of this was allowed to happen and who had an interest in getting Maduro out of the picture. I think those are legitimate questions to raise at this point.

And I think anybody looking at Venezuela as an outside observer would benefit from understanding that no country is one-dimensional, two-dimensional, or even three-dimensional. There are so many layers, factions, and interests at play, even within a political movement like Chavismo, that openings like this are possible. And honestly, what stands out to me again is that it reminds me a lot of the Syria case, where when Syria fell last year, it was in no way at the height of the dirty war against the country. It wasn't at their worst moment. And it's the same thing with Venezuela. I write in the book about how the peak of the dirty war—the financial war—played out.

## #Max

Kind of a hybrid war.

## #Anya

The hybrid war, in terms of suffering on the ground in Venezuela, was several years ago—around 2015 to 2017. Since 2019, there was another downturn because of the oil sanctions that Trump introduced, but they've actually been on the up and up since then. They had the election in 2024, which Maduro declared victory in, and the opposition definitely saw that as a moment—and the U.S. saw it as a moment—to try and seize power again. But he succeeded in keeping power, regardless of what you think about how that election was conducted. He succeeded.

In a lot of ways, it felt as if Venezuela had defeated this regime-change war, that they were actually doing better, that they were on the up. And just like Syria, to wake up one day and find out the president is gone—it feels as if the empire steps forward, puts a card on the table, and says, "Yep, this is it. It's done." For whatever reason, what we thought—or what appeared to be—a strong government just collapses, and not at a time when it made sense. So I definitely think that suggests there are many interests at play here, and that the United States was probably able to exploit a very tricky situation.

## #Max

So I was planning to go through Trump's press conference right away, but you brought up the possibility of some kind of negotiated exit, which has been—well, you know, we've seen lots of rumors about it, reported by places like Sky News and other corporate media outlets. There's been a lot of discussion about it. You've mentioned it on Twitter. Should we talk about that now, or—well, all right, let's just—um, I want to highlight something I said in our last livestream, and I also want to highlight comments you made today on Twitter.

This was me with Aaron from our last stream in 2025. I said four days ago that I speculated Trump didn't take María Corina Machado seriously and was therefore determined to force a managed coup or a deal to replace Maduro with someone inside the Chavista camp. Not sure if that's what went down, but even if it were, it might not resolve so cleanly. So here's that clip of me just kind of calling it. If anything—and I just get this vibe when I read the mainstream media coverage and hear what Trump officials are saying—they're not really pumping up María Corina. So they must be trying to finagle some kind of deal where Maduro leaves, and then they claim they've got some more moderate figure from within the Chavista realm, and then they can begin whittling them down.

But that's not going to happen without the involvement of a figure like Diosdado Cabello, who's in the Maduro administration but really holds a lot of sway among the military. So, all right, that is a plausible scenario now, and we'll get into Trump's comments, which actually back up the possibility of that kind of scenario. Here's what you had to say, in more detail today, citing your sources: multiple U.S. sources told me over the holiday weeks that the Trump administration was not serious about installing María Corina Machado and instead proposed a deal in which Maduro would leave and be replaced by Delcy Rodríguez. This now appears to be what Venezuela got by force. One source told me the deal was ill-fated because Venezuela's military would not necessarily accept that change.

I pray that this criminal attack from the U.S. doesn't plunge the country into civil war. And yeah, you have good sources. Well, we kind of share sources because we share a roof. And we have multiple—I would say we have multiple sources who have been close to the negotiations or have some knowledge of what's been going on behind the scenes in Washington and Caracas. And, you know, it's still not clear, speaking for myself, exactly whether this went down or what exactly went down. But then, when Trump's press conference took place, he made some comments that really reinforced what we were hearing. This might not be all of it, but it's part of it. And StreamYard makes it really hard to get stuff on screen these days.

## #Max

So the question was, have you heard anything about the whereabouts of the opposition leader, Machado? And have you been in touch with her? And now Trump is making some pretty brutal comments.

## #Speaker 03

They're asking all about her whereabouts.

## #Trump

I think it would be very tough for her to be the leader. She doesn't have the support or the respect within the country. She's a very nice woman, but she doesn't have the respect to be the leader.

## #Max

So, pretty brutal. And then he goes on to say that Marco Rubio has been talking to Delcy Rodríguez and that, in Trump's words, "she'll do whatever we want." So how do you interpret all of this, based on the comments you made today and what you were hearing from your sources—and from Trump, I guess, our sources—and what we're seeing? Also, we should mention Diosdado Cabello, who is an extremely important figure. There's kind of this triad in what was the Maduro administration: Maduro and his wife, then you have Delcy and her brother, Jorge Rodríguez—they're a power faction—and then you have Diosdado Cabello, who has massive support within the military and the colectivos, who are like the militant supporters in the street. There was this rumor that Diosdado Cabello had been assassinated, but he's been out in the street with armed men. Delcy Rodríguez has now delivered messages; she's been sworn in as president. What do you think went down with Maduro's kidnapping, and where is this leading?

## #Anya

I hate to speculate, because yes, we do have good—well, I should say that when I say "multiple sources," they're not just people all hanging out in the same room confirming things so we can call it

multiple sources. They're people from different worlds who are both privy to these negotiations and the deals that were put forward.

## #Max

Not both, like many—I would say, yeah, multiple sources, right? And these aren't people who necessarily know each other or hang out.

## #Anya

No, exactly. So, I know some people might say, "Oh, multiple sources—well, it's just two people who were negotiating together and told you." No, it's more than that. So I think I feel confident saying that there was a deal put forward in the last few weeks that did ask Maduro to step aside and simply put Delcy in his place.

And if you look at it from a face-saving perspective, you can see how that's a good off-ramp for the Trump administration if they don't want to go fully into Venezuela with the military, or push Machado in some way if they don't have confidence in her—which, I was told, is the case. They don't believe she's viable, and Trump confirmed that today. So what you have then is a dynamic in which, if that was put out there, it could have caused some tensions in Caracas. I can only imagine that was probably even the goal of putting forward such a plan.

And to just see Maduro dragged out of his home in his pajamas—it just feels too bizarre to me that that actually happened, because I don't think the Venezuelans are incompetent. So I'm really just shocked by that image. And it makes me wonder, yeah, about that deal that was put forward earlier, because now they got that either way. And it's not like we're necessarily going to get the truth out of the Trump administration or the Venezuelan side right now. I think it's probably more complicated than either side is going to let on. But I do know, definitely, that Delcy herself and her brother are...

They already were—possibly the most powerful duo in Venezuela. Maduro and his wife are very powerful, but when you step back and actually look at the government, Delcy's the vice president. She's acted as the economy minister, she's the head of PDVSA, the oil company, and her brother is the leader of the parliament—though the parliament is supposed to come into effect, to be sworn in, this next week. So they've accumulated a lot of power over the last few years, and she's a natural successor to Maduro in that way. But as I said, these kinds of relationships, I think, are more complicated than Americans can really process.

## #Max

Well, we've met Delcy Rodríguez and her brother Jorge, and I interviewed her in her office. She's a very effective communicator, and she's extremely open to courting media and political figures from around the world. I think she's been sort of—she's a name that was probably unknown to most

Americans. All these CNN hosts who are just reading off cards sent to them by producers who have no idea what's going on had never heard of her. But she was one of the most powerful women in Latin America for years. And her brother—any Venezuelan knows that her brother was a powerful figure, a former communications minister as well.

They're the children of Jorge Antonio Rodríguez, who was tortured to death during the Fourth Republic—the kind of democracy the United States wants to restore in Venezuela. In 1976, while in prison, he was a revolutionary leader in Venezuela's left at the time. Under the Acción Democrática government of Carlos Andrés Pérez, which was center-left, social democratic, but also kind of run by the IMF, they wanted to neutralize the socialist left. So they ran a dirty war and disappeared, I think, over a thousand people. She comes from that legacy and that tradition. That's why I asked her about it at the end of our interview, which mostly focused on economic and hybrid warfare against Venezuela and how they were responding—how they were dealing with COVID, and so on.

And she got very emotional. So the question is, if Delcy Rodríguez is going to be president for now, is she going to maintain the Chavista character—economically, politically, ideologically—of a government that hasn't been decapitated but has seen its leadership destroyed, absconded, kidnapped, abused by the U.S. regime? And we've also seen the bombing by the U.S., apparently, of the mausoleum of Hugo Chávez at Cuatro de Febrero, the Cuartel de la Montaña, where we visited—where each day a cannon is fired to commemorate the Bolivarian Revolution. So the central symbol of Chavismo and the Bolivarian Revolution was attacked. Yet Delcy, Padrino López, and Diosdado Cabello remain. Can we assume that Chavismo is still in effect? And then, where does Rubio go with that?

## #Anya

Chavismo is still in power. So it could have been as simple as the fact that Trump was so obsessed with Maduro—he had made Maduro the issue and gone so far with this war that he needed a trophy. Removing Maduro was the best they could do, even though they knew that going further or actually forcing regime change was impossible. So I think that could have been the scenario. And for whatever reason, somehow it played out in Venezuela the way they wanted it to.

## #Max

Yeah, it gives Trump kind of a climb-down. One theory is that it gives Trump a way to climb down, and he gets to reenact Panama and seem like Rambo—a major PR win—by doing a fake drug trial.

## #Speaker 05

Right.

## #Max

Even though his whole press conference was about stealing Venezuela's oil, he barely even mentioned drugs. When he did, Marco Rubio seemed to get nervous for some reason. There's that theory that this is Trump's exit strategy, but then he's threatened to go back in. So how do you take over Venezuela, as he's pledged to do, when these Chavista figures are still in power—unless they've just ceded control and given up on Chavismo? I don't see what the political plan is.

## #Anya

There isn't one. I think the political bet, perhaps, is that they thought by removing Maduro, it could ignite so much chaos and instability that it would allow them to come in, exploit the situation, and install someone they want. So right now, the Venezuelans have to demonstrate that they have the situation under control and that there is unity behind Delcy and the military. The U.S. was probably hoping—especially by saying these things about Delcy—to stir the pot and create a situation where people are vying for power or trying to remove her. I don't think the Venezuelans will necessarily fall for that right away. I think they're going to try to just maintain order in the country, and there's no way for the U.S. to actually take the oil without going in with U.S. troops and fighting the Venezuelan military. I don't know if the Venezuelan military made a great showing yesterday, but I don't—yeah, that's a question.

## #Max

And there's that question. Then I have one more, just about the possible kind of deal-making—or dirty deal-making, which is my fear. Like, when I saw that Nicolás Maduro had been captured—why are they saying "captured"? He's not captured; he's been kidnapped. He's a hostage of the U.S. regime. This is completely illegal gangsterism. But yeah, such as it is. How is that possible? How could they pull off such a clean Delta Force raid unless somebody sold them out or there was a deal? That was my first initial thought.

## #Anya

It's either that or total incompetence, and I just can't accept that.

## #Max

Yeah, and Chinook helicopters were circling so low over Caracas that, you know, it could have turned into a Black Hawk Down scenario—getting hit with an RPG, like we saw in Mogadishu. They don't need, like, the big aircraft systems, but they were just proceeding without any apparent resistance. And now you see the colectivos out on the streets, the supporters of Chavismo out on the streets. Was this just choreographed? That's a question that lingers and will have to be answered by the new Venezuelan leadership, because I think everyone's asking that right now.

## #Anya

And at what point did Maduro—I mean, it's really stunning. It's another one of those images in my lifetime that I couldn't believe, whether it's Saddam getting hung or Gaddafi murdered like that. In this case, thank God there was no death. That, I think, would have been absolutely something the region wouldn't have been able to take. It would have become a disaster. But this is bad enough—this image of Maduro in his pajamas on a plane, blindfolded. You know, this is the president of a country, and you don't have to think he's perfect or anything, but he was really beloved by his people. I saw it firsthand. He's a very—uh, you know, we've met him, and you've interviewed him—and it's just shocking to see someone who was in that position marched out by the U.S. military in that way. I don't know. I mean, people are saying if it's choreographed, does that mean he negotiated his exit this way? I don't think so.

## #Max

But Trump has denied that he negotiated his exit. Essentially, Trump said he refused to leave under what he called "colonial orders."

## #Anya

And so it's possible he refused the deal, and then it was done by force.

## #Max

And the CIA is leaking that they had some insider, but they also have this story out there, through all their propagandists on CNN, that they followed his movements carefully. And this is what they do with terrorists—pattern-of-life analysis. What is pattern-of-life analysis, John Miller? Well, it's what we do against terrorists.

## #Anya

As if it's that hard to know where the president of a foreign country sleeps.

## #Max

Yeah. I mean, he was doing interviews in vehicles he was driving up until two days ago, so it wasn't like he was hiding. He was singing "Don't Worry, Be Happy" at public rallies. His pattern of life was pretty open—maybe it should have been more vigilant. And it seems like he may have thought there was a deal on the table that could have avoided this kind of violence. And again, there are these power factions jostling for control. Even if there had been a deal, it's not likely it would've gone cleanly, and they could have provoked a civil war. But one more question I have—probably the last one—about the potential backroom politics of the situation is that the... who was it? Sorry, StreamYard makes this really complicated. It was... this was Maduro's last public appearance, hours before he was kidnapped, and he was meeting with a special envoy from China sent by Xi. Um...

## #Max

So, I mean, this is effectively a meeting with envoys—he's meeting with envoys for Xi. The U.S. is planning to bomb all around Miraflores Palace, risking the lives of Xi's envoys, and they're going to target the man who's there in the middle of that room. Did China have any idea this was going to happen? And if not, how will they respond? This isn't about—I don't see this as about—multipolarity, where the U.S. just gets to control the Western Hemisphere and they're asserting the Monroe Doctrine, as Donald Trump said. This is aimed not just at Venezuela; it's aimed at the entire Latin American left, including the center left, like Lula in Brazil. And it's also aimed at China, and obviously at Iran. And Russia. And Russia. And there, I mean, Reuters says four sources report that Delcy Rodríguez was in Moscow.

## #Anya

The plane, I think, was tracked to that location.

## #Max

I honestly don't know.

## #Anya

Yeah, there's no way. Well, she was in Venezuela as of this morning—or a few hours, a few minutes ago—when she was giving that press conference, so...

## #Max

Indirect attack on China and Russia. Do China and Russia respond by saying, "All right, well, your boy Zelensky and Budanov—they're toast. And we're going to go ahead and take Taiwan too, if you're going to be doing this—because we had serious economic and political interests in Venezuela, which posed no threat to you militarily. And you're putting advanced weapons systems on our immediate frontier, including a new—something like a \$100 billion—sorry, \$10 billion shipment of weapons to Taiwan, including ATACMS missiles. Like, we're done with that." Where do Russia and China fit in here?

## #Anya

It's a big question mark. Again, it's just speculation. We don't know what they know, but it definitely—well, I saw Alexander Dugin tweet that this isn't about Venezuela, this is about World War Three. And I agree, because I write in my book about how Venezuelan oil supplied the Allies—the British—during World War Two, with initially 40 and then 80 percent of their oil imports. That literally

fueled the British military during World War Two. I remember being in Caracas in 2019 for the Non-Aligned Movement meeting and talking with a Venezuelan diplomat who told me that whoever controls Venezuela going forward will have a great oil prize for World War Three. He basically said they need to control us because if there's going to be a major global war, they'll need our oil.

So if this is about sparking something with China or Russia, or heating up the situation with either of those countries, it's also about having the fuel to fight them—or to fight Iran. You've already seen someone like billionaire Bill Ackman tweet that by the end of the year, or soon enough, Iran will be free because of what just happened in Venezuela. Naftali Bennett, the Israeli official, said something similar—basically that Iran is next. So why are these Zionist influencers saying this? The day after, Netanyahu was with Trump right before this happened. I mean, they're not really trying to hide it at this point.

## #Max

And also—sorry to interrupt—but Maduro was kidnapped on the anniversary of Qasem Soleimani's assassination.

## #Anya

Right.

## #Max

There have been thousands and thousands of Iranians in Soleimani's hometown of Kerman today, paying their respects to him. So it's a symbolic date.

## #Anya

Right. That's what I'm saying. There must be some people out there who can tell us what the significance of January 3rd is.

## #Max

You mean astrologers?

## #Anya

Well, there are people who do other kinds of analysis—of dates, numbers, and how they get manipulated.

## #Max

I'm going to ask a D.C. neocon or a Zionist billionaire to divine that for me. Bill Ackman isn't alone in celebrating.

### **#Anya**

No, Nat—I think it's Nat. I was just looking it up. Yeah, Nat Rothschild also tweeted, "Venezuela libre, great job, USA."

### **#Max**

Well, not to get into Rothschild conspiracies, but Emmanuel Macron, the French president, has also celebrated the kidnapping of the Venezuelan president. Who is Emmanuel Macron? What's his background?

### **#Anya**

Before he became president, he'd spent his whole career as a Rothschild banker.

### **#Max**

Billionaire banker. They want Venezuela's resources, and they want the crude. Sorry, I just want to make this quick point about Iran. Iran's ace card is closing the Strait of Hormuz if it's attacked by the U.S. and Israel. The U.S. may want to steal Venezuela's crude as a kind of insurance, in case Iran does that—to deprive it of that ace card. But you were saying—

### **#Anya**

Well, not to go back to the Rothschild conspiracies—but to go back to it just for a minute—the Bank of England also stole all of Venezuela's gold and likely doesn't have it in their actual physical coffers. So you have to wonder where all of it went.

### **#Max**

Can you just quickly tell us about the theft of Venezuela's gold?

### **#Anya**

I feel like we've talked about that so many times.

### **#Max**

In two sentences.

## #Anya

Before the initial coup attempt that Trump made in 2019, Venezuela had asked to repatriate what was then maybe less than a billion dollars' worth of gold bars from the Bank of England—its physical gold stored there. When England and the United States recognized Guaidó just a few months later, that repatriation request was put in jeopardy, allowing the Bank of England to basically say, "We're keeping the gold indefinitely." That is, again, if they even have it. They were experiencing a gold shortage in London at the time. And since then, the gold has gone up so much in value that it's worth maybe even upwards of \$2 billion now. So yeah, good gamble for the Bank of England there.

## #Max

The U.S. stole Venezuela's gold. They just went in and took it. Venezuela made the mistake of keeping it in the Bank of England.

## #Anya

Probably a long time ago.

## #Max

Some time ago, the United States under Biden stole one of Nicolás Maduro's transport planes. The Trump administration had been seizing Venezuelan oil tankers and intends to keep doing so. I think this leads into Trump announcing that he'll take control of all of Venezuela's oil. In his press conference today, standing beside Marco Rubio, he basically said, "We're going to take Venezuela's oil and make a lot of money," which is exactly what María Corina Machado, the abandoned opposition leader, had been promising.

## #Trump

So, taken care of.

## #Speaker 03

President, does the U.S. running the country mean U.S. troops will be on the ground? How would that work?

## #Trump

Well, you know, they always say "boots on the ground." We're not afraid of boots on the ground if we have to. We had boots on the ground last night at a very high level, actually. We're not afraid of it—we don't mind saying it. But we're going to make sure that the country is run properly. We're not

doing this in vain. This is not a dangerous attack; this is an attack that could have gone very, very badly. We could have lost a lot of people last night, a lot of dignity, a lot of equipment. The equipment is less important, but we could have lost a lot. And we're going to make sure this is done properly. We're there now, and we're ready to go again if we have to. We're going to run the country right. It's going to be run very judiciously, very fairly. It's going to make a lot of money. We're going to give money to the people. We're going to reimburse people who were taken advantage of. We're going to take care of everybody.

## #Anya

Whatever that means.

## #Trump

We couldn't let them get away with it. You know, they stole our oil. We built that whole industry there, and they just took it over like we were nothing. And we had a president who decided not to do anything about it. So we did something about it. We were late, but we did something about it. Yeah, please.

## #Max

So, we don't know what it means that Donald Trump is going to essentially absorb Venezuela into the United States and take ownership of Venezuela and its resources. I've seen top U.S.-backed Venezuelan opposition figures like Pedro Borrelli, who's been an advisor to Juan Guaidó, actually question what Trump was even talking about there and call it a politically bizarre plan. Trump reiterates something he and Stephen Miller have been saying—that Venezuela actually stole our oil from us, that the United States built the oil infrastructure in Venezuela, and therefore the U.S. is simply retaking what was rightfully theirs. What is the history of the U.S. oil industry in Venezuela, especially ExxonMobil? And did the U.S. really steal Venezuela's oil? Did Venezuela under Chávez really just steal oil that belonged to the United States?

## #Anya

No, especially not if you just look at the fact that it's in their territory—it's their sovereign territory. There's no argument to be made there. But beyond that, Royal Dutch Shell discovered Venezuelan oil about a hundred years ago, and that company was actually responsible for building much of the initial infrastructure. I saw Francisco Rodriguez, a Venezuelan economist and professor at the University of Colorado—also a good friend—do a pretty good debunking of that on X, just explaining that claiming the U.S. built Venezuela's oil industry is absurd. And beyond that, Chávez wasn't the only figure to begin the process of taking sovereign control over the oil industry. That actually began under Carlos Andrés Pérez, when he nationalized the oil industry. But of course, foreign actors still maintained control, particularly Exxon.

And Chávez did eventually kick them out of the country and seize their operations. But again, how would Americans feel about a foreign company coming in and pumping oil or controlling every aspect of America's sovereign energy supply? I think it's only a matter of time before we realize, in 2026, that countries aren't going to just accept that anymore. So this argument that it somehow belongs to us just falls apart. Trump is talking as if we already control Venezuela, but we don't. We're not just going to march in there now and get the oil. We're not going to be able to seize control of the oil fields that easily. So I don't really think he has a plan there. I think it might be wish-casting—hoping that there's going to be so much instability in the coming weeks that they can somehow exploit the situation.

## **#Max**

Yeah, I mean, going as far back as Harry Truman—after Venezuela supplied the U.S. military with oil for its Navy and actually provoked German Nazi naval ships to carry out sabotage operations off its coast—Truman oversaw a coup in Venezuela. And Venezuela saw the installation of its first real pro-U.S. dictator, Pérez Jiménez. Following that, there have been historical efforts by the U.S. to prevent Venezuela from benefiting from its own natural resources, the ones it gained control of under Simón Bolívar. So this is just a continuation of that process. The U.S. media is legitimizing the idea of American ownership over Venezuela. You see almost no outrage in U.S. media about what just took place. The only outrage we've actually been seeing is that María Corina Machado got the cold shoulder from Donald Trump. This is Erin Burnett, who's married to a Goldman Sachs banker.

## **#Anya**

It's not working for us.

## **#Max**

Oh, sorry. Again—StreamYard. We really need a new system here.

## **#Speaker 05**

Wow, Erin, just watch her face.

## **#Max**

Watch her facial expression. She's so cheerful about the idea of the U.S. We didn't learn anything from what was originally supposed to be called Operation Iraqi Liberation—or OIL. Watch her face.

## **#Speaker 05**

That's a population of 30 million people—and now that's owned by the United States. Just think about it in such a simple, black-and-white set of numbers.

## #Max

Wow, it's just remarkable—we own them.

## #Anya

We don't know how. Erin doesn't usually work Saturdays, by the way. When I clicked on CNN, it was supposed to be Fredricka Whitfield, and then suddenly it was Wolf Blitzer and Erin Burnett.

## #Max

Then it was—yeah, Wolf Blitzer was just in there for a second. I guess he lost steam because it wasn't about Israel. Here's Donald Trump on the Monroe Doctrine, which he's tried to claim as his own. Erin Burnett said that was when the U.S. took control of Latin America.

## #Anya

That was the policy that gave the U.S. control.

## #Max

Oh yeah.

## #Anya

Like some higher authority had granted the United States control over Venezuela.

## #Max

No, it was a treaty—like the Louisiana Purchase. Here we go.

## #Trump

...potentially in league with the cartels operating along our border. All of these actions were in gross violation of the core principles of American foreign policy, dating back more than two centuries—and not anymore. All the way back, it dated to the Monroe Doctrine. And the Monroe Doctrine is a big deal, but we've superseded it by a lot—by a real lot. They now call it the Donro document—I don't know. It's the Monroe Doctrine. Okay, Rubio. It was very important, but we forgot about it. We don't forget about it anymore. Under...

## #Max

A very articulate statement by Trump—profound articulation of the spirit of the Monroe Doctrine, or “Donro Doctrine.” He didn’t really explain what it meant; it just meant a lot, and it was a really big deal. I can’t do it—Trump.

## #Anya

He also called the events of last night an attack on sovereignty. Those were his actual words, which I thought was funny—not in that clip, but during the press conference. Another point I wanted to make was that Trump basically talked about nation-building in Venezuela during his press conference, which is... America First? Yeah, totally not America First. He basically said we have to go in there and rebuild their entire infrastructure.

## #Max

Well, that’s because his cronies want the contracts to do all of that.

## #Anya

Yeah, after we destroyed it—after we sanctioned and tanked their industry. So, I don’t see how that’s viable. I think they’re calling it Operation Absolute Resolve, which is very similar to Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq. So that’s a sign of how successful our policy will be for Venezuela, I guess. I mean, they’re just letting us know with their titles how confident they are.

## #Max

That’s a great point. Donald Trump is rehashing George W. Bush’s neocon nation-building exercise in Iraq, where Heritage Foundation staffers were sent to run an entire fake neoliberal government out of the Green Zone in Baghdad—a complete disaster. The U.S. was running hospital clinics and building firehouses in Baghdad while firehouses were disappearing across the U.S. And that’s what’s happening under Trump, except Trump ran against that. He personally humiliated and destroyed Jeb Bush on the debate stage—and Marco Rubio—in 2015, because they were the neocon nation builders. And now Marco Rubio has his hand up Donald Trump’s ass.

Trump is his marionette. He’s—he’s Adelson, and everybody below him—Rubio, yes. It’s the second coming of George W. Bush’s first term, maybe the third coming, uh, because the first Donald Trump term was essentially the deep state taking over as well. Donald Trump made some comments about Cuba during this press conference. As I’ve been saying, this is not just about Venezuela; this is about taking out the “troika of resistance” in Latin America—Cuba, where Marco Rubio wants to, you know, march in on the back of, like, a thousand OnlyFans influencers and cartel motorcycles to trashify Cuba and destroy the Cuban revolution.

And they want to take out the Sandinista government immediately in Nicaragua. But Donald Trump has also directly threatened Claudia Sheinbaum, the popular and elected president of Mexico, who's sort of a center-left figure, holding her responsible for the cartels. He threatened her today. He also threatened Gustavo Petro, who is a social democrat and actually publicly called for a transition for Maduro to leave. He wasn't exactly a close Maduro ally in Colombia. Trump blamed Petro, essentially calling him a narco-trafficker. Gustavo Petro has done more—more than any Colombian leader in recent years—definitely more than Álvaro Uribe, who is actually on the DEA's list of top 100 narco-traffickers.

## #Anya

DEIA.

## #Max

DIA—Defense Intelligence Agency. Good point, you know your stuff. And his stooge, Iván Duque. This is just ridiculous rhetoric. It's all about taking out the Latin American left. It's all about geopolitics—about installing local compradors who let the U.S. exploit and even imprison people.

## #Anya

It's about—you know, it's not even just about the left. It's about the government in Iran, again the government in Russia, any country that's opposed to the U.S. hegemonic order.

## #Max

Yes.

## #Anya

That was established—basically, anyone who's opposed to the IMF-world, you know, rules-based international order that was set up during World War Two. You'd think we're fighting for something new now, but it seems like they're just consolidating and consolidating their power.

## #Max

Consolidating through gangsterism—the law of the jungle, brute force, mass death. Brute force, mass death. And this is a signal of what's to come. Here's Trump, when asked about Cuba, and Marco Rubio jumps in.

## #Trump

Yes, sir. Please, go ahead. Is there a message here for Cuba and Díaz-Canel? Well, Cuba's an interesting case. Cuba is, you know, not doing very well right now. That system has not been a very good one for Cuba. The people there have suffered for many, many years.

## #Max

I wonder why.

## #Trump

I think Cuba's going to be something we'll end up talking about, because Cuba is a failing nation right now—a very badly failing nation. And we want to help the people. It's similar in the sense that we want to help the people in Cuba, but we also want to help the people who were forced out of Cuba and are living in this country. Do you want to say something about that, Marco, please?

## #Anya

Yeah, Marco, this is your thing.

## #Speaker 06

A few minutes ago, you know, when the president speaks, you should take him seriously. Suffice it to say, Cuba is a disaster. It's run by incompetent, senile men. And then what did he just say while standing next to Trump? It's run by—well, Díaz-Canel is much younger than Donald Trump and, I think, a lot less senile. In some cases, not senile, but incompetent nonetheless. It has no economy; it's in total collapse. And that would be him, you know—they were, you know, all the guards that helped protect Maduro. This is well known: their whole spy agency, all of that, was full of Cubans. I mean, it's amazing—this force basically took over Venezuela in some cases. One of the biggest problems the Venezuelans have is they have to declare independence from Cuba. They tried to basically colonize it from a security standpoint. So yeah, look, if I lived in Havana and I was in the government, I'd be concerned at least a little bit.

## #Max

A little bit? You'd be concerned? So, you know, what will they designate next? They've already designated Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. Venezuela's government was designated as a terrorist organization. So will they just escalate Cuba's designation? Will Trump attack Mexico next? Trump has attacked Nigeria. He's constantly attacking Somalia. He's threatening Colombia. It's just an all-out regime-change assault with no real political rationale or plan for—there is no plan for the day after. No.

## #Anya

No.

## #Max

And you made—again, the point about—well, actually, let's go back to one more comment by Donald Trump, because this is highly significant. Given that Maduro is supposed to be put on trial, including for gun possession in a country flooded with guns, filled with gun nuts and Second Amendment lovers, he's going to be put on trial under a 1934 gun provision, as well as for cocaine conspiracy in the Southern District Court of New York. That's the same court where Juan Orlando Hernández was prosecuted and convicted. This is Donald Trump defending the man who sent over 400 tons of cocaine into the United States—Juan Orlando Hernández of the Honduran coup regime.

## #Anya

Whose brother was signing bags of cocaine with his initials and bragging he'd shove it up the noses of Americans. I mean, not very subtle.

## #Speaker 07

You did, yeah. You said that Maduro is responsible for drug trafficking. You recently pardoned the former president of Honduras, who was convicted of multiple drug-trafficking offenses. Can you explain how these two situations are different?

## #Trump

I endorsed, as you know, the winning president—the man who won in Honduras. I endorsed the man who won in Chile, and I endorsed the man who won in Argentina. We're doing very well with that whole group. The man I pardoned was, if you could equate it to us, treated like the Biden administration treated a man named Trump. That didn't work out too well for them. He was persecuted very unfairly. He was the head of the country, and he was persecuted very unfairly. And there are a number of them.

We felt it was a very unfair situation that happened to him. He's also a party member of the man who won, so obviously the people liked what I did. One of the reasons that was done is because the party in power felt very strongly that he was treated very badly. I looked into it quickly at first, then in great detail. I talked to a lot of the people standing behind me, and they felt he was persecuted and treated very badly. That's why I gave him a pardon.

## #Max

So he was persecuted and treated very badly. Who persecuted him? It was one of Trump's closest allies, Emil Bove, whom Trump just appointed to the federal bench. And Trump overruled the

Department of Justice. They worked for years to prosecute Juan Orlando Hernández. Anya, you co-authored a clinically methodical analysis of the indictment of Juan Orlando Hernández for us, and it was just a devastating piece. I think we were one of the only outlets that actually covered the indictment. The indictment itself was devastating. What is Trump defending here, and why?

### **#Anya**

Hypocrisy and corruption. I mean, basically, people close to Hernández bought off people close to Trump to make this pardon happen.

### **#Max**

Oh, being Juan Orlando Hernández.

### **#Anya**

Yeah, Juan Orlando Hernández. And there's no—there's no, I mean, it's just too transparent. The fact that he's claiming to wage this war against drugs and narco-trafficking in Venezuela while pardoning the president who was running an entire narco-state. It's also similar to the fact that we have strong relations with Ecuador right now, and with Chile—he mentioned Chile there. I'm pretty sure Chile, Peru, and Ecuador—no, Bolivia—but Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador are the largest producers of cocaine in the world. And those are all countries that...

### **#Max**

And exporters—yeah, that we're happy to have. Peru and Ecuador, that's where the cocaine comes from. There hasn't been a U.S. strike on a boat near Venezuela since November 20th; it's all in the eastern Pacific now. And where's that coming from? So... I mean, when you read the indictment of Juan Orlando Hernández, did you think about it years ago? I mean, did it feel credible to you? It was authored by very close Trump allies.

### **#Anya**

Yes, it was brought by the U.S. government, and the case was made in a U.S. court, and he was found guilty. I mean, there's—Trump has no legs to stand on with this case.

### **#Max**

I mean, they documented payments to Juan Orlando Hernández from Los Cachiros, which is one of the biggest cartels in Honduras. He was setting up airports all across Honduras just to ship cocaine north. He was caught on video by Los Cachiros—an informant—saying, "I'll shove the cocaine up the gringos' noses." It was bizarre, so obvious. And as you said, his brother is still in a federal

penitentiary, I believe in Florida. There are photos in the indictment of "TH" written on giant cocaine bags because they were for Tony Hernández. It's just absurd and hypocritical. And why did it happen? Why did he pardon him?

Because it just goes to the essential reality of what the Trump administration is—and what Donald Trump's "golden age," or maybe "gilded age," actually is. It's just a grab for what's left of global capitalism for himself, his family, and his cronies. Mark Andreessen, David Sacks—these crypto billionaires were very interested in the Roatán sovereign zone off the coast of Honduras. The social democratic government of Xiomara Castro was beginning to crack down and regulate it because it was a channel for drug trafficking and crime. And Tito Asfura, the candidate from Juan Orlando Hernández's National Party, promised to open it back up again. So they basically paid all these influencers—like Roger Stone, and even Juan Orlando himself—to make the case for him to be pardoned.

And then, in pardoning him, Trump polished the image of the National Party, which he wants to win, and then gets a regional tool—just like Nayib Bukele—that Trump can use to exploit Honduras. So that's all it's about here. That's all Venezuela is about. It never had anything to do with drugs. It never had anything to do with national security. But Zionists are interested in this, as you pointed out. And, like, I think—I know you have to go—so let's just, I want to get your thoughts on the comments, the new comments by... I don't know if these are new comments.

## **#Anya**

I'm pretty sure those are her comments from today.

## **#Max**

Okay. If that's true, it looks like she's in Morocco.

## **#Anya**

Yeah, I told you—she spoke today from the offices.

## **#Max**

Okay. Well, this is Delcy Rodríguez, who has been sworn in as the Venezuelan president. Governments around the world are simply shocked that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is the victim and target of an attack of this nature, which undoubtedly has a Zionist tinge. It's truly shameful.

## **#Anya**

Maduro says this a lot. Yeah, Maduro says this a lot. He says that the Zionists are leading a conspiracy against him, repeatedly. I think he's even said things about the occult and dark forces coming for Venezuela.

## #Max

So why do they say that? And why are—why is the Zionist movement and Israel, Naftali Bennett, as you mentioned, the former prime minister of Israel, a right-wing Likudnik who celebrated the kidnapping of Maduro—why are they so interested in Venezuela, a country that seems so far away?

## #Anya

There are a lot of ways you could answer that question. The basic fact is that Chávez ended relations with the Israeli government and denounced Israel repeatedly, and Maduro has continued that tradition. When we were in Venezuela, we saw Delcy Rodríguez give a speech where she was wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh and denouncing Israel. But I don't know if that matters that much to Israel, honestly. Venezuela is in the Americas. I think when you start looking at people like Bill Ackman—he's not just a Zionist, he's a major financial player in our global capitalist system. And if you look at the post–World War II order—what is the “rules-based international order,” and what is the IMF? Well, the rules-based international order started after World War II by creating Israel.

So it immediately undermined every aspect of the rules-based international order to create this state that continues to terrorize us to this day. And then, at the same time, as a result of the war, this global financial capitalist system consolidated itself as a network through the IMF, the Club of Rome, and these formal financial groups that are actually at the center of what would come to pillage Venezuela if the regime of Chavismo were to fall. You'd have people like Bill Ackman going in and making money there. So that's maybe part of what Delcy is saying as well.

## #Max

Well, that does seem to be backed up by a new report in the Wall Street Journal today. The reporter is Brian Schwartz from the Wall Street Journal. Wall Street is already at the ready post–Nicolás Maduro's capture by U.S. forces. About twenty business leaders, including some from top hedge funds and asset managers, are preparing to go on a March trip to Venezuela to look at business opportunities there—investment opportunities, including in energy and infrastructure. There are also defense and tech leaders going as well. That's in the Wall Street Journal report.

## #Anya

I'm pretty sure that one of Ahmed Al-Shara's ministers or officials said, after their government fell, “We will let Jews come invest in us.”

## #Max

He said Jews?

## #Anya

He said Jews specifically, yeah. He was like, "We're not against you guys. We're not against you guys."

## #Max

Well, I wasn't necessarily suggesting that. It's just American capital.

## #Anya

Yeah, no, I was just saying that.

## #Max

Vulture capitalists. Again, this would have to proceed with the consent of the new Chavista leadership. So I don't know if there was a deal there or what, but they're eager to exploit. And yet Trump has announced there will be no relief from sanctions. But it really goes to show—who's pushing for this. Elon Musk is also really excited about what just took place. He only got interested during the election campaign, in which first María Corina Machado and then the senile former death squad administrator, Edmundo González, ran against Maduro. And it was pretty obvious to me that Elon—Mr. "We'll go wherever we want to get the lithium"—was guaranteed some kind of contract. There is lithium in Venezuela.

## #Anya

Yep.

## #Max

There are lots of precious metals if Machado came in.

## #Anya

Just look at the poster boy of MAGA in the region—and of Elon fanaticism in the region—Javier Milei. Major Zionist, someone who actually renounced his Catholic upbringing. Sorry, I was going to say Catholicism, and then I kept cutting myself off. He renounced his Catholicism to begin the process of converting to Judaism and is so in with the Chabad Lubavitch group. He went to Israel immediately after becoming president. I mean, that's happening in Latin America. Why? While he also sells out

his country to the IMF and possibly even gives Argentina's sovereign water supply over to a private Israeli company.

## #Max

Yeah, there have been rumors about Israeli intelligence bases being set up in Argentina as well. Javier Milei is a member of Chabad. He's made a pilgrimage to Menachem Schneerson's gravesite, I believe. Howard Lutnick, in the Trump administration, is an adherent of Chabad. Jared Kushner too.

## #Anya

Ivanka and Trump went to parade at his gravesite to celebrate Trump's victory.

## #Max

Yeah. Fraudster Charles Kushner—who, I guess, we don't care about because he's not the ambassador to France. He's ambassador to France. He's not Somali, so it's okay. He got his pardon, or clemency, through a legal firm set up by Chabad, which also helped get off the king of Medicare fraud, who defrauded a state government—I think the government of Florida—for over a billion dollars. So yeah, this network—Javier Milei's in it. Latin America is tied in in many ways. Actually, Juan Orlando Hernández was a very close ally of Israel. He may have actually been at the inauguration of the U.S. embassy when Trump moved it from Tel Aviv, in violation of international law. The president of Guatemala was flown out on Sheldon Adelson's personal jet.

So the Zionist forces have a lot of interest in Latin America. But just one quick point—I mean, we saw that Venezuela had normal relations with Iran, which any country should have. Countries are expected by the United States, Israel, and the Zionist axis to treat Iran as just a giant terrorist organization and not a normal country. Venezuela refused to do that, and we actually toured an Iranian supermarket in Caracas that was providing some very high-quality goods at low prices to Venezuelan consumers. We didn't find any secret IRGC base there, but we filmed a package about it that you can watch at The Grayzone. And I think that's one reason Venezuela is being punished here. Then they say, "Oh, there's Hezbollah there, they're gonna invade us."

## #Anya

Yeah, and Iran is helping to rebuild Venezuela's oil industry. I mean, the U.S. is saying, "We're going to go in there." Trump says, "We're going to go in there and rebuild their oil industry." But Iran is already doing that, because as an oil producer, Iran has existed under similar sanctions for decades and is kind of an expert in how to take control of your own sovereign oil industry without relying on business routes or trade that could get sanctioned. So the Iranians are helping Venezuela in that regard, too. And that's why you hear Trump and Rubio making references to Hezbollah and trying to make it about the Middle East.

## #Max

Nobody's accepting it in the United States. Nobody cares about their justifications for this. The public is not supportive of it at all. The public in Venezuela—however they feel about Maduro—they're worried about their safety, and they oppose the sanctions in poll after poll because it's wrecked their lives. We got a super chat from Jackson Hinkle that you can answer, and then I'll let you get back to your life. Thoughts on Delcy Rodríguez's hour-long phone call with Rubio? And second, could a New York jury hypothetically acquit Maduro?

## #Anya

Well, the second question is yes. The answer is yes, it could happen. I'm sure the U.S. is going to run a crazy campaign and that they can come up with a case soon, proving their claims if they'd like to. I mean, they obviously have something there. I'm not sure if it's legitimate, but they think they have a case and they're going to try to prosecute it. But it's very possible there's nothing there. So yeah, I mean, a jury could acquit him.

## #Max

And, uh, well, you witnessed a jury trial.

## #Anya

I'd actually have to check and see what kind of trial it will be.

## #Max

Yeah. You witnessed a federal judge, Beryl Howell, who was an Obama appointee, preside over the trial of the Venezuelan Embassy defenders—the Embassy Three. You were part of the embassy defense; you were inside the embassy reporting for us when it was under siege by the Gusano industrial complex and Juan Guaidó's fake ambassador, this goon squad, as the U.S. government attempted to seize it. I think it was the greatest act of anti-imperialist resistance I've witnessed in the heart of D.C. And they put the last three, who were actually arrested by the police, on trial. You saw how they tried to—

## #Anya

Yeah, they can limit what you're allowed to talk about in the courtroom.

## #Max

The judge is very hostile, very, uh, kind of imperialist.

## #Anya

They weren't allowed to explain that Maduro was actually the president of Venezuela, for example, during that trial. They acted as if the U.S. government's recognition of the shadow government was legitimate, and so they treated Guaidó as the president. The jurors were really confused. The defense for the embassy protectors wasn't even allowed to mention, explain, or clarify any of that. So yeah, there are definitely ways to make these trials really confusing and almost impossible for juries to sort out. As for Delcy's long call with Rubio, like I said at the beginning, I think it's possible there was competition between factions in the Venezuelan government. That makes sense to me. What doesn't make sense is the idea that the U.S. military could just fly in easily and kidnap the president. That's pretty hard for me to believe—that it all just came down to incompetence. But I don't know if that means Delcy was the one who decided to betray Maduro, or if there were other forces at play.

## #Max

But you seem pretty indignant about what happened.

## #Anya

Absolutely. Absolutely.

## #Max

And I mean, another point is that Maduro was always open to a deal, and the U.S. consistently screwed Venezuela over. This is the lesson for Iran and for every other country that's in the crosshairs. You cannot negotiate with this gangster government. The U.S. always operates in bad faith when it feels like it has the preponderance of power to impose on its officially designated enemy. Maduro was open to a deal—he constantly held out an olive branch, and he got the gun. So Delcy Rodríguez—Trump characterized her as “willing to do whatever we want.” This could simply be a reiteration of Maduro's position that they are open to a deal over oil.

There was a deal being worked out through Trump's envoy, Rick Grenell, in which Venezuela would accept large numbers of migrant deportees in exchange. Chevron would have its drilling rights extended in Venezuela. So there has always been the possibility of these kinds of deals. Marco Rubio sabotaged that, which I can talk about. So could that be what Trump was referring to—that she'll do whatever we want? Or was he trying to wage some kind of psychological war against her? I don't know. Yeah, we don't know. I don't know. But great question from Jackson. Um, yeah, I'll let you go and I'll wrap up, but thank you so much, Anya Parampil—for those who did not sleep much.

## #Anya

So I don't know if I was very coherent, but I'm going to go not sleep some more.

**#Max**

So, what's the book?

**#Anya**

Corporate coup.

**#Max**

Anything else you want to add or tell us about the book before you go?

**#Anya**

No, I mean, I—I don't know, I'm so tired.

**#Max**

All right.

**#Anya**

Please, that's all I want to say.

**#Max**

All right. Go get some rest. Thank you so much for joining us. Uh, you know, we'll be back again on Venezuela—hopefully with you. And I hope you'll be making the rounds in the coming days.

**#Anya**

Hopefully we'll know more later. I don't love always—uh, I hate doing that—but sometimes you just have to get out there and talk about what's going on. Hopefully people found something interesting in there.

**#Max**

Sometimes you've got to speculate. All right, well, thanks again.

**#Anya**

All right.

## #Max

Bye. Um, yeah, I'm going to wrap pretty soon because I'm tired, and I'm also tired of speculating. But if anyone has a quick super chat, maybe I'll do 10 or 15 more minutes. Otherwise, we'll be back with my regular co-host, Aaron Maté, and other guests. I can think of some great guests we're hoping to have on about Venezuela from Caracas—one is on his way back into Venezuela now. We want to provide you with the best on-the-ground analysis possible. And there's so much else to cover. We're working on shaping some coverage of the protests in Iran, which started out as economic protests based in bazaars but have now clearly been weaponized. The Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, is almost openly taking credit for these protests.

Every ultra-Zionist influencer on social media is pushing them, and they're becoming violent. So we want to provide some coverage of that, um, as well as what's happening in Somalia and how the narrative is being shaped inside the U.S. Those are a few stories we're looking at. But we have so much Venezuela reporting in our archive. I've interviewed Nicolás Maduro. I think it's worth going back to that interview to get a sense of his thinking—who he really is. I think that if he's put on trial in the Southern District Court in New York, that could be a site of protest and resistance, because this is a criminal prosecution. The prosecutors are the criminals here. It's something we can't accept anymore, and I hope to see that.

And it will be a great way of shattering the phony narrative that he was just some dictatorial drug trafficker who represented nothing to anyone. When you go to Venezuela, you'll hear a lot of different opinions, but he has a major base of support there. And Chavismo has inspired people internationally. Why? Well, one reason is that during the 1990s, when there was this era of unipolar hegemony and the U.S. was taking out one nation after another—starting with Yugoslavia, moving east, moving toward Iraq—a new voice rose from within the Americas, calling for regional integration, for the consolidation of Venezuela's national sovereignty, and for using its resources to fund social programs and lift people out of the shadows.

It was Hugo Chávez in 1998. He was almost alone in that era, after the socialist bloc collapsed and the neoconservative project for a new American century started to take hold. And Trump and Marco Rubio—Marco Rubio is a poster child of the neoconservative movement whose patron, Paul Singer, has funded every neoconservative journal and organization across the country. He's also the vulture-capitalist hedge fund manager who basically wrecked Argentina's economy by owning its sovereign debt. They want to sunset the challenge to unipolar hegemony that arose in Venezuela. And that's why they bombed the mausoleum—the grave where Chávez rests—which I've visited multiple times. They want to destroy that symbol of sovereignty and resistance. That's ultimately, ideologically, what this is about when you get beyond the issue of oil or drugs.

When you focus on the issue of drugs, though, this is... something Nicolás Maduro is going to be accused of in court: conspiracy to traffic cocaine inside the United States, supposedly by sitting at the top of a cartel called the Cartel of the Suns—which doesn't exist. Even the New York Times refers to the Cartel of the Suns as a slang term for a network of corrupt Venezuelan generals. Well, there are corrupt military officials in the U.S. who've trafficked drugs. Read Seth Harp's *\*Fort Bragg Cartel\** for a recent look at drug trafficking within the U.S. military. The Cartel of the Suns was literally created, as I've explained again and again on this stream, by the CIA before Chávez took power, using the CIA's assets within the Venezuelan National Guard, who wore suns on the arm patches of their uniforms.

And so they were informally known as the Cartel of the Suns. They shipped drugs into the United States under orders from the CIA, which wanted to let the dope walk. There's actually a great piece—not just the *\*60 Minutes\** segment by Mike Wallace about this, interviewing the CIA assets who were told to send cocaine into the United States—but also one by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair in *\*CounterPunch\** about the more than 20 tons of cocaine shipped into the U.S. under the watch of the CIA through the so-called Cartel of the Suns. After that took place—why did they ship the drugs into the U.S., by the way?—it was supposedly to expose drug-trafficking routes and traffickers in the U.S., and they claimed they would monitor it.

I think it was actually to fund black operations, but regardless, the Cartel of the Suns disappeared after that point—there was no trace of them. Under Chávez, the DEA was kicked out of Venezuela, and Chávez then proceeded to destroy over 50% of the airfields in the country that had been used by cartels. The government of Nicolás Maduro was officially at war with Tren del Llano, which had some strength in Sucre province, for example. They were having armed battles with them all the time. They busted Tren de Aragua's whole operation in Venezuelan prisons years ago. So the whole case is phony.

And so I would look forward to Nicolás Maduro having a robust defense and explaining to the court and to the U.S. public how it was the United States government—and the cocaine-trafficking agency known as the CIA—that actually created the Cartel of the Suns. And the hypocrisy, not just of pardoning Juan Orlando Hernández, but of the massive U.S. support for Daniel Noboa, who, as we explain at *\*The Grayzone\** in a new documentary produced by Oscar León, features an interview with the journalist who has done more than anyone in Ecuador to expose the drug-trafficking links of U.S.-backed President Daniel Noboa and his family. Andrés Durán is the name of the journalist.

Ecuador is the main source of trafficking to the U.S.—and then fentanyl. Can we talk about fentanyl in this courtroom? There's no fentanyl being sent from Venezuela; they don't produce fentanyl. It's coming through Mexico. And who's responsible for the fentanyl deaths and the opioid deaths in the U.S.? Their names are on museums right here in Washington—the Sacklers. All of these points, I

think, are relevant. And yeah, I'm worried that the judge, if there's a jury trial, will prevent the jury from hearing any of those points and limit the political nature of the trial. But it must be a political trial.

And I hope there's a sustained protest encampment or movement outside the court calling to free Nicolás Maduro from this gangster government and this phony \$50 million bounty—which actually never got paid to anyone—and to educate the American public about who's really poisoning our people. Do we have any super chats? What do we got? Let's see how that's paid off. Someone's asking if I've traveled to China recently. I haven't traveled to China ever. And now, you know, having young children makes that a little more difficult. That's definitely on the bucket list for sometime this decade. Have I seen Professor Zhang's lectures about *\*Pax Judaica\** and his thoughts that Israel will replace the U.S. empire? Haven't seen that, sorry. Thank you for that, though. Professor Zhang is the guy who predicts things, I think—he's become popular. I watched maybe one of his interviews.

## #Max

Yeah, I haven't heard about this either—Israeli tech firms creating search hits on people's names to generate paranoia. Would this be like the predictive Google search hits before something happens to someone? I don't know what that's referring to. I do know that if you Google The Grayzone from a U. S. IP, you'll have a hard time finding any of our work; you'll mostly find attacks on us. But if you Google us from an IP in, I don't know, Central America, that doesn't happen. So the SEO is definitely being gamed to demonize us. Thank you.

## #Max

My thoughts on labor—this is too big of a question for the short time I have. The labor and anti-war movement, particularly teachers' unions such as the AFT and NEA—I haven't seen much of an anti-war movement there. But I think the Palestine Solidarity Movement that has developed and grown, especially on college campuses through the encampments, and also in the streets of U.S. cities, which is involved in BDS, has really, since October 7th, brought about a resurgence in U.S. anti-war activity. It's important for people involved in Palestine Solidarity to understand issues on a very granular level—like Iran, Syria, Venezuela, and what happened during the so-called Arab Spring—and to understand that Palestine is not just a human rights issue or an identity issue. It's an issue of empire; it's an anti-imperial issue.

And I think that will expand the growth of the anti-war movement. The labor movement—I mean, we all know about the AFL-CIO and how, since the days of Jay Lovestone, it's been infiltrated by the CIA. It's been a vehicle for the CIA and the National Endowment for Democracy, this CIA spinoff, to neutralize socialist labor unions—and I would say just counter-hegemonic labor unions across the Global South. They've also neutralized anti-war activity inside the U.S. And the AFT, run by Randi Weingarten—I mean, Randi Weingarten herself has met with Benjamin Netanyahu, appeared on panels with him. She's an arch-Zionist. But at the same time, she's a left-liberal, pro-labor figure who

has limited her own members and teachers from participating in BDS activity. The NEA too—it really comes down to whether you can do BDS or not.

## #Max

Whether Trump's move into Venezuela is about the U.S. trying to wean itself off Saudi oil—well, I don't think they'll be weaning themselves off Saudi oil under Donald Trump, considering how much sheer bribery he's accepting through ventures like World Liberty Financial, run by his sons and Steve Witkoff's two sons. Trump has openly said there's no possibility of him facing any penalty for conflicts of interest. They're making billions of dollars through so-called investments from Saudi Arabia. But I think, as I mentioned before, there's the issue of the Strait of Hormuz being a choke point that Iran can exploit if it's attacked, and Venezuelan oil gives the U.S. a kind of insurance policy if that happens. But how are they going to do it? I don't think they have a clear plan right now.

## #Max

Leopoldo López and Juan Guaidó making a comeback? No, no. Juan Guaidó—he's done. And he was sort of a joke. Trump actually killed him with his comments. Politically, he said this guy seems young and his wife looks like a little girl. Leopoldo López was Guaidó's mentor, and I think he was very jealous that María Corina Machado has superseded him on the world stage through her Nobel Peace Prize. López is sort of the godfather of the U.S.-backed, radical, putschist Venezuelan opposition that was created with money from USAID and NED, and training from these CIA-adjacent organizations like CANVAS. And I think he's kind of a spent force at this point. Trump's comments about Machado were just brutal, and I don't know how she can recover from them—especially when Marco Rubio is standing behind Trump.

And again, Anya and I had sources telling us that Rubio didn't take Machado seriously, which is interesting because he seems ideologically aligned with her. But how could she come in and rule? I mean, seriously, how would she come in and essentially take over a country when you have a military that's been cultivated with the ideology of chavismo, of sovereignty—and then tell the military, "Well, we're just going to become some fake neocolonial military, and you're going to turn your guns on Venezuelans—basically on your neighbors in the barrios who protest—while we just let these rich guys from Washington and Miami loot our entire country"? You have to have control of the guns, and that's where Diosdado Cabello comes in. He really speaks for that contingent.

He hosts a variety show every day called *\*Mazodando\**—it's like "the big, powerful mace." He's a great talk show host, kind of hilarious. They have music, performances, and then political discussions. The show is attended by the base of Chavismo, and when you go in there, you see workers from PDVSA, the state oil company, and military guys—young privates, conscripts, decorated figures. He has this kind of charismatic force within the military. He's called a drug

trafficker by the U.S., of course, and he's heavily demonized because he's the most militant figure within the pantheon of Chavista leaders now. So María Corina Machado—she just can't come in and rule. It's not possible. Maduro himself said she wouldn't last 48 hours. That's true.

## #Max

This is an interesting one—probably from a British viewer. I try to keep up with what's going on on your little island. "Chance-controlled opposition prevents UK-Palestine Action from a simple name change, such as Anti-Apartheid Union, to disrupt dystopian law language." I'm not sure which controlled opposition you're referring to, and I didn't know it was on the table to change the name of Palestine Action. Seems clever. Basically, if you say you support Palestine Action in the UK under Starmer, you'll be accused—and could go to jail—for supporting terrorism, because Palestine Action has been proscribed as a terrorist group.

The UK, I believe, just outlawed the statement "Globalize the Intifada" as well, following the Bondi Beach mass shooting by ISIS supporters who have nothing to do with the Palestine Solidarity Movement. The UK is just becoming a repressive hellhole. Digital ID is coming in, and it's making it harder for people to even use Substack—by design. This might be a way around that speech law, but it has to be challenged directly. I've also seen people with signs that say "Plasticine Action" — "I support Plasticine Action." Like, I could say "Totalize the Intifada," and that would be legit, but you can't say "Globalize the Intifada." It just exposes the whole clownishness and absurdity—like Monty Python—level absurdity—of attempts to regulate speech on behalf of Israel's global censorship regime.

Got anything else? Why was there no resistance? This is referring to why Venezuela's military didn't fire a shot at the U.S. when it invaded Caracas. We addressed this earlier. It made us wonder if a deal had been struck, because the Chinooks were flying so low and seemed so vulnerable. It's time to unite the right and left for a big "no more wars" protest in D.C. Who can organize such an event? Well, I would agree. We had the Rage Against the War Machine, which really brought together the independent left—the kind of uncaptured, uncontrolled, anti-war left—and the libertarian movement. And I'd say it was a big success.

It really shook the establishment, because no one expected a protest against the Ukraine proxy war in 2022. Tulsi Gabbard actually appeared there and gave a speech before Ron Paul, alongside Dennis Kucinich, the former progressive Democratic anti-war member of Congress. Where's Tulsi Gabbard right now? I mean, she knows everything—what a criminal act just took place in Venezuela and in Iran—and she's still in the administration. So she would not be welcome at such a rally, for sure. But Rage Against the War Machine was a big success, and I don't know where the forces are that planned it at this point, or how we could do such a thing again. There was an enormous attempt to sabotage that rally from the professional sectarian left—a very revealing moment.

Why would you sabotage an anti-war rally just because you don't want to bring people together across partisan and ideological lines? It was shocking. But I think a lot of people have woken up to the value of coalition building at a time when Trump is president, and you're seeing young people on the right start to wake up to the lie of Christian Zionism. It should be—it could be—a united... I don't know, unite against the Israel rally. It would be great. It would never be allowed to happen, somehow. But I would support the idea of it. I think it's important, though, that there needs to be some protest and resistance outside the Southern District Court in New York on a perpetual basis.

## #Max

Am I familiar with the Bazaaris in Iran? You know, I'm not going to pose as an expert on them. I would say the leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, just gave a speech and referred to the Bazaaris as a very loyal group to the Islamic Republic. He was making the point that in some of these protests, police stations are being attacked, security officers are being stabbed and beaten. You've seen some masked protesters—like chaos agents—throw Molotov cocktails at police officers.

Things that would never be tolerated in the U.S.—that would lead to the shooting of protesters and the celebration of that shooting by the Trump administration—are being encouraged by Trump and the Israeli regime. But Khamenei's point is that these protests, the economic protests about inflation—which is the direct result of U.S. sanctions—are being used as a vehicle for internal chaos agents who, if you believe Mike Pompeo, are being instrumentalized by intelligence agencies, including Israel's. I mean, he openly said Mossad is marching alongside them. We'll be having some guests on to give more detailed analysis about what's happening inside Iran.

The midterm election will crack the Zionist grip on the U.S. government? No, because the Democrats are controlled by AIPAC and the Israel lobby as well. The trick the Democrats are using is to say, "Well, I don't take AIPAC money," like Gavin Newsom saying that. "I don't take AIPAC money. I just do whatever AIPAC wants," because AIPAC doesn't have to give you money directly. They establish stealth PACs that could be called something like "American Democracy PAC," and then they'll run ads supporting you or attacking your opponent for, say, voting the wrong way on Trump's BBB bill. It won't even be about Israel, but all the money is coming from Zionist millionaire and billionaire donors on the basis of your Israel support. That's how people like Jamal Bowman and Cori Bush were defeated.

None of the ads were about Israel. AIPAC is really ratcheting down its presence, especially within the Democratic Party, but it's increasing its activity. I do think the midterms will repudiate Donald Trump's agenda. I mean, the generic number right now for Democrat over Republican is fairly high from a historical point of view. So, I mean, the public is pretty much done with Trump, and MAGA has really lost its momentum. You can just watch the last TPUSA AmFest to get a sense of all the divisions

erupting within the MAGA base. And obviously, there's no more "America First," at least under Trump's banner. He's pledging to do nation-building in Venezuela—that's the least "America First" thing you can do.

## #Max

When will oil corporations pay for their own wars? Well, that's why the CIA stands for Capitalism's Invisible Army. And if you're in the U.S. military, you've signed up—I mean, I understand why you go. You want to pay for college; it's a way to advance in a very difficult economy. I'm shocked whenever someone says they're joining for political or ideological reasons. But you're just fighting for Israel, you're fighting for ExxonMobil, and you're fighting for—if you're involved in Operation Southern Spear, the phallic-named operation that Pete Hegseth launched, which has now been transitioned to Operation Absolute Resolve—you're also just fighting for a bunch of gusanos in Miami who see the U.S. as an aircraft carrier to settle scores with the country they left, have no other interest in the United States, and pretty much contribute nothing else.

How long until the blowback happens? All these new U.S.-backed leaders—will we see a pink tide again? Um, that's what Trump is aiming to prevent, and did prevent in Argentina, where Milei had tanked the Argentine peso. His policies were completely failing, and he had abandoned his anarcho-capitalist philosophy—the "chainsaw" philosophy he was famous for as a TV star in Argentina—by accepting a \$40 billion U.S. loan. It was the least anarcho-capitalist, least libertarian thing you could do. At least \$20 billion of it was funded by us to pay, almost directly, bondholders who were friends with Scott Besant, the Treasury Secretary, who held Argentine bonds—just to basically firm up their financial portfolio.

And he was going to get clobbered in the parliamentary elections—like their version of midterms—and that's where the loan came in. Trump told the Argentine public, "If you don't vote for his party, if you vote his party out, I will not give this loan and your economy will be destroyed." So Argentinians had a gun to their head when they voted. Same thing in Honduras. Trump said, "If you vote for Rixi Moncada, who was the successor to Xiomara Castro—the social democratic candidate from Partido Libre—then I will destroy your country's economy. You must vote for Tito Asfura, the right-wing National Party candidate, and then I won't wage economic warfare on you." It was just that simple. I've never seen such naked meddling and interference from a U.S. leader in Latin America. I say "naked" because they always interfere, they always meddle, and they do coups.

But when it's under Obama or Biden, they tend to keep things behind the scenes. With Trump, it's just an open weaponization of economic warfare to generate a political outcome and to make sure the pink tide keeps receding. But there are countries like Mexico where—I mean, Honduras was the original banana republic. They don't have a history of a strong pro-sovereignty movement. Manuel Zelaya, the founder of the Libre Party, wasn't a hardcore socialist when he came into power. He was very centrist. And then he gets removed in a coup, and he woke up to what time it really was—that he'd have to fight to come back and face a very militarized, U.S.-backed coup government.

Mexico and Mexicans have a very strong political education and a very keen understanding of what the U.S. wants, since the U.S. stole their land in the U.S.-Mexico War—just a straight-up land theft—which mirrors what Trump is trying to do to Venezuela. So they’re standing behind a leader like Sheinbaum, and she’s very popular, and I think they see what the stakes are. They have a very similar program to Venezuela, which is to nationalize Pemex and use Pemex as an economic powerhouse for their country—not only to fund social programs, but to build infrastructure like the Maya Train, which will open up Mexico’s coasts and help make Mexico the economic powerhouse it should have always been.

And the Gen Z rebellion in Mexico completely failed and was easily exposed. So I think it really comes down to the political consciousness of countries. In Ecuador, Rafael Correa has been exiled. He was betrayed by Lenín Moreno, his successor, and they’ve imposed a repressive regime that’s cracking down on political dissent in unprecedented ways. I mean, look at the consequence of transitioning from a figure like Rafael Correa to today, where Ecuador has gone from one of the safest countries in the hemisphere to one of the most dangerous countries in the world—with, I think, five of the ten most dangerous cities. Guayaquil—they call it Guayaquil.

There’s a naval base in Guayaquil—or a military base—where the entire perimeter outside the base is controlled by a cartel, and they have to protect themselves from being overrun. That’s because Lenín Moreno and Noboa, to an even greater extent, have just whittled away whatever remained of social programs, privatized everything, and young men have nowhere else to turn but gangs. That’s the consequence of turning back the pink tide. What else do we have? I answered this question before. Does Machado even have the support to take power? No—just, you know, go back. I explained that. And yeah, she wasn’t even the most popular figure within the radical opposition.

It was López. Will there be an open mic at Grayzone stand-up? We need to do that, but, you know, we’ve got to get a venue, and I don’t know—it’s always dangerous when you open the mic up. You never know what anyone will say. I actually have a kind of funny story. The first time I went to London to give a talk, I was invited to speak in Westminster by this backbench member of Parliament. It was actually at a place called Portcullis House, off Westminster, by this kind of unknown backbencher named Jeremy Corbyn, who was a very strong supporter of Palestine. He wasn’t there at the time, and I showed up late—like an hour late. I’d gotten the timing wrong.

They had opened up the mic at Portcullis House and let anyone come on stage to speak. People were making, you know, generally thoughtful and trenchant but intelligent commentary. Then one person got up—apparently someone who had once held a sign at a protest comparing Israel to Nazi Germany. They had planted this Zionist propagandist in my talk to try to portray it as some kind of anti-Semitic, Nazi-themed meeting. He published a piece—I forget his name, though people in the UK involved in Palestine solidarity would probably know him—but I forget his name. Anyway, he wrote on his blog claiming that Max Blumenthal’s talk was introduced at an event organized by Jeremy Corbyn by a Holocaust denier.

And the proof that he was a Holocaust denier was that he had held a sign comparing Israel to Nazi Germany—which, like, I compare Israel to Nazi Germany all the time. I'd never heard of this guy either. He was just some random person who spoke at the open mic before I talked. So when Jeremy Corbyn declared his candidacy for Labour leadership—I think it was 2015, a few months after this talk—he became an internationally known figure. In a very deft move, the British anti-war movement and the British left organized about 100,000 people to join the Labour Party and flood it with new members to support Corbyn for leadership.

It completely freaked out the Israel lobby, and they launched this campaign to paint Corbyn as an anti-Semite—to destroy him and ultimately get to, you know, someone like Keir Starmer, a Trilateral Commission-type figure, which is what they have now. The first attack—I think it was really the opening shot—was the claim that Jeremy Corbyn had hosted a Holocaust denier in Westminster to open for Max Blumenthal, as reported in the *\*Daily Mail\**. That was the opening salvo of this campaign, which went on for years to brand him as an anti-Semite. But I think, you know, a Grayzone open mic could be interesting. I mean, we do long Q&As at our Grayzone events, and we get some great questions there.

## **#Max**

Old Jewish joke: "I support Palestine, I support Iran, I support Venezuela." "I think you bring bad luck." Okay.

## **#Max**

Can I try to book Donald Trump for an interview, just to decipher the seemingly unfathomable chaos of his substandard brain tissue? I don't think Donald Trump will be agreeing to any interviews with me anytime soon. But I'd love to at least get a question in to him at some point. I'll probably solicit questions during the next Super Chat session. But, I mean, what do you expect from him at this point? Much of what he says is incoherent. I have to say, though, he seemed kind of giddy today at the press conference. He really believed he'd pulled off some kind of diplomatic and military masterstroke. And it's likely to go south from here. All right, I've got to go. But I really...

## **#Max**

Thank you all for being here with us. We had a great contribution from my close colleague, Anya Parampil. Check out her book—get her book—*\*Corporate Coup\**. I think it's essential background on why the U.S. is determined to take over Venezuela, and not just under Donald Trump, but under previous administrations—the Obama administration, the Biden administration. They helped move this forward to the point where we're at today, where the president of Venezuela has been kidnapped and is being held hostage by the United States, and will be subjected to a phony show

trial on drug-trafficking charges, which are absurd. We don't know if this is the end of the violence, but we'll be following up here shortly, and I hope to have my usual co-host and colleague, Aaron Maté, back here.

Please subscribe to this channel—our YouTube channel—if you haven't done so yet, and subscribe to us on Substack, because you'll get all our original investigative reporting and documentaries right in your inbox. You don't even have to donate anything to us. If you want to, we have a new way to donate that won't be captured by the PayPal mafia, which has suspended our account for obviously political reasons. I'll be explaining more about that this week. So yeah, thanks again for being here, and we'll see you next week. Free the political prisoner Nicolás Maduro, and resist this gangster campaign by the U.S. regime. No pasarán. Peace.