



By: TA | AP Brief

Colombia's leader to visit Venezuela for key talks on border security and trade



Colombian President Gustavo Petro is visiting Venezuela on Friday for key talks on border security and trade with the country's acting president, Delcy Rodríguez.

The meeting, their first, comes months after the U.S. military seized former Venezuelan President **Nicolás Maduro** and his wife from their home in January.

Colombia is lobbying to become a buyer of Venezuelan gas and last month sought an exemption from **U.S. sanctions** to invest in **Venezuelan electricity** projects and natural gas ventures, which could include the reopening of a gas pipeline between the neighboring South American countries.

Petro's administration also reached agreements with Venezuela's state-owned oil company PDVSA to replace the pipeline in the Colombian section.

Petro and Rodríguez are also expected to discuss the presence of illegal armed groups and drug trafficking along their shared border.

"The United States has an interest in Colombia becoming the buyer of Venezuelan gas," said Ronal Rodríguez Durán, a researcher at the Venezuela Observatory at the Universidad del Rosario.

"Colombia, by virtue of its geographical nature, would become the client that could quickly bring revenue into Venezuela under U.S. supervision," he added.

The topic was part of the conversation during the nearly two-hour meeting between **Petro and U.S. President** Donald Trump at the White House in February.

Both said the talks were friendly — a dramatic about-face from weeks earlier, when Trump accused Petro of pumping cocaine into the U.S. and threatened his country with military action.

According to Petro, they discussed how to revitalize the Venezuelan economy with Colombia's assistance, as well as the role of the

U.S., which the Colombian leader said should "lift sanctions" on Venezuela.

The Trump administration is aiming to revive the Venezuelan economy by drawing foreign investment toward its vast natural resources, particularly oil, following years of decline under the Maduro government, which saw the country crumble and forced at least **7.7 million people to migrate**.

Petro's leverage as mediator in Venezuela is limited

Ahead of Friday's meeting, Petro announced that his delegation, which includes top military and police officials, will tackle border security with Rodríguez.

The focus remains on the **Catatumbo region**, where rival armed groups fight for territorial control and Petro stressed the necessity of "close collaboration on intelligence," warning that without it, "bombs land in the wrong places ... and end up killing civilians."

Colombia-Venezuela ties have long been on the rocks. Petro did not recognize Maduro as Venezuela's legitimate president in the wake of the contested July 2024 elections that triggered protests, which sparked widespread repression. Still, he maintained diplomatic ties with Caracas.

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Colombia's government has said that the Petro-Rodríguez meeting on Friday aims to "contribute to a resolution of Venezuela's political crisis."

However, it's unclear how this can be achieved.

Rodríguez Durán, the university researcher, said Petro's leverage is limited regarding any

potential mediation, given that his term ends in August.

Future ties with Venezuela will likely also be influenced by who takes power next in Colombia.

Petro and Rodríguez were expected to meet last month at their shared border, but their respective governments abruptly canceled the meeting citing “force majeure,” which they did not explain, and simply said it would take place at a later time.

Before that canceled meeting, several Venezuelan nongovernmental organizations had addressed an open letter to Petro, urging Colombia to contribute to the “promotion of democratic principles and human rights,” including the release of “all political prisoners” and an end to “persecution.”