



By: TA | AP Brief

Venezuela rejects Trump's 51st state remarks



Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodríguez told journalists that her country had no plans to become the 51st U.S. state after President Donald Trump said he was "seriously considering" the move.

Rodríguez was speaking at the International Court of Justice in The Hague on the final day of hearings in a dispute between her country and neighboring Guyana over the massive mineral- and oil-rich **Essequibo region**.

"We will continue to defend our integrity, our sovereignty, our independence, our history," said Rodríguez, who assumed power in January following a U.S. military operation that ousted then-President Nicolás Maduro. Venezuela is "not a colony, but a free country," she added.

Speaking to Fox News earlier on Monday, Trump said he was "seriously considering making Venezuela the 51st US state," according to a post by Fox News' co-anchor **John Roberts** on social media.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the matter.

Trump has made similar comments about **Canada**.

White House spokesperson Anna Kelly later declined to comment on Trump's plans in an interview of her own with Roberts on Fox News.

Kelly said the president is "famous for never accepting the status quo," and praised Rodríguez for "working incredibly cooperatively" with the U.S.

Rodríguez went on to say that Venezuelan and U.S. officials have been in touch and are working on "cooperation and understanding."

Dispute between Venezuela and Guyana

Before addressing Trump's comments, Rodríguez defended her country's claim to

Essequibo at the United Nations' highest court, telling judges that political negotiations – not a judicial ruling – will resolve the century-old territorial dispute.

The 62,000-square-mile territory, which makes up two-thirds of Guyana, is rich in gold, diamonds, timber and other natural resources. It also sits near massive offshore oil deposits currently producing an average 900,000 barrels a day.

That output is close to Venezuela's daily production of about 1 million barrels a day and has transformed one of the smallest countries in South America into a significant energy producer.

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Venezuela has considered Essequibo its own since the Spanish colonial period, when the jungle region fell within its boundaries.

But an 1899 decision by arbitrators from Britain, Russia and the United States drew the border along the Essequibo River largely in favor of Guyana.

Venezuela has argued that a 1966 agreement sealed in Geneva to resolve the dispute effectively nullified the 19th-century arbitration.

In 2018, however, three years after ExxonMobil announced a significant oil discovery off the Essequibo coast, Guyana's government went to the International Court of Justice and asked judges to uphold the 1899 ruling.

Tensions between the countries further flared in 2023, when Rodríguez's predecessor, Maduro, threatened to annex the region by force after holding a **referendum** asking voters if Essequibo should be turned into a Venezuelan state.