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By: TA | AP Brief

US and Venezuela sign military agreement



The United States and Venezuela have signed a deal to reestablish military ties that will range from conducting joint training to intelligence sharing, U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Wednesday in Caracas while visiting the South American nation's interim leaders.

Hegseth touted how U.S. forces in January captured then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, telling an audience of diplomats and military officials from both countries that now Venezuela "has gone from our most aggressive regional threat to a compliant security partner."

He also praised the "close cooperation" with acting President Delcy Rodríguez that allowed officials "to stabilize Venezuela and rid it of narco-terrorists once and for all," in a reference to drug traffickers.

Hegseth's visit, the latest in a series of stops in Venezuela by members of President Donald Trump's Cabinet, underscores efforts by the U.S. administration to deepen its influence in the South American country.

Trump said in August that Hegseth helped broker a sweeping deal for the U.S. to take control of some Venezuelan oil reserves.

Hegseth praises Trump's Venezuela oil deal

The Pentagon chief praised the energy deal by referencing another major military action by the Trump administration this year — the Iran war.

The conflict has disrupted global energy supplies through a critical waterway in the Persian Gulf, raising gasoline prices and contributing to the Republican Party's severe losses in this month's midterm elections.

> The Venezuela oil deal makes the Strait of Hormuz a nonfactor for the Western Hemisphere - Pete Hegseth

The Venezuela oil deal "makes the Strait of Hormuz a nonfactor for the Western Hemisphere," Hegseth said at the U.S. Embassy in Caracas.

In the meeting with Hegseth, Rodríguez asserted that the deal enables "the energy development of our nations" and "benefits both the people of the United States and the people of Venezuela."

Among those in attendance for Hegseth's speech was Alejandro Betancourt, the owner of North American Blue Energy Partners, the second-largest oil operator in Venezuela.

The U.S. government and Betancourt's company entered into the ambitious agreement to tap Venezuela's vast oil reserves.

Both the Interior and Energy secretaries also visited Venezuela earlier this year and focused their efforts on tapping its oil reserves and critical minerals.

The head of U.S. military operations in Latin America, Gen. Francis Donovan of U.S. Southern Command, also has met interim authorities in Venezuela at least twice this year.

Hegseth later stopped in Bogota, Colombia, where he was greeted at a military base by the country's defense and foreign ministers.