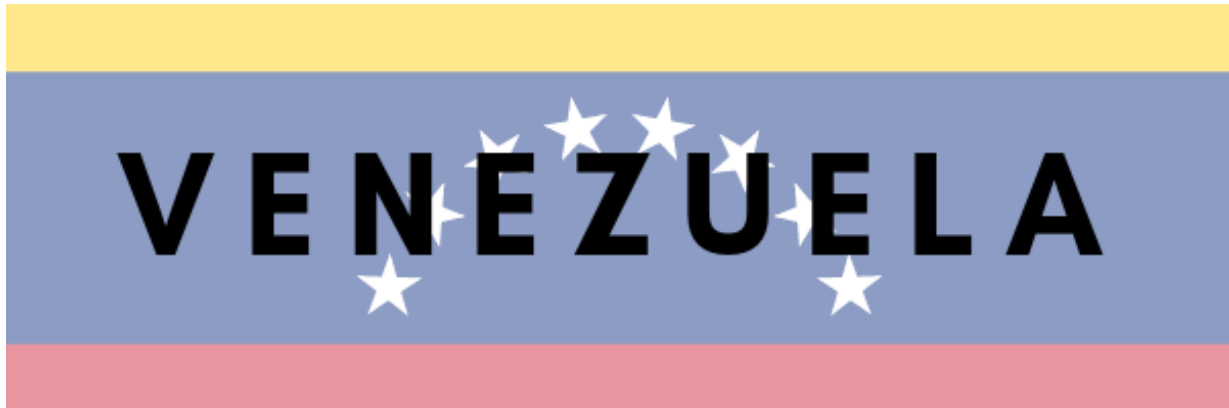




BOLIVARIAN THREAT NETWORK

May 2021

The following is a summary of open-source media reporting on the Bolivarian Threat Network's activities in Latin America and the Caribbean in May 2021. This is not a complete list of media reports on the Bolivarian Threat Network's activities in Latin America but are some of the most relevant articles and reports selected by SFS researchers and fellows. The monitor does source a limited amount of media reports from state-owned or -controlled media outlets, which are carefully selected and solely intended to report on news that is not reported on by other media and is relevant for understanding VRIC influence in the region. This report is produced as part of our VRIC Monitor published monthly by the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS), a non-profit, national security think tank based in Washington D.C.



- Venezuela's state-owned PdV is scrambling to load crude cargoes before China imposes a new import tax that has blindsided management in Caracas - [Argus Media on 20-MAY](#)
- Hyperinflation in Venezuela has pulverized the value of the bolivar currency with annual inflation recently calculated at 2,940.8%, according to Central Bank data. Since the Nicolás Maduro regime issued the petro, its attempt at a national cryptocurrency, Venezuela's public cryptocurrency ecosystem has been drastically deteriorating. - [Nasdaq on 20-MAY](#)
- Two former Green Berets jailed in Venezuela for last year's botched coup are not mercenaries, may have been duped and should be shown leniency by the Maduro regime,

said a prominent private negotiator seeking to win their release. - [Miami Herald on 20-MAY](#)

- One of Venezuela's oldest newspapers was evicted from its own building, after members of the National Guard, accompanied by a judge, executed a court order. - [Voice of America on 19-MAY](#)
- State media reports Venezuela's National Assembly appointed former magistrate Gladys Gutierrez as the country's new ambassador to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. The announcement came a week after Vice President Delcy Rodriguez let the ICC know that Venezuela is finishing up a report with evidence against the court's allegations that the Venezuelan government has committed crimes against humanity against its people. - [Andalou Agency on 14-MAY](#)
- Maduro has indicated he is ready to restart halted talks with opposition leader Juan Guaido, according to state media. - [Digital Journal on 13-MAY](#)
- Venezuela's Supreme Court sent a request to Spain for the extradition of exiled opposition politician Leopoldo López, who has been sentenced to 14 years in prison. - [Buenos Aires Times on 12-MAY](#)
- Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó proposed reaching an accord with the Maduro regime to "save Venezuela" from its worst crisis in history, even floating the idea of lifting U.S. sanctions as an incentive to hold new elections. - [Miami Herald on 11-MAY](#)
- Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA would need \$58 billion in investment to revive its crude production to the levels of 1998 before ex-President Hugo Chavez came to power, equivalent to 3.4 million barrels per day (bpd). - [Reuters on 10-MAY](#)
- A former executive with Venezuela's state-run oil company was sentenced to two years and four months in prison in connection with an alleged \$1.2 billion money laundering scheme linked to South Florida real estate. - [The Real Deal on 06-MAY](#)
- The United Nations Children's Fund said 50 freezer kits had arrived in Venezuela to boost the OPEC nation's capacity to store coronavirus vaccines. - [Reuters on 05-MAY](#)
- Venezuela's congress named two opposition-linked figures in a new elections council, the make-up of which is keenly observed by Western diplomats pressing for free and fair elections in the South American nation. - [U.S. News on 04-MAY](#)
- State media reports in 2018, Caracas launched its own cryptocurrency called the Petro backed by Venezuela's oil reserves, in a move that came against the backdrop of a severe economic meltdown in the South American nation. At the time, Maduro vowed the government would create a single exchange rate linked to the Petro. Maduro has now stated that the government had approved the use of the Petro cryptocurrency as the basis

for calculating social benefit payments to tackle hyperinflation. The latter amounted to 2,959 percent last year. - [Sputnik on 03-MAY](#)

- Six senior executives of Citgo Petroleum Corp who have been detained by the Venezuelan government since 2017 were transferred from prison to house arrest. - [World Oil on 02-MAY](#)
- US Senators Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz introduced the National Assets Responsibility Preservation Act of 2021 (PANA Act). As indicated on Senator Rubio's own page, "the bill" would authorize the taking of "seized assets" and thus a "Venezuela Restoration Fund" would be managed to be used by the State Department, with the goal to "strengthen democracy and Venezuelan civil society." - [El Universal on 30-APR \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Three Cuban-flagged tankers that are under U.S. sanctions for transporting Venezuelan oil to the island have been serviced in the port of Veracruz on Mexico's Gulf coast, according to vessel tracking data and industry sources. - [Reuters on 30-APR](#)
- Venezuela's attorney general said that 10 officials from state-owned oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) were arrested for allegedly diverting and selling some 3 million liters (792,516 gallons) of fuel illicitly, as long lines continue at petrol stations throughout the OPEC country due to shortages of gasoline and diesel. - [Nasdaq on 29-APR](#)
- Far from the well-trodden border crossings in western Venezuela, shrinking resources and acute gas shortages have left many increasingly desperate residents along the Caribbean coast with few options other than a dangerous maritime crossing if they want to leave. - [The New Humanitarian on 28-APR](#)
- 'Sistema Patria' is a new digital tool for social control in Venezuela. Citizens are forced to register with the platform, created by the government of Nicolás Maduro, to receive public salaries, state benefits and Covid-19 vaccines. - [El País on 24-APR](#)
- Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó plans to make the biggest one-time withdrawal from offshore accounts frozen by U.S. sanctions to purchase Covid-19 vaccines as well as pay wages, legal fees and expenses. Guaido approved the release of \$152 million, of which about \$100 million will be used to buy vaccines through the World Health Organization-backed Covax initiative or other organizations, according to a budget report approved by the National Assembly. - [Bloomberg on 22-APR](#)
- On April 16, the Venezuelan Civil Cassation Chamber of the Supreme Tribunal ordered El Nacional to pay compensation to the vice president of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), Diosdado Cabello. Miguel Henrique Otero, president and editor of veteran Venezuelan newspaper El Nacional, said the publication will take its case to international bodies following the \$13.3 million legal sentence against it. - [LatAm Journalism Review on 21-APR](#)

- Venezuelans try to beat hyperinflation with the cryptocurrency revolution. With Venezuela's official currency plummeting for years, both the government and cryptocreators are trying to stem the rot with digital tokens. For ordinary Venezuelans, the cryptoboom also means regaining freedom. - [DW on 16-APR](#)

COLOMBIA CRISIS

- The flat-footed administration of President Iván Duque eventually rescinded the unpopular policy. But that didn't matter. The violence raged on as groups of rioters systemically burned public transportation, defaced and pulled down cultural monuments, vandalized private property and places of commerce, and injured nearly 900 police officers. It was soon apparent that the tax issue was merely a pretext for violence. - [Breitbart on 26-MAY](#)
- Nicolás Maduro, warned about the possible plans of the Government of Colombia to infect the Venezuelan population with new variants of COVID-19 that, he assured, have already reached the neighboring country. - [El Nuevo Herald on 23-MAY](#)
- One of the most prominent commanders of a group of Colombia's former FARC rebels who reject a 2016 peace accord, has been killed in Venezuela in an operation by Colombia's military, according to his new armed group. Seuxis Hernández, known by his nom de guerre of Jesús Santrich, was one of the chief negotiators for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in peace talks with the Colombian government. - [The Guardian on 19-MAY](#)
- Colombia reopened its land and water borders with all of its immediate neighbors - with the exception of Venezuela - the ministry of foreign affairs said, as the government tries to boost economic recovery in border regions. - [Reuters on 19-MAY](#)
- State media reports the Venezuelan Minister of Defense said that eight troops were captured during the fighting with irregular Colombian armed groups. - [Mehr News on 16-MAY](#)
- On April 28, everything seemed normal in Cali in the midst of a massive day of peaceful protest. In parallel, however, the criminal plan of the dissidents of the FARC and the urban militias of the ELN began to be implemented: the violent takeover of the capital of the Valle del Cauca. Two weeks later, Colombia's third city, with more than 2 million inhabitants, is still stuck. - [Semana on 15-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Since the national strike began in Colombia, on April 28, thousands of fans (mostly women) of Korean pop have been up early every day to boycott Twitter trends that they say incite hatred, misinform, or are maliciously created to delegitimize the marches against the government. - [El País on 15-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- A Venezuelan non-governmental organization said eight soldiers from the OPEC nation were being held by a faction of a Colombian rebel group that had issued a statement naming the officers, after fighting broke out along the countries' shared border zone. - [Reuters on 10-MAY](#)
- The Colombian Foreign Ministry issued a very harsh statement in response to the statements of Argentine President Alberto Fernández, who through his Twitter account had questioned the actions of the Iván Duque administration in the crisis unleashed by the multiple demonstrations that took place in the main Colombian cities. - [Infobae on 07-MAY](#)
- State media reports Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez expressed his concern over expressions of institutional violence against citizens who are in the streets protesting against Colombia's President Ivan Duque and his economic policies. - [Telesur on 07-MAY](#)
- Diosdado Cabello's statements assuring that Colombia has been taken over by gangsters who decided to massacre the people, referring to the protests that have taken place, elicited a strong response from the Duque government. - [El Tiempo on 07-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Cuba protests the expulsion of one of its diplomats from Colombia amid a wave of violent protests against its right-wing government. Colombia's foreign ministry had accused Omar Rafael García Lazo, the first secretary of Cuba's embassy in Bogota, of breaching the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations, without adding further details. - [Nasdaq on 07-MAY](#)
- Colombia's President Ivan Duque has begun meetings with civil society groups and political opponents who want action taken on poverty and unemployment and an end to police violence, in an effort to calm protests after more than 20 deaths. - [Reuters on 07-MAY](#)
- Colombian President Ivan Duque says he will withdraw a proposed tax reform after deadly protests and widespread lawmaker opposition, though he insisted a reform is still necessary to ensure fiscal stability. - [RNZ on 03-MAY](#)
- Colombia's finance minister resigned and the country's currency, bonds and stock markets fell after President Ivan Duque withdrew a tax reform proposal seen as important for fiscal stability. - [Reuters on 03-MAY](#)
- State media reports Venezuela's armed forces said that they are deploying more troops to the state of Apure on the border with Colombia, which has seen heavy clashes between the army and Colombian irregular armed groups. According to a statement issued by Operational Strategic Commander Remigio Ceballos, the incoming troops will execute "operations to combat and expel" armed groups coming from Colombia. - [Andalou Agency on 28-APR](#)

- On April 3, Colombian Minister of Defense Diego Molano accused Venezuela of acting as an “accomplice” of Colombian narco-trafficking groups in heavy confrontations that have forced thousands of people to cross the border and take refuge in Colombia. - [Diálogo Américas on 27-APR](#)

PERU ELECTIONS

- In Apurimac there is a radical and very dangerous group for the country, Inkarrri Islam, which until recently had Edwar Quiroga Vargas as its director. This character is the leader of the Islamic movement in Peru, little known by television media, but is very influential in mining areas. He has turned Islamism into a political platform. On several occasions, Quiroga has staged violent protests against mining. - [Peru 21 on 26-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Peruvian citizen Oscar Balladares and lawyers Lucas Gherzi and Fernando Pickmann requested the Ombudsman, Walter Gutiérrez Camacho, to initiate actions to require the dissolution of the Free Peru political party. - [Expreso on 25-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- At least 14 people, including two children, have been killed by a splinter group of the Shining Path rebel group, in a brutal attack on a remote jungle hamlet, according to Peru’s military. - [The Guardian on 24-MAY](#)
- The leader of Peru Libre and head of presidential candidate Pedro Castillo, Vladimir Cerrón, has pending accounts with the courts. Cerrón has been convicted of acts of corruption when he was regional governor of Junín, but he also faces other criminal proceedings. In addition to the nine tax accusations, as reported by Peru21, he has an ongoing investigation for money laundering for acts committed during his first term (2011-2014). - [Peru 21 on 24-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The congressman elected by Peru Libre and prosecuted for terrorism, Guillermo Bermejo, sent a notarized letter to two executives and two journalists from Willax demanding retraction for false claims. They are Enrique Luna Victoria (general manager), Antonio Hume Hurtado (director), Humberto Ortiz and Augusto Thorndike. - [Expreso on 23-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Vladimir Cerrón is the main advisor to Pedro Castillo, who allegedly has ties to the Shining Path. In an interview, Edwar Quiroga claims that Cerrón and Castillo are connected to Evo Morales and the Shining Path. - [Willax Televisión on 21-MAY](#)
- Benedicto Jiménez, head of the Special Intelligence Group (Gein), which captured the Shining Path leader Abimael Guzmán, said that Pedro Castillo will never distance himself with Vladimir Cerrón, nor with Movadef and nor with Shining Path. He warned that, according to intelligence reports, in the face of an eventual victory for Keiko Fujimori, the Peru Libre candidate has ordered protests to be generated in the streets. - [Red de Comunicación Regional on 19-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- After the disclosure of the audios, broadcast by Peru21, in which the Shining Path invokes not to vote for Keiko Fujimori and threatens to boycott the second round of elections, the alarms of the interference of the terrorist group in the elections were set off June 6. In the recordings, ‘Comrade Vilma’, a terrorist command, makes an aggressive call not to vote for Popular Force and speaks with absolute certainty of the socialist victory. - [Peru 21 on 12-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Keiko Fujimori, the presidential candidate of Fuerza Popular, responded to former Bolivian President Evo Morales, who expressed his support for the presidential nomination of Pedro Castillo, from Peru Libre, and asked him not to “get involved” in Peru's electoral campaign. - [Milenio on 20-APR \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The former president of Bolivia, Evo Morales, expressed his “respect and admiration” for the Peruvian candidate, Pedro Castillo, favorite in the polls for the second round of the presidential election on June 6, ahead of the right-wing Keiko Fujimori. - [Milenio on 20-APR \(content in Spanish\)](#)

BOLIVARIAN NETWORK

- The Governments of Chile and Bolivia held a new round of talks in Ecuador to advance in the normalization of their bilateral relations. “I met with colleague Andrés Allamand and we agreed that constructive dialogue is the ideal instrument to strengthen ties according to the 2021 road map,” Bolivian Foreign Minister Rogelio Mayta Mayta wrote on Twitter. - [MercoPress on 25-MAY](#)
- The trafficking of narcotics and people in the hemisphere are challenges that the United States Southern Command must take on together with allied countries of the region. This was announced by high military commanders to the Voice of America. According to Admiral Craig Faller, head of the Southern Command, nations such as Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina and Chile are his strongest allies in the fight against the core challenges facing the region after China. - [Voice of America on 21-MAY](#)
- Chile, Latin America’s most successful economy in recent decades, made a sharp turn to the left in the May 16 elections for members of an assembly that will draft a new Constitution. Independent leftists and the Communist Party were among the largest minorities elected to the 155-seat body and will have a veto power in drafting the country’s new charter. - [McClatchy DC on 19-MAY](#)
- The release of a U.S. government list labeling 17 Central American politicians as corrupt prompted El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele to praise China, and its congress to ratify a 2019 cooperation agreement with the country. - [Reuters on 19-MAY](#)
- On May 6, the Organization of American States (OAS) issued a statement expressing “*extreme concern*” at the recent approval of electoral reforms and election of the

Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) by Nicaragua's legislature. - [LatinNews Daily on 07-MAY](#)

- The Movement for Socialism (MAS) Party appointed former Minister of Justice Hector Arce Zaconeta as Bolivia's new ambassador to the Organization of American States (OAS). - [Los Tiempos on 03-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Starting Monday, May 24, Bolivian citizens will not require a visa to enter Mexico, according to President Luis Arce in his social media accounts. - [El Deber on 03-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- There's a new VIP vaccination scandal in Latin America. Paraguayan Senator Mirte Gusinky was vaccinated without being within the qualified age rank, then denied having done so. Now, in the face of evidence, she sent a note to the president of Congress trying to explain why. - [Infobae on 03-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Argentine government said it will build a cargo terminal in Puerto Las Palmas, on the Paraguay river, in the northern Argentine province of Chaco. According to official sources, it is expected to advance in the next 90 days with the public tender to start the construction of the port terminal on the Paraná-Paraguay river waterway, key to regional foreign trade. - [Diario Libre on 29-APR \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Uruguay formally unveiled a proposal to its Mercosur partners that would make the trade negotiations more flexible and allow each country to enter into agreements unilaterally with third parties. According to the draft document released by the Foreign Ministry in Montevideo, the proposal would allow member states, under some conditions, to initiate negotiations "either as a group or individually." - [Buenos Aires Times on 26-APR](#)
- State media reports as part of an official visit to the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Venezuela's Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza held a fraternal meeting with former President and indigenous leader Evo Morales in Cochabamba. - [Venezuelan Government Press Release on 24-APR](#)
- On April 18, Mexico's ruling left-wing Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (Morena) announced that it would seek to impeach two councillors on the National Electoral Institute (INE), including its president, for having barred some of the party's candidates from competing in June's midterm federal and state congressional and gubernatorial elections. - [LatinNews Daily on 18-APR](#)

ALEX SAAB

- While his fate is played out in a weary orange office building, home to the Constitutional Court of Praia, on the island of Santiago, Colombian businessman Alex Saab spends his days in a luxurious townhouse on the island of Sal, a tourism mecca of the archipelago. - [Armando Info on 23-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- One of Alex Saab's defense lawyers, Femi Falana, sent a letter to the office of Joe Biden, requesting that he stop the pressure exerted by his administration for the extradition of the Colombian businessman, indicated as a front man of Nicolás Maduro. - [El Tiempo on 21-APR \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Republic of Cape Verde, has asked the Community Court of Justice (the ECOWAS Court), to set aside its judgment delivered on March 15, 2021, which declared the arrest of Alex Saab as illegal and also ordered that he should be immediately released. - [Vanguard on 06-MAY](#)