



BOLIVARIAN THREAT NETWORK

May & June 2022

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 & June 2022. 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.



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- Delegates from the Maduro regime and the opposition will both attend the Oslo Forum this week, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry said, offering hope that talks between the two parties will resume. Maduro's government withdrew from talks with the opposition last October after just two months. - [U.S. News on 20-JUN](#)
- The US removed Carlos Erik Malpica Flores, a former national treasurer and vice president of Venezuela's state oil company, from the list of Specially Designated Nationals, a move Biden officials pledged after a March meeting with Maduro aimed at coaxing him back to negotiations with political opponents. Malpica Flores, the nephew of Maduro's wife, Cilia Flores, was sanctioned in July of 2017 along with 12 other Venezuelans. - [BNN Bloomberg on 17-JUN](#)
- A former top lawyer of Venezuela's oil ministry who played a central role in a \$1.2 billion money-laundering scheme fueled by government corruption was sentenced to more than four years in prison by a Miami federal judge — punishment that was less than half of what prosecutors sought for the ex-foreign official, Carmelo Urdaneta Aqui. - [Miami Herald on 16-JUN](#)
- The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has published its latest monthly oil market report, in which Venezuela claimed to have produced 735,000 barrels of crude per day (bpd) in May, down from 775,000 bpd in April. - [LatinNews Daily on 15-JUN](#)
- João Pedro Fins do Lago, Portugal's ambassador in Caracas said that Lisbon will be taking every opportunity to deepen bilateral relations with Venezuela, saying "Portugal, a country deeply attached to multilateralism, the promotion of human rights, democracy, respect for the rule of law, political pluralism and individual freedoms, is committed to deepening relations with Venezuela, taking advantage of every opportunity that may arise in the near future." - [Portugal Resident on 14-JUN](#)
- The Biden administration excluded the authoritarian leaders of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua from the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, but voices from those three nations have been heard throughout the week in events where activists denounced the suppression of individual freedoms and the circumstances of hundreds of political prisoners. - [Charlotte Observer on 09-JUN](#)
- Fernandez's final words were also for the US president. "President Biden, I'm here trying to build bridges and bring down walls. As president of CELAC, I want to invite you to participate in our next plenary meeting. I dream of the Americas fraternally united, we commit ourselves to all human beings inhabiting our continent having the right to bread, land, housing and a decent job." - [Buenos Aires Times on 09-JUN](#)
- State media reports two world figures under Western sanctions were guests at the same building in Ankara. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Maduro both arrived at Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan's presidential palace within hours of each other but, according to Maduro, they did not meet. Lavrov, who faces restrictions from several

countries on his travel due to sanctions over Russia's war against Ukraine, was in Ankara for a meeting with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu. - [Al-Monitor on 09-JUN](#)

- Venezuela's state-run PDVSA began switching most oil sales to prepayment, requiring spot cargo buyers to pay in full before tankers can set sail after several recent defaults. The new payment terms, first communicated in April to companies intermediating in the oil sales, sharply reduced May oil exports and left tanks storing the country's flagship crude grade near full capacity. - [Reuters on 08-JUN](#)
- Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido will speak to President Biden over the phone during the Summit of the Americas this week, US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Brian Nichols said. Guaido, who the White House recognizes as Venezuela's interim president, will not attend the summit in person. - [Reuters on 07-JUN](#)
- Venezuela's Maduro praised the "courage and clarity" of Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador for choosing not to attend this week's Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles. Maduro said Washington's decision to not invite himself or the leaders of Cuba and Nicaragua "was an act of discrimination." - [Reuters on 06-JUN](#)
- State media reports Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro said Argentina's president would represent all those countries excluded from the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, California. "Alberto Fernández will be the voice of Venezuela at the Summit of the Americas," said Maduro, who added the Celac pro tempore president will also be representing Cuba and Nicaragua, who were not invited due to the antidemocratic tint of their governments. - [Merco Press on 06-JUN](#)
- Italy's Eni and Spain's Repsol will get the green light to start shipping Venezuelan crude to Europe from next month, Reuters has reported. The sources cited a letter written by the US State Department to Eni and Repsol, signaling that Washington's firm stance on Venezuelan sanctions may not be so firm after all now that its strategic partners in Europe are facing a shortage of crude because of sanctions against Russia. - [OilPrice on 06-JUN](#)
- Venezuela's government is quietly rolling back a decades-long policy of subsidizing electricity, water, gas, and road tolls to shore up fiscal accounts, shifting the costs to businesses and individuals long accustomed to cheap utilities. Across the South American country, light and water bills are rising. Tolls have been reinstated in several states. Gasoline stations are increasingly charging US dollars. - [BNN Bloomberg on 01-JUN](#)
- The death of the head of the Farc dissidents, Miguel Botache Santillana, alias Gentil Duarte, was confirmed through a statement. Duarte decided to withdraw from the peace process and return to criminality in 2016. He died Wednesday, May 4, in Venezuelan territory and, according to the statement, there was an explosion in the camp where Gentil Duarte was staying with his girlfriend. - [La Semana on 31-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- Venezuela's state-run PDVSA has ordered over a hundred stations to begin selling diesel in dollars, reducing a subsidy that had allowed truckers and public transportation drivers to fill their tanks almost for free. Venezuela had set a diesel retail price of \$0.50 per liter in late 2021 for some stations but a parallel system in local currency continued working, allowing most drivers to access the subsidy. - [Reuters on 30-MAY](#)
- A new neoliberal reality has emerged in the Chavist nation through the use of the US dollar, state controls being lifted and a new relationship with Washington. The use of the dollar as everyday currency, the lifting of price controls and tariff-free imports have changed the reality under which Venezuelans previously attempted to subsist. - [El País on 26-MAY](#)
- Venezuela's main state-owned bank announced it will offer up to 10% of its capital in the local stock market, after Maduro allowed the partial opening of public companies to raise funds. As part of the economic policy shift to relax controls, Maduro said on May 11 that between 5% and 10% of the shares of state-owned industries like telephone companies and mixed oil companies would be opened to national and foreign investors. Caracas-based Banco de Venezuela, which was nationalized by the government in 2009 and sanctioned by the United States in 2019, said in a statement it will initiate a public offering of 5% to 10% of its share capital. - [Reuters on 25-MAY](#)
- The Venezuelan government is unwilling to resume negotiations with the country's opposition on issues such as free elections and lifting economic sanctions if Norway acts as facilitator as it did last year at talks in Mexico. The Maduro regime has recently insisted on Russia's presence at any negotiations. - [Reuters on 25-MAY](#)
- A tanker carrying about 1 million barrels of Iranian heavy crude arrived in recent days in Venezuelan waters for delivery to the country's largest refinery, according to a shipping report seen by Reuters and vessel tracking data. - [Reuters on 23-MAY](#)
- Venezuela's government and opposition say they are ready to restart talks in Mexico aimed at resolving the country's political crisis. It comes as the US agreed to ease some sanctions against Caracas. US officials said the move, which was taken in close collaboration with opposition leaders, was designed to entice Maduro back to the negotiating table and would include easing sanctions against some Venezuelan officials. - [BBC News on 18-MAY](#)
- The US will ease some sanctions on Venezuela in exchange for continued dialogue between Maduro and the opposition, the Biden administration announced. The sanctions relief allows Chevron Corp to negotiate the terms of its license and potential future activities with Venezuela's state-owned oil company, PDVSA. - [NBC News on 17-MAY](#)
- The Venezuelan opposition faction backed by the US announced plans to hold a primary contest next year to choose a presidential candidate for the planned 2024 election. The Unitary Platform said in a statement that it has reshaped into a "broad and inclusive" organization with clear rules and areas of concrete work. - [Daily Mail on 16-MAY](#)

- State media reports Venezuela is ready to reopen the commercial border with Colombia and the consulates, the governor of the western Venezuelan state of Táchira, Freddy Bernal, said. According to the governor, the reopening will improve both nations since the economic relations between the Colombian department of Norte de Santander and Táchira are historical and both regions depend on each other. - [TeleSUR on 12-MAY](#)

BOLIVARIAN THREAT NETWORK

- On 25 June, Ecuador's national assembly began debating an impeachment motion against President Guillermo Lasso, which argues that he is responsible for the protests declared on June 13 by the indigenous organization Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Conaie). - [LatinNews Daily on 27-JUNE](#)
- President Guillermo Lasso says he is ready to negotiate an end to the nine-day anti-government strike but the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (Conaie) says it won't talk until new demands are met. - [Cuenca Highlife on 22-JUN](#)
- On June 21, El Salvador's legislature extended for a further 30 days the state of emergency first implemented by President Nayib Bukele's Nuevas Ideas (NI) government on March 27 to address gang-related violence. - [LatinNews Daily on 22-JUN](#)
- In Peru, Law No. 31494, gives credence to the creation of paramilitary forces. The law gives civil groups called "self-defense committees," functions that the Constitution reserves for the National Police of Peru (PNP), empowering them to receive firearms and ammunition owned by the State. - [El Montonero on 17-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves is facing widespread criticism after announcing on June 14 that he was nearly doubling the salaries of his cabinet ministers and deputy ministers. - [LatinNews Daily on 16-JUN](#)
- The president of Paraguay, Mario Abdo Benítez, invited Bolivia to be part of the bi-oceanic corridor during the commemoration of the 87th anniversary of the cessation of hostilities in the Chaco War held in Villa Montes, Tarija. During his speech, the Paraguayan president invited the Bolivian president, Luis Arce, to participate in the meeting that the leaders of Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Chile will hold in the coming months to discuss the route of the highway that will link part of the region from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. - [Rio Times online on 15-JUN](#)
- Indigenous groups have blocked key roads across Ecuador in protest against the government's economic policies. Some 20 roadblocks have been set up in 11 Ecuadorian provinces, local media report, partly cutting off access to the capital Quito. The protesters' list of demands includes reducing the cost of fuel and price caps on agricultural goods. Ecuador is currently grappling with rising levels of inflation, unemployment, and poverty. - [BBC News on 14-JUN](#)

- An important announcement was made by President Gabriel Boric together with his Argentine counterpart, Alberto Fernández, in the context of the ninth version of the Summit of the Americas, held in Los Angeles, on energy exchange. As of June this year, Argentina will export natural gas to Chile. This gas supplies the Pacific Gas Pipeline that covers the Biobío and Ñuble regions, covering the cities of Chillán, Los Ángeles and Concepción. There are 300,000 cubic meters of natural gas that will enter daily during this year and until September 30, 2023. - [BNAmericas on 13-JUN](#)
- The production of the Margarita 10 well exceeded 2.7 million cubic meters per day, reported Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB), which with the new volumes foresees a recategorization of proven reserves. - [El Deber on 13-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- A Bolivian court found former President Jeanine Añez guilty of orchestrating a coup that brought her to power during a 2019 political crisis. She was sentenced to 10 years in prison. A former military commander and ex-police general were also convicted. Añez, 54, was convicted of making “decisions contrary to the constitution” and of “dereliction of duty.” - [Reuters on 10-JUN](#)
- According to information from the Colombian Defense Ministry, Alias Pirry, a leader of the ELN guerrilla group, AKA Felipe Alcocer Alvarino, but escaped from justice with false documents in the name of Wilfredo Vásquez Castrillón, was killed in a military operation in the village of La Honda de Morales, in the Bolivar department. - [Infobae on 08-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Dominican Republic's minister of environment and natural resources has been shot and killed in his office by a close personal friend, officials say. Orlando Jorge Mera, 55, was holding a meeting at the time of the attack. At least six shots were heard. A presidential spokesman identified the assailant as Miguel Cruz, describing him as a childhood friend of the minister. - [BBC News on 07-JUN](#)
- State media reports Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou addressed public security and replied to criticism from opposition left-wing party Frente Amplio (Broad Front). At an annual assembly agrarian society in western Montevideo, the president said that “we should not be obtuse and say that everything is fine because it is a fallacy that no one would believe”. - [Merco Press on 06-JUN](#)
- The former Minister of Productive Development Matías Kulfas presented to President Alberto Fernández the formal resignation, after the head of state asked him to do so after considering “ethically reprehensible” – the dissemination of an “off” report on the bidding process for the Néstor Kirchner gas pipeline. - [Infobae on 06-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- State media reports Paraguayan President Mario Abdo Benítez welcomed his Argentine counterpart Alberto Fernández in Ayolas, 305 kilometers from Asunción, to attend a

series of events involving joint undertakings in energy production. Both heads of state were joined by Ayolas Mayor Carlos Duarte; and by the Executive Directors of the Yacyretá Binational Entity, Nicanor Duarte Frutos -the former Paraguayan President- and Fernando De Vido. - [MercoPress on 31-MAY](#)

- Argentine President Alberto Fernandez sent a pointed message to his Uruguayan counterpart Luis Lacalle Pou at the end of the Mercosur summit implying that nations should leave the regional trade bloc if they no longer wish to be a part of it, defending the right member countries should have to cut their own trade deals. It was unclear if he was implying Argentina would leave the bloc, or if he believed other members should leave. - [Buenos Aires Times on 27-MAY](#)
- Gangs are fighting each other and seizing territory in the capital of Port-au-Prince with a new intensity and brutality. The violence has horrified many who feel the country is swiftly unraveling as it tries to recover from the July 7 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse and the United Nations prepares to debate the future of its longtime presence in Haiti. - [Associated Press on 22-MAY](#)
- On May 19, Paraguay's President Mario Abdo Benítez hosted Colombia's Vice President Marta Lucía Ramírez, who offered her country's full support and cooperation to get to the bottom of the recent murder of Paraguay's special prosecutor against organised crime, Marcelo Pecci, on a Colombian beach while on honeymoon. - [LatinNews Daily on 20-MAY](#)
- Honduran authorities arrested accused cartel leader Herlinda Bobadilla, following an extradition request for her and her sons by the US. Police arrested Bobadilla after an "intense confrontation," during which her son Tito Montes Bobadilla was killed, according to a tweet by National Police Commissioner Gustavo Sanchez Velasquez. - [Reuters on 15-MAY](#)
- Honduras extradited former police chief Juan Carlos Bonilla Valladares, alias El Tigre, to the US to face drug trafficking charges similar to those ex-President Juan Orlando Hernández was accused of several weeks ago. Prosecutors accuse him of conspiring to import cocaine into the United States and related weapons offenses involving the use and possession of machine guns and destructive devices. - [OCCRP on 13-MAY](#)
- On May 12, Peru's Prime Minister Aníbal Torres, Energy & Mining Minister Carlos Sabino Palacios, and Labour Minister Betssy Chávez, were all summoned before congress and put on notice of likely impeachment attempts. - [LatinNews Daily on 13-MAY](#)
- On May 10, five deputies from the far-left Perú Libre (PL), which is closely allied with President Pedro Castillo, announced that they were leaving the party, amid signs that the number of PL resignations could rise to ten. - [LatinNews Daily on 11-MAY](#)
- Rodrigo Chaves began a four-year term as Costa Rica's president, taking office with a lengthy list of reproaches for his predecessor and the country's political class while

promising great change. Shortly after being given the ceremonial presidential sash by outgoing President Carlos Alvarado Quesada, Chaves lashed out at the state of the nation he has been left to lead, complaining of the high cost of living, crime, drug trafficking and long lines at social security offices. - [ABC News on 08-MAY](#)

COLOMBIA ELECTIONS

- Colombia's president-elect Gustavo Petro said he had been in contact with Venezuelan authorities to discuss fully reopening the shared border, which has been closed for the past seven years. - [La Prensa Latina on 22-JUN](#)
- Former M-19 rebel Gustavo Petro won Colombia's runoff presidential election Sunday with 50.5% of the vote. His opponent, businessman Rodolfo Hernández, received 47.3%. The rest of the votes were either left intentionally blank or annulled by electoral authorities. - [Wall Street Journal on 20-JUN](#)
- Latin America has taken another leftward turn, this as Gustavo Petro was elected president of Colombia, Sunday, making history as the country's first leftist elected to be president. The shift left, analysts claim, could be yet another foreign policy headache for the Biden administration. - [Fox News on 20-JUN](#)
- On May 31, the Colombian pollster Centro Nacional de Consultoría (CNC) published a survey showing populist presidential candidate Rodolfo Hernández (Liga de Gobernantes Anticorrupción) leading his left-wing rival Gustavo Petro (Pacto Histórico) by 41%-39%, in the first poll of this election cycle to show Petro outside of pole position. - [LatinNews Daily on 01-JUN](#)

BRAZIL ELECTIONS

- US President Biden became concerned that his Brazilian counterpart was going to skip the summit in Los Angeles that he dispatched a close adviser to personally deliver the invitation to Bolsonaro. The gesture was met with a demand, according to three of the Brazilian leader's Cabinet ministers. Bolsonaro said he would attend the Summit of the Americas only if Biden granted him a private meeting. - [Associated Press on 07-JUN](#)
- Brazil is preparing to receive a record number of international observers for its October election, according to electoral authorities and participating organizations, amid a polarized presidential race in which President Jair Bolsonaro has questioned the reliability of electronic voting machines. - [Reuters on 27-MAY](#)
- Elon Musk traveled to Brazil to discuss projects to protect the Amazon rainforest with President Jair Bolsonaro, ministers said, in a boost for the far-right leader who is facing increasing criticism at home and abroad for surging deforestation on his watch. The visit by Musk follows a meeting in November with Brazilian Communications Minister Fabio Faria. They spoke then about using SpaceX technology to bring the internet to rural schools and combat illegal deforestation. - [CNBC on 20-MAY](#)

- Brazil's elections chief warned that the South American country could face a similar assault as the 2021 US Capitol riot amid growing attacks on its democratic institutions ahead of October's presidential election. - [Reuters on 17-MAY](#)
- Former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva retains a 14-percentage-point lead against far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro if an October election goes to a run-off between them as expected, a new opinion poll showed. Bolsonaro has gained ground, however, with approval of his government rising more than 4 percentage points to about 30%, according to the survey by pollster MDA. - [U.S. News on 10-MAY](#)