



## MAY & JUNE 2022

The VRIC Monitor is a one-of-a-kind, monthly report from the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS) tracking extra-regional influence in Latin America. VRIC stands for Venezuela, Russia, Iran, China where Venezuela represents the Bolivarian Revolution and the broader Bolivarian Threat Network. Likewise, Iran represents the Iranian Revolution and the Iranian Threat Network in Latin America, to include its chief proxy, Hezbollah. The monitor consists of open source information selected by SFS analysts. This is not a complete list of media reports on VRIC presence in Latin America, but a snapshot of open-source media highlighting the major areas of VRIC influence.

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Disclaimer: The VRIC Monitor does source a limited amount of media reports from state-owned or -controlled media outlets from VRIC nations. These media reports are carefully selected and solely intended to report on cultural, diplomatic, economic, or military activities that are not reported on by other media and relevant for understanding VRIC influence in the region. Given the inevitability that state propaganda will be mixed into these articles, we ensure that reporting from state-media outlets is no more than 25 percent of the overall VRIC Monitor and exclude any opinion pieces or anti-US (anti-West) declarations of any kind.

## OVERVIEW

Gustavo Petro's victory in Colombia's presidential election on June 19 consolidates the gains the Latin American left has made in recent years. Despite distancing themselves from Petro during his campaign, congratulations poured in from some of the most autocratic corners of the region. Starting with Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro and Diosdado Cabello who stated, only minutes after Petro won, that "united, we'll be victorious." President-elect Petro has since declared his intention of reopening Colombia's border with Venezuela and renewing relations with the Maduro regime.

President Petro may not outright join the regional club of authoritarian states, known as the Bolivarian Alliance or "ALBA" at the onset but he certainly shares their worldview. Under the banner of "peace" Petro is already setting the stage to provide incentives to criminal and terrorist groups in Colombia, such as the ELN, to sign a peace deal that will likely result in neither peace nor justice. And can further blend the formal agricultural sector with the illicit economy of cocaine.

All eyes will be on Bogota on August 7 when Gustavo Petro is inaugurated as Colombia's next president. Meanwhile, across the border, Venezuela will be prepping to host a competition in the International Army Games, Russia's largest multinational military exercise. Even though Russia is still at war with Ukraine, part of its military is prepping to bring, for the first time, some of these military games to the Western Hemisphere.

**In mid-August, Venezuela will host the "Sniper Frontier" competition with the participation of Russia, Iran, and China's military, as well as at least 10 other nations. In a strategic move that seeks to preposition forward-deployed military assets in Latin America and the Caribbean, the VRIC nations are getting ready to make a loud statement that the region is ready to embrace the multipolar force. This was recently highlighted in Vladimir Putin's speech in St. Petersburg on June 17 at the International Economic Forum:**

"A year and half ago, speaking at the Davos forum, I once again emphasized that the era of the unipolar world order is over.... despite all of the attempts to save it, to preserve it by any means possible. When they won the Cold War, the US declared themselves God's own representatives on earth, people who have no responsibilities — only interests. They seemingly have not noticed that new powerful centers have arisen and are getting louder and louder."

This was echoed on June 22, when President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China followed suit at the 14<sup>th</sup> BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China) Business Forum held in Beijing, appealing to its members to unite against an increasingly unipolar world. Days later, on June 27, Argentina and Iran submitted applications to join the BRICS group, which is a sign that the VRIC is expanding.



Nicolás Maduro was not invited to the 9th Summit of the Americas on June 6-10 held in the Los Angeles Convention Center, however, his regional allies ensured a message was sent. From Argentine President Alberto Fernández attending on the condition that Juan Guaidó was disinvited to Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador snuffing the summit all together. It appears a concerted effort was made by certain Latin American leaders to delegitimize the OAS-led summit and prop up the China-supported CELAC. Evidenced by Alberto Fernandez inviting President Joe Biden to the next CELAC meeting and Maduro congratulating Fernandez from Tehran.

Across the Atlantic, Maduro was on a two-week, six-country Eurasia and Middle East tour starting with his trip to Istanbul on June 7. **Boosting economic ties in oil and gas, gold, mining, and tourism sectors with Turkey, Maduro extended this cooperation to Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, and Azerbaijan, culminating with a 20-year strategic deal signed with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The strategic deal between Iran and Venezuela is meant to mirror similar strategic agreements that the Islamic Republic signed with China and Russia in recent years.**

After Maduro returned to Venezuela on June 18, the Conviasa government plane YV3533 returned to Iran where the presidential plane YV2984 flew to St. Petersburg, Russia. The movement of several Conviasa planes, some leased from the Iranian airline Mahan Air, prompted suspicion when a Boeing 747 cargo plane from the new Venezuelan airline Emtrasur Cargo touched down in Ezeiza International Airport in Buenos Aires. The cargo plane was subsequently grounded on June 8, while other Conviasa/Mahan Air planes continued flying between Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, Chile, Bolivia, and Peru.

In Peru, a new law was passed in mid-June allowing for armed, auto-defense groups to be established prompting concern for future “colectivos” similar to those in Venezuela and Cuba. While in Bolivia, in mid-May, the former Venezuelan minister of prisons and current legislator, Iris Varela, took a trip to the coca-growing heartland, Chapare, for meetings with Evo Morales and then was denied entry into Argentina on May 12 because she is on a prohibited ITAR list adopted in 2019.

In Ecuador, although the state of emergency was lifted as President Guillermo Lasso entered into talks with the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE), after more than two weeks of violent protests in 11 provinces throughout the country— he could now face an impeachment proceeding sparked by his political opponents. The protests were accompanied by more than 20 roadblocks that caused food and fuel shortages in Ecuador prompting the political party linked to former President Rafael Correa to motion to remove Lasso from the presidency.

- 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 Guaidó 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. Guaidó, 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 Andrés Manuel López 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 Pais 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 Bolívar 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](#)

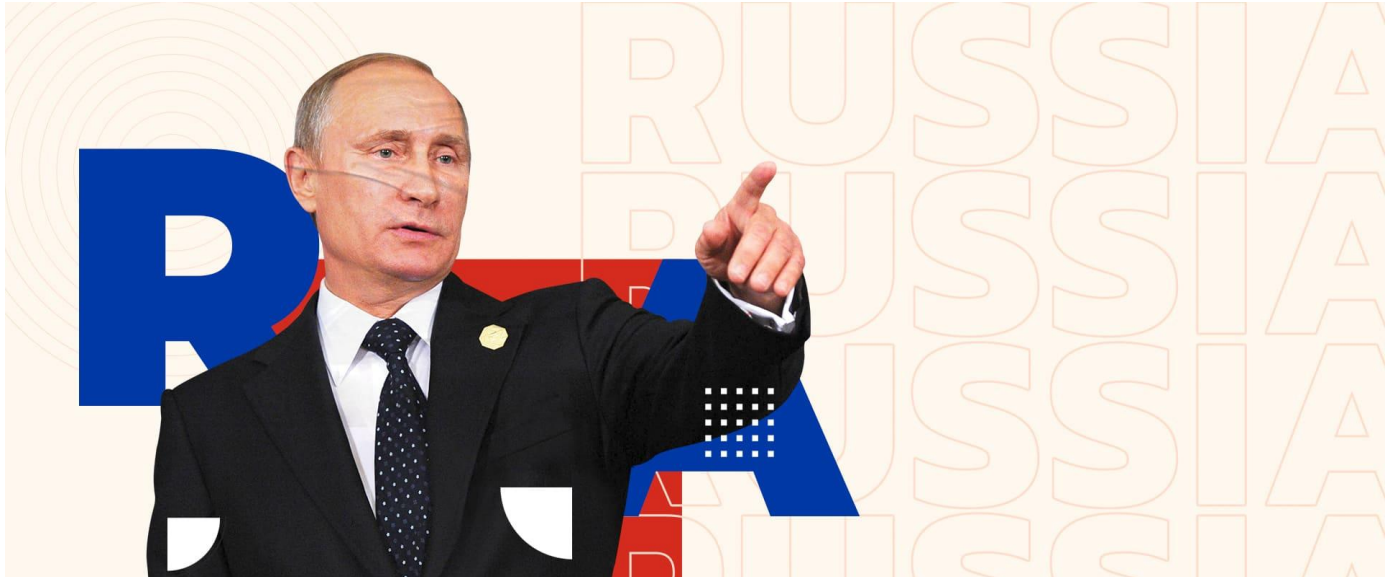
## COLOMBIA ELECTIONS

- 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](#)



**During the Summit of the Americas, and in the midst of the Ukraine War, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua renewed Decree 10-2022 authorizing Russian troops, planes, and ships to patrol the Central American country's borders and conduct joint military training exercises.** Nicaragua's National Assembly approved the measure that, aside from Russia, allows seven Latin American countries and the United States to participate in an "exchange of experiences, training exercises, and humanitarian operations."

Elsewhere in Central America, Conti, the Russia-aligned cyber group, has been wreaking havoc in Costa Rica. In May, Costa Rica declared a national emergency after repeated cyber attacks crippled infrastructure and systems from public health to social security. The Russian hacking group also called for civic unrest, which may come to Costa Rica in light of soaring gas prices, a pandemic-weary tourism industry, and the announcement of salary increases for the cabinet. Further south, Conti also claims to have hacked Peru's National Directorate of Intelligence.

Russia's intelligence operations extend to espionage when it was discovered that an alleged agent of Russia's GRU military intelligence used a false identity as a Brazilian national to try and obtain an internship at the International Criminal Court (ICC). It appears that the Russian agent, Sergey Vladimirovich Cherkasov, had been cultivating his cover as a Brazilian national for years and may not have been working alone.

In February 2020, a Mexican scientist was arrested for spying on a FBI informant in Miami for Russia. This past week the spy, Hector Cabrera Fuentes, pled guilty in a federal court and was sentenced to more than four years in prison.

- The international community should explore all options to alleviate a Russian squeeze of energy supplies that has spiked prices, including talks with producing nations like Iran and Venezuela, a French presidency official said. - [Reuters on 27-JUN](#)
- There are among hundreds of Russians estimated to have relocated to Latin America in recent months, as a combination of relaxed entry rules and an ambivalence towards western sanctions makes it an increasingly attractive destination. - [Financial Times on 24-JUN](#)
- Nicaragua's finance minister Iván Acosta has announced that a further 300 buses will arrive from Russia following the renewal of economic agreements between Russia and Nicaragua. This follows a bilateral inter-governmental meeting which took place on June 17 between the two governments in Russia in which various cooperation programmes were discussed, including the supply of wheat, vaccines against the coronavirus and fertilizers as well as the possibility of joint investment projects in areas such as infrastructure, agro-industry and renewable energy. - [LatinNews Daily on 24-JUN](#)
- A renowned Mexican scientist who led a double life with two families on separate continents has been sentenced to more than four years in prison for spying for Russia on an FBI informant in Miami. - [New York Post on 23-JUN](#)
- After Gustavo Petro's victory in the elections, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a message to the leader of the Historical Pact congratulating him and highlighting the relations between Colombia and Russia, which, as he mentioned, "traditionally have a friendly character." - [El Tiempo on 22-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Russian president Vladimir Putin used his address at the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg on Friday to sharply denounce the West's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "A year and half ago, speaking at the Davos forum, I once again emphasized that the era of the unipolar world order is over — I want to start with this, it is an inescapable fact. - [National Interest on 18-JUN](#)
- A Russian spy tried and failed to secure an internship at the international criminal court (ICC) using the false identity of a Brazilian citizen that he had built up over more than a decade, according to Dutch intelligence. Sergey Vladimirovich Cherkasov, 36, accused of being an agent of Russia's GRU military intelligence, flew to the Netherlands in April believing he had succeeded in an extraordinary attempt to gain inside access to the war crimes court, using the false identity of Viktor Muller Ferreira, 33. - [The Guardian on 18-JUN](#)
- State media reports Russia is allegedly en route to create a "new G8" in response to its ruptured economic ties with the United States and western allies such as Canada. "The economies of the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, and Canada continue to collapse under the

pressure of sanctions against Russia,” asserted the Duma’s head of state, Vyacheslav Volodin, on Telegram. - [National Post on 15-JUN](#)

- Mexico’s president slammed NATO’s policy on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, calling it “immoral.” President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador did not mention NATO or the United States by name, but his comments were the latest example of his party’s ambiguous stance on the invasion. Mexico has voted to condemn the invasion, but refused to join in sanctions on Russia. - [Globe and Mail on 13-JUN](#)
- The government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega has authorized Russian troops, planes and ships to deploy to Nicaragua for purposes of training, law enforcement or emergency response. Ortega will allow Russian troops to carry out law enforcement duties, “humanitarian aid, rescue and search missions in emergencies or natural disasters.” The Nicaraguan government also authorized the presence of small contingents of Russian troops for “exchange of experiences and training.” - [CBS News on 11-JUN](#)
- A new agreement between Russia and Nicaragua to provide Russian troops for and in Nicaragua represents what Thomas Jefferson called a “fire bell in the night.” But the importance of this agreement goes much further. It marks the first significant appearance of Russian forces in Central America, an appearance that promises to be important because it has the potential to serve as the basis for a more enduring Russian military presence in Nicaragua and beyond. - [The Hill on 11-JUN](#)
- Brazil's Agriculture Minister Marcos Montes said the 2022/23 grain crop is “saved” as Russia is still sending fertilizers to the South American nation. - [Successful Farming on 07-JUN](#)
- Alejandro Zelaya, Treasury minister of El Salvador, explained that the conflict happening currently between Ukraine and Russia has influenced the price of bitcoin on international markets, disrupting it. Due to this disruption, Zelaya also stated that it was not feasible to issue the volcano bonds yet, which are to finance the construction of the Bitcoin City announced last year by President Nayib Bukele. - [Bitcoin.com on 03-JUN](#)
- Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez condemned Russia's “most brutal genocide” in Ukraine, and also warned that other autocracies are interested in disrupting democracies around the world, in order to attack and dismantle values that make democracies strong. - [Fox News on 03-JUN](#)
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine has limited the supply of the key agricultural supplement throughout Latin America. Some 80 percent of the 180,000 metric tons of fertilizers used annually in Venezuela are imported, mostly from Russia but also from Ukraine and Belarus, according to the Fedegro union of agricultural producers. “Thank God we managed to buy Russian fertilizers in business talks in October and November, paid in December and they were able to arrive in February and March,” said Celso Fantinel, the Fedegro president. - [Buenos Aires Times on 20-MAY](#)
- Maduro announced Carlos Faría, who was serving as ambassador to Moscow, is becoming the Latin American nation's new foreign minister. The diplomat's appointment reinforces evidence of



Venezuela's close ties with Russia after the two nations' leaders discussed their shared fears about the threats posed by the United States and NATO and the conflict in Ukraine over the phone in March. - [Express on 19-MAY](#)

- The west must not backslide into aiding Nicolás Maduro, or it will hand victory to an autocratic alliance led by Vladimir Putin and weaken the democratic cause in Europe and Venezuela, the country's deputy foreign minister, Isadora Zubillaga, has warned. A delegation of Venezuelan opposition politicians have been touring Europe in an attempt to reassure the west that despite recent divisions and setbacks, they have a viable strategy to secure new presidential elections. - [The Guardian on 14-MAY](#)
- President Alberto Fernández cast doubt over the worth of economic sanctions against Russia, highlighting their fierce global impact on food and energy prices. Speaking after a bilateral meeting with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin, Argentina's president described Russia's invasion of Ukraine as "immoral" and called on all parties to work towards "a solution to the armed conflict." - [Buenos Aires Times on 11-MAY](#)
- State media reports Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Argentinian President Alberto Fernandez met in Madrid and discussed the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. In a Twitter post, Sanchez said: "Spain and Argentina firmly condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and show our total respect for international legality and the multilateral order." "We can be a stable supplier of energy and also contribute not only raw materials, but also applied biotechnology. We took the first step toward it," the Argentinian president said. Fernandez said they also agreed on the need to promote policies for greater equality and to continue strengthening the Ibero-American agenda. - [Anadolu Agency on 10-MAY](#)

## **BELARUS**

- State media reports Ambassador of Venezuela to Belarus Franklin Ramirez Araque expressed interest in organizing deliveries of agricultural products to the Belarusian market via the Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE) as he visited BUCE's central office as part of a delegation of heads and personnel of foreign diplomatic missions. - [BelTA on 09-JUN](#)
- State media reports Belarus and Venezuela have agreed to cooperate to promote bilateral trade. Director of the National Center for Marketing and Price Study Nikolai Borisevich met with Ambassador of Venezuela to Belarus Franklin Ramirez Araque. The Venezuelan diplomat was shown the possibilities of the center to intensify bilateral cooperation. - [BelTA on 13-MAY](#)

## **COSTA RICA CYBER ATTACKS**

- As consumed as Russia is with trying to overpower Ukraine, the Kremlin has still found time and talent to launch an all-out cyberwar against Costa Rica — the rain-forested Central American nation with a population just over 5 million, and no army, navy, air force or heavy weapons. - [NewsMax on 21-JUN](#)
- For two months now, Costa Rica has been reeling from unprecedented ransomware attacks disrupting everyday life in the Central American nation. It's a situation raising questions about the

United States' role in protecting friendly nations from cyberattacks when Russian-based criminal gangs are targeting less developed countries in ways that could have major global repercussions. - [NBC News on 17-JUN](#)

- Costa Rica's public health service, known as the Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS), has been forced to take its systems offline after being hit by Hive ransomware. In a statement on Twitter, the CCSS said the attack started early on Tuesday morning on May 31 and that an investigation was being conducted. In an address to local media, the CCSS added that the Hive ransomware was deployed on at least 30 out of 1,500 government servers and that any estimation of time to recovery remains unknown. - [TechCrunch on 01-JUN](#)
- The Costa Rican government declared a state of emergency on May 8, following cyberattacks by the Russian Conti ransomware gang "on more than 20 public institutions and more than a dozen high-profile private institutions," Esteban Jiménez, chief technology officer of the Costa Rican cybersecurity firm Atticyber, told *Diálogo*. The Ministry of Finance's digital services have been down since April 18. - [Diálogo Américas on 27-MAY](#)
- The number of Costa Rican institutions hit in a wave of cyber attacks in the past month has grown to 27, President Rodrigo Chaves said, in one of the earliest challenges to face the new leader during his first month in office. He added that nine of the institutions struck, mostly government agencies, are considered "very affected." - [Reuters on 16-MAY](#)



Alarm bells rang throughout the region on June 8 after Uruguay denied its air space to a Venezuelan cargo plane that was discovered to have members of the Qods Force, the elite unit of Iran's revolutionary guards, on board. **Gholamreza Ghasemi, a known weapons trafficker for the IRGC and manager of Qeshm Fars Air, was piloting the Boeing 747-300M that returned to Buenos Aires along with four other Iranian nationals and 14 Venezuelans.** The plane, which was reportedly transporting "auto-parts" for

Volkswagen, the German car maker, was grounded at the Ezeiza International Airport while the flight crew remained at Hotel Plaza Canning, outside Buenos Aires. Days later, on June 15, their documents, personnel effects, and electronics were seized by Argentine authorities who discovered images of tanks, missiles, and other pro-IRGC paraphernalia on one of the mobile devices.

The Argentine government tried to minimize the incident, repeating false claims such as that Ghasemi was an homonym and not an IRGC member. But was quickly debunked by the FBI and the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires who confirmed Ghasemi's true identity. Ghasemi also made at least thirteen trips from Iran to Venezuela in the last year and a half, even before the Maduro regime's agreement with Mahan Air began. The identity of the other Iranians on the plane, however, is still a mystery with at least one of them, Mohammad Khosraviragh, an Iraqi national, using what appears to be an alias or false identity as an Iranian.

Elsewhere in Argentina, another Iranian national was picked up by authorities in the Entre Rios province along the border with Uruguay. This individual possessed a fraudulent Venezuelan passport and had a previous history presenting false documents to Argentine migration. This comes as a well-known Argentine journalist, George Chaya, is under police protection after facing possible death threats.

Meanwhile, on June 8, Iran sent the second aframax oil tanker "Yoraco" to Venezuela built by the long-sanctioned, IRGC-affiliated SADRA shipyard. Nicolás Maduro and Ebrahim Raisi provided remarks via a video link during the handover ceremony at the Iranian port-city of Bushehr. Venezuela reportedly has two additional tankers on order from Iran.

One week later, on June 15, a Conviasa plane YV3535 arrived at the Santiago Mariño Caribbean International Airport on Margarita Island, Venezuela with a reported 70 Iranian "tour operators" and "influencers" days after Maduro signed a strategic deal with Iran, and Argentine authorities confirmed that Venezuela's Emtrasur Cargo YV3531 is still owned by Mahan Air.

- Iran has submitted an application to become a member of the group of emerging economies known as the BRICS. Iran's membership in the BRICS group, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, "would result in added values for both sides," Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said. - [Al Jazeera on 28-JUN](#)
- An Iranian citizen with false documentation was detained in Concepción del Uruguay. He was arrested last Thursday, June 23, with different Argentine documents and had already been detained months ago; the circumstances are being investigated by the federal justice of Entre Ríos. - [La Nación on 27-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- A tanker built by an Iranian shipyard for Venezuela plans to depart next month from the Middle Eastern country with a cargo of fuel components for the gasoline-thirsty nation, three sources with knowledge of the deal told Reuters. - [Reuters on 15-JUN](#)
- State media reports Uruguayan lawmakers of the opposition Frente Amplio (FA - Broad Front) announced they would summon Defense Minister Javier García before Congress' Defense Committee to explain why he had banned from national airspace the Venezuelan-Iranian Boeing

747-300 now held in Buenos Aires. FA lawmakers Mario Bergara, Sandra Lazo, and Alejandro Sánchez, who are members of the Defense Committee, argue that the only information they have on the incident was that released through the media. - [MercoPress on 15-JUN](#)

- Venezuela received tour operators and influencers from Iran, in a visit that has as its purpose promote tourism between Caracas and Tehran, according to the tourism minister Ali Padrón. “Compliance with the ‘Implementation Program in Tourism Cooperation between MINTUR and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of the Islamic Republic of Iran 2021-2023’ today they arrive at the island of Margarita 23 Iranian tour operators”, announced the Venezuelan official on his Twitter social network account. - [Zyri on 14-JUNE](#)
- An Iran-flagged tanker carrying about 1 million barrels of crude from the Middle Eastern country arrived in Venezuelan waters over the weekend, according to a shipping document seen by Reuters. The cargo is the third of Iranian crude supplied by Iran's Naftiran Intertrade Co (NICO) to Venezuela's state-run oil firm PDVSA following a supply contract providing the South American nation with lighter crude. Venezuela has been processing the Iranian oil in its refineries. - [Reuters on 13-JUN](#)
- In an elaborate handover ceremony conducted on June 11, Iran reported that it delivered its second domestically built oil tanker. The unnamed vessel which is only referred to in the reports as “Aframax 2” was built in defiance of international sanctions and delivered to Venezuela during a visit by Maduro to Iran. - [Maritime Executive on 13-JUNE](#)
- State media reports direct flights between Tehran and Caracas will start on June 18, the Iranian envoy to Caracas said, adding that no visa will be needed for traveling to the Latin American country. Speaking on the IRIB TV program, the Iranian Ambassador to Venezuela Hojjatollah Soltani hailed that political relations between Tehran and Caracas are at the best possible level. - [Mehr News on 12-JUN](#)
- Iran traded 5,585 tons of non-oil goods worth \$12.75 million with Latin American countries in the first month of the current fiscal year (March 21-April 20), the latest data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration show. Trade with Brazil stood at 5,329 tons worth \$12.26 million, for the Latin American country to top the list of Iran’s partners in the region. - [Financial Tribune on 12-JUN](#)
- State media reports Nicaraguan Ambassador to Iran Isaac Lenin Bravo Jaen made the comments in a meeting with the president of the Tehran-based Iran University of Medical Sciences Abdolreza Pazouki. Isaac Lenin Bravo Jaen said at the meeting, "We seek to expand bilateral cooperation in education, medicine and education of our country's students in Iran." - [Mehr News on 01-JUN](#)
- State media reports Brazilian Ambassador to Iran Laudemar Goncalves de Aguiar Neto said in addition to the agricultural sector, Brazil is developing relations with Iran in petrochemicals, nanotechnology and industry fields. Goncalves de Aguiar Neto made the remarks in a meeting with the CEO of Iran Tractor Manufacturing Industrial Group Mostafa Vahidzadeh. - [IRNA on 31-MAY](#)

- State media reports Iran will own shares in 3 oil refineries in Venezuela and Nicaragua in return for supplying crude and equipment. Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji signed major energy deals with authorities in Venezuela and Nicaragua during his recent visits to the two countries. The agreements signed with Venezuelan energy authorities stipulate that Iran will supply its heavy crude grades to two refineries in Venezuela in addition to providing equipment and technical services to the refineries in return for owning shares in the facilities. Iran will also partner with Venezuela in construction works at an unfinished refinery in Nicaragua in return for owning shares in the 100,000-bpd facility - [Fars News on 31-MAY](#)
- State media reports Iran has exported four million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Venezuela, Iranian Health Minister Bahram Einollahi announced. In a relevant development, Einollahi said that the Iranian and Cuban nations gained self-sufficiency in different fields faced with the US sanctions. Einollahi made the remarks in a meeting with his Cuban counterpart José Angel Portal Miranda on the sidelines of the 75th edition of the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva. - [Fars News on 29-MAY](#)
- Iranian state firms have started preparations to revamp Venezuela's largest oil refinery, the 955,000-barrel-per-day Paraguana Refining Center, four people close to the talks said, following a contract to repair its smallest facility. - [Reuters on 23-MAY](#)
- Conviasa will launch a flight between Caracas (CCS) and Tehran (IKA) every two weeks. The 7,315-mile flight is blocked at 13hr30min in each direction, and is scheduled to be operated by an Airbus A340-300. Conviasa has a single 25-year-old Airbus A340-300, which used to fly for Air China and Cathay Pacific, among other airlines. - [One Mile at a Time on 23-MAY](#)
- State media reports Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi has said that Iran and Cuba enjoy various capacities and should use them to boost their cooperation in different fields such as trade, economy, agriculture, and health. The Iranian president also said that there are grounds for his country's cooperation with Latin American states, adding that the cooperation will help both Iran and those nations achieve economic growth. - [IRNA on 19-MAY](#)
- State media reports Bolivian Ambassador to Iran Guadalupe Pérez Ramon said that Iran's capabilities in vaccine development and treatment are valuable, adding that an example of which was COVIran Barekat that provides good immunity. In her meeting with head of the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) Pirhossein Kolivand, Romina Perez Ramos Ramos said that Bolivia is ready to become a hub in Latin America to provide pharmaceutical and medical services to other countries of the region. - [IRNA on 18-MAY](#)
- An agreement on a barter trade roadmap was signed between Iran and Cuba on the sidelines of a Joint Economic Commission meeting held between the two countries' officials in Tehran. The agreement was signed by Iranian Deputy Industry Minister for Trade Mohammad Sadeq Mofatteh and visiting Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz. The signing ceremony was also participated by senior officials from the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran (TPO). The 18th Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Commission was held in Tehran on May 15-17. - [Fars News on 18-MAY](#)



- State media reports Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iran's foreign minister, has condemned the broad and unilateral sanctions of the U.S. against Iran and Cuba, saying the two nations should use their expertise to oppose the draconian measures. The statements were made during a meeting between Amir Abdollahian and Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, who is in Tehran for the 18th session of the Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Committee. - [Tehran Times on 18-MAY](#)
- A Venezuelan cardiologist who taught himself computer programming sold software that was used by an Iranian hacking group to attack Israeli companies, US prosecutors said in bringing criminal charges against him. Moises Zagala, 55, licensed his software to cybercriminals who deployed it to extort victims for money, according to a complaint filed in federal court in Brooklyn, New York. - [Jerusalem Post on 16-MAY](#)
- Venezuelan oil production is set to get a boost from record inflows of Iranian crude used to improve the quality of the Latin American nation's supplies. Iran has delivered 6.8 million barrels of oil to beleaguered Venezuela this year, a 48% increase over the full-year 2021 figure. Most of the Iranian shipments involved a lightweight type of oil known as condensate that the Venezuelans mix with the local sludgy crude to produce Merey 16, the country's most-exported crude grade. - [BNN Bloomberg on 12-MAY](#)
- A Venezuela-owned tanker in March sailed to a remote spot in the Indian Ocean and met an Iran-flagged vessel, took on a cargo of Iranian condensate and sailed home, according to monitoring services and shipping documents. The ship-to-ship transfer off The Maldives was the latest tactic by the two countries to keep their oil flowing to markets despite U.S. sanctions. The widening energy cooperation between the nations is helping cash-strapped Venezuela obtain supplies to convert its extra heavy oil and boost exports. - [Reuters on 12-MAY](#)
- State media reports Iran will study investing 6,216 million euros (\$6,558 million) in a refinery in Nicaragua, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji announced. The announcement was made during a visit to the El Supremo Somni de Bolívar industrial complex in the Nicaraguan Pacific, where he received information about the refinery's installed capacity. The refinery, located near Puerto Sandino in the Pacific Ocean, will have the capacity to refine 150,000 barrels of crude oil daily, of which Nicaragua will consume 50,000 barrels and the rest will be exported to Central America, according to the government. - [Fars News on 10-MAY](#)
- State media reports Venezuela has begun shipping in heavy crude oil from Iran to use as feedstock in domestic refineries, Reuters reported citing documents from Venezuela's state-run oil company PDVSA. The import of Iranian heavy crude is going to expand the two country's energy cooperation as the two U.S.-sanctioned nations have already agreed on swapping Iran's gas condensate for Venezuela's crude oil. The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) last year reached a deal with PDVSA to swap Venezuelan crude for Iranian condensate, which PDVSA would also use as a diluent and mix it with the tar-like crudes from the Orinoco oil belt for transportation and export. - [Tehran Times on 10-MAY](#)

## MADURO MIDDLE EAST TRIP

- State media reports President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has met in the format of a video conference with Maduro, who is on a working visit to Azerbaijan. During the conversation, the sides highlighted the successful joint activities of the two countries within the framework of international organizations, including the Non-Aligned Movement. - [Trend News Agency on 17-JUN](#)
- State media reports Venezuela is eyeing joint cooperation with Qatar, especially in energy, agriculture and tourism sectors, as the South American country seeks to broaden horizons that serve the common interests of the two countries. This was highlighted by Nicolas Maduro who is leading a high-power delegation of ministers of tourism, transport, agriculture, science and technology, at a meeting with the Qatari Businessmen Association (QBA) in Doha. - [Gulf Times on 16-JUN](#)
- Venezuela's Maduro, announced that direct flights between Caracas and Doha, the capital of Qatar, will begin from October. Maduro's tour of Qatar lasted two days and he is now in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, to discuss the two countries' "bilateral agenda," he said. - [Reuters on 16-JUN](#)
- State media reports Maduro visited Kuwait and spoke with the oil-rich Gulf state's crown prince, as part of a bid to expand on ties between the two countries, who were both part of the original members of the OPEC oil cartel. - [The New Arab on 14-JUN](#)
- State media reports Venezuela First Lady Cilia Adela Flores de Maduro met with Vice President for Woman and Family Affairs Ensiyeh Khazali. The two sides exchanged views on the shared concerns of the two countries' women and some laws related to safeguarding women's rights in the two countries. It was also agreed in the meeting that in the next meeting the Venezuelan culture minister and minister of women's affairs will be present to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU). - [IRNA on 13-JUN](#)
- State media reports Maduro paid a visit to Pardis Technology Park, accompanied by Iran's Vice President for Science and Technology Sorena Sattari and the park's head Mehdi Safarinia. Maduro said after the visit that he was inspired by the park and interested in receiving Iran's help to develop similar technology parks in Venezuela. - [IRNA on 13-JUN](#)
- Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro and Iran's hard-line president signed a 20-year cooperation agreement, a day after Maduro praised the Islamic Republic for sending badly needed fuel to his nation despite U.S. sanctions. In an interview with President Maduro after his arrival in Tehran for a two-day visit, Iranian state media reported that Maduro hailed Iran's move to send fuel tankers to his energy-hungry nation. - [The Blaze on 11-JUN](#)
- Maduro arrived in the Iranian capital of Tehran on a two-day state visit, the country's state-run media reported. A high-ranking political and economic delegation from Venezuela, which like Iran is under heavy U.S. sanctions, is accompanying Maduro on the visit, following an invitation from Iran's hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi. - [Yahoo News on 10-JUN](#)

- Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune hosted Maduro in Algiers. The South American leader arrived in the North African nation, for what Algeria's state news agency called a two-day "working and friendship visit." Both countries agreed to reinforce their economic cooperation. Tebboune announced at a joint press statement that direct flights between Algiers and Caracas would soon be launched. - [Africa News on 10-JUN](#)
- Direct flights between Algiers and Caracas will begin in the coming months, Algeria President Abdelmadjid Tebboune said during a visit by his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro. - [Reuters on 09-JUN](#)

## PLANES

- Strong response from Paraguay to the Iranian regime for the case of the plane: "We will adopt the measures that are necessary for the security of the State." The Foreign Ministry of the South American country rejected Tehran's comments on the heads of the Interior and Intelligence, Federico González and Esteban Aquino, respectively, whom they called "Zionists." - [Infobae on 28-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Paraguayan government replied to the note from the Iranian Embassy stating that the government does not accept or abide by foreign directives and that it will take the necessary measures to "preserve the security of the State and its inhabitants." - [Oscar Acosta on Twitter on 27-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The pilot of the Venezuelan-Iranian plane had made thirteen flights between Caracas and Tehran, before the craft was registered by Conviasa. Justice seeks to reconstruct the history of Gholamreza Ghasemi before his arrival Ezeiza and the confusing links between the airlines of Iran and Venezuela, under the shadow of terrorism. - [Clarín on 27-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The scandal of the Venezuelan-Iranian plane in Paraguay grows: "He had authorization to stay eight hours and stayed three days." In an interview, Senator Enrique Riera demanded to know what the 18 crew members did in Paraguayan territory last May. - [Infobae on 25-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Another Venezuelan plane sanctioned by the US landed at a South American airport. The Conviasa Airbus in Chile that was used by Nicolás Maduro for his recent tour of Turkey, Algeria, Iran, Kuwait, Qatar and Azerbaijan is located at the Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport. - [Infobae on 22-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Iranian pilot Gholamreza Ghasemi had photos of tanks, missiles and a flag repudiating Israel on his cell phone. Also an image in which he is seen when he was young as part of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. The investigation is headed by Judge Federico Villena. - [Infobae on 22-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Argentine Justice will maintain the ban on leaving the country for the crew of the Venezuelan plane and will send a warrant to the United States. These are some of the measures requested by

prosecutor Cecilia Incardona when formally charging the five Iranians and 14 Venezuelans who traveled on the Emtrasur plane. The warrant is to expand the FBI report. - [Infobae on 22-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- The Uruguayan Ministry of Defense released the communication between the pilot of the Venezuelan-Iranian aircraft and the air traffic controller. After the rejection, the flight returned to Argentina where it is stranded while the investigation into the trail of illegal espionage or terrorism progresses. - [Infobae on 21-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Argentine Justice charged the Iranian pilot of a Venezuelan plane stranded in Buenos Aires with terrorism. The Argentine prosecutor Cecilia Incardona asked to investigate the relationship of the pilot of the Emtrasur plane, Gholamreza Ghasemi, with possible acts of terrorism. She also charged the rest of the crew members of the aircraft held in Buenos Aires. - [Infobae on 21-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Paraguay questioned the identity of the co-pilot of the Venezuelan-Iranian plane. After the links of the pilot of the aircraft held in Argentina with terrorist groups were confirmed, the official warned about the rest of the crew and confirmed that they used to turn off the transponder to avoid transmitting information about their routes. - [Infobae on 20-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Last week an unusual plane was grounded at the Ezeiza international airport near Buenos Aires, having already covertly flown across part of Argentina. The Boeing 747-3B3(M), registration YV3531, was owned by the Iranian company Mahan Air until January 2020, when it was transferred to the Venezuelan state-owned Emtrasur Cargo. Onboard was a mixed Venezuelan and Iranian crew, including a man named Gholamreza Ghasemi and several reported members of the Quds Force. - [Iranwire on 20-JUN](#)
- The first vice president of the PSUV, Diosdado Cabello, broke the silence on the case of the Venezuelan-Iranian plane that has been in Argentina for two weeks. “We are respectful. The national government, as it corresponds, is doing all the pertinent procedures before the Argentine authorities, delivering what corresponds to us... Are they putting together a false positive? Of course!” he said. - [Monitoreamos on 20-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Venezuelan Consortium of Aeronautical Industries and Air Services (Conviasa) has been operating in Bolivia since 2019 and has sanctions imposed by the United States (USA), in addition to many complaints from its users for poor service. Recently a pilot of one of its cargo planes, from its subsidiary Emtrasur, was linked to terrorism and arms trafficking. - [Página Siete on 19-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The FBI provided evidence to federal justice to confirm that the pilot of the Venezuelan plane belongs to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard of Iran. The information sent from Washington assures that Gholamreza Ghasemi is an international terrorist and revealed the different operations carried out by his unit under the orders of Tehran. - [Infobae on 19-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- The plane is "marked" for arms trafficking; has flight and assistance restrictions in several countries around the world due to a series of sanctions applied by the United States since 2011. It is an Airbus 340-642 that less than a week ago had the registration EP-MMI of Iran, since it belonged to MahanAir. On June 15, that device was on the Viru Viru platform for 12 hours. - [El Deber on 19-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Joseph Humire: "Iranian plane likely to have been part of covert military transfer action." In an interview with Infobae, this security specialist and executive director of the Washington-based Center for a Secure Free Society says that it is very easy to confuse auto parts with elements to build military drones. - [Infobae on 18-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Argentina reportedly failed to register crew member with possible terrorist connections on plane detained due to US sanctions. Humire, who has been studying Iranian influence in the region for more than a decade, revealed that although the immigration record in Argentina mentions only 5 Iranian nationals, there were actually 6. - [El American on 18-JUN](#)
- Alberto Fernández broke his silence on the Venezuelan-Iranian plane and accused the opposition. President Alberto Fernández affirmed that the opposition "tried to take advantage" of the issue of the plane with Venezuelan-Iranian registration held at the Ezeiza airport, and said that "they wanted to show something dark that it is not." - [Monitoreamos on 18-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- President Alberto Fernández insisted that a cargo plane with Iranian and Venezuelan crew members had been grounded due only to fuelling difficulties, not because of any alleged link to Iran's elite Quds Force. There is "no irregularity" with the Venezuelan plane, Fernández told Radio 10, adding that the sole problem was refueling difficulties linked to US sanctions on Venezuela. - [Buenos Aires Times on 18-JUN](#)
- One of the men aboard a plane grounded near Buenos Aires is a member of Iran's Quds Force, Paraguay's intelligence chief said, despite claims by Argentina that no evidence links the case to the elite branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Intelligence chief Esteban Aquino told AFP that Captain Gholamreza Ghasemi did not merely share a name with a member of the Force — an expeditionary arm of Iran's Revolutionary Guards that carries out kidnappings and assassinations outside of Iran — but is in fact the same man. - [Times of Israel on 18-JUN](#)
- A mysterious plane visited Russia and Venezuela in the weeks before the Iranian-linked aircraft was impounded in Argentina. The Boeing 747 plane was held in Buenos Aires this week where Argentinian authorities searched it and seized it on suspicion of intelligence activities - detaining 19 crew members. Among the crew were five Iranians, alleged to have links to the Quds Force, the shadowy wing of of Iran's terrorist-designated Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) responsible for clandestine foreign operations. - [The Sun on 17-JUN](#)
- One of the crew members of the Venezuelan-Iranian plane, who remains held in Argentina, is a senior member of the Quds Forces, an elite group of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. - [El Deber on 17-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)



- State media reports following the case of the Boeing 747-300 belonging to Venezuelan cargo airline Emtrasur (a Conviasa subsidiary), the second aircraft bound for Buenos Aires landed in Santa Cruz de la Sierra and would not complete its flight out of fear that it might also be seized by local authorities at the request of the United States, where all Mahan Air and Conviasa units have been blacklisted for their alleged involvement in military intelligence operations. - [MercoPress on 17-JUN](#)
- Judicial and police officials were night searching a cargo plane owned by Venezuelan airline Emtrasur, which has been held at Ezeiza International Airport since last week, for clues about the intentions of the crew of 14 Venezuelans and five Iranians, whose passports have also been detained. The search was being carried out on a disused secondary runway at the airport on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, away from public view, at the rear of the air station. An official from Federico Villena's federal court in Lomas de Zamora and members of the Federal Police are taking part in the search. - [Buenos Aires Times on 17-JUN](#)
- Five of the Venezuelans who came on the plane held in Ezeiza are military. One of them participated in the coup attempt against Carlos Andrés Pérez in which the late Hugo Chávez became known. - [Clarín on 16-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Flight VO9502 of the Venezuelan state airline Conviasa, which was supposed to land at the Ezeiza international airport, will not arrive in Argentina. Official sources consulted by this newspaper explained that the plane would end in Bolivia, where the technical stopover was planned. - [Clarín on 16-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Israel expressed its "concern" about the plane with Venezuelan and Iranian crew that was retained in Ezeiza, and warned about the airlines that operate in Latin America and are dedicated to arms trafficking and the transfer of people. - [Clarín on 16-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Police officers searched the hotel where the Venezuelan and Iranian crew of a mysterious plane that remains stuck at Buenos Aires' main international airport have been staying as authorities blocked its exit amid suspicions about its crew and US sanctions against Iran. Federal Judge Federico Villena ordered the raid at Hotel Plaza Canning, outside Buenos Aires, which housed the crew of the Venezuelan-owned Boeing 747 cargo plane loaded with automotive parts. - [Washington Post on 14-JUN](#)
- Five Iranian members of the crew of the Venezuelan-Iranian plane are being investigated by the federal justice system in Lomas de Zamora. Federal judge Federico Villena prohibited them from leaving the country. After the measure, the Minister of Security of the Nation, Aníbal Fernández, spoke of a possible link with the Quds Force, the Revolutionary Guard of Tehran, which is considered by the United States as a terrorist group. - [Clarín on 14-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- A judge in Argentina has blocked five Iranian crew members from a grounded Venezuelan cargo jet from leaving the country, temporarily seizing their passports pending a probe into possible links to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Federal Judge Federico Villena ordered that the passports of the Iranian crew members be withheld "for a period of 72 hours" and that the police at Ezeiza

International Airport “report on any movement” related to the Venezuelan Emtrasur Boeing 747 cargo plane that was grounded on June 8. - [Buenos Aires Times on 13-JUN](#)

- State media reports Iran’s Mahan Air has dismissed reports that a plane belonging to the airline has been seized in Argentina, saying the plane in question is operated by Venezuela. Amir-Hossein Zolanvari, a spokesman for Mahan Air, told Iranian media that the seized plane, identified as Boeing 747, had been leased to Venezuela a year earlier and had thus nothing to do with the Iranian airline. - [Iran Front Page on 12-JUN](#)

## **HEZBOLLAH**

- The Venezuelan-Iranian plane raises questions about the meeting of the Paraguayan vice president with Hezbollah leaders. In 2015, when he was in charge of the Chamber of Deputies, the Vice President of the Republic of Paraguay, Hugo Velázquez, went to Lebanon to meet with political and religious leaders of the powerful Islamic movement Hezbollah, although he later denied it several times. - [Aurora on 23-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Hezbollah activities against George Chaya. The Argentine courts investigate a terrorist threat to a journalist and an interview with Patricia Bullrich, president of Pro, in El Noticiero. - [La Nación on 21-JUN \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The assassination of a prominent Paraguayan organized crime prosecutor in Colombia, who was involved in a series of high-profile investigations into transnational criminal networks operating in South America, sparked fears that organized crime’s power in the region is rising once again. That is fueling further fears of rising regional insecurity and heightened geopolitical risk, thereby impacting foreign investment inflows and economic growth. - [OilPrice on 24-MAY](#)

## **SYRIA**

- The Syrian –Venezuelan Friendship Committee at the People’s Assembly discussed with the Chargé d’ affaires of the Venezuelan Embassy in Damascus, Joaquín Gómez, ways of enhancing and developing mutual parliamentary relations. Chairman and members of the committee stressed the importance of the deeply-rooted Syrian-Venezuelan relations. - [SANA on 07-JUN](#)

## **TURKEY**

- In an effort to curb concerns over food security, Turkey plans to lease farmlands in various countries to boost agricultural production, it emerged this week. For years now, Turkish authorities have been exploring such opportunities in ten nations in Africa and Latin America, including Venezuela and Sudan. - [Greek Reporter on 20-JUN](#)
- State media reports Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro offered Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to turn Venezuela into a port of entry into Latin America. “It’s time for Turkish investors in Venezuela, for them to arrive in tourism, mining, industry, logistics, banking, oil, gas, gold, coal,” the South American ruler told Erdogan during a state trip to Ankara. He added that Turkish investors would enjoy “all the guarantees” for “a process of expansion in the relationship between both countries.” - [MercoPress on 09-JUN](#)

- State media reports addressing a joint press conference after talks with his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro in the capital Ankara, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said: “Our trade volume with Venezuela was about \$150 million in 2019. We doubled it by 2020 and took it up to \$850 million in 2021.” He added that Turkey's aim is to boost the figure to \$3 billion in the near future. - [Daily Sabah on 08-JUN](#)
- Venezuela’s Maduro was welcomed in the Turkish capital just as the foreign minister of Russia, a key ally of the ostracized Latin American regime, was also visiting the city. Maduro is on a Eurasian tour after being rebuffed by Washington, which decided not to invite him to the Summit of the Americas. - [Associated Press on 08-JUN](#)
- State media reports a court in Istanbul ordered Samir Handal back into custody as the man accused of involvement in the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moise sought release in a hearing. Handal was detained at Istanbul Airport in November 2021 as he was traveling to Jordan on a connecting flight. He was one of the suspects wanted with an international “red notice” by Interpol over Moise’s assassination on July 7, 2021. - [Daily Sabah on 30-MAY](#)
- State media reports Turkey and Colombia are keen on boosting their bilateral relations, the president of the South American country praised Ankara for declaring Bogota a “strategic partner.” He continued, “I certainly applaud it and we're very pleased and honored,” Ivan Duque told Anadolu Agency in an interview while on a visit to Istanbul. Duque's visit, at the invitation of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, marks the first visit to Turkey by a Colombian president since 2011, when his predecessor Juan Manuel Santos came to the country. - [Yeni Safak on 21-MAY](#)
- State media reports producing Turkey's first unmanned helicopter Alpin, Titra Technology strengthened its presence in both civil aviation and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) fields by striking a strategic cooperation deal with Cicare, one of the world's leading sportive helicopter companies. The signed agreement also marks a new collaboration that has been established between Turkey and Argentina in various fields of technology. - [Daily Sabah on 11-MAY](#)

## **QATAR**

- State media reports Qatar Chamber discussed with a commerce delegation from Brazil, relations of economic and commercial cooperation, especially in the fields of agriculture, construction, mining, food security, and energy. The meeting touched on economic and commercial relations between both countries and ways to enhance them and ways to enhance cooperation between private sectors in Qatar and Brazil, in addition to exploring investment opportunities galore on both sides and promoting Brazilian products in Qatar. - [Gulf Times on 30-MAY](#)
- Minister of People's Power for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela Carlos Faria met with ambassador of Qatar to Venezuela Rashid bin Mohsin Fetais. During the meeting, they reviewed relations of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. - [Gulf Times on 26-MAY](#)



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was busy last month furthering Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) deals in Latin America with calls to Uruguay, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. The former, Uruguay, joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS New Development Bank, providing momentum for continued cooperation. Ecuador is also ready to sign cooperation agreements with China under the BRI.

The BRI is also in full swing in Argentina despite pushback from local Mapuche communities. Progress on two dams being built on the 236-mile Santa Cruz River in Patagonia have continued amidst protests, lawsuits and court orders to pause construction. China also received good news in Peru, where indigenous communities lifted a protest at Las Bambas copper mines that caused a halt in operations.

But the BRI isn't the only in-roads China has in the region. Chinese President Xi Jinping has invited Argentina to participate in three BRICS events, including a get-together of political parties, social organizations and think tanks; a summit of foreign ministers from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, and the Argentine Minister as a guest on May 20; and a summit of the five-plus one leaders that is scheduled for June 24.

And as Russia attempts to delegitimize the international financial system, **China has signed an agreement with a Switzerland-based bank to establish a reserve of yuan currency together with Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Chile to counter the US dollar.**

- Mexico City will begin on July 11 the first stage of the 37bn-peso (US\$1.84bn) modernization of metro line No. 1, awarded in November 2020 to a consortium formed by Chinese locomotive supplier CRRC Corporation and CRRC Zhuzhou Locomotive. - [BNAmericas on 29-JUN](#)
- The Chinese battery cell manufacturer and Volkswagen partner Gotion High-Tech has signed an agreement to build a lithium carbonate plant in Argentina. In future, the material will be processed into battery cells in Argentina, which could then also be used in electric vehicles made in four continents. - [Electrive on 27-JUN](#)

- Together with GSMA Intelligence and ITU, Huawei hosted the LATAM ICT Congress 2022, aiming to build a global industry communication platform and promote the rapid development of 5G and digital transformation in Latin America. Representatives from operators, regulators, industry organizations, 5G ecosystem partners, analysts, and media partners attended the congress. - [PR Newswire on 27-JUN](#)
- The People's Bank of China will create a yuan reserve pool with the Bank for International Settlements and five other regulators to provide liquidity to participating economies in periods of market volatility. China along with Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Chile will each contribute a minimum of 15 billion yuan (\$2.2 billion) or US dollar equivalent to so-called Renminbi Liquidity. - [Bloomberg on 25-JUN](#)
- The recent visit to Pakistan by the head of Argentina's joint military staff has fed speculation that a JF-17 fighter jet deal is on the horizon following more than a decade of interest by the South American nation. But despite China's willingness to help fund an acquisition program, its unclear if any major progress was made. - [Defense News on 24-JUN](#)
- Argentina's possible accession to the BRICS – the grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa – has been on the table for more than a decade, but there has never been any serious attempt until now. Xi Jinping's invitation to Argentina's President Alberto Fernández to participate in the 2022 summit, which convened virtually on June 23 with China as host, renewed the debate regarding this possibility, which still seems remote. - [The Diplomat on 23-JUN](#)
- State media reports China's top legislator Li Zhanshu held talks with Manzoor Nadir, speaker of the National Assembly of the Parliament of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, via video link. Li, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, said that political mutual trust is a solid foundation and a significant guarantee for the healthy and stable development of China-Guyana relations. - [China People's Daily on 16-JUN](#)
- The countries of the BRICS group of emerging economies will hold their annual summit, against a tense global backdrop due to the war in Ukraine. For the third time in a row, the event will bring together leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa virtually, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. But it will differ from recent meetings with the guest appearance of Argentina, which has previously expressed its desire to join the group. - [Diálogo Chino on 15-JUN](#)
- Orient Overseas Container Line (OOCL) has announced the introduction of a new Transpacific Latin Pacific 6 (TLP6) service to enhance its Asia - Latin America network. The port rotation of the new service will be Hong Kong - Shekou (China) - Ningbo (China) - Shanghai (China) - Manzanillo (Mexico) - Puerto Quetzal (Guatemala) - San Antonio (Chile) - Hong Kong. The COSCO-owned box line believes the new service will provide a "comprehensive port coverage between North East Asia and West Coast South America." - [Container News on 14-JUN](#)
- A group of indigenous Peruvian communities agreed to temporarily lift a protest against MMG Ltd's Las Bambas copper mine that forced the company to halt operations for more than 50 days, the longest in the mine's history. According to meeting minutes, the truce will last thirty days from



June 15 and the communities and the mine will engage in talks during that time. - [Reuters on 10-JUN](#)

- The Summit of the Americas provides a prime opportunity for the United States government to work with its like-minded partners in the region to address a major strategic challenge: China's growing influence over Latin America's critical and natural mineral resources. For rare earths alone—a subset of the larger category of critical minerals—China is estimated to account for approximately 85% of the world's processing capacity. - [Lawfare on 08-JUN](#)
- China has widened the gap on the United States in trade terms in large swathes of Latin America since US President Joe Biden came into office early last year, data show, underscoring how Washington is being pushed onto the back foot in the region. An exclusive Reuters analysis of U.N. trade data from 2015-2021 shows that outside of Mexico, the top US trade partner, China has overtaken the United States in Latin America and widened the gap last year. - [U.S. News on 08-JUN](#)
- State media reports China's Agriculture Ministry recently approved the import and use of soybeans as a raw material using Bioceres' Crop Solutions drought tolerance technology. It's a technology that gives crops greater tolerance to a lack of water and is hailed as a landmark development for agriculture. Bioceres is promoting the technology for farmers who have been suffering from harsh weather, while China's decision paves the way for its entry into a key market. - [CGTN America on 08-JUN](#)
- In March 2022, Ecuador was shaken by the news that the Chinese state-owned China International Water & Electric Corporation (CWE), the last company to preside over the Toachi Pilatón hydroelectric project, was suing the country for US\$100 million. The reason: Ecuador's decision to unilaterally terminate the contract with the company. - [Diálogo Chino on 07-JUN](#)
- Cuba and China presented Pan-Corona, the first patent for an anti-covid vaccine jointly developed between both countries. The project is located in a joint biotechnological R&D center in Yongzhou and is led by experts from the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) and the Cuban Biotechnological and Pharmaceutical Industries Business Group (BioCubaFarma). - [14ymedio on 05-JUN](#)
- Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez encouraged the US to step up its strategic infrastructure bidding in Latin America, saying the country is far behind China on that front, and also stressed that ensuring 5G has the tightest cybersecurity protections available is imperative accelerating into another “industrial revolution.” - [Fox News on 03-JUN](#)
- In this article, we discuss how prevalent the phenomenon of reshoring out of China is and whether Mexico has significant advantages over China by looking at key metrics, such as operating costs, market size, trade, and diplomatic relations. - [Dezan Shira & Associates on 27-MAY](#)
- State media reports Wang Chen, vice chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, met with Iris Varela, First Vice President of Venezuela's National Assembly, via video link. Iris Varela said that Venezuela firmly adheres to the one-China principle, and is willing to

enhance communication between legislatures to promote cooperation on economy and law, as well as other fields, between the two countries. - [China People's Daily on 27-MAY](#)

- Brazil and China have completed some key negotiations on starting Brazilian corn exports to China, according to a statement released May 23 by Brazil's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply. However, there is no clarity on when China would allow imports of Brazilian corn into the country. - [S&P Global on 24-MAY](#)
- Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed to his Uruguayan counterpart, Francisco Bustillo, the Asian giant's interest in deepening cooperation in scientific and technological matters, while both agreed on the “strengthening of trade” that an FTA could propitiate. Uruguay, which according to the document took advantage of the instance to thank the proposals of the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, Initiative for Global Development and Initiative for Global Security, that “expressed the desire to raise the level of strategic cooperation between the two countries.” - [EFE on 21-MAY \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- State media reports Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone conversation with Uruguayan Foreign Minister Francisco Bustillo. As the first Southern Common Market (Mercosur) country to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Uruguay has joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS New Development Bank, providing important momentum for bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the two countries, said the Chinese foreign minister. - [CGTN on 21-MAY](#)
- State media reports since the resumption of diplomatic relations six months ago, China and Nicaragua have made a good start in bilateral cooperation with high speed and high standards, which fully shows that the resumption of diplomatic ties conforms to the trend of history and the trend of the times and serves the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said during a phone call with his Nicaraguan counterpart Denis Moncada. - [CGTN on 20-MAY](#)
- State media reports Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that the country is ready to advance high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and engage in discussions on signing cooperation plans. Wang made the remarks in a phone conversation with Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Juan Carlos Holguin. China is willing to make joint efforts with Ecuador to build health, digital and green Silk Roads, Wang said. - [CGTN on 20-MAY](#)
- Panama President Laurentino Cortizo said he intends to immediately restart negotiations with China over a free trade agreement, after conversations were put on hold during the pandemic. Cortizo, who took office in 2019, said he will seek bigger concessions than previous Panamanian administrations attempted to get from Asia's largest economy. - [Bloomberg on 19-MAY](#)
- State media reports Chinese state-owned conglomerate Cosco Shipping Holdings is building – virtually from scratch – a deep-water port in Peru. At the cost of US\$ 3 billion, it will connect an industry and a logistics park in collaboration with a unit of the Swiss trading company Glencore. - [MercoPress on 19-MAY](#)

- State media reports Argentina has been invited by Chinese President Xi Jinping to participate in three BRICS events. The first will be a get-together of political parties, social organizations and think tanks, a second on May 20th, is a summit of foreign ministers from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, BRICS full members, and the Argentine minister guest. Finally, on June 24 a summit of the five-plus one leaders is scheduled. - [MercoPress on 16-MAY](#)
- State media reports Chinese pharmaceutical Sinovac Biotech Ltd which makes one of the vaccines against Covid 19 most in several Latin American countries initiated on Thursday the construction of its first fill and finish plant in Chile, consolidating its presence in the Latin American country that has used its Covid-19 shot the most. - [MercoPress on 16-MAY](#)
- The community of Fuerabamba in the Andean region of Peru was resettled eight years ago to make way for a giant Chinese-owned copper mine, in a \$1.2 billion scheme billed as a model solution to protests dogging the South American nation's mining sector. Now the community wants the land back. - [Reuters on 12-MAY](#)
- Two dams are being built on the 380-kilometer (236-mile) Santa Cruz River in Argentina's Patagonia, threatening glacier movements and endemic wildlife that rely on the surrounding wetlands. Several Indigenous Mapuche communities, who consider the area to be important to their cultural heritage, say officials failed to consult with them before starting the project. Despite protests, lawsuits and court orders to pause construction, work on the complex, part of the China-funded Belt and Road Initiative, has continued. - [Mongabay on 12-MAY](#)
- China's multimillion-dollar loans to Latin American governments have come to a standstill. No new state-to-state loans have been issued over the past two years. According to experts, however, China has instead prioritized commercial loans for its companies' projects in the region. - [Voice of America on 11-MAY](#)