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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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15.03.2019

## Did the US Cause the Blackout in Venezuela?

Posted on [March 14, 2019](#) [March 13, 2019](#)

As all U.S. diplomats were [ordered home](#) from Venezuela, about 70% of Venezuelans have been without electricity and water since last Thursday evening. As of Monday the blackout had killed 21 people (including 6 babies), [according to opposition leaders](#).

Reuters [reported](#) that according to witnesses and social media, some of the country had power restored on Tuesday. That would be welcome news, as many hospitals have not had power in five days. Cell phone coverage and internet access have been in very short supply. Schools and businesses have been largely closed. Tons of food has spoiled, the economy is at a virtual standstill, and more people are becoming desperately hungry due to the blackout.

Other than countries where massive power blackouts were caused by a natural disaster or a war, the power blackout in Venezuela is believed to be one of the longest any country has gone without power in recent memory.

Just a week ago, the US coup in Venezuela was [losing ground](#) due to a number of setbacks. But three days later, the blackout in Venezuela occurred, and now the coup has gained momentum.

?The timing of the blackout could not have come at a better time for American coup-plotters, as exhibited by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who [gloated about the misery](#) in a tweet: “No food. No medicine. Now, no power. Next, no Maduro.”

The timing of the blackout is very peculiar. And it’s not certain how the power outage happened.

The US blames Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro and his socialist economic policies. Venezuelan’s have experienced rolling blackouts for many years, but nothing near a total blackout. It’s possible that Venezuela’s hydroelectric power system – which reportedly needed work – could have fallen into a greater state of disrepair due to US sanctions that have reduced funding and personnel from Venezuela’s infrastructure projects.

Maduro says it’s an act of sabotage by the US in their efforts to oust him from power, citing the US as the only country with the technology to cause a blackout in Venezuela. On Monday, Maduro [said](#) two people who were allegedly trying to sabotage power facilities were captured and were providing information to authorities. On Tuesday, Maduro [said](#) the computerized system in the Guri Dam and the central electrical “brain” suffered cyber attacks, while recovery was delayed by physical attacks against transmission lines and electrical substations.

The cause of the blackout has not been definitively determined, but it is conceivable that Maduro is correct. As Kalev Leetaru of Forbes [wrote](#), “the United States remotely interfering with [Venezuela’s] power grid is actually quite realistic...timing such an outage to occur at a moment of societal upheaval in a way that delegitimizes the current government, exactly as a government-in-waiting has presented itself as a ready alternative, is actually one of the tactics”.

Max Blumenthal of the Grayzone Project [wrote](#), “The US-funded CANVAS organization that trained Juan Guaido and his allies produced a 2010 memo on exploiting electricity outages and urged the opposition “to take advantage of the situation...towards their needs”

Whitney Webb of MintPress News [pointed out](#), “The US has long had highly developed plans involving the use of cyberattacks to attack critical power-grid infrastructure in countries targeted for regime change by Washington. Indeed, the most well-known plan of this type, known by its codename “Nitro Zeus,” was originally created under the George W. Bush administration and was aimed at Iran. With so many former Bush officials now calling the shots in the Trump administration, particularly its Venezuela policy, the potential return of a “Nitro Zeus” virus, this time tailored to Venezuela, seems increasingly likely.”

And on Wednesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lu Kang said China had noted reports that the power grid had gone down due to a hacking attack. “China is deeply concerned about this...China hopes that the Venezuelan side can discover the reason for this issue as soon as possible and resume normal power supply and social order. China is willing to provide help and technical support to restore Venezuela’s power grid.”

Nonetheless, none of this proves the US was responsible for the blackout, but given the Trump administration’s willingness, and ability, to use any means necessary to oust Maduro, it’s not out of the question.

Particularly since other claims made by the US against Maduro have proven to be false. For instance, the New York Times ran a story that [contradicts](#) the US narrative that Maduro was responsible for burning aid trucks recently at the border of Venezuela and Colombia. The Times provided video footage showing that it was actually a Molotov cocktail thrown by an anti-Maduro protester that likely caused the fires. This means Elliott Abrams, John Bolton, Trump and Pompeo were either lying or basing their conclusions on unsubstantiated facts. Glenn Greenwald [expanded](#) on the Times exposé in discussing how the US and media are spreading pro-war propaganda in Venezuela.

The fact that the US has used economic sanctions to cripple Venezuela’s economy demonstrates its willingness to inflict suffering on everyday people. This was exemplified over the weekend when US Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida [said](#), “The sanctions are effective and have helped ...but the sanctions need to go deeper...we need to pierce the layers below the leadership and go down to the middle management and even the families...”.

Jim Wyss of the Miami Herald [pointed out](#) the impact of sanctions that Wasserman Schultz and many others support: “Financial sanctions rolled out in 2017 made it difficult for Venezuela to refinance loans and get fresh funding. Then, in January, Washington used “the nuclear option” and blocked money from Venezuela’s US oil sales from going to Maduro’s coffers – effectively costing the country billions. Venezuela imports 80 to 90 percent of all its goods – including food and medicine...Venezuela’s imports in 2018 fell to an estimated \$11.7 billion down from \$66 billion in 2012.” Mark Weisbrot of the Center for Economic And Policy Research [adds](#) more context to how US economic sanctions are killing Venezuelans and making it nearly impossible to restore their economy.

Because of its motives and its willingness to use sanctions to crash Venezuela’s economy, it’s plausible that the US was willing to crash Venezuela’s power system as well, particularly given the timing. Hopefully power and water are being restored to the people of Venezuela –

people who deserve to get answers about the cause of the devastating, potentially game-changing blackout.

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