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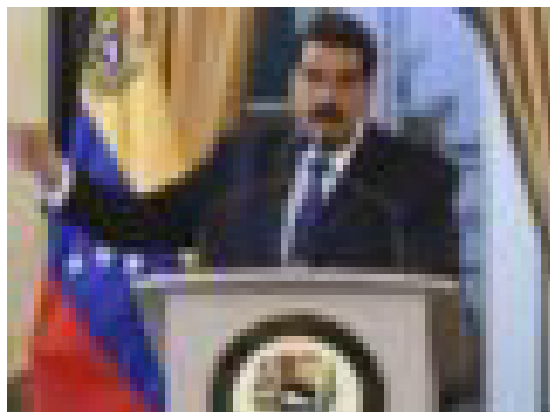
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زبانهای اروپایی

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## ***Nicolás Maduro: ‘They intend to create a conflict with Colombia’***

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Venezuela’s President Nicolás Maduro ended his address to the National Defense Council on Sept. 9, which exposed the existence of a military threat and escalation against his country. He said, “We have the evidence of how they intend to create a false positive to provoke an armed conflict between Colombia and Venezuela.”

The Monday night meeting followed a day of growing diplomatic tension. First, Venezuelan Minister of Communication Minister Jorge Rodríguez presented evidence of how the Colombian press, particularly *Semana* magazine, falsified and disseminated documents in an attempt to accuse the Venezuelan government of collaborating with the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia and the sector of the Revolutionary Armed

Forces of Colombia (FARC) that resumed armed struggle against that country's government.

After that presentation, a press conference took place in the afternoon with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza and Rodríguez. The diplomatic corps, which is accredited in Venezuela, was summoned to hear "precise information on the terrorist acts planned to be launched from the Republic of Colombia under the protection of the government in Bogotá."

Toward nighttime President Maduro met with the National Defense Council. Representatives from all levels of the Bolivarian National Armed Force, public officials and the national cabinet participated in the meeting.

President Maduro, following Article 232 of the Constitution, said: "As head of state, I have passed authority over to the National Defense Council for the collective management of this situation, which is one of a genuine threat of violence, armed conflict and attack by the militarist and criminal government of Colombia."

In his speech, President Maduro denounced the 42 different covert acts that the Colombian government has carried out in three months. One of them has been, and continues to be, an attempt to "recruit Venezuelan officers and noncommissioned officers with the intention of attacking the Venezuelan air and missile defense system, supported by a group of Venezuelans."

President Maduro also referred to the orange alert decreed days ago and the beginning of border operations called "Sovereignty and Peace in Venezuela" that will be carried out from Sept. 10 to 28. These are taking place "to fine-tune the entire national defense system, to fine-tune all the mechanisms of the deployment of our country's military capacity, to fine-tune land defense, anti-aircraft — the coordinated defense of the national territory itself."

### **Colombia's president accuses Maduro**

The tension between the two countries peaked following the new escalation that began on Aug. 29 when a section of the FARC announced its return to armed struggle. This was

followed by Colombian President Iván Duque's accusation that Maduro's government offered the FARC support within its territory.

Two days later on Aug. 31, Rodríguez announced the arrest of a person who was planning to detonate explosives in central Caracas. He also denounced the presence of three military training centers in Colombia near the Venezuelan border. He explained that this individual, along with others, was trained there and then sent to Venezuela.

It was not the first time that the Venezuelan government reported the presence of military training centers in Colombia whose aim is to attack Venezuela. The first incident was the attempted assassination [by drones] of President Maduro on Aug. 8, 2018.

The current scenario is framed within [the context of] a new offensive to attempt the overthrow of President Maduro. Declarations [by the opposition] have escalated in recent weeks — particularly since the decree signed by Trump on Aug. 6 to tighten the economic and financial blockade. [Trump's decree froze Venezuelan governmental assets.] It resulted in Maduro's decision to suspend negotiations [with the opposition] in Barbados.

In this context — and in consideration of the demobilization of the [anti-Maduro] opposition at the national level — the Colombian factor gained strength in the manner of a siege on the Venezuelan government. Duque made no comments on Sept. 9 about the statements made [by President Maduro] from the Miraflores Palace in Caracas.

### **Other external threats against Maduro**

Finally, three significant events also occurred on Sept. 9. First, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet read a report which reiterated her concerns about human rights violations in Venezuela, while it recognized the negative impact of the blockade and opposition violence.

Second, there were the words spoken by Elliott Abrams, U.S. special envoy for Venezuela. From Brussels, he accused the European Union of not imposing greater sanctions against Maduro's government and of being permissive with its leaders.

Finally, it was learned that on Wednesday [Sept. 11], the Organization of American States will debate the request made by self-proclaimed president [of Venezuela], Juan Guaidó, to

activate the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance. The document puts on the table the possibility of forming an international coalition against Venezuela. The Venezuelan government withdrew from the OAS [on April 29].

The United Nations General Assembly scheduled for Sept. 27 will be a new scenario for diplomatic confrontation. The tempo has accelerated once more.