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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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11.05.2020

## US Wants Release of Two Special Forces Veterans Who Led Failed Coup Invasion of Venezuela



Photograph Source: Jordan Goudreau – Instagram

Imperial overreach was on full display this week as the US government demanded that a pair of US citizens — former Special Forces soldiers leading a 60-man invasion of Venezuela with the goal of fomenting a coup and/or capturing or killing that country's elected president — be released from arrest and returned to the US.

Bad enough that the US almost certainly knew in advance about this invasion which involved multiple simultaneous border crossings and beach landings by mercenary forces, many of them reportedly sketchy former Venezuelan soldiers involved in the drug trade, who were on a payroll as soldiers-for-hire. But how about the gall to also claim that when the effort fails, the intended victim of the coup, Venezuela, has no legitimate right to

punish the perpetrators, but must release them to their home country, the US — a country that has for years been trying to oust Venezuela's elected government?

This story, to the extent that it gets any play here, is being presented in much of the US media as all about the safety of those two US mercenaries, although AP reporter Joshua Goodman has written an excellent investigative report suggesting that the coup attempt was a really half-assed operation doomed to failure from the start by hubris and incompetence on the part of its planners.

But let's just for a moment turn the situation around: Imagine if you will how the US government would react, and how the American public would respond, if a group of heavily armed mercenaries funded by some foreign power — say Venezuela for the sake of argument — were caught trying to invade US shores to foment a coup and perhaps capture or kill the US president?

I'm certain that there would be immediate calls from Congress for an attack on the home country of those mercenaries — likely the launching of a bunch of Tomahawk missiles and a few airstrikes on military bases, etc. There would be demonstrations in the streets by Americans clamoring for more serious consequences.

Imagine now if the government of the country of origin of those who had plotted against the US were to further suggest it would use “every tool available” to “try to get the captured mercenaries” back safely to their home country's “soil” — a statement that carries a not-so-subtle threat of military or terrorist action. The US would likely declare all-out war at that point!

This imagined scenario is, however, precisely what US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has done, threatening publicly to use “every tool available” to get the two American mercenaries back from Venezuela, the current bete noire of America's bipartisan foreign policy establishment.

What do we know at this point about this bizarre plot by a few dozen armed mercenaries to foment a coup against Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro?

According to Stars & Stripes, a newspaper published for US active-duty military personnel, both of the captured Americans, identified as Aaron Barry and Luke Denman, were former Green Beret special forces soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan with Jordan Goudreau. Head of Silvercorp USA, a shady Melbourne, Florida-based private “security” firm founded in 2018, which provides no information about its management

or backers, Goudreau claims to have organized and funded the botched coup attempt, called “Operation Gideon.” ([Silvercorp’s promotional website](#) says, “Silvercorp USA was founded with one purpose in mind. We provide governments and corporations with realistic and timely solutions to irregular problems.” An accompanying video shows men, including Goudreau, in heavy bullet-proof military uniforms, heavily armed, riding ATVs in desert terrain, making group parachute jumps, and firing weapons at purported enemies. The site offers no information about company ownership or leadership.)

One thing is clear: Goudreau and his company Silvercorp, are in this for the money, so some entity with deep pockets obviously was underwriting this aborted invasion. Given Silvercorp’s owner and the leaders assigned to the action, all of them US Special Forces veterans, the prime suspect, I would suggest, would be the US, and probably the CIA, for which US special forces of the various branches of the military are effectively a private army for secret ops.

Venezuelan authorities claim 60 people, including Venezuelan military deserters, were involved in the plot and that all involved were either captured or in the case of eight men, killed. The Venezuelan government is claiming that the incident was a US operation that was supposed to appear to be run by the US Drug Enforcement Agency. The US has indicted Maduro and several other Venezuelan officials and military leaders as “narco-terrorists.”

If this was a failed US attempt to capture or oust President Maduro, it would be just the latest in a long series of illegal efforts by the US to oust the Venezuelan government, beginning with a coup during the Obama administration against Maduro’s predecessor, President Hugo Chavez, whose election back in 1999 led to the launching of what Chavez called a “Bolivarian” revolution establishing a people’s government that would nationalize the oil industry and deliver economic gains to the long-suffering poor people of his country.

The US doesn’t recognize Chavez’s vice president and successor as president Maduro as Venezuela’s legitimate leader, supporting instead the unelected right-wing political flunky Juan Guaido, and has shut the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, DC.

This would not be the first time that the US has taken a proprietary interest in the safety of US invaders of a foreign country. Great efforts were made to free Cuban exiles involved in the US-organized-and-funded Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961,

ultimately providing Cuba a ransom of \$53 million worth of food and medicine in return for their release.

What the US will have to do and how much it will cost to get Venezuela to release the two captured “supervisors” of this latest affront to the country’s national sovereignty will be interesting to see.

At some point, embarrassed by its decades of failure in trying to rouse the Cuban people to overthrow Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution he led, the US finally gave up on such methods and has turned instead to economic and diplomatic measures to crush the country. Perhaps after the comic fake coup attempt in Venezuela last year, and now this latest bungled “invasion” by paid mercenaries, the US will also recognize that they’re not going to succeed in turning the Venezuelan masses against their government.

Even economic strangulation is unlikely to work. Venezuela’s poor certainly bear the brunt of the pain caused by brutal US sanctions on their country, but they know that if the Maduro government is overthrown and replaced by a puppet regime backed by the US and Venezuela’s wealthy and middle class, things will only be worse for them.

Unless the Trump administration comes up with a pretty good financial offer and a promise to quit meddling, I suspect US invasion leaders Barry and Denman will be spending considerable time contemplating their navel’s in a Venezuelan prison.

**CounterPunch 08.05.2020**