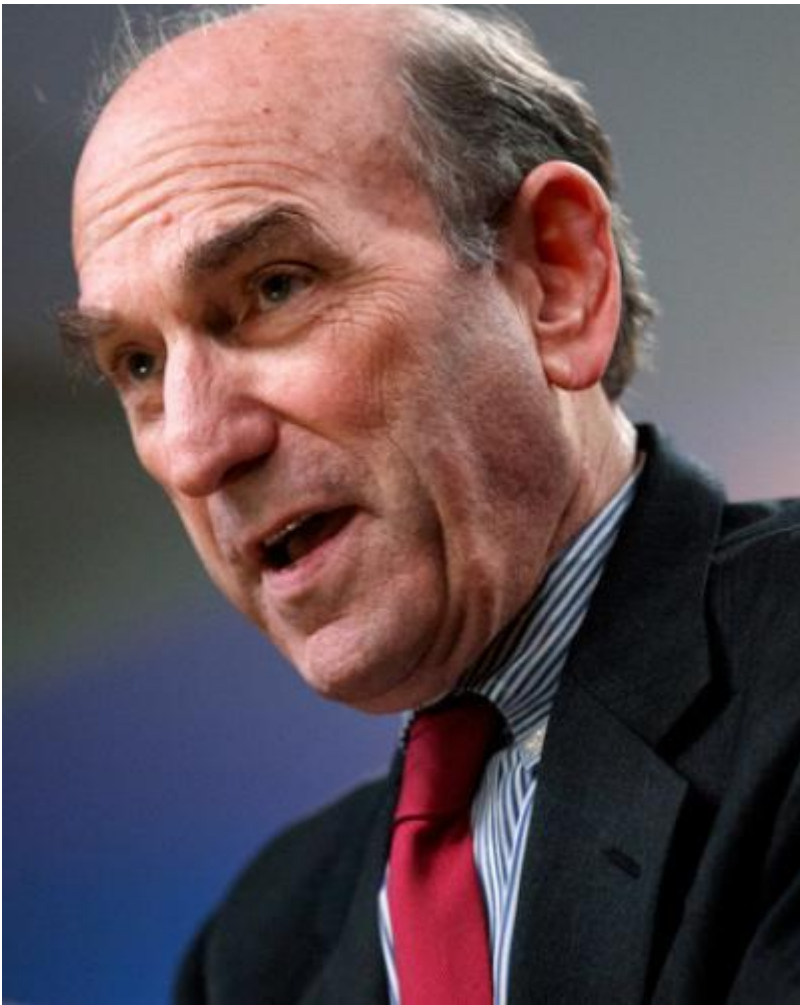


Elliott Abrams denies failure of U.S. regime change policy in Venezuela



Washington, June 26 (RHC)-- U.S. special representative for Venezuela Elliott Abrams attempted to downplay the failure of his country's campaign against the Venezuelan government of Nicolas Maduro saying Tuesday that U.S. President Donald Trump is still committed to a pressure campaign to force regime change in the South American country.

The campaign has failed to take out Maduro, who has retained the support of Russia and China, along with many other countries in the global south who have rejected Washington's attempts to gain support for their intervention policies in Venezuela.

The United States and many of its right-wing allies were quick to recognize opposition lawmaker Juan Guaido as the country's "interim president" in February, after he illegally declared himself the president in violation of the country's constitution and rulings of its supreme court.

Elliott Abrams brushed aside questions over whether Washington had lost interest amid

other pressing foreign policy issues such as tensions with Iran and China trade talks. He also firmly rejected the possibility that Maduro could be part of a unity government in Venezuela as negotiations in Norway between representatives of the government and the opposition in Norway have stalled in recent weeks. "It is hard to see how he is part of the solution or could be part of a transition government," Abrams told reporters.

Citing examples that Venezuela remained a priority for the administration, Abrams said Trump raised the topic with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during their June 20th meeting. Vice President Mike Pence also traveled to Miami to help send off the U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort on a medical mission to South America to help with displaced Venezuelans.

"It is not a sign of uninterest," said Abrams. "The notion that there is at the highest levels of the government a diminution of interest is just simply false." Abrams said he hoped to meet with Manuel Cristopher, a Venezuelan general who turned against Maduro, who is now in the United States.

Abrams said the administration "did not bring" Cristopher to the United States, but added: "We're happy he is here, because it makes it easier to have more conversations with him."

Cristopher, who was the head of the South American country's Sebin intelligence service, has been accused by the Maduro government of being behind the failed attempted coup on April 30th as he conspired to help Juan Guaido by releasing opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez, who was under house arrest at that time.

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