

Donald Trump threatens to impose blockade, quarantine on Venezuela



Washington, August 3 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump has threatened to impose a quarantine or blockade against Venezuela, as part of Washington's latest efforts to pressure legitimately-elected President Nicolas Maduro to step down.

Trump made the comment as he departed the White House for a campaign rally in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Thursday. Asked by reporters whether he was considering a blockade or quarantine on the Latin American country, Trump said: "Yes, I am." The U.S. president did not elaborate or provide details on when or how such a blockade could be imposed.

Moreover, the administration in Washington said on Friday that it would bar two Venezuelan officials from traveling to the United States over accusations of alleged human rights violations. The U.S. State Department claimed in a statement that the two officials, Rafael Enrique Mendoza, the commander of Venezuela's special forces, and Ivan Rafael Hernandez Dala, the chief of military counterintelligence, had committed "gross violations of human rights." The United States imposed financial sanctions on the two officials, as well as three other people, in February.

The U.S. has ratcheted up pressure on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro by sanctioning some of his top officials. The Trump administration — which was quick in recognizing Venezuela's opposition figure Juan Guaido as the country's legitimate leader earlier this year— has actively been undermining Maduro's government in a bid to replace him with Guaido. It even has not ruled out the use of military force to oust Maduro.

Washington has levied several rounds of sanctions against the country and confiscated Venezuela's state oil assets based in the U.S. to channel billions of dollars to Guaido and his non-existent administration.

Venezuela says the United States is pushing for military intervention in the Latin American country by undermining the negotiations between Caracas and the opposition.

Guaido orchestrated a failed coup against the government on April 30 with backing from Washington. Maduro's government, however, has not proceeded to arrest Guaido despite the coup attempt.

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