

# *Venezuelan president announces measures to defend oil industry*

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Caracas, February 20 (RHC)-- Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro announced Wednesday two measures adopted by his government to guarantee the security of the country's oil industry as the United States launched new attacks against state-owned oil and natural gas company (PDVSA).

During a meeting with workers in the oil, petrochemical and gas sectors, Maduro unveiled two decrees to be put in place in order to consolidate the restructuring of the sector.

Firstly, the head of state declared an “energy emergency of the hydrocarbon industry,” that gives power to the government to take the “necessary measures to guarantee national energy security and protect the industry from imperialist aggression.”

The president then announced the creation of the Presidential Commission 'Ali Rodriguez Araque' to restructure and protect PDVSA. “I won’t accept more excuses, either we produce or we produce. Venezuela has to become an oil powerhouse,” he stated from the headquarters PDVSA in Caracas.

Economy Vice President Tareck El Aissami will head the commission, which will focus on stepping up crude production. El Aissami will be joined by former Energy Minister Asdrubal Chavez as the commission’s vice president. While the security apparatus for PDVSA will be coordinated by Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino, and armed forces Strategic Operational Commander Remigio Ceballos.

Maduro also called on the sector's workers to join for the defense of PDVSA from the attacks led by some opposition groups seeking to destabilize the nation from abroad.

The president's intervention comes a day after the U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions against Russian oil company Rosneft Trading S.A., for trading and transporting Venezuelan oil and against its president of the Board of Directors Didier Casimiro.

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