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Russia Accuses U.S. Of 'Shameless' Meddling in Venezuela

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Nikolas Maduro (Jeso Carneiro / Flickr / CC BY-NC 2.0)

Russia has slammed the United States for "shameless" interference in cash-strapped Venezuela as the country's leader kicked off a second presidential term this week.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro was sworn in on Thursday, defying critics in the United States and Latin America. The United States decried a "usurpation of power," and Venezuela's opposition-run Congress called Maduro a dictator in charge of a "de facto" government.

"Washington's shameless unconstitutional formation of alternative government structures ... represents an overt encroachment on the sovereignty of Venezuela," Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement published on its website Friday.

The United States on Tuesday imposed sanctions targeting a Venezuelan currency exchange network scheme that siphoned off billions of dollars to corrupt insiders of the Venezuelan government.

Related article: Russia Signs $6 Billion Investment Deals With Venezuela, Maduro Says

Russia's Foreign Ministry described the "tightening of the sanctions" as a "noose that hurts ordinary Venezuelans" and blamed them for fueling economic chaos that has led to a humanitarian crisis.

The South American country is entering a sixth year of recession caused by a crash in oil prices and an unraveling socialist economic model. Three million Venezuelans have fled violence, hyperinflation and shortages of basic goods, most since 2015, according to the United Nations.

Last month, Maduro said Venezuela and "brother country" Russia had signed a $6 billion investment deal in Venezuela's oil and gold sectors.

Reports in Russian media have also suggested that Moscow was considering deploying strategic bombers full-time in Venezuela.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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