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Russian Advisers Will Stay in Venezuela ‘as Long as Necessary,' Moscow Vows

March 28, 2019



Valery Sharifulin / TASS

Russian military advisers will stay in Venezuela as long as needed, the Russian Foreign Ministry has said, a day after U.S. President Donald Trump called on Moscow to “get out” of the South American country.

Moscow sent military advisers to Venezuela over the weekend amid the escalating political crisis in Venezuela. Trump on Wednesday called on Russia to withdraw from Venezuela and said "all options" were open to make that happen. The Kremlin rejected his call and said its actions there were agreed with the Latin American country’s legitimate government.

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Russian military advisers will stay in Venezuela “as long as the Venezuelan government needs them,” Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters during a weekly briefing on Thursday.

Zakharova denied reports that Moscow was considering a long-term military base in the Bolivarian republic.

“It’s the first I’m hearing about bases in Venezuela,” Zakharova said in an interview with the Ekho Moskvy radio station.

Earlier on Thursday, Viktor Bondarev, the head of the Federation Council’s defense and security committee, told media that Russia should consider a base in Venezuela if Caracas extended the offer.

“Just like the United States of America, Russia has the ability and the right to open military bases anywhere in the world,” he said.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Dzhabarov, the first deputy chairman of the Federation Council’s international affairs committee, told media that he was against a base in the current circumstances.

“First the situation in the country [Venezuela] must be stabilized,” he was cited as saying by Interfax.

“Establishing a [military] base when there could be a possible backlash, including an armed one, would mean getting pulled into the internal conflict in Venezuela,” he added.

Russia has emerged as a staunch backer of President Nicolas Maduro while the United States backs the country's opposition and has imposed sanctions.

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido, who declared himself interim president in January, has called on his supporters to prepare to take power in the country, and announced for "tactical actions" to begin on April 6.

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