

Trump Says Putin Not 'Involved' in Venezuela, Despite U.S. Claim

By [Bloomberg](#)

May 04, 2019



Donald Trump **Gage Skidmore**

Donald Trump said that Russian President Vladimir Putin isn't seeking to "get involved" in the crisis in Venezuela, despite assertions by the American president's top national security advisers that the Kremlin is offering critical support to Nicolas Maduro's regime.

"He is not looking at all to get involved in Venezuela other than he'd like to see something positive happen for Venezuela," Trump told reporters at the White House on Friday, following a call with the Russian leader earlier in the day. "And I feel the same way. We want to get some humanitarian aid -- right now people are starving, they have no water, they have no food."

The conversation, which Trump went on to describe as "very positive," appeared to be yet another example of Trump taking Putin's claims at face value despite contrary evidence from his own government. The White House national security adviser, John Bolton, and U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo both said earlier this week that the Kremlin talked Maduro

out of leaving Venezuela after U.S.-backed opposition leader Juan Guaido attempted to end his regime on Tuesday by calling for a military uprising.

White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said later on Friday that Trump simply was “relaying what President Putin said to him. That’s it.”

The Kremlin has denied that the Russian government persuaded Maduro to stay in Caracas.

Bolton said the U.S. was considering action in response against Russia and Cuba, another Maduro ally, that may include new economic sanctions. In March, Bolton warned nations “external to the Western hemisphere” to stay out of Venezuela after Russia landed at least two planeloads of troops in Caracas.

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Russia’s state-run oil giant Rosneft PJSC has drawn criticism from the U.S. for giving financial support to Maduro. Pompeo said in March that the company “continues to throw a lifeline to the regime” by supplying Venezuela’s state-run Petroleos de Venezuela SA with a petroleum product it needs to keep exports flowing in defiance of U.S. sanctions. Rosneft, which is also subject to U.S. sanctions, denied the allegations.

Also Friday, the Defense Department briefed top Trump administration officials — including acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney, Bolton and Pompeo — on “a wide range of military options” involving Venezuela, according to a statement from the U.S. Southern Command.

Trump has repeatedly indicated he also believes Putin’s denials that his government was involved in a Russian effort to interfere in the 2016 election. Trump joined the Russian leader at a news conference in Helsinki last summer in publicly challenging the U.S. intelligence community’s conclusion that the Kremlin directed the interference campaign, drawing condemnation from American lawmakers in both parties.

Trump called a reporter “very rude” after she asked if he had warned Putin not to meddle in the 2020 elections during their call.

“We didn’t discuss that,” he added. “Getting along with countries is a good thing and we want to have good relations with everybody.”

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