

Russia Slashes Number of Military Advisers in Venezuela, Reports Say

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Martin Mejia / AP / TASS

Russia's defense conglomerate has withdrawn "key" defense advisers from Venezuela, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday, citing an unnamed source close to the Russian Defense Ministry.

The Kremlin previously [said](#) Russian military specialists are in Venezuela to service pre-existing contracts for the supply of Russian arms. Moscow, which has supplied Caracas with weapons and loans, accuses the United States of trying to advance a coup in the Latin American country.

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Russia's defense conglomerate Rostec has cut its defense advisers in Venezuela from 1,000 several years ago to "just a few dozen" now, WSJ [cited](#) its source as saying.

The pullout has escalated in the past several months over a lack of new contracts and Rostec's acceptance that cash-strapped Venezuela will be unable to pay for existing deals, other sources were cited as saying.

"They believe the fight is being lost," a person close to the Russian government was quoted as saying, noting that economic liabilities outweigh the political benefits of supporting President Nicolas Maduro.

Rostec [fulfilled](#) its last major contract with Venezuela in March and other defense cooperation plans are expected to "cease," the outlet reports. A source close to the Russian Defense Ministry said money stopped coming in for ongoing missiles and air-defense systems contracts by the end of last year.

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"Since the Venezuelans aren't paying, why should Rostec stay there and foot the bill on its own?" the Defense Ministry source was quoted as saying.

Analyst Mark Galeotti [estimates](#) there are 300 Russian Defense Ministry and corporate security company officers in Venezuela.

Russia sent planes with dozens of soldiers and military advisers to Venezuela's capital of Caracas this spring amid growing tensions in the South American country. One of WSJ's sources said the move had been "a public show of support by the Defense Ministry because real cooperation between Rostec and Venezuela had already slowed to a trickle."

Russia's ambassador in Venezuela has [denied](#) the reports as "absolutely false."

"The work is carried out in compliance with existing obligations, and there is no question of any reductions," Ambassador Vladimir Zayemsky was quoted as saying.

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