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Russia Says Military Plane Landed in Venezuela to Service Equipment

By Reuters

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Sergei Ryabkov **Sergei Bobylev / TASS**

A Russian Air Force plane that landed in Venezuela is there to service Russian military equipment already in the country, Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov on Tuesday, according to Interfax.

The plane landed on Monday in Venezuela's main airport, according to a Reuters witness and a website that tracks plane movements, three months after a similar arrival exacerbated tensions between Washington and Moscow.

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"From all points of view this cooperation is transparent," Ryabkov said in quotes carried by Interfax. "It does not have any elements of destabilization of the region or any other

situation."

U.S. President Donald Trump in March ordered Russia to remove all troops from Venezuela, while Russia's foreign ministry said the planes that landed there at the time were only carrying specialists who were servicing arms sales contracts.

Russia has backed President Nicolas Maduro, while the United States and most other Western countries support opposition leader Juan Guaido. In January, Guaido invoked the constitution to assume Venezuela's interim presidency, arguing that Maduro's 2018 re-election was illegitimate.

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