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Putin Backs Venezuela Talks Rejected by Opposition Leader

By Reuters

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Russian President Vladimir Putin backed negotiations between Venezuela's government and opposition groups that have been rejected by the leader of the main opposition to President Nicolas Maduro.

Last week, a group of Venezuelan opposition parties agreed to enter a dialogue with Maduro's government. But larger groups, led by opposition leader Juan Guaido, rejected the move.

Meeting Maduro in Moscow, Putin said Moscow considered any refusal to hold dialogue to be "irrational and harmful for the country and a threat to the welfare of the population."

"Of course we support the dialogue that you, Mr. President and your government, are conducting with opposition forces," Putin told Maduro.

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Moscow has been one of Maduro's biggest backers amid what it has described as U.S. efforts to undermine him, and has provided loans and help for Venezuela's military and oil industry.

Putin announced plans for Moscow to deliver 1.5 million flu vaccines in the near future to Venezuela and said Russia was meeting its obligations to service military hardware it had sold to Venezuela.

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