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For Pro-Kremlin Figures, Maduro's Capture a Stark Reminder of Failed Zelensky Ouster

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Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) shakes hands with Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro during their meeting at the Kremlin, May 2025. **AP Pool / TASS**

Pro-Kremlin figures and military bloggers have slammed the United States' ouster of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro while pointing out Russia's own failure to capture Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky.

U.S. President Donald Trump claimed that Washington was now "in charge" of Venezuela after American forces forcibly removed Maduro from the country during a shock assault on Caracas on Saturday.

Moscow has demanded the release of Maduro and his wife, calling their capture an "unacceptable encroachment on the sovereignty of an independent state."

But Russian military bloggers — figures with large followings who regularly criticize Russia's

war effort in Ukraine — highlighted the contrast between the U.S. operation and Russia's failed attempt to capture Kyiv and overthrow Zelensky's government in February 2022.

"Judging by the footage published from Venezuela, U.S. forces encountered no resistance in the air or on the ground. I cannot imagine Russian helicopters operating freely over Kyiv. Ukraine had been preparing for a war with Russia for eight years, while Venezuela spent years putting on military parades," pro-Kremlin war correspondent Alexander Kots wrote to his more than 512,000 Telegram followers.

"Today, we are fighting an enemy that is formidable in its own right and enjoys unprecedented support...We tripped over our own rake in 2022," Kots continued. "But the world is still full of examples from which lessons can be learned."

Starshe Eddy, a pro-war Telegram channel with around 600,000 followers, criticized attempts to downplay the U.S. operation.

"Claiming now that the entire operation in Caracas was 'nonsense' and that Russia could do much better if given the order is... crude, chest-thumping patriotism," the channel wrote.

"Clearly, no one is tasking the military with abducting [Zelensky]. He is of far greater use where he is in his current role rather than in Lefortovo Prison [in Moscow]," Starshe Eddy said. "That said, there are many lower-ranking figures whose elimination would bring prestige and acclaim."

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Pro-war blogger Alexander Kartavykh joked that while "the Americans snatched Maduro, we snatched a raccoon from Kherson" — a reference to the animals taken from Kherson Zoo during Russia's retreat from the Ukrainian city in November 2022.

"If you launch the next 'special military operation' without removing the military and political leadership and with naive ideas of brotherly nations in your head, you're f***ing idiots and your descendants will curse you," he said, referring to one of the Kremlin's justifications for invading Ukraine in 2022.

Ultra-nationalist ideologue Alexander Dugin described the events in Venezuela as "a critical and urgent challenge for Russia."

"The capture of Maduro demonstrates that international law no longer exists — only the law of force applies," he said, adding that Russia must now make decisions and take actions "at an accelerated pace."

"The war in Ukraine must under no circumstances be stopped — not before victory is achieved," he said. "Look at Venezuela. If we do not destroy them now, they will destroy us tomorrow — or even today. If necessary, we must be prepared to fight the United States as well. We may not be able to conquer them, but we will be able to defend ourselves."

Veterans of the FSB's Alfa special forces offered a critical view of the U.S. operation to capture Maduro, claiming there was "no particular professionalism" in how it was carried out.

Alfa veteran and FSB colonel Vitaly Demidkin claimed that Moscow "could easily abduct Zelensky, but we are complying with international law. That's why we are not taking such actions for now. Our guys are better at everything, period."

Related article: With Maduro Gone, Putin Risks Being Pushed Out of the Western Hemisphere

While Moscow failed to remove Zelensky in 2022, Russia currently occupies about 20% of Ukrainian territory and the UN has accused Russian authorities of committing crimes against humanity against Ukrainian civilians.

Igor Girkin, the jailed ex-commander of Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, said the Maduro operation was "not just another annoying flick on the nose... we have once again suffered a blow to our image."

"[The U.S.] demonstrated how a great power should act in the face of emerging threats before they become too serious and insurmountable," Girkin said.

Although Caracas has long been Russia's closest South American ally and Putin and Maduro signed a strategic partnership in May 2025, Moscow has stayed on the sidelines as the Venezuelan leader has been taken to New York to face criminal charges.

"Yet another country that was counting on Russia's support was left waiting," Girkin said, likely referring to ousted Kremlin ally Bashar al-Assad of Syria. "Of course, bogged down up to our ears in the bloody quagmire of Ukraine, we are hardly capable of anything else, let alone assisting Venezuela on the other side of the globe, right under the United States' nose."

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