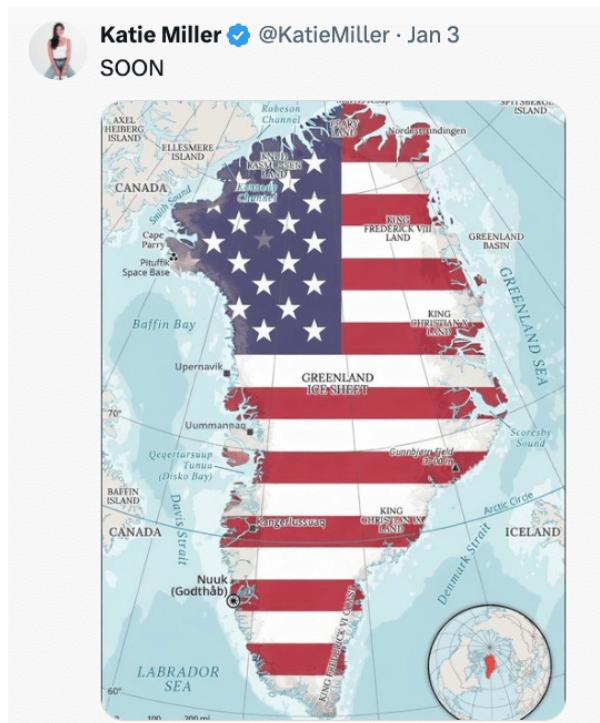


STEPHEN MILLER AND PLANS FOR POST-DECAPITATION

Stephen Miller's breeding partner created a worldwide scandal by posting a picture of Greenland as an American flag.



The map from a far right podcaster, however well-connected, was actually less important than that the US President, the same day, told Michael Scherer, "we do need Greenland" because it was "surrounded by Russian and Chinese ships," a sentiment Trump repeated on Air Force One yesterday.

During our call, Trump, who had just arrived at his golf club in West Palm Beach, was in evident good spirits, and reaffirmed to me that Venezuela may not be the last country subject to American intervention. "We do need Greenland, absolutely," he said, describing the island—a part of Denmark, a NATO ally—as "surrounded by Russian and Chinese ships."

Of course, since both Katie Miller and Donald Trump largely parrot what they've recently heard, both comments likely reflected the views of Stephen Miller.

Meanwhile, this passage of a story describing how Trump really hasn't (yet) committed regime change, but instead decapitated the Venezuelan state only to leave Maduro's cronies in place (for now), attracted a flood of confirmation bias.

Two people close to the White House said the president's lack of interest in boosting Machado, despite her recent efforts to flatter Trump, stemmed from her decision to accept the Nobel Peace Prize, an award the president has openly coveted.

Although Machado ultimately said she was dedicating the award to Trump, her acceptance of the prize was an "ultimate sin," said one of the people.

"If she had turned it down and said, 'I can't accept it because it's Donald Trump's,' she'd be the president of Venezuela today," this person said.

I have no doubt Trump was pissed María Corina Machado got the Nobel Prize and he did not. But a Miami Herald story published just six days after Machado's recognition described that Delcy Rodriguez had been pitching a *Madurismo* without Maduro via back channels for months.

A group of senior Venezuelan government officials, led by Vice President Delcy Rodríguez and her brother Jorge, who is president of the National Assembly, have quietly promoted a series of initiatives in recent months aimed at presenting themselves to Washington as a "more acceptable" alternative to Nicolás Maduro's regime, according to people with direct knowledge of the talks.

The proposals, funneled through intermediaries in Qatar, sought to persuade sectors of the U.S. government that a “Madurismo without Maduro” could enable a peaceful transition in Venezuela—preserving political stability without dismantling the ruling apparatus.

According to the sources, Qatari mediators presented to the U.S. two formal proposals this year, one in April and another in September. Both outlined potential governing mechanisms without Maduro in power. In those scenarios, Delcy Rodríguez would serve as the institutional continuity figure, while retired Gen. Miguel Rodríguez Torres, who is currently in exile and is not related to the Rodríguez siblings, would head a transitional government.

The central argument, the sources said, was that the Rodríguez siblings represent a “more palatable” version of so-called *chavismo* – the socialist ideology named for deceased leader Hugo Chávez – for Washington, since neither has been indicted on narcotrafficking charges by U.S. courts. However, former regime officials—whose accounts have been used by U.S. prosecutors in cases linked to the so-called Cartel of the Suns—have implicated both siblings in logistical support and money laundering operations.

Delcy Rodríguez is also the person who, according to the indictment charging Marco Rubio’s old roomie, former Congressman David Rivera, with acting as an unregistered agent of Venezuela (for which he is due to stand trial next month) who ordered CITGO to serve as a front for the contract. As part of the contract, Rivera lobbied Rubio in 2017 on a Maduro succession plan.

Delcy Rodriguez has been in the thick of such efforts from the moment Trump first became President.

So while the attribution of Trump's sidelining of Venezuela's democratic opposition – by a single person "close to the White House" – to the President's narcissism surely has some truth, I'm more interested in that same story's report that Stephen Miller may actually take on some of the duties of Viceroy that Trump initially assigned to the Miami-raised Spanish speaking Marco Rubio, not least because that may explain why Trump chose decapitation – retention of the oppressive Maduro regime – over regime change, replacement with a democratic one.

Having dismantled much of the U.S. foreign policy infrastructure since he came to power, Trump depends on a small number of trusted personnel and business associates to handle core issues such as his peace plan in Gaza, negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, and now Venezuela.

The National Security Council staff has been gutted and the administration has yet to nominate an assistant secretary of state to handle the Western Hemisphere.

The White House is weighing giving Stephen Miller, Trump's deputy White House chief of staff and homeland security adviser, a more elevated role in overseeing post-Maduro operations in Venezuela, according to one person with knowledge of the conversations, who, like others, spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive dealings.

Miller has been the architect of the administration's anti-immigration and border policy, and took a central role in the effort to remove Maduro. He was among the handful of top administration officials flanking the president during

the news conference Saturday at Trump's Mar-a-Lago Club.

War on the Rocks argues that too many people are trying to read Trump's decision to invade Venezuela as a statement of his ideology, rather than the result of the chaotic fight for influence within his White House.

Many observers of this administration underestimate the power struggle inside the administration and how it scrambles the output. Venezuela has been an interesting case of this. My hypothesis here is that Venezuela has been an outlet of sorts for the hawks, especially Secretary of State Marco Rubio but also others. There has been no sustained appetite for confrontation with Russia or China, and only limited room to maneuver on those fronts without significant escalation risks. Iran and Venezuela, by contrast, offered arenas for hawkish foreign policy.

[snip]

When it comes to predicting the president's next move, too many politicians and analysts assume coherence where there is division, chaos when there is improvisation, and restraint where there is only selectivity. Trump's foreign policy behavior emerges not from doctrine but from friction. Venezuela offered a target that felt weak, morally disreputable, geographically proximate, and manageable.

Under Trump, foreign policy outcomes are less the product of grand strategy than of episodic alignment. Observers should stop asking whether a given action is consistent with Trump's supposed beliefs and start asking whether it is legible to him as fast, dominant, and

containable. They should pay closer attention to intra-administration dynamics and to how ideas persist even when not immediately acted upon. Otherwise, the failure to predict Venezuela will not be an outlier.

Given the WaPo report (which came after Viceroy Rubio bombed on the Sunday shows) that Miller will be playing in a key role in America's new colony, I want to situate the Venezuelan coup in Miller's own history.

It is my belief – this is a hunch based entirely on observation, not any insider reporting – that Miller made himself indispensable when he helped Trump pull himself together after the Butler assassination attempt. Trump was completely dysfunctional after the near-death experience (I don't blame him – everyone would be floored by that trauma). I would argue that Trump has never actually reclaimed his poise since then – throughout the campaign, he was already surpassing all decency on his political attacks, and he frequently got lost on the campaign trail, including his sundowning episode on the campaign trail. Everything people point to now as proof that he is unfit to be President was evident on the campaign trail. But Trump buried his collapse under ever grandiose fascist theater, much of it orchestrated by Miller, leading up to Trump's fascist rally at Madison Square Garden, and shortly after, to election victory.

Whether or not that's the case, it is clear that in the same period, Miller started laying the groundwork to use Venezuela as a propaganda foil for his assault on democracy, which I documented here.

- 2023: Miller decides invoking the Alien Enemies Act will be a nifty way to deport people without due process.

- September 2024: right wing propagandists stoke claim that Aurora, CO has been invaded by Tren de Aragua.
- October 11, 2024: Miller stages a hate fest in Aurora.
- October 18, 2024: After Tim Walz and others debunk Miller's lies, he accuses them of defending gang members.
- February 9, 2025: One of Miller's earliest high profile raids targets Aurora but nets just a single TdA member.
- February 26, 2025: The IC debunks Miller's false claims about TdA.
- March 14, 2025: Trump nevertheless relies on those lies while invoking the Alien Enemies Act.
- March 16, 2025: DHS unloads planes of mostly innocent Venezuelan men in defiance of order from Judge James Boasberg.
- March 21, 2025: Trump claims he's not the one who signed the AEA invocation.
- April 2025: WaPo reports that the NIE also debunked Miller's false claims about TdA.
- April 10, 2025: SCOTUS rules

Trump has to make some effort to get Kilmar Abrego back.

- April 14, 2025: Performance art with Nayib Bukele in Oval Office.
- April 19, 2025: SCOTUS halts an AEA deportation order in process.

But then, on July 18, 2025, Trump swapped Venezuelans from CECOT for 10 Americans in Venezuela, seemingly dealing Stephen Miller a major defeat in his plan to rely on AEA.

I questioned why that happened here. And on the same day, NYT provided what is in retrospect even more critical background, a batshit insane story I glossed here. As the entire CECOT drama was proceeding, Trump was dicking around the Miami Hispanic community, which was clamoring to pressure Maduro, first halting then renewing Chevron's Venezuela license.

- January 31: Maduro makes a deal with Grenell.
- February: Cuban-American Members of Congress (CAMC) pressure Trump to pull the Chevron license, which he does in late February (possibly between the time Rubio signs the deal with Bukele and the day 200 mostly-innocent men are loaded on planes?).
- Chevron CEO Mike Wirth notes

that if Chevron can't export Venezuela's oil, China will do so.

- CAMC learn that Trump might reverse his decision, so threaten to vote against the Big Ugly Bill.
- Stephen Miller pitches Trump on murderboats.
- Trump lets Chevron license expire on May 27.
- CAMC vote to pass Big Ugly.
- Around the same time Trump considers a pardon for convicted drug kingpin Hernández, Marco Rubio sells Trump on a claim that Maduro is a drug kingpin.
- July: Based in part on Wirth's China argument, Trump reverses course, again, on Chevron license, Maduro accepts the CECOT prisoners and releases 10 Americans, including a triple murderer.

Trump's flip-flopping over the Chevron license would lead up to Trump's command, ten days before the actual invasion, that oil companies prepare to invest in Venezuela if they want compensation for equipment Maduro seized.

But we know that, after Miller first pitched Trump on drone strikes in Mexico, and then he and Rubio (Miller to support his fascist project including hopes to return to using the AEA declaration, Rubio to cater to Miami's Cuban-American desires) pitched Trump to instead attack Venezuelan-related drug trafficking. On

July 25 – a week after returning the hundreds of mostly innocent men to Venezuela – Trump signed an order to begin the murderboat campaign, with murderboat strikes beginning in September. That same day, Marco Rubio pretended this was all about the election Maduro stole last year. Another week later, Pam Bondi upped the reward to help capture Maduro – \$50 million we don't yet know whether has been claimed.

This would have been the period when CIA and Delta Force started practicing the snatch of Maduro.

According to a new WSJ story, it wasn't yet a foregone conclusion that Trump would approve the attack. Maduro remained dancing in videos that reported inflamed Trump, and dancing in negotiations to leave peacefully (even as Delcy Rodriguez was working back channels to assume power in his wake).

- October 7: CNN reveals Trump has a **covert** finding authorizing strikes on cartels.
- October 10: Machado wins Nobel Prize.
- October 15: Trump confirms he has signed a finding authorizing strikes on cartels.
- October 16: Alvin Holsey announces his retirement.
- November 16: Ford carrier group arrives in the Caribbean.
- December 1: Trump pardons Juan Orlando Hernández, whose crimes include shipping drugs originating in and protected by

Venezuela.

- December 10: Trump starts seizing oil tankers; Machado arrives in Oslo just after the prize is awarded.
- December 23: Maduro rejects offer to exile in Turkey.
- Roughly December 25: Trump orders oil companies to prepare to invest in Venezuela.
- December 29: CIA strikes a loading facility in Venezuela.
- Unknown date: DOJ supersedes existing indictment against Maduro, shifting emphasis (without much substantiation) from Cartel de los Soles to Tren de Aragua, and including Maduro's wife and son.
- January 3: Trump snatches Maduro.

And immediately after Trump's Administration imagined that they had proven their concept of decapitation without regime change, Trump started listing other places he would attack, including Cuba – high on Rubio's list – but also Mexico (which Miller had had to defer earlier), Colombia, and Greenland.

If Marco Rubio had unilaterally won these battles, the chances would have been greater for genuine regime change; and his failure to deliver may soon sour his constituency on the snatch.

That this was, at least for the moment, decapitation, suggests Miller presided in the

end.

After all, Trump also immediately likened the snatch operation to Miller's domestic efforts to subjugate both civil society, including universities, law firms, and hospitals treating trans children, but also entire blue states, with paramilitary invasions launched in the name of deportation.

Miller's goals are to demand subservience from everyone on threat of invasion, if not death, the stated means of keeping Delcy Rodriguez on track.

In the end, Stephen Miller is perfectly happy to get in bed with proud socialists, it turns out, so long as he can appropriate their authoritarian tools to his own ends.