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# Rubio warns Venezuela of the consequences of attacking Guyana: 'It would be a very bad day for them'

The US Secretary of State considers Caracas' sovereignty claims over the Essequibo region to be illegitimate, and expresses support for the small oil-rich nation where ExxonMobil operates



Marco Rubio on Thursday during a press conference.



## FLORANTONIA SINGER

Caracas - MAR 28, 2025 - 05:46 EDT



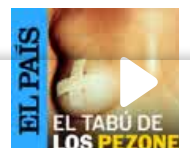
Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s visit to Guyana has rekindled tensions with Venezuela. The senior U.S. official warned Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro on Thursday that a military attack on the small but oil-rich neighboring country would be a big mistake and would have “consequences” for Caracas. The Donald Trump administration is showing Guyana its full support in its territorial dispute with Venezuela. “It would be a very bad day, a very bad week for them,” he said in reply to a question about a hypothetical attack [against ExxonMobil](#) projects in Guyana. The remarks were delivered at a press conference in the capital, Georgetown, alongside Guyanese President Irfaan Ali.

Clashes over the territorial dispute have resurfaced in recent weeks. The Chavista regime’s intention to call elections in the Essequibo region to elect a governor and representatives has set off alarm bells. It is unclear how this measure will be implemented, but the Venezuelan government has insisted that on May 25th, in less than two months, polls will take place in this territory.

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Guyana has reacted to Venezuela's political intentions by threatening those who support these elections with charges of treason. "If it is a Guyanese who is appointed governor of Essequibo [...], we will accuse that person of treason and arrest him," said Guyana's Minister of National Security, Robenson Benn. "Each and every one of them can be charged with treason, and anyone who supports them will also be charged." CARICOM has also described this new movement as a threat, which could rekindle a crisis like the one two years ago [with the referendum](#) with which Venezuela sought to justify [annexation of the territory](#).

Added to this was the incident earlier this month, when a Venezuelan Navy corvette approached an ExxonMobil platform. This approach, in more than a decade of friction over Guyanese oil exploration and exploitation, is the first time Venezuela has come so close to Guyana's border. In this case, according to some analysts, Venezuela has crossed a line. Two previous incidents, in 2013 and 2018, which ended with the crews being detained, occurred further north of the border, in a more undefined area.

Venezuela stands alone in the region in the defense of its claim on Essequibo, with the sole exception of the Nicaraguan regime, which supports Caracas. ExxonMobil's exploration and exploitation—in a joint venture with the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, which holds a 25% stake and is also a partner of PDVSA—with which Guyana is securing a future as the richest country in the region, has been ongoing for over a decade, but it's only now that there are strong demands from Caracas that fall within the [new, incendiary framework of regional geopolitics](#) with Trump in the White House. During the Hugo Chávez administration and the early years of Maduro, the construction of a petrodiplomacy with which Chavismo gained support in the Caribbean countries—loyal to Guyana's position—took precedence over the territorial dispute.

"We have a big navy, and it can get almost anywhere. And we have ongoing commitments to Guyana," Rubio said, adding that he would not go into details about what the United States would do in the event of a Venezuelan attack on Guyana, but that new cooperation agreements have been signed on defense and security issues, particularly regarding offshore oil facilities. Rubio warned

adventurism.”

Rubio's visit coincided with joint military exercises between the U.S. Navy and the Guyana Defense Force in international waters and within Guyana's Exclusive Economic Zone, intended to improve communications and coordination of joint maneuvers. Venezuela has also deployed military vehicles to nearby shores in recent months, including attack boats purchased from Iran.

Venezuela's Vice President Delcy Rodríguez responded to Rubio's visit by stating that Guyana “must immediately halt the illegal and abusive use of a sea yet to be delimited” and sit down to negotiate. In a Telegram message, she called the Guyana president “the Zelenskiy of the Caribbean.” Maduro for his part railed against Rubio. “Here comes that idiot [Marco Rubio threatening Venezuela](#) from Guyana. You idiot, no one threatens Venezuela because this is the homeland of the liberators, this is the homeland of Bolívar,” he declared.

Negotiated solutions to the territorial conflict have been sought since 1966, with the Geneva Agreement. The initiatives ended in 2018, when the UN Secretary-General referred the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Although Venezuela has rejected Guyana's jurisdiction in this claim, it has taken part in the process and mounted a defense. In August, Venezuela will have the opportunity to submit its final written reply to the ICJ, which is analyzing the validity of the 1899 Paris Arbitration Award, which established Guyana's borders, including the Essequibo region—equivalent to two-thirds of its territory—claimed by Venezuela. It will do so after Venezuela has elected governors and representatives for Essequibo, although nobody knows where they will fulfill their duties.

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