

anymore,” that would actually have some effect or attempt to have some effect. It would be unconstitutional, unenforceable. But to tell him not to do something or to stop doing something he is not doing is nonsense.

The effect of this is to slap the President of the United States in the face. That is the only effect that this vote can have. It can have no practical effect because it is trying to stop something that isn’t going on.

So we are again here considering this War Powers Resolution to remove the troops from a foreign country where they do not exist. The War Powers Act was created as a way to address the continuing deployment of U.S. forces into hostilities—or in hostilities.

There is no continuing deployment of U.S. troop forces in hostilities. The War Powers Act was never designed to remove the President’s article II right to defend the United States, its interests, or its citizens; nor, indeed, could the War Powers Act do that because the Constitution absolutely directs the President of the United States to use the military might of the United States to protect it.

Indeed, the constitutional power was given to the President. We cannot change that. It is the power that he has. This vote and similar votes before it are an abuse of the War Powers Act. There are no U.S. military forces in Venezuela.

The United States conducted a limited operation to remove an indicted narcoterrorist, Nicolas Maduro, from Venezuela and brought him to the United States to face justice for his crimes.

Now, was this a good thing to do? Well, of course, it was a good thing to do. Indeed, Democrats themselves have said that it was a good thing to do.

I want to read from three different Democrats who told us that this was a good thing to do. I am not going to name them. They can step up and take credit if they want to. These are three different Democrats.

The first one said:

Obviously, we know Maduro and his cronies do not want to go quietly into the night, but the United States needs to work with its partners and allies in the region to ratchet up pressure.

This was a Senator on August 2, 2024.

The same Senator says, after Maduro was removed:

It is an illegal act of war to replace Maduro.

Another Senator said—and this was back in 2019:

If Trump cared about consistency, he would make the realist case for intervention in Venezuela (getting rid of Maduro is good for the United States).

This Senator called for intervention in Venezuela. Do you know what he says now, after the invasion?

The invasion of Venezuela has nothing to do with American security. Venezuela is not a security threat to the U.S.

That is what he says today.

Now, one of my favorites, this Senator said—and this was on February 5, 2020:

And the President brags about his Venezuela policy. Give us a break. He hasn’t brought an end to the Maduro regime. The Maduro regime is more powerful today and more entrenched today than it was when the President began.

Well, the President changed that. He removed Maduro. Do you know what that same Senator says today?

This is reckless. And the American people are just, this morning, in fear of what’s going to happen here.

That was January 4, 2026.

This is the height of hypocrisy. The purpose of this resolution is to slap the President in the face. It will do nothing that it purports to do because it can’t stop something that isn’t going on right now.

In addition, the President’s actions in Venezuela are consistent with other Presidents’ efforts to protect the American people from threats in our own backyard.

President George H. W. Bush authorized limited military operations to arrest Panama’s Manuel Noriega and bring him to the United States to stand trial for drug-related charges, just as President Trump has done with Maduro. In that case, President Bush deployed more than 9,000 troops, and they fought for 2 weeks on the ground in Panama before they got their hands on Noriega. At that time, both Republican and Democrat leaders of the Senate praised this move.

Compare that to what happened here. There were only about 200 troops involved, and they were engaged for 47 minutes. And yet, all of a sudden, this is a horrendous problem.

When you are in the business of flying drugs into the United States—drugs that kill our children and hurt our country and destabilize our hemisphere—in violation of U.S. law, and when you invite Russia, China, and Iran to set up shop right in our backyard and do the things that they are doing, there is going to be a price to pay. Maduro is paying that price today.

But unlike the former President, President Trump demonstrated he is a man of action. He was decisive and did what he promised the American people he would do, and that is to keep them safe.

Now, Democrats are reversing their position on Maduro’s removal to criticize the President.

The President’s decision was the right call. Let’s acknowledge that fact. Let’s celebrate that fact. Let’s resolve that the President of the United States is to be commended for what he did.

My fellow Senators, vote no on this resolution. This is nothing more than a slap in the face to the President of the United States. It cannot accomplish something that does not exist.

I yield the floor.

VENEZUELA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to make just a few brief observations ahead of the vote on Senator Kaine’s War Powers Resolution.

The War Powers Act is not the law I would have written, and there are reasonable questions about its constitutionality. But it has been the law now for over 50 years. And it is important to remember what it was designed to prevent—and, even more importantly, what it wasn’t.

Back in 1973, the goal was preventing another Vietnam. The idea was to impose guardrails against the large-scale, indefinite commitment of U.S. troops abroad. And in shutting that door, the law very intentionally reaffirmed our Founders’ decision to leave another door open.

The law grants presidents clear authority for the limited use of military force. And of the many occasions over the years when colleagues on both sides of the aisle have invoked the War Powers Act to condemn such limited use of military force—by Presidents of both parties—I can’t recall a single one in which Congress managed to change the facts and artificially constrain the Commander in Chief’s authority.

This time is no different. The President was well within this authority in his decision to bring Nicolas Maduro to justice. How do we know? A number of ways:

First, plain statute: Notification of Congress within 48? Check. Withdrawal within 60 days? Try 60 minutes.

What is more, recent history provides clear precedent from Presidents of both parties. What authority did this operation exceed that President Obama or President Reagan did not exceed in operations in Libya? Or President Clinton in Kosovo? What makes this time different than President Biden’s strikes in Syria or Yemen? Certainly, there is little daylight between the legality of this operation and the one President H.W. Bush undertook to apprehend Manuel Noriega in Panama.

You don’t have to agree with a President’s approach to national security policy to acknowledge his compliance with the law and his constitutional authority for the use of force, which makes the invocation of the War Powers Act such a tired and blunt instrument. For my part, I have consistently opposed resolutions like these aimed at constraining Presidents’ constitutional authority. And I have done it on behalf of Presidents of both parties.

I am old enough to remember when, during President Obama’s feckless dealings with Iran, no less than the future Democratic leader insisted that, “We should never take the military option off the table”.

But every one of our colleagues remembers last summer when the frequent fliers of the War Powers Resolution reached yet again for their favorite tool after the President’s decision to degrade Iran’s nuclear program without putting a single American boot on the ground.

Of course, there are serious questions at hand to which the Senate and the American people should expect serious answers from the Commander in Chief.

The President's authorities to conduct military operations may be wide and well-established, but they incur a responsibility to situate decisive actions in broader, longer-term strategy.

Maduro is an authoritarian thug. He reduced a once-prosperous neighbor of America to an impoverished vassal of Cuba, Russia, Iran, and China. He profited from the flow of lethal drugs to America. He spat in the face of Venezuelan voters. And, until very recently, he slept in peace while they starved.

A Western Hemisphere without him or his ilk in power serves America's interests. But clearly, Venezuela and the hemisphere have a ways to go.

To the extent that our colleagues are concerned about the mechanisms and timeline of a transition to democratically elected Venezuelan leaders, I share their curiosity. If they want to know more about the President's longer-term strategy to stabilize Venezuela and the Western Hemisphere, so do I.

Suffice it to say that whatever the objective, whatever the strategy, America is well-served when its Presidents secure enduring bipartisan support for their foreign policies. President Obama ignored Congress in pursuing a reckless and bad nuclear deal with Iran. Unsurprisingly, that deal did not endure.

Successfully returning Venezuela to its role of stable, prosperous, democratic neighbor is a noble goal, but an ambitious one. It doesn't come without risk. And it is worth making the clear case to the country.

I appreciate the administration's willingness to brief Senators on the sensitive details of a tactical victory. But they owe it to the American people—and, frankly, the long-suffering people of Venezuela—to lay out the path to strategic success in much greater detail.

If the aim is to reestablish American primacy in its near abroad, great. If the idea is to evict enemies who hate America from a valuable foothold in our region, onward.

A stable Venezuela, led by duly elected Venezuelans, will leave Americans safer and more secure. The administration should explain how that end goal will be achieved.

In the meantime, I will oppose the Kaine resolution and would urge my colleagues to do the same.

VENEZUELA

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the War Powers Resolution before the Senate regarding recent U.S. actions related to Venezuela. This is a serious and consequential matter that goes to the heart of Congress' constitutional responsibility to authorize sustained military engagements, define the limits of executive authority, and protect the long-term interests of both the United States and the Venezuelan people.

Nicolas Maduro is a narcoterrorist and international drug trafficker whose actions led to the addiction and deaths of many Americans. He was an illegitimate dictator who held power through stolen elections and horrific violence against the people of Venezuela. The Biden administration imposed a \$25 million bounty for his arrest and extradition to the United States. He was indicted twice in Federal court and should stand trial in the United States.

With Maduro rightfully captured, the circumstances have now changed. While I support the operation to seize Nicolas Maduro, which was extraordinary in its precision and complexity, I do not support committing additional U.S. forces or entering into any long-term military involvement in Venezuela or Greenland without specific congressional authorization.

The resolution I have supported today does not include any language related to the removal operation. Rather, it reaffirms Congress' ability to authorize or limit any future sustained military activity in Venezuela, while preserving the President's inherent article II authority to defend the United States from an armed attack or imminent threat. I believe invoking the War Powers Act at this moment is necessary, given the President's comments about the possibility of "boots on the ground" and a sustained engagement "running" Venezuela, with which I do not agree.

What happens now matters greatly, both in terms of accountability for Maduro and the future of the Venezuelan people. The long-term success of this operation will depend on Venezuelans having the opportunity to run Venezuela, with the support of international and private sector partners.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

VENEZUELA

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, first, I want to thank Senator Kaine for his great leadership on this issue, Senator SCHIFF, and Senator PAUL for working with me on this resolution.

If there was ever a moment for the Senate to find its voice, it is now. The Senate must act to stop Donald Trump's folly.

Today, the Senate must assert the authority given to it in the Constitution on matters of war and peace. We must send Donald Trump a clear message on behalf of the American people: No more endless wars.

If any of my colleagues—if any of the American people—doubted what Trump was up to, here is what he said last night to the New York Times.

They asked him: How long are we going to stay in Venezuela—a month, 6 months, a year?

Donald Trump said:
I would say much longer.

Donald Trump is ready for an endless war in Venezuela and Lord knows where else. The American people are not. The American people want us to focus on the No. 1 issue they face: rising costs. They can't afford the things they need—the affordability crisis.

And, instead, Donald Trump and too many of our Republican colleagues are saying: Let us spend our treasure and maybe even American lives on Venezuela and other areas far afield.

How can the American people watch this and not just groan and grimace and ache and fear? When America has tried to do this kind of nation building, these kinds of regime replacements in the past, it has led to the American people paying the price in treasure and in blood.

So now we have the opportunity to stop. We are very close. We urge our Republican colleagues to join us. Tell the American people you want to focus on what they care about: the cost of groceries, the cost of healthcare, the cost of electricity and other goods.

The contrast between what is happening in the House and Senate today is glaring. In the House, there will be, from what I am told, a good number of Republicans who will join in saying: Extend the tax credits for 3 years.

Leader THUNE has even refused to put that on the floor.

But what is happening here? The ability, the strength, the constitutional authority of the Congress to say: No. No endless wars. No sending all our money down to Venezuela and Lord knows what other countries.

Again, just look at this, my Republican colleagues. Here is what Trump said on oversight of Venezuela.

They asked him:

A year? Longer?

He says:

I would say much longer.

How many of you want to see us bogged down in Venezuela for a whole bunch of years? If you don't want to see that, if you want to see us focused on the costs the American people are facing and reduce them, vote with us.

Vote yes on this very important resolution.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

VENEZUELA

Mr. Kaine. Mr. President, I have spoken before; so I am going to be very brief. And then I am going to call up the business of the Senate, this War Powers Resolution.

Two points. In the aftermath of the briefing yesterday, I have had good conversations with colleagues, and many of them have asked me about the distinction between the execution of a valid arrest warrant and a larger military operation.

I want to state very clearly that I do not challenge, nor does this resolution