



**Senator Peter Welch
Remarks as Delivered
On President Trump's March to War in the Caribbean
December 17, 2025**

Mr. President, the United States is on the brink of a war; a war of regime change in Venezuela. President Trump has amassed an armada of U.S. warships, fighter planes, and special forces off the coast of Venezuela. Around 15,000 military personnel are in the region, and that includes special forces, Marines, and specialized units.

Reports indicate that 13 warships are operating in the Caribbean right now, and that includes the U.S.S. Gerald Ford carrier group and several amphibious assault ships. And more than a hundred advanced aircraft have been deployed and are being deployed, and that includes, Mr. President, F-35s from the Vermont Air National Guard.

The President has also deployed combat rescue units, the types of specialists that can rescue pilots who are downed in hostile territory. And the President himself has said that the attack could come "very soon."

So, Mr. President, the question is: why are our warships, a carrier group, and support assets in the Caribbean? They are not there for drug interdiction. The reason they're there is obvious, and it's even acknowledged. President Trump wants Maduro gone. He wants regime change.

The President has said himself that Maduro's days, "are numbered." His Chief of Staff, Susie Wiles, said that the President, "wants to keep on blowing boats up until Maduro cries 'uncle,' and people way smarter than me say that he will." And when Secretary Rubio was asked a few weeks ago if the Venezuelan government should be concerned about the massive military buildup in the Caribbean, he said, "they don't have a government. There's an illegitimate regime that's basically narco-trafficking organization that's empowered itself."

All of us revile Maduro. He's a tyrant. He's tortured and jailed political opponents. His policies have been bankrupted his very wealthy country, driving millions of Venezuelans to flee their homes.

Yet, Mr. President, we face two questions: first, should the United States go to war for the purpose of changing a regime we despise? Second, can the President— any

President, through his unilateral actions—plunge our country into a war for the purpose of changing regimes and do that without coming to this Congress for approval under the *War Powers Act*?

Mr. President, we've had experience with wars to change regimes we despised. The Iraq War was sold confidently by its promoters as a simple operation—our troops would be welcomed as liberators. We remember that, and we know how that ended. True, it only took weeks for America's superior firepower to topple Saddam Hussein's regime—but that was only the beginning.

The war in Iraq unleashed decades of instability, ushering in violent Islamic insurgencies across the region. And of course, the war in Afghanistan took only a handful of special forces troops and targeted air strikes to lead to the quick fall of the Taliban regime. But it also dragged our country and many of our allies into our longest war, fighting a 20-year insurgency.

In each case, it was easy to topple the regime, but what followed was tremendously terrible for our soldiers and our taxpayers. Those wars cost the United States and our allies the lives of 10,000 of our brave soldiers. It cost us trillions of dollars, and we are still paying for that.

Mr. President, the Executive has two obligations, and the Congress must demand compliance. First, the Administration owes us transparency. In the build-up of our military presence, the Administration has ordered the extrajudicial killings of nearly 100 civilians in international waters. That they were alleged “drug dealers” or “drug corridors” does not give the President the authority to direct the military to attack.

The Administration has provided *absolutely* no information to Congress about these attacks—who was killed, the basis of the attacks, nor has it released the video of the recent attack in which survivors were killed in a second strike. Nor has the Administration made public the classified legal opinion on which it relies to justify its actions.

Members of Congress, including me, have had an opportunity to read that opinion, which I found *woefully* unconvincing, but since it was classified, I can't discuss. My view? Release that opinion to the American people. My view? Release that video to the American people.

Second, as the President masses our forces for a war—as he and his associates have explicitly stated is one in which their goal would be the elimination of the Maduro regime—the President continues to refuse to come to Congress and seek Congressional approval for a military action, as is required under the *War Powers Act*.

Mr. President, all of us—*all of us*—as elected members of the United States Senate, have vested in us, under the Constitution Article I, the responsibility and *exclusive* authority to declare war. Let us all accept our duty and demand that the executive be transparent, be accountable, and comply with the provisions of the *War Powers Act* and come to Congress for our approval of the military action that is clearly underway.

Mr. President, I yield.

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