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U.S.A.'S INTERVENTION OF VENEZUELA: A GRAVE VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

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The year 2026 began with a severe military aggression by the United States of America against a sovereign nation 'Venezuela' without any proper legal justification. The US Intervention was aimed at ousting and capturing the Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, and his wife, Cilia Flores. In an apparent violation of sovereign immunity of a state, the US Special Forces captured Maduro and his wife and took them to New York to face criminal charges of "narco-terrorism and drug trafficking" in a US Federal Court.

Operation Absolute Resolve as the US military operation was named remained indubitably successful- violates one of the most basic rules of international law which imposes prohibition of the use of force by one country on another in international relations as enshrined in Article-2(4) of the United Nations Charter. Article-2(4) reads as: "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations." The only exception to this prohibition is set out in Article- 51 which is: "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security." Here, the USA was not at all anticipating or facing an armed attack from Venezuela, neither was it facing any threat to its sovereignty and integrity, which could trigger a right of self- defence. Still the USA started an international armed conflict with Venezuela on its own accord, which is not at all acceptable and must be condemned by the international community.

No legal justification by the USA

The USA carried out this military aggression on the pretext of a law enforcement operation to liberate oppressed people of Venezuela from the authoritarian rule of President Maduro's government which had been characterized by electoral fraud, human rights abuses, corruption, censorship and severe economic hardship. But this presumption does not change the fact that the USA committed a serious violation of international law by this armed operation, because it

cannot legally enforce law on the territory of some other state without its consent. Moreover, the capture of a potent, yet unlawful Head of the State by the use of military force is another violation of international law. Apart from this, any of the minor legal exceptions to the prohibition on the use of force in international relations does not apply to the US operation. This absurd transgression of Venezuelan territorial integrity and political independence by the US is not a new phenomenon, rather there have been a long period of US sanctions, open threats against Venezuela previously, and recent deadly attacks on ships supposedly transporting drugs, as well as capture of tankers carrying Venezuelan oil.

The United States of America, being a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is bound to fulfil the objectives of the UNSC, a body that is meant to enforce prohibitions on the use of force. The objectives of the UNSC are to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations. On the contrary, the most powerful nuclear state itself infringes on the core purposes of the Security Council by its bizarre action of breaching the territorial integrity of a sovereign state Venezuela. Moreover, the USA didn't care to obtain a Security Council's mandate for the above operation. The US officials have not been able to provide any lawful justification for the above actions. Toppling an illegitimate leader, freeing the Venezuelan people from the callous autocratic rule of President Maduro, uprooting illegal drug smuggling, whether as pretence or sincerely held aims, these intents do not arm US to use military force on another state's territory arbitrarily.

Operation Iraqi Freedom v/s Operation Absolute Resolve

Operation Iraqi Freedom of 2003 was another such armed intervention of the USA in Iraq. It was a wide range invasion and longer occupation to topple the dictatorial government of Saddam Hussein. This was conducted by a U.S.- led combined force of troops from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Poland. It comprised of over 100,000 troops from these nations and was a massive attack, that began on 20 March 2003 and lasted over one month. This operation was aimed at disarming the Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, overthrowing Saddam Hussein from power and liberating the Iraqi people from the repressive, authoritarian rule of Saddam Hussein. It resulted in several US casualties before being successful in its objectives. It also initiated a nine- year long war and prolonged successive insurgency in the region that finally ended in 2011. It resulted in the arrest and execution of Saddam Hussein by the USA.

On the other hand, Operation Absolute Resolve of 2026 was a quick, targeted, precise and specialist mission to capture Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. It was a surgically accurate short- time intervention attack, whereby the USA bombed targets to arrest President Maduro for his alleged involvement in narco- terrorism and drug- trafficking. By this operation, the USA also aimed to take control of Venezuela's oil reserves. It was carried out by the elite U.S. Army Delta Force commandos after months of stimulation training and on the basis of intelligence gathered by the C.I.A.. This operation ended successfully without even a single American casualty.

One critical difference between the two operations is that before carrying out the **Operation Iraqi Freedom**, the USA engaged in an intense diplomatic quest to obtain the nod of the United Nations Security Council, and after it was successfully carried out, then elaborate attempts to explain US action in legal terms were made, while in **Operation Absolute Resolve**, the US didn't even take pains to gain the Security Council's approval, and acted on its own whim and did not provide any legal justification for the said operation.

Way Forward

It is very crucial that such kind of military aggressions be condemned strongly by the whole international community. Be it the US or any other country, the rules of international law should be adhered to by all the UN member states, and territorial sovereignty and head of the state immunity of every state should be respected by all the nations. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in 2022, 141 countries voted to "criticise strongly the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine". Same type of response should be given to the USA's actions, and they should also be condemned by the whole international community. The United Nations system should also adopt certain measures to desist a state from taking such arbitrary and illegal actions against any other sovereign nation. Such type of aggression by a permanent member of the UN Security Council defeats the very purposes for which the UN was established, which is to maintain international peace and security, respect territorial sovereignty of each nation. So, the UN should take strict actions against the US.

If such kind of aggression had been taken by any other country on the territory of some other nation, then the USA would have definitely taken some strict actions against such an aggressor: like imposing sanctions, tariffs, trade barriers, etc. Now when the US is itself the aggressor, it remains to be seen how the other superpowers like China, Russia, the United Kingdom, etc.

shall react against the US.

Apart from this, big and wealthy players of the global geopolitical arena should ensure that the international law has more grounding and shall compulsarily be binding on all the nations, and should be followed rigorously by all the member states of the UN. If any state violates any rules or principles of international law, like that of the UN Charter, then provisions of strict punishments, like imposing sanctions, economic hardships, trade tariffs, etc. against such state must be there, so that the countries abide by the rules of international law. Moreover, the decisions of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court must have binding powers to be obeyed by all the countries.

Conclusion

The United States of America's targeted bombings in Venezuela to capture President Nicolas Maduro and taking him and his wife to the US for trying them for narco-terrorism and drug-trafficking set a dangerous precedent for the global geopolitics. Such actions of aggression can trigger and motivate other powerful nations to take same kind of actions against smaller and weaker states, which can potentially disrupt the world order and can create lawlessness in the world. It can instigate other states to violate the territorial sovereignty and integrity of small and weaker nations.

There is possibility that President Nicolas Maduro meets the same fate as Saddam Hussein by the USA. If he is executed by the USA in the same manner, then the UN Security Council should immediately remove the USA from its permanent membership and should take strict reprimanding actions against the USA.

The Trump Administration's increasing desire to annex Greenland, which is a part of Denmark, and threat of similar kind of interventions in Colombia and Mexico are also worrisome and arouse fear. Such actions, if materialised would dismantle the global order and peace. Borders cannot be redrawn by force, and territories cannot be annexed by coercion by any country in this world. International law must be upheld and followed by all the states to maintain a peaceful geopolitical world order.