



Before capturing Maduro, Trump admin sought lessons from Iraq war to get Venezuela's oil flowing

As the Trump administration prepared late last year for the [US military operation to capture](#) Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, a handful of officials began studying the US approach to oil resources in Iraq following the 2003 US invasion.

During a State Department briefing in late December, among the key findings presented was that Iraqi skepticism about America's intentions hampered US efforts to boost production quickly, according to two sources familiar with the conversations.

Distrust of Americans was so high among Iraqis working in the oil industry that internal sabotage harmed the ability to quickly boost output, according to one of the sources familiar with State Department briefing. It's unclear if elements of the briefing, which has not been previously reported, were ever shared directly with President Donald Trump, who has long been a critic of the US decision not to, as he puts it, "keep the oil" in Iraq.

But if they were, they do not appear to have altered the president's thinking.

Trump has made no secret of his desire to exert US control over Venezuela's vast oil resources, and in private, both before and after Maduro's January 3 capture by US forces, he has been keenly focused on how to revitalize Venezuela's oil industry, sources said.

While multiple Trump administration officials have said the oil profits would go towards benefitting the people of Venezuela, Trump has repeatedly promised to "take back the oil" in Venezuela that he also claims was "stolen from us" — a reference to Venezuela's past nationalization of assets and infrastructure owned by US oil companies.



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