



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 28, 2025

NYT: Trump Wrong on TdA's Ties to Maduro. Miami Herald: Former CIA Official Confirms Maduro Control

When President Donald Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to deport illegal-alien members of the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua gang, *The New York Times's* propaganda machine whirled to life.

The order argues that Tren de Aragua is part of narco-terrorism operation sponsored by the regime of Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro. No, the *Times's* scribes wrote, U.S. intelligence insiders say the Maduro regime doesn't control the outfit.

Problem for *The Times*: Two days later, the *Miami Herald*, citing a former CIA agent, reported that the Maduro regime is in "operational control" of the gang. Trump was right. The entry of gang members into the United States was indeed an invasion. And that means triggering the Alien Enemies Act was the right thing to do.



AP Images
Nicolás Maduro

As the U.S. tracks suspected Venezuelan gang members, a look at a group that's helping
<https://t.co/If1ql4cn6>

— Miami Herald (@MiamiHerald) [March 25, 2025](#)

***Times* Story**

Trump signed his order on March 15 [after declaring](#) TdA and other gangs are terrorist organizations. It clearly explains why invoking the 227-year-old law was necessary.

TdA "is a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization with thousands of members, many of whom have unlawfully infiltrated the United States and are conducting irregular warfare and undertaking hostile actions against the United States," the order says:

TdA operates in conjunction with *Cártel de los Soles*, the Nicolas Maduro regime-sponsored, narco-terrorism enterprise based in Venezuela, and commits brutal crimes, including murders, kidnappings, extortions, and human, drug, and weapons trafficking. TdA has engaged in and continues to engage in mass illegal migration to the United States to further its objectives of harming United States citizens, undermining public safety, and supporting the Maduro regime's goal of destabilizing democratic nations in the Americas, including the United States.

Moreover, the Maduro-sponsored [Cártel de los Soles](#) "coordinates with and relies on TdA and other



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organizations to carry out its objective of using illegal narcotics as a weapon to ‘flood’ the United States.”

Thus did Trump exert the summary power of deportation conferred by the [Alien Enemies Act](#), which confers this power upon the president:

Whenever there is a declared war between the United States and any foreign nation or government, or any invasion or predatory incursion is perpetrated, attempted, or threatened against the territory of the United States by any foreign nation or government, and the President makes public proclamation of the event, all natives, citizens, denizens, or subjects of the hostile nation or government, being of the age of fourteen years and upward, who shall be within the United States and not actually naturalized, shall be liable to be apprehended, restrained, secured, and removed as alien enemies.

The *Times* was having none of it.

Trump Wrong

It cited a document, dated February 26, that said the “shared judgment of the nation’s spy agencies” that the Maduro regime does not control the gang. Of course, that means Trump had gone off the deep end again. The *Times* didn’t put it that way, of course.

“The disclosure calls into question the credibility of Mr. Trump’s basis for invoking a rarely used wartime law, the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, to transfer a group of Venezuelans to a high-security prison in El Salvador last weekend, with no due process,” the [Times observed](#):

The intelligence community assessment concluded that the gang, Tren de Aragua, was not directed by Venezuela’s government or committing crimes in the United States on its orders, according to the [anonymous] officials.

Amusingly, the *Times* nearly undermined its own report. The newspaper confessed that the conclusion had only a “‘moderate’ confidence level ... because of a limited volume of available reporting about the gang.”

“Most of the intelligence community, including the C.I.A. and the National Security Agency, agreed with that assessment,” the [Times reported](#). Then it slighted the FBI. It says the gang is linked to Maduro but used “information the other agencies did not find credible.”

The *Times* also explained that Trump’s declaration inched the nation close to a “constitutional clash” between the executive and judicial branches.

Miami Herald Story

Two days later, the [Herald sallied forth](#) with a report that contradicted the *Times*.

The *Herald* disclosed that “a small team of Venezuelans and former U.S. officials with deep connections to police and intelligence in the South American country has been providing information to the Trump administration about the number and identities of members of Tren de Aragua and other Venezuelan gangs headed to or already in the United States.”

But that wasn’t all. The same group met and presented information to top Trump advisors before he



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was inaugurated. The group disclosed the “links between the feared Tren de Aragua gang and the Nicolás Maduro regime.” It also gave the Trump officials Venezuelan police documents that identified “1,800 gang members believed to have been sent into the United States,” [three sources told the Herald](#).

Maduro Controls TdA

Indeed, the *Times*’s sources didn’t tell the paper of record that some TdA members who landed in the United States had military training, or that the Maduro regime controls them. That was up to the *Herald*. In fact, the newspaper reported, Maduro controls the gang:

Among those sent to the United States were 300 gang members who had received paramilitary training in Venezuela, said Gary Berntsen, a decorated former CIA station chief who headed the agency’s unit searching for Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan.

“The Venezuelan regime has assumed operational control of these guys [Tren de Aragua] and has trained 300 of them; they have given them paramilitary training, training them to fire weapons, on how to conduct sabotage, how to use crypto,” Berntsen, one of the team members, said. “They have given them all like a four- to six-week course. They put these 300 guys through that course and that they were deploying them into the United States to 20 locations, to 20 separate states.”

Another team member, who requested anonymity to protect the identities of the team’s sources in Venezuela, said the group has had access to records from the police agencies of the South American country and that these were provided to the Trump administration, and that they have led to the identification and arrests of at least 800 Venezuelans who are believed to be either full-fledged members of Tren de Aragua or members of smaller affiliated gangs.

Venezuela’s intelligence services gave money to the gang members to enter the United States. They “were deliberately sent into the largest American cities to create problems for U.S. law enforcement agencies, the source told the *Herald*.”

The gang members are “soldiers sent in an asymmetric warfare operation against the United States,” the source said. One job for the gang members was dealing drugs in major cities “to fill the void created by the crackdown” on the Salvadoran MS-13 gang.

Former CIA officer Gary Berntsen, one of the most highly decorated intelligence veterans in recent U.S. history, has come forward to confirm that the Venezuelan criminal gang Tren de Aragua (TdA) has been deliberately deployed into the United States by the Venezuelan regime, with...

— Insurrection Barbie (@DefiantlyFree) [March 28, 2025](#)

The Trump administration also received documents that revealed the names of 1,281 gang members. They “were part of an estimated 20,000 inmates who have been released from Venezuelan prisons during Maduro’s tenure and who were told that they had to leave the country if they wanted to remain free,” the [newspaper continued](#):



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Information gathered by the team from sources inside the regime points to a plan that would place 5,000 gang members inside the United States, Berntsen said.

Run by the 300 gang members-turned-operatives, he said the people pose a dangerous threat to U.S. national security. "This is the equivalent of an oversized combat brigade dispersed through 20 different locations, but with thousands of people that would be able to communicate, move drugs, and do whatever they needed, and be able on hand to put pressure on the U.S. with violence in cities, and build out a massive criminal infrastructure in America," he said.

Former FBI Agents Were Right

The *Herald's* report confirmed the [warning from](#) 10 former FBI officials to top elected officials on Capitol Hill in January 2024.

"The threat we call out today is new and unfamiliar," the former officials wrote about the Biden administration's catching and releasing millions of illegal aliens.

This letter from former FBI, Homeland Security, and law enforcement officials on the growing national security threat at the Southern Border sent a chill up my spine.

Border security is national security. pic.twitter.com/BOUQBj0Q5N

— Ashley Hinson (@RepAshleyHinson) [January 26, 2024](#)

"It would be difficult to overstate the danger represented by the presence inside our borders of what is comparatively a multi-division army of young single adult males from hostile nations and regions whose background, intent, or allegiance is completely unknown," they wrote.

A "starling number are on the terror watch list," the officials wrote. They are "potential operators in what appears to be an accelerated and strategic penetration, a soft invasion, designed to gain internal access to a country that cannot be invaded militarily in order to inflict catastrophic damage if and when enemies deem it necessary."



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