



Security Council

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Letter dated 3 October 2019 from the Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to address you, in your capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of October 2019, to alert you about an extremely serious incident: the baseless accusations made by Iván Duque Márquez, President of the Republic of Colombia, during the general debate of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on 25 September 2019, which are part of a general plan of aggression against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

During his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, the President of the Republic of Colombia accused my country of committing acts of violence that have actually taken place in Colombian territory. Such defamations are part of a disinformation operation led by Colombia and the United States of America, and which we already denounced back on 9 July 2019 in a letter sent to some members of the Security Council, in which we indicated:

These operations consist of generating false news that attempt to hold the Venezuelan Government responsible for the protection of Colombian irregular militias, such as the ELN. Also, affirming that Venezuela provides them with MANPADS and trains them in its use, without providing any evidence. The most serious aspect is that high representatives of the Governments of Colombia and the United States of America have echoed such smears without consignment of any kind of evidentiary elements.

These accusations seek the construction of a *casus belli*, which would justify the use of armed force against Venezuela by Colombia and the United States of America. These two countries would be responding to a simulated aggression; hence, they would be protected by the inherent right of legitimate defence provided for in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. What makes matters even more serious is the fact that such aggression is non-existent, unfounded and worse still, is manufactured with false evidence, as will be proven below.

During his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, President Iván Duque stated the following:

The Venezuelan dictatorship represents an additional link in the chain of transnational terrorism. Its corrupt structures are servants to the drug cartels. Its pawns are henchmen of the mafia, which in turn feeds the violence in Colombia. They shelter murderers and child rapists, while completely ignoring any regulations. Of course, those who prefer to ignore all this do become accomplices of the dictatorship. My Government has compelling evidence that



proves the support of the dictatorship to criminal groups and narco-terrorists operating in Venezuela to attack Colombia. As President of Colombia, I will hand over the supporting evidence of this assertion to the President of the Assembly and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. This 128-page dossier contains the body of evidence demonstrating Nicolás Maduro's complicity with terrorist cartels that attack Colombian people. We present, before the international community, the list of a gang of at least 20 criminals who betrayed the generosity of Colombians.¹

The report to which he refers, entitled "Threats to democracy, security and regional peace", was consigned on 26 September 2019 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, and it contains a group of photographs that would serve as evidence of the presence in Venezuela of irregular armed groups from Colombia.

Nonetheless, the day after the submission of such a document, Colombian media and international news agencies claimed to recognize at least four photographs from the report, but with a different origin in time and place to that indicated by the Government of Colombia in the report. The news media *El Colombiano* said the following:

The photo given by Duque to António Guterres and that he showed this Thursday on his Twitter account would not correspond either to the date or to the place to which the Colombian leader refers, according to information received by *El Colombiano* through military intelligence in 2015.

...

The image would correspond to the recruitment practices carried out by ELN in El Tambo, Cauca.²

Similarly, the news agency Agence France Press (AFP) published the following:

Duque delivered to the United Nations false information of uncertain origin about Colombian guerrillas in Venezuela.

...

In a telephone call on 27 September 2019, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Defence apologized to AFP for the use of at least three photographs of this agency in the dossier, which has not been made public in its entirety. In addition, the source acknowledged that the three AFP photographs had been taken in Colombia and not in Venezuela.³

The official recognition of the falsity of the evidence contained in the report resulted in the resignation of General Oswaldo Peña Bermeo, Director of Military Intelligence of Colombia, who was allegedly used as a scapegoat after the failure of the disinformation operation. Therefore, it is clear that President Iván Duque tried to deceive the United Nations General Assembly, the Secretary-General and world public opinion with fabricated evidence.

As a consequence of the international scandal, the Colombian authorities tried to recover the momentum of their attack by offering a press conference in order to prove the veracity of the accusations and rescue their credibility. Thus, on Monday, 30 September 2019, Colombian Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo, Attorney General Fabio Espitia and Police Commander Óscar Atehortúa presented as new

¹ See also www.youtube.com/watch?v=NP8m00YTrV0&feature=youtu.be.

² See www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/paz-y-derechos-humanos/foto-entregada-por-presidente-duque-a-la-onu-no-es-del-eln-en-venezuela-JA11665158.

³ See <https://factual.afp.com/duque-entrego-la-onu-informacion-falsa-y-de-origen-incierto-sobre-guerrilleros-colombianos-en>.

evidence the photograph of José Amín Hernández Manrique, alias “Marco”, leader of the war front “Darío Martínez” and member of the national leadership of ELN, accompanied by his partner in the city of Maracaibo (Venezuela), in 2015. The presence of this guerrilla chief in Venezuela would evidence the support currently lent by the Venezuelan Government to the Colombian armed groups.

However, on that very same day, Colombian media revealed that the aforementioned guerrilla leader was killed in a fight with Colombian armed forces in the village of El Carmen, in Segovia (Antioquia, Colombia), as published in the newspaper *El Tiempo*, on 14 June 2015. This information was confirmed by then Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. It should be noted that even in the damage control attempt with regard to the failed disinformation operation at the United Nations, the Colombian authorities continued to lie, further deepening the destruction of their credibility.

Similarly, the Government of the United States of America joined the defamation operation against Venezuela by expressing its support for the false report, on 1 October 2019, through its Embassy in Colombia:

The United States fully supports the conclusions shared by President Duque at the United Nations General Assembly calling out the sanctioned Maduro regime for its ongoing support of criminal and narco-terrorist groups in Venezuelan territory. There is no doubt that these groups continue to engage in narcotics trafficking and other criminal activity that continue to destabilize the region. The United States stands by Colombia in its ongoing efforts to protect and defend its territorial integrity.⁴

The purpose of this joint manipulation by Colombia and the United States of America is to generate a state of hostile opinion against the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, increasing border tensions between the two countries and creating an opportunity for the intervention of the United States Government in favour of Colombia. We must understand this operation in the context of the implementation of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, of which Venezuela is no longer a party, and which is intended to be used to justify aggression against it, as denounced in our letter of 20 September 2019 (S/2019/765).

Venezuela, as a firm defender of the truth, must work to prevent the United Nations from being used as a forum for the incubation of false information intended for warmongering purposes against any country, including ours. Colombia’s disinformation operation constitutes a violation of the principle of good faith in the fulfilment of the obligations undertaken by States, in accordance with the Charter (General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970).

The ability to determine the truth of the facts is an essential element in guaranteeing the maintenance of international peace and security, and it is an attribution vested in the Security Council under Article 39 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Lastly, the assertions by the Government of Colombia regarding an alleged Venezuelan violation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) are based on fabricated and false evidence, which only contribute to the denaturalization of said resolution and its initial purpose of fighting terrorism, in an attempt to induce the Security Council to apply it erroneously and contrary to the purposes of the Charter. For this reason, we address you, in your capacity as President of this highest organ, to alert you and all members of this body not to fall into this provocation by

⁴ See <https://co.usembassy.gov/support-for-duque-governments-conclusions-on-eln-and-farc-d-activity-in-venezuela/>.

determining, on your own account, the falsity of the accusations made a week ago by the President of Colombia before the General Assembly of the United Nations.

I respectfully request your good offices to circulate the present letter⁵ among the members of the Security Council and to issue it as a document of that body.

(Signed) **Samuel Moncada**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations

⁵ See also the articles available at www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/01/colombia-spy-chief-quits-dossier-venezuela-oswaldo-pena; <https://factcheck.afp.com/colombias-military-intelligence-chief-resigns-over-false-information-presented-un-including-afp>; <https://colombiareports.com/colombia-admits-fabricating-at-least-four-pieces-of-evidence-against-venezuela>; and www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-33129613.