



Iranian Gasoline Support to Venezuela Linked During Pandemic

OE Watch Commentary: According to several media sources, Iran is providing Venezuela with gasoline during the COVID-19 pandemic. Iran publicly confirmed this and threatened that any attempts made by the US to stop support would be met with repercussions. Details regarding what type of repercussions were not stated. Additionally, Maduro publicly backed Iran and pledged support no matter what the consequences. These ideas were captured during a Youtube video released by Colombian news source *El Tiempo*. During the same video, Maduro discussed that he was willing to use the Venezuelan military to escort Iranian shipping barges into port if their passage was impeded. However, this was not necessary as the barges were not stopped. Prior to the arrival of the Iranian vessels in late May 2020, Venezuela's Minister of Industries and National Production, Tarek El Aissami and Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza, also took stances regarding their views of US presence in the Caribbean and how it was affecting the Venezuelan gasoline industry. Both individuals were quoted in Venezuelan news source Telesur as noted in the accompanying excerpt. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Tarek El Aissami.

Source: DHS via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tarek_El_Aissami_reward_poster.jpg, Public Domain

“Islamic Republic of Iran, thank you for all the support we are receiving from you. We are ready for whatever happens, no matter what. Thank you, Iran.”

Source: “Maduro celebra envío a Venezuela de buques petroleros de Irán entre tensiones con Washington (Maduro Celebrates Departure of Oil Filled Barges Headed to Venezuela from Iran Despite Tension from Washington),” *YouTube Video*, 1.41, 21 May 2020. <https://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/venezuela/maduro-celebro-envio-de-buques-petroleros-de-iran-a-venezuela-497902>

Tehran threatened repercussions if shipping barges carrying gasoline were not allowed to enter Venezuela during the covid-19 pandemic and has stated there would be consequences if they were stopped. At the same time, Maduro was seen in the Youtube video stating: “Islamic Republic of Iran, thank you for all the support we are receiving from you. We are ready for whatever happens, no matter what. Thank you, Iran.”

Source: “Venezuela denuncia persecución de EE.UU. a buques de petróleo (Venezuela Denounces US Pursuing Petroleum Tankers),” *Telesur*, 18 May 2020. <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/venezuela-denuncia-persecucion-eeuu-buques-petroleo-20200518-0026.html>

“How much the man on the street will be aided by the arrival of gasoline that the Iranian ships are transporting is a matter which has no spectacular side. At the national scale of fuel consumption, those shipments are like a band aid for an open wound....

What is worth highlighting is the decision of Nicolas Maduro to recur to Iran to resolve the supply difficulties...

These rapprochements between Iran and Venezuela have taken difference forms of industrial cooperation, in joint investment firms and in ‘strategic’ activities that in almost all cas The following comments were made by Venezuelan Officials Tarek El Aissami and Jorge Arreaza:

El Aissami:

“US presence (in the Caribbean) interferes with the distribution of gasoline additives, parts and technicians by any and all countries willing to help support the Venezuelan people.”

Arreaza:

“Any actions by the US (to stop Iranian barges from entering Venezuela during the covid-19 pandemic) would represent flagrant violations of international law and the fundamental rights of Venezuelans.”

es have not succeeded in materializing: gold, tractors, weapons, cement, petrochemicals... Of the myriad of joint activities, two fields are particularly noteworthy...flights apparently commercial between Caracas and Tehrán that frequently include stopovers in Syria, flights whose cargo of equipment, materiel and even Iranian operators or of Hezbollah is unclear. The other issue is of the existence of active Shia militia cells on Venezuelan soil to train, jointly with Cuba, soldiers of the military forces in matters of security and intelligence.”