



Bolivarian Sabre Rattling?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Bolivarian Nicolás Maduro not only made the rounds to seek economic support from geopolitical allies, he heralded some conspicuous military displays. A clutch of Russian military planes recently landed at Maiquetía, including two Tu-160 strategic bombers. The first accompanying reference, from the *YouTube* channel of the Mexican news source *Mexico 24 Horas*, is representative of many reports from around Ibero-America suggesting that the region did indeed take note. In the second accompanying reference, from the Miami *Nuevo Herald*, Antonio María Delgado includes interview material from Venezuelan commentator Martín Rodil, who opines, among other things, that the Russians are sending a clear message of their invested interest in Venezuela. The Delgado article also notes the near simultaneous announcement from Iran, which is apparently sending a squadron of small warships to Venezuelan waters for the same reasons. There is speculation, evident from article titles if nothing else, that those in control of the government in Caracas fear the possibility of military action against them. More than one foreign power is apparently also concerned, lest they lose a considerable amount of financial investment that may depend on continuing control of Venezuelan territory by the current regime. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**Source:** “Bombarderos rusos arriban a Venezuela (Russian bombers arrive in Venezuela),” *Mexico 24 Horas* and *YouTube*, 11 December 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqdP1cTsRxs>

*Five days after a meeting in Moscow between the presidents Nicolás Maduro and Vladimir Putin, four aircraft landed at the Maiquetía Airport, which serves Caracas, for joint maneuvers the duration of which was not specified. The Russian Army in Moscow informed that the subject is two bombers Tu-160, an An-124 transport plane and an Il-62 passenger plane...General Vladimir López [Venezuelan] assured that the military exercises sought to guarantee the defense of his country against external threats...*

**Source:** Antonio María Delgado, “Bombarderos rusos y barcos de guerra iraníes. ¿Teme Maduro una intervención extranjera? (Russian bombers and Iranian war ships. Does Maduro fear an external invasion?),” *El Nuevo Herald*, 10 December 2018. [https://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/america-latina/venezuela-es/article222906150.html#storylink=latest\\_side](https://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/america-latina/venezuela-es/article222906150.html#storylink=latest_side)

*...the experts are implying that the presence of the Russian bombers in Venezuela could be seen as an intimidation piece for the United States. For Martín Rodil, an expert on relations among Caracas, Teheran and Moscow, the presence of the bombers is just one signal that seeks to remind the world that Russia has interests in Venezuela...*

“...one signal that seeks to remind the world that Russia has interests in Venezuela...”



Tu-160 and IL-78 tanker airing in time for a demonstration at the air show, Parade on Pobedata, May 9, 2016.  
Source: Toshonenov [CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)], from Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tu-160\\_with\\_IL-78.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tu-160_with_IL-78.jpg).