

# UN Security Council Confronts U.S. Over Venezuela Oil ‘Extortion’



Venezuelans demonstrate in capital Caracas against the U.S. blockade of oil tankers on December 17, 2025.

NEW YORK (Dispatches) -- Venezuela strongly denounced the “greatest extortion” in its history at an emergency United Nations Security Council session in New York on Wednesday, condemning Washington’s aggressive seizure of two Venezuelan oil tankers earlier this month. The Venezuelan ambassador to the UN described the U.S. actions as “worse than piracy,” a brazen attempt to pillage and loot Venezuelan resources under the guise of combating drugs.

The Security Council session was convened specifically to address these seizures, while the U.S. has openly signaled its pursuit of a third Venezuelan oil tanker.

In a provocative escalation, President Trump has baselessly accused President Nicolás Maduro of leading a drug cartel,

framing the Venezuelan government as a global criminal enterprise.

On December 16, Trump ordered a naval blockade targeting all sanctioned Venezuelan oil tankers entering and leaving the country, further inflaming tensions. The U.S. has announced plans to keep or sell the seized crude oil and vessels, effectively treating Venezuelan property as its own spoils.

The latest show of force is part of a broader U.S. military buildup in the Caribbean and Pacific, involving 15,000 troops, aircraft carriers, and warships—the largest deployment to the region since the invasion of Panama in 1989.

Ostensibly aimed at halting the flow of fentanyl and cocaine, the campaign has included U.S. strikes on Venezuelan

maritime vessels, killing over 100 people, actions that some experts argue may violate international laws governing armed conflict.

Venezuelan envoy Samuel Moncada denounced the U.S. for acting outside international law, accusing it of demanding that Venezuela cede control over its sovereign territory.

“We are talking about pillaging, looting, and the decolonization of Venezuela,” Moncada stated, emphasizing that the U.S. has no jurisdiction in the Caribbean and that its claims linking Venezuela’s oil industry to drug trafficking are baseless.

In response, U.S. Ambassador Michael Waltz said the U.S. does not recognize democratically-elected President Maduro as Venezuela’s legitimate leader and claiming that controlling Venezuelan oil is necessary to curb alleged narco-terrorism.

Yet, critics argue this stance reveals blatant opportunism: using allegations of drug trafficking as a pretext to appropriate Venezuelan resources and project military power in the region.

Through these actions, the United States has not only violated international norms but also flagrantly undermined Venezuelan sovereignty.

The operation has been widely denounced as an unprecedented act of economic coercion and a dangerous precedent for global law. Venezuela’s condemnation underscores a stark reality: the U.S. continues to wield its military and economic might with impunity, subordinating international law to strategic and financial interests.

## EU, France, Germany Slam U.S. Visa Bans as ‘Censorship’ Row Deepens



Former European Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry in Sorbonne University in Paris, France, April 25, 2024.

BRUSSELS (Dispatches) – The European Union, France and Germany condemned U.S. visa bans on European citizens combating online hate and disinformation, with Brussels saying on Wednesday it could “respond swiftly and decisively” against the “unjustified measures.”

U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration imposed visa bans on Tuesday on five European citizens, including French former EU commissioner Thierry Breton, who it accuses of working to censor freedom of speech or unfairly target U.S. tech giants with overly burdensome regulation.

A European Commission spokesper-

son said it “strongly condemns the U.S. decision,” adding: “Freedom of expression is a fundamental right in Europe and a shared core value with the United States across the democratic world.”

The visa bans are likely to exacerbate growing divergences between Washington and some European capitals over issues including free speech, defense, immigration, far-right politics, trade and the Russia-Ukraine war.

They come just weeks after a U.S. National Security Strategy document warned Europe faced “civilization erasure” and must change course if it is to remain a reliable U.S. ally.

Breton was one of the architects of the EU’s Digital Services Act, a landmark piece of legislation aimed at making the internet safer that has irritated U.S. officials.

They were particularly riled by Brussels’ sanction earlier this month against Elon Musk’s X platform, which was fined 120 million Euros for breaching online content rules. Musk and Breton have often sparred online over EU tech regulation, with Musk referring to him as the “tyrant of Europe.” The EU’s DSA is meant to make the online environment safer, in part by compelling tech giants to do more to tackle illegal content, including hate speech and child sexual abuse material.

Washington has said the EU was pursuing “undue” restrictions on freedom of expression in its efforts to combat hateful speech, misinformation and disinformation, and that the DSA unfairly targets U.S. tech giants and U.S. citizens.

The European Commission spokesperson said the EU had the right to regulate economic activity, and had requested more information from Washington about the measures.

“If needed, we will respond swiftly and decisively to defend our regulatory autonomy against unjustified measures,” they said.

French President Emmanuel Macron said: “These measures amount to undermining dialogue and coercion aimed at intimidating European digital sovereignty.”

## U.S., South Korea Push Nuclear Submarine Pact Forward

SEOUL (The Korea Times) -- Seoul and Washington are moving to form a separate bilateral pact to facilitate South Korea’s development of nuclear-powered submarines, National Security Adviser Wi Sung-lac said Wednesday, following their agreement on the need for such a deal.

“On the issue of cooperation on nuclear-powered submarines, the two sides agreed that a separate pact between us is necessary, and we are moving to pursue it,” he told reporters at a briefing in Seoul after his weeklong trip to the U.S., Canada and Japan from Dec. 16 to 22.

The move toward the pact follows an October summit between President Lee Jae Myung and U.S. President Donald Trump, during which Trump approved Seoul’s bid to build nuclear submarines.

In Washington, Wi met with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Energy Secretary Chris Wright and other senior officials. Wi said he had “practical in-depth discussions,” noting that submarine collaboration, uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing were all on the agenda.

Discussing the legal framework for a nuclear submarine deal, Wi pointed to constraints in U.S. law and the need for tailored exceptions, noting that Section 91 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act restricts the transfer of nuclear materials for military purposes.

The idea is to establish a separate bilateral agreement that deals exclusively with the supply of nuclear fuel for South Korea’s upcoming nuclear-powered submarines. Under this arrangement, the new pact would be treated as an exception, which would require approval by Trump and Congress.

“They did it that way with Australia, and they want to do the same with us — to make an agreement that grants an exception or waiver,” Wi said.

He emphasized Lee’s commitment to nonproliferation and made clear that South Korea’s future submarines would be based on low-enriched uranium fuel.

“On enrichment and reprocessing, I explained that the president has repeatedly emphasized his commitment to nonproliferation,” Wi said. “The nuclear subma-

rines we are pursuing will be equipped with reactors using low-enriched fuel. We have no plans to introduce highly enriched fuel. Low enriched fuel means enrichment levels of 20 percent or less.”

Bilateral talks on that issue are expected to be held early next year. The two sides will begin detailed discussions on key issues, including submarine construction, uranium enrichment and the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel, with officials from Washington expected to visit here in the coming months.

Wi described his trip as the start of implementing follow-up measures outlined in the joint South Korea-U.S. fact sheet released on Nov. 14. Beyond the submarine issue, he said he used the visit to coordinate on broader security challenges, including North Korea, its military ties with Russia and Washington-Beijing relations.

The discussion on the North Korea issue aligns with South Korean officials’ expectations that Trump’s planned visit to China in April could provide momentum for potential U.S.-North Korea talks.

## Zelensky Floats Terms for Peace: Withdrawing Troops From East



The latest draft of a peace plan agreed by U.S. and Ukrainian negotiators would see Kyiv withdrawing its troops from the eastern territories claimed by Moscow, according to President Volodymyr Zelensky.

KIEV (Politico) – The latest draft of a peace plan agreed by U.S. and Ukrainian negotiators would see Kyiv withdrawing its troops from the eastern territories claimed by Moscow, according to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Briefing reporters in Kyiv on Tuesday, Zelensky said the updated plan contemplated the designation of the eastern Donbas region — the majority of which is currently occupied by Moscow’s troops — as a demilitarized “free economic zone” in which neither Ukrainian nor Russian forces are present.

Zelensky stressed that Ukraine is against the withdrawal, which is one of Russia’s top demands. But, he added, “there are two options: either the war continues, or something will have to be decided regarding all potential economic zones.”

The Ukrainian leader said the latest version of the plan — an update of a Trump administration proposal that both Kyiv and the European Union had initially dismissed as a “non-starter” — maintains the proposed security guarantees from the U.S., NATO and European partners that are equivalent to those outlined in Article 5 of the transatlantic alliance’s treaty.

“If Russia invades Ukraine, in addition to a coordinated military response, all global sanctions against Russia will be restored,” he said, adding that the guarantees would also be considered invalid if Kyiv takes any unprovoked military action against Moscow. Zelensky noted that Washington had dropped text from a previous version of the plan that proposed the U.S. receive compensation for the security guarantees.

The plan additionally proposes Russia legally adopt a strategy of non-aggression towards Ukraine and Europe. The text also accepts Kyiv’s eventual accession to the European Union, acknowledges the country’s right to demand reparations from Russia, and endorses the creation of dedicated investment instruments to fund the country’s reconstruction.

The revised text also calls for the joint administration of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant by Ukrainian, Russian and American authorities. Kyiv is loath to allow Moscow to manage the complex, which has been the site of fierce fighting, but is willing to partner with the Trump administration on running infrastructure Washington considers crucial for future minerals mining operations in the country.

Zelensky said the nearby city of Enerhodar, which is currently occupied by Russia, would be a candidate for demilitarization if the U.S. insists on designating economic zones within Ukraine. But, he added, for the move to be legal, a referendum would have to be held to endorse that decision.

The plan also calls on Ukraine and Russia to introduce programs in their educational curricula that promote tolerance of different cultures. Kyiv would additionally be expected to implement EU regulations to protect minority religions and languages.

## Two Police Killed In Explosion in Moscow Near Site of General’s Assassination



The blast took place near where Lieutenant General Fanil Sarvarov was killed on Monday by an explosive device.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) – Two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia’s Investigative Committee said in a statement Wednesday.

The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

“An explosive device was triggered” as the officers approached the suspect, who was near their service vehicle, said the statement by the committee, which probes major crimes.

An earlier statement on Telegram said investigators were inspecting the scene and carrying out forensic analysis, including “medical and explosive examinations”.

The area was cordoned off and had a large police presence, according to images broadcast on Russian television, which quoted witnesses describing an explosion that occurred at around 1:30 am (2230 GMT Tuesday).

The blast took place near where Lieutenant General Fanil Sarvarov was killed

on Monday by an explosive device that had been placed under his parked car.

Sarvarov had been the head of the Russian General Staff’s training department.

Since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, Kyiv has been blamed for several attacks targeting Russian military officials and pro-Kremlin figures both in Russia and in occupied parts of Ukraine.

Kyiv has claimed responsibility for some of the attacks.

A source in Ukraine’s GUR secret services welcomed the “elimination” of the police officers, who they said, without providing evidence, had fought in Ukraine and “tortured Ukrainian prisoners of war.”

In a statement, the GUR source said the attack was carried out by a “local resident” and did not claim to have been involved.

Developments come after Russia launched one of its largest aerial attacks on Monday on Ukraine overnight, killing at least three people and injuring at least 17 others.

## News in Brief

BERLIN (Anadolu Agency) -- Germany’s defense company Rheinmetall said it signed a technology supply agreement with Polish deep-tech firm SATIM Monitoring Satelitalny to support SPOCK-1, a next-generation satellite reconnaissance program for the German armed forces. Under the contract, SATIM will act as a technology supplier, providing artificial intelligence-driven capabilities that convert large volumes of synthetic aperture radar (SAR) imagery into actionable intelligence for military and defense customers. The agreement formalizes SATIM’s role within Rheinmetall’s expanding satellite reconnaissance portfolio. SAR satellites enable continuous ground monitoring day and night and in all weather conditions, using radar rather than optical sensors to see through cloud cover, smoke, rain, and darkness, capabilities considered critical for modern intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) operations.

MOSCOW (RT) -- Russia plans to launch a power station on the Moon within a decade, space agency Roscosmos has announced, saying it has signed a contract with NPO Lavochkin, the country’s lead developer of deep-space and planetary missions, to carry out work through 2036 on the project. The purpose of the facility is to provide a long-term energy supply for lunar rovers and an observatory, as well as for the China-led International Lunar Research Station (ILRS). Roscosmos said in a statement on Wednesday. NPO Lavochkin led landmark Soviet missions to the Moon and Venus and remains the lead developer for Russia’s current lunar missions. State nuclear corporation Rosatom and the Kurchatov Institute, the country’s leading national research center for nuclear science, will be involved in the project, it added.

ROME (TASS) -- Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni made a grim forecast for 2026, wishing her office staff a happy Christmas while warning them to brace for a challenging year ahead. “The past year has been tough for all of us but don’t worry because next year will be even worse,” she quipped. Speaking at her official Rome residence in the Palazzo Chigi courtyard on Tuesday, Meloni also told her team she loved them, adding that they “were a family that fought together year-round” and advising them “to rest properly during these holidays because we have to continue to give responses to this extraordinary nation.”

BELJING (CGTN) -- The recent remarks on possessing nuclear weapons by a senior Japanese official are by no means an isolated incident, exposing the consistent erroneous stance of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and Japan’s right-wing forces, and sending an extremely dangerous signal, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday. Lin Jian made the remarks at a regular news briefing in response to a query about a senior official from the Japanese prime minister’s office brazenly claiming that Japan should possess nuclear weapons. Lin noted that in recent years, Japan has removed the ban on exercising the right to collective self-defense, developed intermediate-range offensive weapons, increased military deployment, restructured the command systems, and expanded the area and scope of Self-Defense Forces activities.

WASHINGTON (RT) -- U.S. President Donald Trump branded the New York Times a national security threat in renewed criticism of the newspaper. In a Truth Social post on Tuesday, Trump accused the outlet of spreading “lies and purposeful misrepresentations” and said it was “a serious threat to the National Security of our Nation.” “Their Radical Left, Unhinged Behavior, writing FAKE Articles and Opinions in a never ending way, must be dealt with and stopped,” Trump wrote, without specifying which material had prompted his denunciation. The president has a history of condemning news organizations he accuses of conspiring with political opponents to undermine his leadership.

WASHINGTON (Hindustan Times) -- U.S. border patrol agents arrested 30 Indian nationals, living illegally in America, operating semitrucks with commercial driver’s licenses. Border Patrol agents in the El Centro Sector in California arrested 49 illegal immigrants with commercial driver’s licenses during vehicle stops at immigration checkpoints and in interagency operations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said in a statement last week. Between November 23 and December 12, agents apprehended 42 illegal individuals operating semitrucks with commercial driver’s licenses while travelling on interstate or traversing immigration checkpoints.