

## Amid threat from the west, Venezuela's Maduro flexes military muscle



Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro takes part in a military exercise in Valencia on Sunday/Image: Reuters

Amidst chaos in the Latin American politics Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro oversaw a display of his army's Russian hardware on Sunday, with anti-aircraft flak and tank rounds pounding a hillside to show military might and loyalty in response of an international ultimatum for the new elections.

Socialist Maduro, 56, is in the headlines around the globe for confronting an unprecedented challenge to his dictatorial authority after opposition leader Juan Guaido declared himself interim president, citing a fraudulent election. Guaido has won wide international support including United States and other western allies and offers amnesty to soldiers who join him.

On Sunday, Australia and Israel joined the league of countries backing Guaido. President Trump's administration said it had accepted Venezuelan opposition figure Carlos Alfredo

Vecchio as the country's diplomatic representative in the US.

Israel joins the United States, Canada, most of the countries of Latin America and countries in Europe in recognizing the new leadership in Venezuela.

— Benjamin Netanyahu (@netanyahu) [January 27, 2019](#)

Early on Sunday, alongside Venezuelan Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino, Maduro watched a platoon of soldiers release volleys of rocket-propelled grenades, machine-gun anti-aircraft fire and tank rounds at hillside targets, the Russian ordnance kicking up clouds of dust at the Fort of Paramacay, an armored vehicle base.

“Nobody respects the weak, cowards, traitors. In this world, what's respected is the brave, the courageous, power,”

*Maduro in response to threats*

“Nobody should even think of stepping on this sacred soil. Venezuela wants peace,” he said. “To guarantee peace, we have to be prepared.”

*-Maduro*

At a UN Security Council debate on Saturday, Russia and China strongly backed Maduro and rejected calls by the United States, Canada, Latin American nations and European powers for early elections.

Both Russia and China are major creditors of Venezuela. Since the government of Maduro's late mentor, Hugo Chavez, the OPEC nation has invested heavily in Russian weaponry, including Sukhoi fighter jets and heavy armor.

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not*

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