

U.S. Warship's Arrival in Trinidad Sparks Venezuelan Fury and Claims of a "False Flag" Plot

The USS Gravelly's visit for joint military exercises drew sharp condemnation from Caracas, which accused Trinidad & Tobago of acting as a "military colony." The destroyer joins multiple U.S. vessels deployed under ongoing SOUTHCOM operations.

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As a U.S. warship docked in Trinidad & Tobago for what the country's government called "training exercises," Venezuela lashed out, accusing T&T Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of acting like a "military colony."

The USS Gravelly, a guided missile destroyer in the U.S. Navy, arrived in Trinidad's capital of Port of Spain on Sunday. The marines on board are reportedly there to conduct joint military exercises with the Trinidad & Tobago defense force. According to a statement from the T&T Foreign Ministry, the exercises, aimed at strengthening "[military-to-military cooperation](#)," will run until October 30.

According to Venezuela, however, the warship's visit is another drumbeat of war. A [statement from the Venezuelan government](#) denounces the exercises as "an action that constitutes a hostile provocation against Venezuela and a serious threat to Caribbean peace."

The statement also claims that a mercenary group "with direct information from the U.S. Intelligence Agency the CIA" has been captured. As a result, Venezuela has "determined that a false flag attack is underway," originating either "from waters bordering Trinidad and Tobago, or from Trinidadian or Venezuelan territory." The attack, the statement says, is "intended to provoke a full-scale military confrontation against our country."

The statement provides no evidence for the startling claim, but goes on to accuse Trinidad & Tobago Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar of renouncing her country's sovereignty in favor of acting "as a military colony subordinated to U.S. hegemonic interests." Trinidad & Tobago has now become "an American aircraft carrier for war across the Caribbean against Venezuela, against Colombia, and against all of South America," the statement from Venezuela continued.

Trinidad & Tobago Defense Minister Wayne Sturge admitted that the USS Gravelly's visit came at the request of the U.S. Government, and claimed that the exercises were pre-planned. Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar, meanwhile, told local journalists that the marines would also provide humanitarian aid while they were on the ground.

The Gravelly becomes the latest naval asset to be deployed to the region by the Pentagon. It joins the Iwo Jima Amphibious Ready Group, the Minneapolis-Saint Paul combat ship, the Lake Erie guided missile cruiser, and the Newport News nuclear attack submarine. The USS Gerald R. Ford, the world's largest aircraft carrier, has also been assigned to the current SOUTHCOM operation, and is currently days away.