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FAA Closes Airspace Over Puerto Rico and USVI After U.S. Military Strikes Venezuela, Captures Maduro

The FAA imposed temporary flight restrictions over Puerto Rico and the USVI until at least 1 a.m. ET Sunday, Jan. 4, citing security concerns following U.S. military operations in Venezuela, urging passengers to check directly with airlines for updates.

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The Federal Aviation Administration has imposed temporary airspace closures over Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as a security precaution following U.S. military strikes in Venezuela that resulted in the capture of President Nicolás Maduro.

The restrictions prohibit U.S. commercial and private aircraft from operating in designated airspace until at least 1 a.m. Eastern Time on Sunday, January 4, 2026, according to officials with

first-hand knowledge of the matter. FAA officials said the decision was made in coordination with federal partners, including the Department of Defense, amid heightened military activity and security concerns in the region.

The closures follow a large-scale U.S. military operation announced by President Donald Trump in the early hours of Saturday, January 3, during which American forces struck targets in Venezuela and captured Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. In a post on Truth Social, Trump described the mission as a success in dismantling Maduro's regime, which he accused of harboring narco-terrorists and facilitating drug trafficking into the United States.

White House officials later confirmed that Maduro and Flores were en route to the United States for processing, marking what the administration characterized as the culmination of months of escalating pressure that included economic sanctions, military deployments, interdictions of drug vessels, and a blockade of sanctioned Venezuelan oil tankers.

According to reporting, the operation involved U.S. special forces deployed under Operation Southern Spear. The announcement came after overnight reports of explosions and gunfire in Caracas, which Venezuelan state media initially described as unrelated before ceasing coverage.

Following Trump's announcement, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said the couple had been indicted in the Southern District of New York on charges including narco-terrorism conspiracy, conspiracy to import cocaine into the United States, and possession of machine guns and destructive devices. In a post on X, Bondi said they would "face the full wrath of American justice" on U.S. soil, praising Trump for demanding accountability and commending the military for what she described as a successful capture. The indictments revive and expand charges first brought against Maduro in 2020, as the administration continues to designate certain Venezuelan entities as terrorist organizations.

While U.S. commercial flights to Venezuela had already been suspended because of military activity, officials said the decision to extend airspace restrictions to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands was taken as a precaution amid heightened regional operations. FAA officials, after consulting with military counterparts, cited concerns about potential retaliatory actions by state actors aligned with Maduro, as well as the risk of incidents involving U.S. military assets operating at an elevated tempo. Pilots have been advised to exercise extreme caution for what the FAA described as "special security reasons."

Reports of U.S. war jets flying at high speeds through territorial airspace have underscored the defensive posture accompanying the broader military buildup in the Caribbean. Despite the increased activity, officials said the airspace closures are intended to minimize risk during what authorities described as a volatile period.

Airlines have suspended or rerouted multiple flights to and from the affected areas, including routes connecting the Caribbean to the mainland United States. Passengers have been urged to check directly with their carriers for updated travel information.

International reaction to the operation has been swift. Russia and China condemned the strikes as a violation of Venezuelan sovereignty, while some Latin American governments called for restraint to avoid regional instability. The United Nations Security Council convened an emergency session, as Venezuelan opposition figures expressed hope for a peaceful transition.

In the United States, congressional leaders from both parties requested briefings on the operation's legality and broader foreign-policy implications. Legal experts have debated whether the action

complies with international law in the absence of United Nations authorization, though U.S. officials have argued it was justified as self-defense against narcotics-related threats.

The administration has not detailed next steps regarding Maduro's detention, a potential trial timeline, or plans for governance in Caracas, as questions remain about possible power vacuums following the dramatic escalation.

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