

# VRIC MONITOR No. 28

## China Expands Strategic Ports in Latin America



**OCTOBER 2022**

The VRIC Monitor is a one-of-a-kind, monthly report from the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS) tracking extra-regional authoritarian influence in Latin America. VRIC stands for **V**enezuela, **R**ussia, **I**ran, **C**hina where Venezuela represents the Bolivarian Revolution and the broader Bolivarian Threat Network. Likewise, Iran represents the Iranian Revolution and the Iranian Threat Network in Latin America, to include its chief proxy, Hezbollah. The monitor consists of open source information selected by SFS analysts. This is not a complete list of media reports on VRIC presence in Latin America, but a snapshot of open-source media highlighting the major areas of VRIC influence.

---

*Disclaimer: The VRIC Monitor does source a limited amount of media reports from state-owned or -controlled media outlets from VRIC nations. These media reports are carefully selected and intended to report on cultural, diplomatic, economic, or military activities that are not reported on by other media and relevant for understanding VRIC influence in the region. Given the inevitability that state propaganda will be mixed into these articles, we ensure that reporting from*

*state-media outlets is no more than 25 percent of the overall VRIC Monitor and exclude any opinion pieces or anti-US (anti-West) declarations of any kind.*

## **OVERVIEW**

Brazil is on the brink of its most important election in recent history. On October 2, Brazilian voters went to the polls for the first round of the general election. In an outcome that shocked some, incumbent President Jair Bolsonaro and former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva advanced to the second round with 43 and 48 percent of the vote, respectively. Many thought that Lula would win in the first round but the results put the two against each other for a run-off vote on October 30.

Brazil's elections have important ramifications for the world. President Bolsonaro has been pushed closer to Russia and Iran in recent months; however, a Lula victory would openly embrace the VRIC and its malign regional allies, namely Venezuela and Bolivia. If Bolsonaro is reelected, the prognosis is more nuanced. In a recent episode of the [Border Wars Podcast](#), SFS Senior Fellow Leonardo Coutinho and the former Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo stated that a second term for President Bolsonaro would likely not seek out a closer relationship with China, but could be steered into one. And a potential Lula presidency would significantly deepen Brazil and China's relationship. Making international observers nervous about the outcome of Brazil's election.

This comes as American policymakers are increasingly concerned about China's influence in Latin America. In an unclassified report to the U.S. Congress, sent in early July, the State Department noted that China's acquisition of technologies, facilities, and infrastructure in Latin America has military purposes. Shortly after, while speaking at the Aspen Security Conference, the head of U.S. Southern Command, Gen. Laura Richardson, [described](#) how Chinese state-owned companies on both sides of the Panama Canal "could be turned quickly toward military capabilities." Many of these Chinese state-owned companies have ties to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and are involved in around 40 port infrastructure projects, from Mexico down to Peru, that combined with eleven satellite ground stations in Latin America, provide China with strategic positioning in the Western Hemisphere.

# CHINA'S PORT-FOLIO IN LATIN AMERICA



Advancing **freedom** and **security** worldwide

Russia complements, rather than competes with China's strategic positioning by expanding its GLONASS satellite navigation system throughout Latin America. Already with four stations in Brazil, one in Nicaragua, and another being built in Venezuela, it is reported that Russia is negotiating to install additional satellite systems in Ecuador, Cuba, and Mexico, as recently announced by President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Within this context, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken took a three-country tour of South America in October, to Colombia, Chile, and Peru in an effort to shore up support to countries whose democracies are being challenged. The question remains; however, is promoting democracy enough in a region that sees the rise of a new populist, authoritarian wave?



**Venezuelan migration to the U.S. southern border has exploded this year. Customs and Border Patrol reported the number of encounters has increased more than 3,000 percent from 2020 to 2022 with more than 25,000 encounters in August alone. A classified report by the Department of Homeland Security, prompted concern by U.S. representatives that the Maduro regime is encouraging violent criminals from Venezuela to embed within migrant caravans marching to the U.S. border.** With increased numbers of migrants, border states are now directing bus loads of migrants north, most recently to Chicago, Washington D.C. and Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts.

This prompted some political backlash from the Venezuelan community in the U.S. that intensified on October 12, when the Biden administration announced a new policy that would enforce large-scale border deportations of Venezuelan migrants to Mexico. The policy also introduced a new parole program to provide a legal pathway for up to 24,000 Venezuelan nationals to fly to the U.S.

While the Biden administration attempts to mitigate the surge in Venezuelan migrants, Nicolás Maduro touts Venezuela's economy. A ceremony propagating the reopening of the Colombia-Venezuela border, held on September 26, tries to add to that narrative. Full diplomatic relations have resumed and Colombia's President Gustavo Petro ceded control to the Maduro regime of the Monómeros fertilizer company. But not all can be propagandized. An attempt to restart direct flights between Colombia and Venezuela failed due to existing sanctions on Venezuela's state-owned airline, Conviasa.

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken recently visited Colombia, Chile, and Peru, to re-engage some of the region's struggling democracies. Blinken's trip; however, was overtaken by the news of an alarming prisoner swap on October 1 when the Biden administration released Maduro wife's nephews, serving out an 18-year prison sentence for transporting 800 kilos of cocaine, in exchange for seven Americans, to include former U.S. Marine Matthew Heath who was imprisoned in Venezuela on dubious charges. This precedent incentivizes members of the Bolivarian Threat Network to consider arresting more Americans on false charges to use as political capital for concessions from the United States.

- The Biden administration announced moves this week to tackle a surge in Venezuelan migration across the southern border, but the combination of an expansion of Title 42 expulsions and a new humanitarian parole path has upset lawmakers and activists on both the right and the left. The Department of Homeland Security announced that it is launching a new large-scale border enforcement operation with Mexico combined with an expansion of removals of Venezuelan nationals. - [Fox News on 15-OCT](#)
- Nicolás Maduro, expressed his solidarity this Wednesday, October 12, with the Mapuche people, who he said are “so repressed, so tortured and so martyred” in Chile, two days after a demonstration in Santiago that ended in clashes with the police and 10 arrested. - [Semana on 12-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The crush of migration at the southern border and the energy war against Russia has created renewed urgency within the Biden administration to reshape the relationship with oil-rich Venezuela. - [The New York Times on 12-OCT](#)
- Thousands of migrants, mostly Venezuelans, are stuck in a village in northwest Colombia, waiting for boats to take them across the Gulf of Uraba, before traversing through treacherous jungle as they make their way to the United States, Colombia's human rights ombudsman said. - [U.S. News on 12-OCT](#)
- Thousands of Venezuelan migrants will be offered a legal path into the U.S. The humanitarian parole program would be available to up to 24,000 Venezuelans who have a U.S. sponsor. However, a pandemic-era rule will be extended to expel Venezuelans who enter the country illegally. - [The New York Times on 12-OCT](#)
- The South American country of Guyana has asked Facebook and Twitter to remove from their platforms maps that place the disputed territory of Esequibo in Venezuela, an official told AFP. - [Barron's on 12-OCT](#)
- In a sharp reversal of strategy, Venezuela's main opposition parties plan to compete in 2024 presidential elections no matter what conditions the government agrees to beforehand. Emboldened by this year's gubernatorial victory in the Chavista stronghold of Barinas, a cattle-raising state in western Venezuela, opposition parties plan to unite behind a single leader, according to interviews with seven officials in the parties. - [Miami Herald on 11-OCT](#)

- Venezuela has lost its seat on the United Nations Council of Human Rights — a development hailed by activists and human rights defenders in Venezuela as cause for celebration. - [CNN on 11-OCT](#)
- The National Assembly of Venezuela rejected the “interfering acts” of the United States in the territorial dispute between the Caribbean country and Guyana over 160,000 square kilometers west of the Essequibo River. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian Nichols, assured that the North American nation supports the 1899 arbitration award that determined the border between territories and that Venezuela rejects. - [Yahoo on 11-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Panama’s National Migration Service (SNM) said that 151,582 migrants made the crossing between January and September, fleeing poverty and violence with the hope of reaching the United States. This includes some 21,570 minors. - [National Post on 10-OCT](#)
- Nicolas Maduro is asking the International Monetary Fund’s members to restore recognition of his government, which would put it a step closer to accessing billions of dollars in reserves. Vice President Delcy Rodriguez sent a letter addressed to IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and the institution’s governors, mostly finance ministers from the fund’s 190 member nations. She argues that there’s no doubt among the international community that efforts to oust Maduro have failed, and that Venezuela enjoys political stability. - [BNN Bloomberg on 10-OCT](#)
- Venezuela’s state oil company is pushing to revive a defunct energy pact with the Caribbean under different terms as it seeks markets that are willing to pay cash for oil and refined products. - [Financial Post on 07-OCT](#)
- The US is willing to reconsider Venezuela sanctions only if President Nicolas Maduro takes “constructive steps” to restore democracy, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, reiterating that he’s seen no such progress so far. - [Bloomberg on 06-OCT](#)
- Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido asked the United States for details of Chevron Corp's expanded license request to operate in the South American country, according to a letter sent to a senior U.S. official that also asked to be consulted before any U.S. decisions. - [Reuters on 05-OCT](#)
- More shipments to Asia through intermediaries and growing cargo swaps with Iran drove Venezuela's oil exports in September to their third highest level this year, internal documents and tanker tracking data showed. - [Reuters on 04-OCT](#)
- President Joe Biden released two nephews of the wife of Nicolás Maduro convicted of drug trafficking, in exchange for the release of seven Americans detained in Venezuela, government sources from both countries reported. - [DW on 01-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The Venezuelan opponent Juan Guaidó said that “if necessary” help will be requested from the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) or the European Union (EU) to participate as observers in the presidential primaries, in the that a candidate will be chosen to compete with Chavismo in 2024. - [AlNavío on 30-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- Nicolás Maduro, indicated that the country is on the right path to overcome the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and recover its economy. His words come in a context of high economic growth that reached almost 20% in the first two quarters of 2022. - [El Universal on 29-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Analyst Luis Vicente León stated that Venezuela's economy will grow about 8% in 2022, a figure that would please any country, although the figure is moderate compared to the initial projections that estimated between 12 and 20%. - [AlNavío on 27-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- House Republicans are urging the Biden administration to take “every possible step” to stop illegal migration from Venezuela, as the U.S. southern border has seen a spike in migration from the authoritarian nation – something that has overwhelmed border towns and cities. - [Fox News on 27-SEP](#)
- Gabriel Boric upped the ante against Venezuela. During a presentation at Columbia University in New York, the president of Chile criticized the human rights violations committed by Nicolás Maduro and also in Nicaragua. “It makes me angry when you are from the left and you can condemn human rights violations in Yemen or El Salvador, but you cannot talk about Venezuela or Nicaragua... or Chile. In Chile we had serious human rights violations in the social outbreak [of 2019], we cannot have a double standard,” he said. Before the UN General Assembly, Boric had accused Venezuela of causing “tremendous pressure” on Chile, as a result of the thousands of Venezuelans who entered the country fleeing the humanitarian crisis. - [El País on 23-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- A fugitive defense contractor nicknamed “Fat Leonard” who claims to have incriminating sex photos of U.S. Navy brass could become the latest bargaining chip in Maduro’s efforts to win official recognition from the Biden administration, according to experts. But it’s unclear how hard the U.S. government will fight for the return of Leonard Glenn Francis, the Malaysian owner of a ship servicing company in Southeast Asia who is the central character in one of the largest bribery scandals in Pentagon history. - [Associated Press on 23-SEP](#)
- The deputy and number two of the Chavista regime, Diosdado Cabello, insulted President Gabriel Boric after the latter named him in his speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), over the humanitarian crisis that Venezuela is experiencing. In his program, the Venezuelan leader called the Chilean president “silly,” and a “little puppy.” - [CNN Chile on 22-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Once a hub for wealthy Venezuelan oil and gas professionals, Houston is increasingly the final destination of thousands of poor and middle class Venezuelans who are fleeing poverty, political instability and persecution in their home country. Circumstances have deteriorated to such an extent that nearly 70,000 Venezuelans have risked their lives traversing the uninhabitable jungle within Central America's Darién Gap in 2022 to make it to the U.S.-Mexico border. - [Houston Chronicle on 22-SEP](#)
- Venezuela's monthly inflation rate increased to 8.2% in August from 7.5% in July, according to data released by the country's central bank. According to Reuters calculations, this takes Venezuela's

year-on-year figure to 114.1%, the highest in Latin America. Inflation figures had improved briefly in July, which analysts attributed to an orthodox approach from Maduro's socialist government, hinging on stabilizing foreign exchange rates and helped by surging oil prices that provided needed revenues. - [Reuters on 14-SEP](#)

- In Venezuela's El Callao mining region, countless small, artisanal miners that once sold gold to the government have left the area in the last year because accessible local supplies are depleted and Maduro has been striking deals with bigger miners, seeking more production and more revenue for the treasury. Nationalizations in 2011 pushed out private miners and gold production stagnated. Now, Maduro wants to ramp up production by building “strategic alliances” with select private companies, a dozen sources told Reuters. - [Reuters on 12-SEP](#)
- The Venezuelan refugee crisis has for years been among the world’s largest but has recently ballooned, with more than 6.8 million refugees and migrants leaving the country since 2015 to avoid political chaos and economic collapse, according to an August 5 estimate by R4V, an interagency platform led by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. - [Washington Post on 04-SEP](#)
- The Venezuelan financier in the middle of a Puerto Rican bribery scandal that led to the indictment of the island’s former governor has declared himself not guilty to a laundry list of federal corruption charges. Julio Martin Herrera Velutini, the founder of Bancredito International Bank & Trust Corp., appeared before a judge in San Juan. He was subsequently released on a \$1 million bond and will await trial at his home in New York. - [Bloomberg on 31-AUG](#)
- Nicolas Maduro named the country's envoy to China as the new foreign minister in a cabinet shakeup that comes amid political negotiations with the opposition meant to ease a political stalemate. Felix Plasencia will serve as Venezuela's top diplomat, while outgoing foreign minister Jorge Arreaza will serve as industry and production minister, Maduro wrote on Twitter. - [Reuters on 19-AUG](#)
- Venezuelan opposition politician Freddy Guevara has been released from jail two days after the Maduro regime and opposition representatives met in Mexico. Mr. Guevara had been arrested in July and charged with treason and terrorism. The release of political prisoners was one of the demands made by the opposition at the start of talks aimed at ending Venezuela's political crisis. Mr. Guevara is expected to form part of the opposition's negotiating team. - [BBC News on 16-AUG](#)
- Six people have been arrested after the apparent assassination attempt on Maduro in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas, the nation’s interior minister said on national TV. Maduro survived the assault after several drones armed with explosives flew toward him during a speech at a military parade, an attack he blamed on far-right elements and Colombia’s outgoing president, Juan Manuel Santos. Those arrested are accused of “terrorism and assassination,” Interior Minister Néstor Reverol said. - [CNN on 06-AUG](#)



- A former governor of Puerto Rico was arrested on bribery charges related to the financing of her 2020 campaign. According to the indictment, from December 2019 through June 2020, then-Governor of Puerto Rico Wanda Vázquez Garced, 62, of San Juan, allegedly engaged in a bribery scheme with various individuals, including Julio Martín Herrera Velutini, Frances Díaz, Mark Rossini, and John Blakeman to finance Vázquez Garced's 2020 gubernatorial election campaign. - [U.S. Department of Justice on 04-AUG](#)
- On July 29, the UK's High Court of Justice ruled against the Maduro regime's claim to US\$1.9bn in Venezuelan gold reserves stored in the Bank of England (BoE), in a verdict that reinvigorated opposition leader Juan Guaidó's claim to be the legitimate president of Venezuela. - [LatinNews Daily on 01-AUG](#)

## COLOMBIA

- In Villavicencio, Colombian authorities detained Eliécer Palomeque Córdoba, alias "Negro Juan," leader of a FARC dissident group known as the Armando Ríos Front and right-hand man of alias "Iván Mordisco," the top leader of the groups of ex-combatants who have not welcomed the peace agreement, signed in 2016. - [Swiss Info on 10-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Delegations of Colombia's government and the ELN will restart negotiations after the first week of November, the parties said in a statement signed by guerrilla commanders Antonio Garcia and Pablo Beltran as well as the country's high commissioner for peace, Danilo Rueda. "For Colombia's government and the ELN, society's participation in this process is essential in the changes that Colombia needs to build peace," said the statement, which was released during a news conference in Venezuela's capital, Caracas. - [Reuters on 04-OCT](#)
- Nicolás Maduro asked the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB) to make contact with the police and military bodies of Colombia to cooperate with Colombian President Gustavo Petro's plan for "total peace" in the country. - [Yahoo News on 29-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The first Bogotá-Caracas flight operated by Conviasa was going to certify in the air the reestablishment of relations between Venezuela and Colombia after three years of blackout. However, the United States deployed all its diplomatic power to stop it, despite the fact that Gustavo Petro and Nicolás Maduro had agreed to do so. This has been the first time that Washington has warned a country for scheduling flights with the Venezuelan state airline. "People and entities that materially help, sponsor or provide financial, material or technological support, goods or services, in support of Conviasa, may be exposed to sanctions. We encourage the Government of Colombia to deny landing rights," the U.S. made known. - [El País on 28-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Trucks loaded with aluminum and medications crossed a bridge linking Colombia and Venezuela for the first time in seven years following restoration of diplomatic relations, giving regional businesses hope for growing trade. Petro, who took office in August, was on hand as the trucks rolled across the Simon Bolivar International Bridge between Cucuta, Colombia, and San Antonio,

Venezuela. It was once one of the busiest crossings between the two South American nations. - [Newsmax on 26-SEP](#)

- Maduro regained control of the Monómeros fertilizer company, which his opponents had managed since 2019. The Colombian government certified and communicated the decision. The Colombian Superintendent of Companies, Billy Escobar, met with the Venezuelan ambassador in Bogotá, Félix Plasencia, and the president of the Venezuelan state petrochemical company, Pedro Tellechea Ruiz, with whom he signed a document. - [Voice of America on 20-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Venezuela and Colombia restored full diplomatic relations after a three-year break, as a new leftist government in Bogota takes shape. A new Colombian ambassador, Armando Benedetti, arrived in Caracas and said on Twitter: “Relations with Venezuela should never have been severed. We are brothers and an imaginary line cannot separate us.” He was welcomed by Deputy Foreign Minister Rander Pena Ramirez, who tweeted that “our historical ties summon us to work together for the happiness of our peoples.” - [Voice of America on 28-AUG](#)
- The feared gang known as “Tren de Aragua,” of Venezuelan origin and which has some of its leaders imprisoned in different Latin American countries, is today the main focus of the authorities in Bogotá who have documented its presence and brutal way of acting, in the capital of the country, where torture, murders and how bodies are left lying wrapped in garbage bags have been documented. - [La Semana on 24-AUG \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Nicolás Maduro and Gustavo Petro have announced the return of ambassadors as part of the reestablishment of relations between Venezuela and Colombia. Given this, the president of the National Assembly elected in 2020, Jorge Rodríguez, announced that they will promote an investigation into the state of the Venezuelan diplomatic headquarters in Bogotá. - [Al Navío on 17-AUG \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- State media reports the investiture ceremony of the current President of the Republic of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, began in Colombia's Plaza de Bolivar, where he was sworn in as President of the nation. In this context, the president received the sword of Bolivar as a symbol of the continuity of peace. - [TeleSUR English on 07-AUG](#)

## **BOLIVARIAN THREAT NETWORK**

- Peru's attorney general filed a constitutional complaint accusing embattled President Pedro Castillo of criminal organization and corruption, an action that could lead to the suspension of the leftist leader. - [Barron's on 12-OCT](#)
- Ecuador is planning to offer, most likely in 2024, blocks for offshore exploration and production of natural gas at the Gulf of Guayaquil, following auctions for onshore areas to be completed next year, Energy Minister Xavier Vera said. Ecuador expects to boost crude production to 750,000 barrels per day (bpd) by 2025 from a current 490,000 bpd. A large portion of the increase is planned to come from onshore areas awarded as part of its Intracampos oil round, whose second phase is currently on offer. - [Natural Gas World on 10-OCT](#)

- Daniel Ortega intends to use Interpol to persecute opponents beyond its borders, seeking to intimidate dissidents who have sought protection in exile. Article 3 of the statute of the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) “strictly” prohibits any activity or intervention in questions or matters of a political nature. - [Infobae on 09-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Thousands of Dominicans have been mobilizing in increasingly frequent peaceful marches to alert their authorities and the international community about what they consider a “serious risk” to the sovereignty and stability of the Antillean country: the excessive immigration of the Haitian population to the Dominican Republic. - [Diario Las Americas on 09-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- On October 6, Guatemala’s foreign ministry (Minex) denounced an “*intrusion*” of its “*technological infrastructure*.” - [LatinNews Daily on 07-OCT](#)
- In recent days, it became known that an audio document had been leaked -among many others that have put the Arce government, his party and Evo Morales in trouble- that reveals the way in which at least nine legislators, MAS leaders and even a governor held meetings to appoint judges in the country in November 2021. - [La Gaceta on 07-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Daily life in Haiti began to spin out of control last month just hours after Prime Minister Ariel Henry said fuel subsidies would be eliminated, causing prices to double. Gunshots rang out as protesters blocked roads with iron gates and mango trees. Then Haiti’s most powerful gang took a drastic step: It dug trenches to block access to the Caribbean country’s largest fuel terminal, vowing not to budge until Henry resigns and prices for fuel and basic goods go down. - [Associated Press on 05-OCT](#)
- A U.S. Government report validates audits that detected irregularities in the 2019 elections in Bolivia. This report, prepared by the State Department, urges Bolivia to comply with its conclusions. - [Unitel on 29-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The United Nations is ordering the evacuation of all non-essential international workers from Haiti, citing ongoing violence that has left workers vulnerable to kidnapping and attacks last week on U.N.-backed food warehouses across the country. The United States is floating a resolution that would establish a new framework for sanctioning Haiti’s gang leaders, as well as those who supply financing and arms to gangs. - [Miami Herald on 23-SEP](#)
- An investigation led by former Attorney General Raúl Melara found that the government of Nayib Bukele held negotiations in maximum-security prisons in 2020 with El Salvador’s three main gangs: the Mara Salvatrucha 13, Barrio 18 Revolucionarios, and Barrio 18 Sureños, criminal organizations classified in Salvadoran law as terrorists. In exchange for their commitment to holding the national homicide rate at a historic low, the gangs demanded, among other conditions, improved prison conditions and increased employment opportunities for their members outside of prison. - [El Faro in 22-SEP](#)
- A report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council this week on Nicaragua’s human rights situation condemns what it calls the further deterioration of civil and political rights by a government seeking to keep its people in check. The report presents a withering account of the

lengths to which the government of Ortega will go to maintain its iron grip on power. It accuses the government of silencing critical and dissenting voices in Nicaragua, deepening the political crisis which is tearing the country apart. - [Voice of America on 15-SEP](#)

- After the meeting between government authorities and peasant leaders in Asunción, the groups managed to close some agreements, which is why the peasants were mobilizing in the city in the first place. However, they clarified that some will stay in the capital to join the working groups made up of representatives of state institutions. - [ABC on 14-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Chile's President Gabriel Boric announced a major overhaul of his cabinet after voters overwhelmingly rejected a new constitution that was key to his ambitious agenda. Just six months into his presidency, Boric announced replacements for his ministers of mining, energy and the interior. He also replaced the minister secretary-general, who oversees the president's legislative agenda. - [Reuters on 06-SEP](#)
- State media reports Uruguayan Foreign Minister Francisco Bustillo is off on a European tour seeking to further develop his country's trade ties as the last inflation index showed the government of President Luis Lacalle Pou was already above its 2022 targets. Bustillo will reportedly seek to advance in the signing of the Mercosur-European Union agreement, which has been stalled for around five years now. - [MercoPress on 06-SEP](#)
- Peruvian lawmakers ousted Lady Camones, the head of Congress, just a day after the country's prime minister publicly demanded her removal over leaked audio that showed her discussing how to use the legislature to benefit her party. Camones had been in the role for less than two months and her ouster underscores how the administration of President Pedro Castillo is pushing back aggressively against a hostile Congress that has already twice impeached him. - [Reuters on 05-SEP](#)
- Chileans have voted comprehensively against a new, progressive constitution that had been drafted to replace the 1980 document written under Gen Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship. With 99.9% of the votes counted in Sunday's plebiscite, the rejection camp had 61.9% support compared with 38.1% for approval amid what appeared to be a heavy turnout with long lines at polling states. Voting was mandatory. - [The Guardian on 04-SEP](#)
- Thousands of Argentines gathered in Buenos Aires and cities and towns around the country to show support for controversial Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner hours after a man pointed a handgun in her face and, authorities say, pulled the trigger. The gun did not fire and Kirchner, a former president, first lady and senator, escaped the confrontation outside her home physically unharmed. President Alberto Fernández called it the “most serious incident to happen since we recovered democracy” four decades ago. - [Washington Post on 02-SEP](#)
- On September 1, Ecuador's armed forces announced that they had bolstered their presence along the northern border due to concerns over escalating guerrilla activity in Colombia. - [LatinNews Daily on 02-SEP](#)
- Thousands of protesters have rallied in Argentina in support of Vice-President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, who denies corruption charges. They gathered outside her home in the capital Buenos

Aires, tearing down barriers and clashing with police. At least five police officers were injured, and four protesters were arrested, local media report. Prosecutors want the former president to be given 12 years in prison and to be banned from public office. The 69-year-old is accused of defrauding the state and being involved in a scheme to divert public funds while she was president between 2007 and 2015. - [BBC News on 29-AUG](#)

- The sister-in-law of Peruvian President Pedro Castillo was given 30 months of pre-trial detention on Sunday, the most serious escalation so far of a host of criminal investigations that have targeted the leader's inner circle. Prosecutors allege she was part of a group that engaged in influence peddling to assign public contracts to allies of Castillo in their home region of Cajamarca, in the Peruvian Andes. - [Reuters on 29-AUG](#)
- Chile voted on a new constitution on September 4, and indigenous issues are at the forefront of debate. The draft charter defines Chile as “plurinational” and refers to the people of Chile as being “composed of various nations.” It also contains provisions on Indigenous consultation, autonomous territories for Indigenous groups and recognition of Indigenous justice. Chile’s population is 12.8% Indigenous, according to the most recent census figures. - [Americas Quarterly on 29-AUG](#)
- Chile’s President Gabriel Boric announced his first cabinet change less than six months into his administration after reports that one of his ministers tried to contact a radical indigenous activist. Boric said he accepted the resignation of Social Development Minister Jeanette Vega after local news service Ex Ante reported that one of her advisers had spoken with Hector Llaitul, leader of the CAM indigenous organization. - [Bloomberg on 25-AUG](#)
- Prosecutors asked a judge to sentence Argentine Vice President Cristina Fernández to 12 years in prison and bar her from holding public office for life for allegedly leading a criminal conspiracy that irregularly awarded public works contracts to a friend and ally. The alleged fraud against the state cost the country’s coffers around \$1 billion, Luciani said. - [Associated Press on 22-AUG](#)
- Thousands of frustrated Argentines clogged downtown Buenos Aires in raucous street protests, demanding government action to boost salaries and unemployment benefits battered by surging consumer prices and a weakening peso currency. The South American nation's economic crisis has seen the ranks of the poor swell to 40% of the population as President Alberto Fernandez struggles to find solutions to an annual inflation rate hovering around 70%. - [Reuters on 17-AUG](#)
- On August 9, various civil society organizations, including Asamblea Social y Popular de Guatemala, blocked at least 11 highways at key points in Guatemala as part of a protest over the arrest of journalist José Rubén Zamora Marroquín, government corruption, and the high cost of living. - [LatinNews Daily on 10-AUG](#)
- Colombia's first leftist president was sworn into office, promising to fight inequality and heralding a turning point in the history of a country haunted by a long war between the government and guerrilla groups. Senator Gustavo Petro, a former member of Colombia's M-19 guerrilla group, won the presidential election in June by beating conservative parties that offered moderate changes to

the market-friendly economy, but failed to connect with voters frustrated by rising poverty and violence against human rights leaders and environmental groups in rural areas. - [NPR on 07-AUG](#)

- Mexico's foreign minister met with Bolivian officials this week to discuss lithium collaboration. Mexico has been working to nationalize lithium deposits in the country, including in neighboring Sonora. Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard arrived in Bolivia, where he met with high-level officials. The leaders say they want to collaborate not only to mine the mineral, but to process lithium and build lithium batteries. AMLO said he hoped to team up with other Latin American nations to capitalize on the region's lithium resources. The president has been working to nationalize the country's lithium. However, concessions for a major deposit in Sonora are currently controlled by the Chinese company Ganfeng. - [Fronteras Desk on 05-AUG](#)
- Peruvian President Pedro Castillo reshuffled his cabinet, naming a new finance minister but stopping short of a full revamp by keeping Prime Minister Anibal Torres in his role. The president tapped Kurt Burneo, a center-left economist who served as an economy vice minister in the early 2000s under President Alejandro Toledo, to replace Oscar Graham in the key finance minister post. Burneo is a former director of Peru's central bank and former president of the Bank of the Nation. - [Reuters on 05-AUG](#)
- On August 4, Honduras's transparency ministry officially called on civil-society to elect its representatives to the nominating board for the appointment of new magistrates to the 15-member supreme court. - [LatinNews Daily on 05-AUG](#)

## **BRAZIL ELECTIONS**

- Brazilian presidential candidate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva saw his lead over incumbent President Jair Bolsonaro slightly drop ahead of the Oct. 30 runoff vote, according to a survey by pollster IPEC published on Monday, October 17. - [Reuters on 17-OCT](#)
- Brazil's former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and incumbent Jair Bolsonaro clashed in their first one-on-one election debate on Sunday, October 16. They repeatedly called each other liars and alleged corruption. - [Euro News on 17-OCT](#)
- Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro mixed an Independence Day military parade with a political rally in the capital Brasilia, attended by tens of thousands of supporters less than a month before a heated election. - [Reuters on 07-SEP](#)
- On September 5, Brazilian supreme court justice Edson Fachin suspended several provisions implemented by President Jair Bolsonaro that facilitated the acquisition and bearing of firearms in Brazil, citing the "*risk of political violence*" ahead of the October 2 general election. - [LatinNews Daily on 06-SEP](#)
- Brazil's embattled former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the front-runner in the country's election, will be struck from the ballot, an electoral court ruled on Friday, reshaping Brazil's election one month before voters cast their ballots. The much-anticipated decision brings some

clarity to a chaotic campaign season in which the man who had been favored to win Latin America's largest election was sitting behind bars. - [Washington Post on 31-AUG](#)

- President Jair Bolsonaro managed to lift his popularity slightly among voters after a multibillion-dollar blitz to stimulate the Brazilian economy ahead of general elections, according to the latest DataFolha poll. His top challenger, former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, would win 47% of votes in the first round, unchanged from the last survey taken at the end of July. Bolsonaro would get 32%, up from 29%. - [Bloomberg on 18-AUG](#)
- On August 12, Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro became the target of yet another investigation led by the supreme court (STF) and related to his frequent attacks on the country's electoral system, after Justice Alexandre de Moraes admitted a criminal-notice filed by the supreme electoral court (TSE). - [LatinNews Daily on 13-AUG](#)
- Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has suffered a defeat in Congress, after his plan to change the current electronic voting system in elections to one with a paper trail failed. The proposal fell well short of the three-fifth majority required for a constitutional amendment. Mr. Bolsonaro says there should be a mixed system in which a receipt is printed out for each vote cast electronically. He argues that a paper trail that can be publicly audited would make fraud more difficult. - [BBC News on 11-AUG](#)
- Brazil's former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is campaigning to return to the job he held between 2003-2010, received an endorsement from moderate André Janones who had been expected to run himself. Da Silva, who is commonly known as Lula, and Janones made the announcement in a live broadcast, shortly before they were scheduled to hold a press conference in Sao Paulo. - [ABC News on 04-AUG](#)

## **BLINKEN SOUTH AMERICA TOUR**

- During the week of October 4, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken headed to Colombia, Chile, and Peru to meet presidents and discuss cooperation on drug policy, climate change, security, trade, and migration. He also attended the OAS General Assembly in Lima. The trip comes as observers note that China is making continued inroads in the region at Washington's expense. - [AS/COA on 07-OCT](#)
- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken hailed a "shared approach and shared priorities" with Chile under President Gabriel Boric, one of a string of leftist leaders recently elected in Latin America. - [France24 on 05-OCT](#)
- The Biden administration launched a weeklong courtship of three of Latin America's newest leftist leaders in a bid to find pragmatic common ground — rather than ideological confrontation — on a host of issues, including immigration, drug trafficking and the widening influence of China. - [Los Angeles Times on 03-OCT](#)
- Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken will travel to Colombia, Chile, and Peru October 3-7, 2022. October 3-4, in Colombia, Secretary Blinken will meet with President Gustavo Petro, Vice

President Francia Márquez, and Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva. Secretary Blinken’s meetings will focus on our shared priorities of supporting strong democratic governments and respect for human rights throughout the Western Hemisphere, [among others]. - [U.S. Department of State on 30-SEP](#)



**American military leaders have raised alarm about a surge in Chinese-owned or controlled ports in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to U.S. Southern Command, Chinese companies are constructing at least 40 ports on both sides of the Panama Canal in Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and the Bahamas.** One mega project, the Chancay Port Terminal, 67 miles outside of Lima, is in its second year of construction and claims to be the largest and most strategic port for China in South America. Led by China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO), connected to the Communist Party of China, this project alone is a four billion dollar investment and has been dubbed, “China’s gateway to Latin America.”

The concern that China could begin to use strategic ports to host Chinese warships comes as Uruguay's General Assembly approved the implementation of joint defense efforts with China to increase collaboration between their respective Defense Ministries, cooperating in the areas of research and acquisition of defense goods and services and promoting combined military exercises and training.

Equally concerning is China’s growing use of satellite ground stations in Latin America. President Xi Jinping has called on the country to become a space power, with a government paper highlighting how the space industry serves its “national strategy.” A [recent report by CSIS](#) details the eleven satellite ground stations in Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, and Venezuela that are owned or controlled by China, many with connections to the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).



Strategic ports, piers, and satellite ground stations are just a piece of the puzzle. Economic overtures continue to be China's primary outreach to Latin America. In September, Ecuador reached a deal to restructure its debt to China, opening up millions of barrels of Ecuadorian crude to the Asian giant in a spot sale. This follows an audit by Ecuador's Congress earlier this year that concluded the Andean country lost up to \$5 billion due to Petrochina, an arm of China National Petroleum Corporation, undervaluing the price of oil during the tenure of Rafael Correa.

- BYD, a Chinese new energy vehicle giant which has launched models in Europe, is making great strides in bringing its cars onto the streets of Mexico and Malaysia. The automaker recently revealed two partnerships with local players in North America and Southeast Asia to widen its influence abroad. - [Yicai Global on 11-OCT](#)
- Chile's congress voted to approve the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) trade deal after four years of legislative debate. The CPTPP is comprised of Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. The United States formally withdrew in 2017 under President Donald Trump. - [U.S. News on 11-OCT](#)
- State media reports Guyana hopes that the Communist Party of China (CPC) will carry on with its innovative and wise ruling policies with Chinese characteristics, to fuel China's progression and to further shoulder China's responsibilities as a major global power that champions the causes of developing countries, Guyana's Ambassador to China Anyin Choo told the Global Times recently, in anticipation of the upcoming 20th National Congress of the CPC. - [Global Times on 11-OCT](#)
- President Mario Abdo Benitez of Paraguay has said that his nation requires \$1 billion in investment from Taiwan to help the Paraguayan government resist pressure to switch diplomatic recognition to China. Benitez said in an interview with the Financial Times on September 29 that his government was working with Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-wen to ensure that Paraguayans "feel the real benefits of the strategic alliance." Benitez said the \$1 billion investment would help his government "build the argument" about the importance of keeping its alliance with the self-ruled island. - [Epoch Times on 04-OCT](#)
- China has laid out a bold vision for its ambitions in space. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly called for China to transform into a leading "space power," and a 2022 Chinese government white paper states plainly that China's space industry "serves the overall national strategy." While Beijing insists that it utilizes space for peaceful purposes and aspires to make scientific achievements in space, its emergence as a space power poses potential risks to other countries. Their proximity to the United States has heightened fears that they can be used to spy on U.S. assets and intercept sensitive information. - [Center for Strategic and International Studies on 04-OCT](#)
- China has laid out a bold vision for its ambitions in space. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly called for China to transform into a leading "space power," and a 2022 Chinese government white paper states plainly that China's space industry "serves the overall national strategy." - [Center for Strategic and International Studies on 04-OCT](#)

- China has expanded its use of satellite ground stations in South America, leading multiple governments to express concern about Beijing's intentions, according to a new report. China's space program has close but opaque ties to the country's military, fueling concerns that ostensibly civilian facilities could also be used for intelligence collection and surveillance, according to the report. - [Axios on 04-OCT](#)
- State media reports Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi praised Costa Rica's reiterated commitment to the one-China principle at a meeting with Costa Rican Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship Arnoldo Andre Tinoco on the sidelines of the 77th United Nations General Assembly in New York. The new Costa Rican government does not allow any form of "Taiwan independence" activities in the Central American country, which has effectively reinforced the political groundwork of the relations between Beijing and San Jose, Wang said. - [CGTN on 25-SEP](#)
- U.S. military leaders are deeply concerned about a surge in Chinese-owned ports in Latin America and the Caribbean that "could benefit its military," according to a report by the U.S.-China Commission (USCC). "Why would China need to build naval bases around the world?" said Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. "They'll have visiting rights to basically nationalize and operationalize any port they control in the world in a time of conflict, if necessary, and there won't be anything we can do about it." - [Fox News on 22-SEP](#)
- Just a week before Brazil's historic elections, it is now clear that China has entered the domestic political debate, with uncertain consequences and repercussions for China's relations not only with the largest South American country but with all of Latin America. - [The Diplomat on 24-SEP](#)
- Argentina is preparing an international tender for works on the Magdalena Channel, a proposed river passage providing new access for ships entering or leaving the Río de La Plata and the Paraná-Paraguay waterway – the route that connects five countries in South America, and through which 75% of Argentina's foreign trade moves. The international tender is expected to attract the interest of major players in the global dredging market, such as Belgium's Jan de Nul, which has been operating on the Paraná-Paraguay waterway since 1995, and China's CCCC Shanghai Dredging Company, which has experience in dredging the port of Mar del Plata on the Atlantic coast, and the Martín García channel further up the Río de la Plata, among other companies. - [Diálogo Chino on 20-SEP](#)
- Ecuador has reached an agreement to restructure its debt with Chinese banks, the government said in a statement, providing relief worth some \$1.4 billion until 2025. Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso announced in February that he was looking to restructure the country's debt and improve the conditions of long-term oil sales contracts with Beijing. - [Reuters on 19-SEP](#)
- Jalisco Governor Enrique Alfaro announced that Solarever Group, a Chinese solar panel manufacturer, would invest US\$1 billion over the next four years in an electric vehicle battery plant in the state, while Nuevo León Governor Samuel García met with executives of the Lingong Machinery Group (LGMG), which is investing \$140 million in a boom lift plant in the northern border state. - [Mexico News Daily on 16-SEP](#)

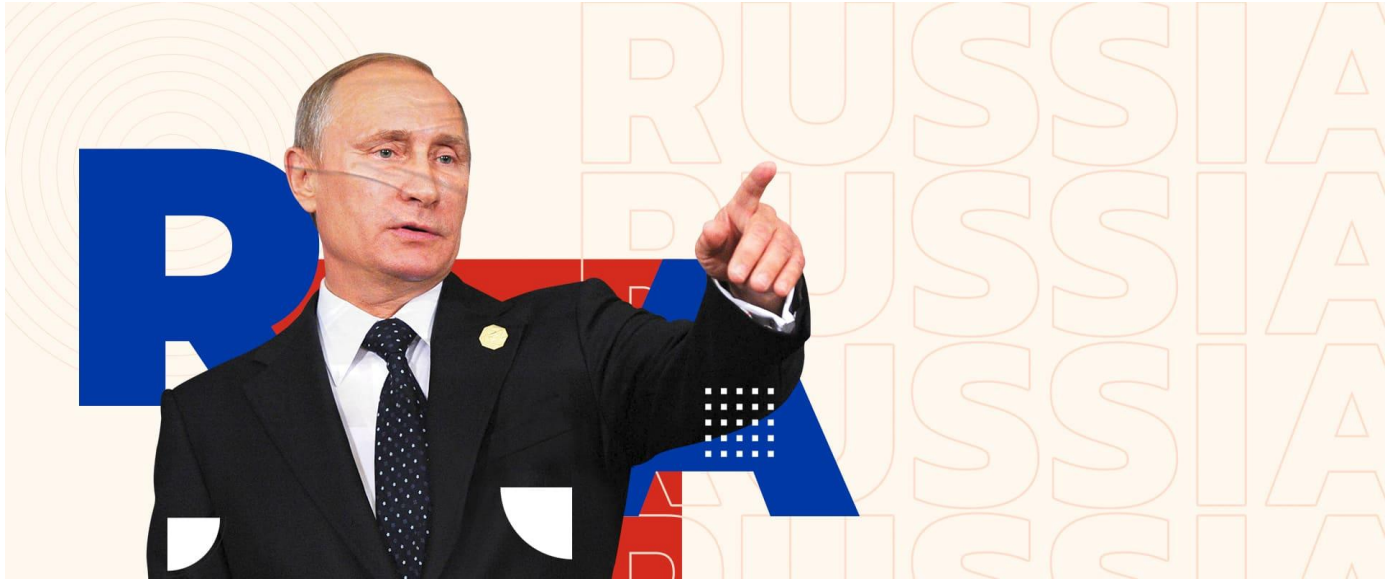
- “When experts talk about China's influence in Latin America, they mostly focus on their economic influence. The more than \$153 billion in investments since 2005, and more than \$140 billion in loans. While that is important, it's more important to understand how China has leveraged that economic influence to gain military, intelligence, and geopolitical advantage in Latin America and the Caribbean, turning the region towards authoritarianism,” Joseph Humire, executive director of the Center for a Secure Free Society told Fox News Digital. - [Fox News on 13-SEP](#)
- Nicaragua's 92-member unicameral legislature has approved an early harvest deal with mainland China, part of a free trade deal (FTA) which the two countries are currently negotiating. According to official state-owned media in Nicaragua, the agreement will permit the country to sell leading exports like beef, shellfish and coffee. Back in June, when first announcing that the two countries had outlined a trade deal, Nicaragua's minister for development, business and industry (Mific), Jesús Bermúdez said that the framework for negotiations had already been established and he hoped that the FTA would be finalized within a year and a half. The FTA will cover key areas of trade policy such as intellectual property rights, environmental standards and phytosanitary measures. - [LatinNews Daily on 09-SEP](#)
- Not so long ago, Chancay was a sleepy fishing and farming enclave on Peru's central coast frequented by tourists and seabirds. Walking through its streets, there was nothing to suggest that this town would host a megaport in a few years that would radically change its appearance and become a key link in trade between Latin America and China. - [BBC Mundo on 08-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Sinovac Biotech will hold an initial trial in Chile to test two of its inactivated vaccines targeting the Omicron variant, the Chinese pharmaceutical company announced. The trials, which were just approved by Chilean regulators, will test two candidates: one targeting just Omicron and a trivalent vaccine targeting the Delta, Omicron and original variants. Sinovac said it would be the first trial of an inactivated Covid-19 vaccine targeting multiple variants. - [South China Morning Post on 07-SEP](#)
- China aspires to open a “naval outpost” in Nicaragua as part of a plan to dominate the Indo-Pacific, Taiwan has warned. “The Chinese are talking with them about also potentially setting up a naval outpost,” Taiwanese Vice Foreign Minister Alexander Yui told reporters. “So they have a very large plan.” Nicaragua severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan last year in favor of new ties with Chinese General Secretary Xi Jinping's regime, which claims sovereignty over the island democracy despite never having ruled in Taipei. - [Washington Examiner on 04-SEP](#)
- Fentanyl, which is manufactured by the cartels in Mexico, has become a plague in America amid the current border crisis. The production of fentanyl begins in China, where a network of underground labs batch up “precursor” chemicals needed to manufacture the drug. Those include the two most common ingredients of fentanyl: N-phenethylpiperidone and 4-anilino-N-phenethylpiperidine. - [New York Post on 03-SEP](#)
- Argentina has delayed until November the signing of a memorandum of understanding with China aimed at increasing investment in Argentine hog output, a government source said, citing environmental protests over the planned export deal. Argentina first sought to sign the preliminary

agreement in August, which aims to double the South American country's pork output - currently 630,000 tonnes per year - in four years. - [Reuters on 01-SEP](#)

- State media reports Nicaragua and the People's Republic of China will carry out a housing construction program that will benefit 12,000 people in 84 municipalities in the country, announced Vice President Rosario Murillo. "The first phase of the national housing program that was agreed yesterday, confirming the beginning of the first phase Nicaragua-China. It will be carried out in Managua and [consist of] 920 houses," she said. - [Kawasachun News on 31-AUG](#)
- Investment by Chinese companies in Brazil more than tripled in 2021, returning to pre-Covid pandemic levels and making the country the main destination for Chinese capital last year. After a lukewarm performance in 2020, operations such as Tencent's investments in fintechs and startups such as Nubank, QuintoAndar and Cora, as well as billionaire investments by Chinese oil companies in the Santos Basin have increased. Also noteworthy was the purchasing of the power transmission company in Rio Grande do Sul by State Grid and of the Mercedes-Benz plant in Iracemápolis by Great Wall Motors. - [Folha De S.Paolo on 31-AUG](#)
- The Central American country of Guatemala will "always support" Taiwan. This was stated by Guatemalan Foreign Minister Mario Bucaro after China held its most extensive ever military exercises around the self-governing island earlier this month. In a meeting with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen at the presidential office in Taipei, Bucaro stressed that Guatemala and Taiwan are "like-minded countries" and linked by a "democratic alliance." - [The Rio Times on 30-AUG](#)
- China has entrusted a defense-focused state firm to ship millions of barrels of Venezuelan oil despite U.S. sanctions, part of a deal to offset Caracas' billions of dollars of debt to Beijing, according to three sources and tanker tracking data. - [Reuters on 26-AUG](#)
- Brazil's cumulative surplus with China since the start of Jair Bolsonaro's administration (January 2019 - July 2022) is US\$127.7 billion. It exceeds the amount added during the leftist governments of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff and under centrist Michel Temer from 2003 to 2018: US\$127.2 billion. - [The Rio Times on 24-AUG](#)
- Analysts say agribusiness links are likely to continue to advance, but diplomacy may follow different paths depending on the winner of Brazil's October presidential vote. Experts consulted by Diálogo Chino see an eventual win for former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who currently leads the polls, as a route to strengthening ties between the two countries. If current incumbent and poll-trailer Jair Bolsonaro is re-elected, the signs are that the government will likely continue to distance itself from China – at least rhetorically. - [Diálogo Chino on 24-AUG](#)
- State media reports a new agreement to facilitate exports from the Brazilian agribusiness sector to China has been described by market experts in Sao Paulo as crucial to inaugurating the "biggest era of market openness in the last ten years" between the two countries. Agronomist Helen Jacintho said that with the new agreement, China is opening up its market for products such as soybean meal (a long standing request from Brazil), concentrated soy protein, corn, peanuts, and citrus pulp. - [MercoPress on 23-AUG](#)

- State media reports while Europe plans to take steps to rebuild its ties with Latin America after Moscow and Beijing sneaked in as the region's new most important partners, the Foreign Ministers of China and Chile held a telephone conversation. Wang Yi and Antonia Urrejola discussed Sino-Chilean relations and highlighted the fact that these bonds have continued to grow despite the changes of government. The Chinese official also pointed out that Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Chilean counterpart, Gabriel Boric, have maintained strategic communication and given direction for the development of bilateral relations. - [MercoPress on 19-AUG](#)
- China is investing in Mexico in order to avoid U.S. tariffs—such as the 25 percent tariff former President Donald Trump imposed on a wide variety of Chinese goods. - [NTD on 18-AUG](#)
- The Ecuadorian Minister of Production, Foreign Trade, and Investment, Julio José Prado, affirmed on Wednesday, August 17, at the presentation conference of the XV China-Latin America and the Caribbean (China-LAC) Business Summit that they are confident of closing a free trade agreement (FTA) with China this year. - [Rio Times on 18-AUG](#)
- State media reports a delivery ceremony for a Chinese Red Cross Society donation worth 150,000 U.S. dollars to its Cuban counterpart was held. The donation is aimed at supporting the Caribbean nation to carry out rescue and restoration work after an oil depot fire incident in the western city of Matanzas. In a speech delivered at the ceremony held at the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment in Havana, Chinese Ambassador to Cuba Ma Hui said, “China and Cuba are sister nations. The Chinese government and people share the same feelings of pain for the massive fire.” - [China People's Daily on 16-AUG](#)
- Uruguay irritated its partners in the Mercosur trade bloc when it announced in July, ahead of the group's semi-annual summit, that it had completed a joint study with China about the feasibility of a bilateral free trade agreement and that the two states are set to begin negotiations. It raises dilemmas for Mercosur, the Southern Common Market with four active members (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay), as its rules require that all members consent to any one of them signing a trade agreement with a third country. Such consent is not likely to be forthcoming; yet Uruguay still wants to move forward with negotiations, hopefully together with its Mercosur partners. - [National Interest on 14-AUG](#)
- The People's Republic of China presented a check valued US\$50,000 to the Government of Guyana to tackle Disaster Relief and Risk Management countrywide. According to a release, the funds were received by Col. (ret'd) Nazrul Hussain, Director-General of the Civil Defense Commission (CDC). The Asian nation expressed intent to formalize a working relationship with the Guyana Government, via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the CDC, to assist in Disaster Risk Management plans. - [Guyana Chronicle on 14-AUG](#)
- State media reports Uruguay's Congress approved the implementation of joint defense efforts with China agreed upon in 2019, when the two countries pledged to increase cooperation between their respective Ministries of Defense, “within the limits of their competencies.” The document also provides for “the exchange and cooperation in the areas of research and acquisition of defense

goods and services and logistical support in the area of international peacekeeping operations” and “the promotion of combined exercises and training, cooperation in matters related to science, technology and military equipment, humanitarian assistance in case of disasters and cooperation in anti-terrorist matters, among others.” - [MercoPress on 10-AUG](#)



The Ukraine War continues to rage on with Russia re-launching another military assault on Kyiv and other cities on October 11. While the West scrambles to bridge the North-South divide aggravated by the war, Ukraine has appointed a special envoy for Latin America, Amb. Ruslan Spirin, who is charged with combating disinformation from Russian state-owned media in Spanish and Portuguese.

Russian disinformation in Latin America was on full-blast during the International Army Games in August, especially in Venezuela. Social media was flooded with videos and posts of Venezuelan, Russian, Iranian, Chinese, Cuban, Bolivian, Nicaraguan, and other soldiers, training side by side in Ft. Terepaima in the Lara State of Venezuela. Meanwhile, **the Sputnik radio network and a Nicaraguan state media conglomerate inked a deal making Russian content available to more than 20 Nicaraguan state channels, broadcasting to 6.6 million people throughout the country. This could catapult Nicaragua to Venezuela’s status, which according to media watchdog, NewsGuard, has become Russia’s best conduit for disinformation in Latin America.**

In September, Nicaragua took part in another major multinational military exercise, the Vostok 2022 in Russia’s far east and the Sea of Japan, to showcase the blossoming joint capabilities of Moscow and Beijing, with the People’s Republic of China, for the first time, sending troops to the exercise from all three branches of its military.

Venezuela is also expanding cooperation with Russia in all areas, including in the energy and pharmaceutical sectors. Vladimir Putin exalted Caracas as its “strategic partner and reliable ally in Latin America” before announcing that a GLONASS satellite navigation system is being built in Venezuela. A

similar satellite base in Nicaragua has raised suspicions, and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador confirmed that Russia will install a GLONASS satellite system in Mexico, for “peaceful purposes.”

- Today we fulfill a fruitful agenda of work with the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov. We reviewed the progress of joint projects, we stand in solidarity with the Russian people and pledged to continue raising the strategic level of our relations. - [Carlos Faria on Twitter on 11-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- The government of Ukraine recently appointed a top diplomat whose primary goal is to counter Russian disinformation about the war reaching audiences in Latin America, Ambassador Ruslan Spirin told the Miami Herald and el Nuevo Herald in an exclusive interview. - [Miami Herald on 11-OCT](#)
- According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Russia continues to support Latin American countries in food and energy security despite Western sanctions. He pointed out that Russian companies supplied US\$3.7 billion in fertilizer between January and June alone. He added that trade between Russia and Latin America increased by 27% in the first six months of this year compared to the same period last year and amounted to US\$11 billion. He pointed out that trade exchange between Moscow and Brasilia increased by 50.6% between January and May, compared to the same period in 2021. - [Rio Times on 10-OCT](#)
- President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) confirmed that Mexico signed an agreement with Russia to use the Glonass satellite system "for peaceful purposes", for which he denied that the action had espionage purposes. - [Infobae on 10-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- State media reports the delegations of Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico were among those who refused to sign a statement from the Organization of American States (OAS) condemning Russia's military deployment in Ukraine as the continental group's 52nd General Assembly kicked off in Lima. A total of 24 American countries signed a declaration of support for Ukraine over the Russian invasion and condemnation of Moscow's actions. The document drafted by Guatemala notes the “immense concern over the indifference and disregard by the Russian Federation to the calls by the OAS for the withdrawal of its military forces from Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.” It also calls on Russia to “cease hostilities and withdraw its military forces from Ukraine within internationally known borders.” - [Merco Press on 07-OCT](#)
- The Wagner Group, Russia’s state-backed private military organization, has increased its recruitment efforts outside of Russia, liaising with organized crime groups in Latin America and Europe, after suffering heavy losses in southern Ukraine, two sources familiar with the paramilitary group told Middle East Eye. - [Middle East Eye on 06-OCT](#)
- Brazil and Russia are tightening energy relations amid the geopolitical turbulence and energy insecurity associated with the latter’s invasion of Ukraine. Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro

announced that around 35Ml of Russian diesel arrived in Santos port, São Paulo state, so far this year, which is 15% more than diesel imports from Russia last year, according to local oil and gas watchdog ANP. Bolsonaro highlighted that new diesel shipments are expected for this month and that the imports will increase local competition and lower fuel prices. - [Competition Policy International on 04-OCT](#)

- State media reports, after months of blockades to Russian commercial flights, the first batch of tourists arrived this weekend at Venezuela's Margarita Island on a Nordwind charter service, it was reported. A total of 417 Russian travelers landed Saturday at Margarita in northeastern Venezuela after seven months of restrictions following President Vladimir Putin's military deployment in Ukraine. - [MercoPress on 03-OCT](#)
- Venezuela's state oil company seized a minority stake in a key joint oil venture from GPB Global Resources, a private energy firm founded by former Gazprom PJSC officials, taking full control of the asset. - [Bloomberg on 30-SEP](#)
- Petrozamorá, a one-time joint venture oil project with Russia's Gazprombank, is now a 100pc PdV-owned subsidiary, PdV workers were told. Russian companies like Rosneft and Lukoil were once regular partners with PdV on a number of projects, but they began pulling out of Venezuela when the US started to impose sanctions on PdV and companies doing business with it. In 2020 Russia created Roszarubezhneft to take over Rosneft's Venezuelan business, but it has been slowly unwinding the partnerships. - [Argus Media on 27-SEP](#)
- Russia has voiced its support for India and Brazil as “worthy candidates” for permanent membership in the UN Security Council, calling them “key international actors.” During the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov expressed his support for India, becoming a permanent member of the Security Council. - [Times of India on 25-SEP](#)
- Russia announced its plans to install a GLONASS satellite navigation ground station in Venezuela. The GLONASS system is similar to the GPS of the United States and the Galileo system of Europe. According to the Russian space agency Roscosmos, the deployment of the station is part of the agreement between Moscow and Caracas on cooperation in the exploitation and use of outer space, ratified in June 2022. - [Dialogo Americas on 22-SEP](#)
- In his address to the high-level debate at the UN General Assembly, Marcelo Ebrard, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, proposed the creation of a diplomatic caucus of global leaders that would support the Secretary General's mediation and promote trust-building measures between Russia and Ukraine. - [UN News on 22-SEP](#)
- After two weeks on the run, authorities in Venezuela arrested former defense contractor Leonard “Fat Leonard” Francis as he attempted to board a plane to Russia, officials said. Francis was detained by Venezuelan authorities at the Simon Bolivar International Airport in Maiquetía. Interpol Venezuela Director General Carlos Garate Rondon said in a post on Instagram. Francis “had entered the country from Mexico with a stopover in Cuba to then proceed... [to the] Federal Republic of



Russia,” Rondon said in a translation of the post from the original Spanish. - [US Naval Institute News on 22-SEP](#)

- State media reports Moscow plans to expand cooperation with Caracas in all areas, including energy and pharmaceuticals sectors, Russian President Vladimir Putin said at a meeting with newly-appointed foreign ambassadors. “Venezuela is our strategic partner and reliable ally in Latin America and in the world in general. We maintain an active dialogue with President [Nicolas] Maduro. The positions of Russia and Venezuela on the main issues on the global agenda are close or in complete accord. We intend to continue boosting bilateral cooperation in all areas, first of all in energy, industry, infrastructure, transport and the pharmaceutical industry,” he said. - [TASS on 20-SEP](#)
- Russian state TV's Vladimir Solovyov says his country should form an international coalition for its war in Ukraine including Venezuela, Iran, North Korea, Cuba and Nicaragua. - [Francis Scarr via Twitter on 15-SEP](#)
- Nicolás Maduro, congratulated Vladimir Putin for the victory of his party in the regional elections that were held last weekend with little presence of opposition candidates and little citizen interest, amid the invasion of Ukraine. “On behalf of the Venezuelan people, I congratulate President Vladimir Putin for the resounding victory of the United Russia Party in the regional and municipal elections last weekend. A strong support from the Russian people that ratifies his undisputed leadership,” Maduro said through his Twitter account. - [Infobae on 14-SEP \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Under a new deal between the governments of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russian-produced media content will now be broadcast across Nicaragua. The contract between the Communication and Citizenry Council of Nicaragua, the country's state media conglomerate, and the Sputnik radio network will make Russian content available to more than 20 Nicaraguan state channels, broadcasting to 6.6 million people. - [Voice of America on 14-SEP](#)
- Russia and Nicaragua have discussed prospects for Russian wheat supply to the Latin American country. Representatives of the Russian Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Supervision (Rosselkhozadzor) took part in a meeting of the Russia-Nicaragua Intergovernmental Commission co-chairs at the Eastern Economic Forum. “The sides discussed certain aspects of the bilateral strategic partnership, including the delivery of Russian wheat to the Nicaraguan market,” the service said in a statement. - [Interfax on 08-SEP](#)
- Daniel Ortega gave a speech at the celebration ceremony of the 43rd anniversary of the founding of the Army. Ortega and Army chief Julio Cesar Aviles did not mention the military maneuvers that take place in Nicaragua with the participation of foreign troops, or the participation of Nicaraguan troops in the Vostok 2022 military exercises being held in Russia, which ended on September 7. Thursday, September 1, Russia began large-scale military maneuvers with the participation of 50,000 troops, 5,000 heavy weapons units, 140 aircrafts and 60 ships, the Ministry of Defense said in a statement quoted by the EFE news agency. - [Confidencial on 05-SEP](#)

- Efforts by the government of Luis Arce to industrialize lithium have produced initial results, putting Bolivia on the world map of lithium suppliers. According to a report by a private institute, nearly half of the amount mined has been exported to Russia. The Bolivian Institute of Foreign Trade (IBCE) reported that the country finally made it to the top 10 lithium exporters. - [Rio Times on 02-SEP](#)
- Russia has launched a week of war games involving forces from China and other nations in a show of growing defense co-operation between Moscow and Beijing as they face tensions with the US. Russian General Staff chief General Valery Gerasimov will personally oversee the drills that will involve troops from several ex-Soviet nations, China, India, Laos, Mongolia, Nicaragua and Syria. The Defense Ministry said the Russian and Chinese navies in the Sea of Japan will “practice joint action to protect sea communications, areas of marine economic activity and support for ground troops in littoral areas.” - [Leading Britain's Conversation on 01-SEP](#)
- Russia and China have launched large-scale military exercises involving several allied nations, in a show of growing defense cooperation between Moscow and Beijing as they both face tensions with the US. The Russian defense ministry said the Vostok 2022 (East 2022) exercise would be held until 7 September at seven firing ranges in Russia’s far east and the Sea of Japan and involve more than 50,000 troops and 5,000 weapons units, including 140 aircraft and 60 warships. - [The Guardian on 01-SEP](#)
- State media reports Venezuela is ready to start supplies of buffalo meat and milk to Russia, Maduro said in his address. “I have been told presently that Russia is highly interested in buffalo meat and derived products and that they are sold well. If Russia needs, Venezuela is ready [to supply],” the regime leader said in his speech streamed by the Venezolana de Television. - [TASS on 31-AUG](#)
- Teams from Venezuela, Russia, and China showed off their military might at the annual Army International Games organized by the Russian Ministry of Defense. The squads competed for the title of the “Best Road Paver” team, the “Best Engineering and Assault Squad” and the “Best Heavy Mechanized Bridge” team at the event hosted at a training ground in Korla, the second largest city in the province of Xinjiang in China. - [Newsweek on 26-AUG](#)
- Snipers from Russia and other countries hostile to the United States are competing in war games being held in Venezuela in events described as Olympic games for soldiers. The international war games have been held yearly since 2015, following Russia’s annexation of Crimea, and Venezuela has participated from their beginning, but this year’s games are the first held in Latin America, and include participants from Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua. Forces from Burma, Belarus, Abkhazia, Uzbekistan, China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia, among others, also participate in the competitions. These are nations that “daily condemn imperialist aggression against the peoples,” Venezuelan Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López declared as he inaugurated the games on Monday. - [Miami Herald on 19-AUG](#)
- The Brazilian army withdrew from participating in an annual competition between military forces organized by Russia. The Force's Social Communication Center confirmed that there would be no Brazilian delegation. According to officials with knowledge of the matter, the decision was a political one: taking part in such an event organized by a country at war could suggest that Brazil

has a side in the dispute. Brazil participated as an observer in the 2015 and 2019 editions and competed last year in the category of countries without the use of armored vehicles. - [Folha De S.Paolo on 16-AUG](#)

- Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak has been appointed co-chairman of the Russia-Venezuela High-Level Intergovernmental Commission. Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has signed an order on the appointment and it has been posted on the official website for legal information. Novak will replace Yury Borisov on the commission, as the latter stepped down from the position of deputy prime minister in mid-July. - [Interfax on 11-AUG](#)

## **BELARUS**

- State media reports Russia and Latin America countries assist with the investigation into the genocide of the Belarusian people. Prosecutor General of Belarus Andrei Shved mentioned it during a ceremony to rebury over 1,000 residents of Belarus, who were shot during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, BelTA has learned. - [BelTA on 30-AUG](#)

## **RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION**

- The alliance between Russia and Venezuela transcends the diplomatic circles, the cold headquarters of the United Nations Organization, it goes beyond the military forts where the Venezuelan soldiers wield modern Russian weapons and goes beyond the joint work in the oil wells. In terms of propaganda, there is also a joint effort. - [Transparencia Venezuela \(content in Spanish\) in OCT](#)
- Canada is imposing sanctions on 34 individuals and one entity that it says are complicit in dissemination of Russian disinformation and propaganda, the Canadian foreign ministry said on Monday, October 17. - [Reuters on 17-OCT](#)
- Russia uses new ways to spread disinformation. The mechanisms were revealed by Nisos, a US-based intelligence firm that monitors disinformation and other digital threats. Russia has devised another way to spread disinformation about its invasion of Ukraine, using digital tricks that allow its wartime propaganda videos to bypass restrictions imposed by governments and tech companies. - [Voice of America \(content in Spanish\) on 05-OCT](#)
- Facebook parent Meta says it has disrupted a large Russian network of fake accounts impersonating European news outlets to push a pro-Kremlin view of the war in Ukraine. Separately, the social media giant says it also took down a network originating in China targeting the U.S. midterm elections and criticizing the Czech government. While the campaigns were not connected, the dual takedowns underscore how social media platforms continue to be ripe targets for efforts to shape the narratives around high-profile events, said Ben Nimmo, Meta's global threat intelligence lead. - [NPR on 27-SEP](#)
- Venezuela has become a conduit for Russian Spanish-language propaganda in Latin America, according to a media watchdog that is releasing a new tool that seeks to dispel misinformation in the country and region. NewsGuard, an organization created by journalists to monitor disinformation and assess the credibility of news and information websites, launched a Venezuela

misinformation tracker to debunk what it says are widely shared conspiracies in the Americas. - [Miami Herald on 22-SEP](#)

- According to the United States, Russia is using disinformation to influence Latin America and Spanish-speaking communities in general, as a political weapon amid the war in Ukraine and three months before the U.S. midterm elections. - [Dialogo Americas on 14-SEP](#)
- After Russia invaded Ukraine last February, the European Union moved to block RT and Sputnik, two of the Kremlin's top channels for spreading propaganda and misinformation about the war. Nearly six months later, the number of sites pushing that same content has exploded as Russia found ways to evade the ban. They've rebranded their work to disguise it. They've shifted some propaganda duties to diplomats. And they've cut and pasted much of the content on new websites — ones that until now had no obvious ties to Russia. - [Voice of America on 09-AUG](#)
- As Russia continues to shell neighboring Ukraine, the Kremlin also pushes its false narrative on Latin American social networks, pointing to the United States as the bigger problem, and portraying Russians as victims of the war, the AP news agency reported April 1. "Though many of the claims have been discredited, they're spreading widely in Latin America and helping to make Kremlin-controlled outlets some of the top Spanish-language sources for information about the war," AP said. The Department of State further asserts that Russian military and intelligence agencies are involved in Moscow's entire disinformation and propaganda machine. In addition, Russian state-funded and state-run media *RT* and *Sputnik* play an important role in all this. - [Diálogo Americas on 22-APR](#)
- Russian state media were a major force in Latin America before the war in Ukraine. Promoting populist content to lure their audience, they are an established presence — not just in countries with authoritarian regimes. The Spanish-language offshoot of Russia Today, Actualidad RT, has been a runaway success since it was founded in 2009. With more than 18 million followers on Facebook and almost six million on YouTube, this "offshoot" far outstrips the English-language version. - [DW on 13-APR](#)



Protests erupted in Iran on September 17, triggered by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who died after being arrested by “morality police” for not wearing a hijab according to regime standards. While many believe the protests could lead to the end of the Islamic Republic, across the Atlantic things are business as usual.

**On October 14, an Argentine court granted permission for the final five crew members of the Venezuelan cargo plane Emtrasur YV3531 to leave the country. Four days later, the Iranian crew members met with Venezuelan Ambassador Stella Marina Lugo de Montilla at the Hotel Canning in Buenos Aires prior to taking off at 3:25AM on Tuesday, October 18 to Santa Cruz de la Sierra via flight Boliviana de Aviación (BoA) 701.**

At least two of the Iranian crew members detained have confirmed ties to the IRGC and were found to have threatening messages and photos of weapons on their cell phones. With the ruling in Argentina, the cargo and crew have effectively been released but the actual plane, a Boeing 747-300(M), remains seized in Buenos Aires for violating U.S. sanctions and export controls. Meaning that the Maduro regime will likely continue to exert pressure on the Alberto Fernández government in Argentina to release the cargo plane.

As the cargo plane saga continues, Iran is capitalizing on the Russia-induced food insecurity crisis in Brazil through a “fertilizer” diplomacy push. In March, Brazilian Agriculture Minister Tereza Cristina traveled to Tehran to purchase urea (fertilizer). Then, Iranian Ambassador Hossein Gharibi began a series of trips to the agricultural producing regions of Brazil, likely to establish himself among rural leaders as a strategic partner of Brazil. In May, the Brazil-Iran Chamber of Commerce invited Brazilian businessmen on a two-week tour of Tehran to learn about investment opportunities. Meanwhile, an Iranian diplomatic mission in Brasilia visited the Foreign Relations and National Defense Commission of the Brazilian Congress to ratify its commitment to send 2 million tons of urea (fertilizer) by the end of the year.

At the UN General Assembly in New York, Iran’s foreign minister met with counterparts from Cuba and Nicaragua, while President Ebrahim Raisi held a closed-door meeting with Bolivia’s President Luis Arce to discuss strategic cooperation. Meanwhile, Venezuela and Uruguay are both becoming host to Iranian

refineries, with the “El Palito” refinery on the Paraguana Peninsula in Venezuela now refining crude oil as the first overseas Iranian-refinery in a foreign country.

- Argentina called on Qatar to arrest a visiting Iranian vice president over his alleged responsibility for the deadly 1994 bombing of a Buenos Aires Jewish center. Iran's vice president for economic affairs, Mohsen Rezai, is wanted by Argentinian special prosecutors for alleged participation in the planning of the bomb attack against AMIA. - [i24 News on 18-OCT](#)
- State media reports El Palito, the first Iranian-built overseas refinery opened in Venezuela. Iranian oil Minister announces that the Islamic Republic of Iran has launched its first Iranian-made refinery in a foreign country in Venezuela with a capacity to refine 100,000 barrels per day of crude oil. - [Al Mayadeen on 16-OCT](#)
- State media reports Bolivia's Foreign Ministry requested the country's Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran to submit a report following press reports that she might have made remarks irritating Tehran. Ambassador Perez reportedly disqualified the protest of Iranian women during a visit to a tractor factory in the city of Tabriz. Perez released a video in which she assures that her statements were “manipulated in a biased manner.” - [MercoPress on 11-OCT](#)
- State media reports Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani sympathized with the Venezuelan government and people over the deadly earthquake and landslide which caused the missing and death of scores of people. Kanaani condoled with the Venezuelan government, people, and families of the victims. Heavy rain in Aragua on Saturday resulted in a landslide killing 22 people and missing over 50. - [IRNA on 11-OCT](#)
- State media reports the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Iraq Mohammad Kazem Al-e Sadeq in a meeting with his Venezuelan counterpart in Iraq discussed the latest international developments. Al-e Sadeq met and held talks with Arturo Anibal Gallegos Ramirez at the Venezuelan Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq. While reviewing the latest international developments, the two sides stressed further strengthening mutual ties. They discussed the capacities of joint trade, transportation, and tourism cooperation in Iraq. - [Mehr News on 10-OCT](#)
- More shipments to Asia through intermediaries and growing cargo swaps with Iran drove Venezuela's oil exports in September to their third highest level this year, internal documents and tanker tracking data showed. The OPEC-member nation's oil exports were volatile earlier this year due to a lack of diluents required to produce exportable grades and unstable output amid processing outages and scarce drilling equipment. But oil production and exports regained their footing in the third quarter, helped by Iran's supplies of condensate and crude to state-run oil company PDVSA, and deliveries of Venezuelan heavy crude and fuel oil to Iranian state companies. - [Reuters on 04-OCT](#)
- State media reports Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and his Cuban counterpart Bruno Rodriguez, in a meeting in New York, reviewed the ways the two countries can cooperate on economic cooperation and the fight against US unilateral sanctions. The two foreign ministers met in the US city on the sidelines of a UN General Assembly meeting. They also expressed views on

medical cooperation between the two countries on making a joint coronavirus vaccine. Amirabdollahian accompanied President Ebrahim Raisi who addressed the world leaders at the 77th UNGA meeting on September 21. - [IRNA on 26-SEP](#)

- State media reports Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian met with his Nicaraguan counterpart Denis Moncada on the sidelines of the 77th United Nations General Assembly in New York. Amirabdollahian highlighted the progress made in the ties between Iran and Nicaragua and said that Tehran's foreign policy in Latin America, including Nicaragua, is focused on expanding and deepening cooperation and implementing the agreements made. The Nicaraguan foreign minister emphasized countering unilateralism and any type of hegemony and stressed his country's determination to expand ties with Iran. Moncada underscored Iran's progress in various fields of science, technology, defense, and other fields and reiterated Nicaragua's supportive position on deepening collaborations on various areas and regional and international issues. - [IRNA on 25-SEP](#)
- Tankers carrying about 1.22 million barrels of Iranian crude and 2 million barrels of condensate are scheduled to discharge at Venezuela's Jose terminal in the coming days, according to a document from state oil company PDVSA. Venezuela relies on Iran for a large portion of the diluents that PDVSA uses to convert its heavy oil to exportable grades. Iranian crude also is being refined in the South American country to produce motor fuels. One of the tankers that arrived this month in Venezuelan waters is the Iran-flagged very large crude carrier (VLCC) Huge, operated by National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), according to the document. - [Reuters on 26-SEP](#)
- State media reports President Raisi in his meeting with President Arce at the hotel residence of the Iranian president in New York emphasized that the Iranian foreign minister is commissioned to activate the Joint Cooperation Commission of the two countries, whose activities need to be tangible in both countries. President Arce, for his part, said in the meeting that Iran and Bolivia have had relations as of remote past, and expressed hope that the statement on Iran-Bolivia cooperation in the past, that has been approved by the two countries, will lead to the continuation and further deepening of mutual cooperation and satisfactory results. - [IRNA on 21-SEP](#)
- State media reports Iranian and Venezuelan businesses signed 60 memorandums of understanding on the sidelines of the exhibition of Iranian technological products. The four-day event opened in the Venezuelan capital Caracas. More than 200 business roundtables were held between Iranian and Venezuelan companies with the aim of signing agreements and strengthening cooperation, Venezuelan Minister of Science and Technology Gabriela Servilia Jimenez said. Emphasizing the importance of strengthening relations with Iran, Jimenez cited "mutual understanding, creating complementary links, strategic alliances, technology exchange, and transfer, trade, and cooperation" as examples. - [Tehran Times on 20-SEP](#)
- State media reports as the Iranian government under President Ebrahim Raisi is seeking a change in the country's absolute raw sale of oil, reports say that Iran has begun a strategic refinery owning a project in Venezuela. Iran daily newspaper quoted an informed source in the Ministry of Petroleum that Iran's first overseas refinery has begun operating in the Latin American country. The source said that, after receiving technical and engineering services, the capacity of the refinery has increased by several times from 15,000 b/d to 90,000 b/d. The project aims to thwart unilateral

sanctions on Iran, the official said, adding that by means of such measures, Iran has been able to find new markets for more oil sales. - [IRNA on 20-SEP](#)

- State media reports Iranian Ambassador to Brazil and the President of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) Celso Moretti discussed expanding cooperation between the two countries in the field of agriculture. - [Mehr News on 19-SEP](#)
- State media reports the Iranian ambassador to Brazil said that giant steps were taken for developing mining and economic cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Brazil. Hossein Gharibi made the remarks in “IBRAM” Mining Congress held in Belo Horizonte city in Brazil through video conference. “With the coordination made in this regard, the mining and economic cooperation between the two countries of Iran and Brazil will be strengthened more than before,” he added. - [Mehr News Agency on 14-SEP](#)
- MP Mohammad-Reza Mirtajodini told Tasnim that the Iranian Oil Ministry has signed contracts with Venezuela and Uruguay to build refineries in the two Latin American states. He said Iran will deliver input to those refineries, hold a stake in the plants, and provide technical and engineering services for running them. - [Eurasia Review on 14-SEP](#)
- State media reports Venezuelan Minister of Transportation Ramón Velásquez invited Iranian experts and investors to participate in the mining and mineral sector of his country. According to the Public Relations Department of Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO), the visiting Transport Minister of Venezuela in a meeting with a member of Board of Directors of IMIDRO Jamshid Molla Rahman, held at the compound of the Organization in Tehran, invited Iranian investors to attend the mining and mineral sector of this country. - [Mehr News on 12-SEP](#)
- Peru's foreign minister, Miguel Rodriguez, has resigned after just one month in office, the country's foreign ministry said, after public clashes between the official and leftist president Pedro Castillo. Earlier this week, Castillo undermined Rodriguez's August announcement that Peru was breaking diplomatic ties with the partially recognised Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic in Western Sahara. On Thursday, Castillo tweeted that Peru reaffirmed the defense of the Sahara state's "self determination." The two politicians also disagreed on the Escazu Agreement, a regional environmental treaty, and Peru's participation in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. - [Reuters on 10-SEP](#)
- State media reports a former official with Iran’s ministry of oil says Europe is pinning its hopes on gas supplies from Iran and Venezuela, both under US-spearheaded sanctions, to replace the Russian gas before the winter. In an interview with Iran’s Labor News Agency (ILNA), Mahmoud Khaghani, the former director general of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia Department at Iran’s Ministry of Oil, said in case Europe fails to reach an agreement with either Iran or Venezuela, Europeans will have to go through a frigid winter. - [Iran Front Page on 01-SEP](#)
- State media reports Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is seriously determined to enhance its relations with Brazil. Ali Bagheri Kani made



the remarks in his meeting with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Brazil for the Middle East, Europe, and African Affairs Kenneth Nóbrega in Tehran within the framework of the 11th round of the Political Consultations between Iran and Brazil. During the meeting, the two sides discussed bilateral, regional, and international ties and also issues of mutual interests. - [Mehr News on 30-AUG](#)

- Iran and Bolivia emphasize the need to expand cooperation and pledged to increase bilateral trade in various fields, the Iranian news agency IRNA reported. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdullahian, in a meeting held with Bolivian Deputy Foreign Minister Freddy Mamani, highlighted the importance that Tehran attaches to the development of cooperation with the Andean country. - [Rio Times on 29-AUG](#)
- State media reports Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Diplomacy Mehdi Safari has announced the holding of the first session of the Iran-Bolivia Joint Economic Commission with the aim of expanding economic cooperation with Latin American countries. In this event, the two sides agreed on a broad range of issues including trade, customs, visa, scientific and educational, technical and engineering fields, cooperation among industrial companies, automakers, tractor manufacturers, energy, transportation as well as technological cooperation. - [ISNA on 29-AUG](#)
- State media reports While Russia is holding joint military exercises with Iran's Revolutionary guard and other Moscow allies in central Iran, Venezuela is also hosting sniper military exercises with these countries. Both of these joint military drills, which started on Monday, August 15, are held in Iran and Venezuela within the framework of Russia's 2022 International Military Exercises, which was initiated by Moscow. Venezuela has been hosting the "Sniper Frontiers." - [Iran International on 16-AUG](#)

## **IRAN-VENEZUELA CARGO PLANE**

- The last crew members of the Iranian-Venezuelan plane held in Ezeiza are leaving the country. These three Iranians and two Venezuelans were staying at a hotel in Canning. Venezuelan ambassador to Argentina Stella Lugo stated, "there was no evidence and today these five people are leaving. They are workers of a Venezuelan company who were working. Justice was served today." - [Todo Noticias \(content in Spanish\) on 17-OCT](#)
- An Argentine court has granted permission to the final five crew members of a Venezuelan plane grounded since June in Argentina on suspicion of potential terrorism links to leave the country, local media reported late on Friday, October 14. - [Reuters on 15-OCT](#)
- Threats and photos of weapons were found on the pilot's mobile. The pilot could have some link with terrorist organizations, according to the FBI. - [ABC Internacional on 06-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)
- Of the 19 crew members who arrived in Buenos Aires on the Emtrasur plane last June 6, only five were summoned for questioning under the accusation of having financed possible terrorist acts. In the next few days, the federal judge Federico Villena has to resolve their procedural situation. - [Infobae on 04-OCT \(content in Spanish\)](#)

- Twelve crew members from a Venezuelan plane linked to Iran's elite Quds Force returned home after being held for three months in Argentina. They were welcomed at Simon Bolivar International Airport near Caracas by dozens of family members and government officials. An Argentine appeals court authorized the 12 crew members to leave the country, while the seven remaining members were barred from joining them. Those seven included four Iranians, one of whom is accused of belonging to the Quds Force, a group within the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that the US classifies as a terror organization. - [Times of Israel on 27-SEP](#)
- The president of the National Assembly of Venezuela, Jorge Rodríguez, attacked Clarín for the coverage on the Venezuelan-Iranian plane that is being held in Argentina due to international sanctions and alleged links between the crew and Islamic terrorism. "They are producers of lies," the Chavismo official accused this newspaper and other Argentine media. - [Clarín on 09-AUG \(content in Spanish\)](#)

## **TURKEY**

- State media reports Venezuela aims to increase trade relations with Turkey. Maduro made the remarks at the Iran-Venezuela Scientific, Technological and Industrial ExpoFair held from September 14-18 in the capital Caracas. "We have to learn from the technological model of the rebirth of China, Russia, Iran, India, our brothers in Turkey, the rebirth of the powers and superpowers and the emerging powers of the emerging world," he said. In June, Maduro visited Turkey as part of an 11-day international tour. Maduro and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed eight cooperation agreements in science and technology, agriculture and land, transportation and tourism. - [Daily Sabah on 16-SEP](#)