

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 2, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Your administration has deployed and developed a broad array of authorities aimed at facilitating a democratic transition in Venezuela and ending the illegitimate rule of the Nicolás Maduro regime. We write to commend you and your administration on the effective use of those tools, and to urge you to bring them to bear on Venezuelan military and intelligence officials linked to the ongoing imprisonment of the six American CITGO executives, who have been held by the regime since November 2017.

Your administration has in particular used Executive Orders (EO) 13692, relating to the situation in Venezuela including serious human rights abuses, and EO 13844, imposing sanctions on the government of Venezuela. These sanctions have worked. In February 2019, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control designated Manuel Ricardo Cristopher Figuera, the former Director General of Venezuela's National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) as a Specially Designated National (SDN) pursuant to EO 13692. He defected three months later to the U.S., where he revealed some of the Maduro regime's activities, including those related to illicit gold trading, cooperation with Hezbollah, and relations with Cuba.

Meanwhile the Maduro regime has continued to jail the CITGO6 executives, Gustavo Cardenas, Jose Angel Pereira, Jorge Toledo, Alirio Zambrano, Jose Luis Zambrano, and Tomeu Vadell. The executives had long been held by the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence (DGCIM), and were recently transferred to El Helicoide, a detention facility run by the SEBIN and notorious for human rights atrocities.

We urge you to redouble the administration's efforts to secure their release, including by leveraging EO 13692 and EO 13844 against the following individuals:

1. General José Gregorio Gómez Lares, SEBIN's Counterintelligence Director.
2. Division General Ramón Pimentel Avilán, Bolivarian National Guard Director for "Internal Order"
3. General Carlos Carvallo Guevara, DGCIM Chief of Operations
4. Division General Edgar Rojas Borges, Martial Court President
5. Brigade General Jesús Emilio Vázquez Quintero, Military Prosecutor General
6. Lieutenant Coronel Elias Placencia Mondragón, Superior Military Prosecutor for Caracas
7. Commissar Javier Villegas, SEBIN Attaché for the Coordination of Judicially Processed Individuals

These officials and agencies answer directly to top officials in the Maduro regime, who are in turn already sanctioned. The DGCIM is controlled by the regime's Minister of Defense, General Vladimir Padrino López. The SEBIN is controlled by the regime's Vice President, Delcy Eloína Rodríguez. Both officials were designated in September 2018 pursuant to EO 13692.

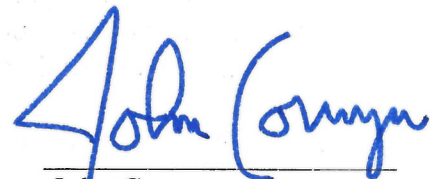
There are reasons to believe that such sanctions have the ability to change the Maduro regime's calculations in the context of unjust imprisonments. In June 2019, the DGCIM detained and tortured Navy Captain Rafael Acosta Arévalo, and he died shortly thereafter. In July 2019, OFAC designated the DGCIM in response, and Treasury Secretary Mnuchin reiterated that Treasury remains "committed to ending the former Maduro regime's inhumane treatment of political opponents, innocent civilians, and members of the military in an effort to suppress dissent." The designation created opportunities for further pressure, and within months the CITGO6 executives were transferred out of DGCIM custody and into house arrest.

Unfortunately, again, that reprieve proved temporary. The CITGO6 are now in SEBIN custody. The health of these Americans continues to deteriorate. We call on you to deploy the full range of authorities at your disposal against the full chain of commanders and officers responsible for their detention, and we stand ready to provide your administration with the resources necessary to identify them and hold them accountable.

Sincerely,



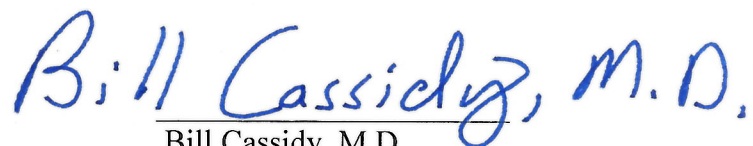
Ted Cruz
United States Senator



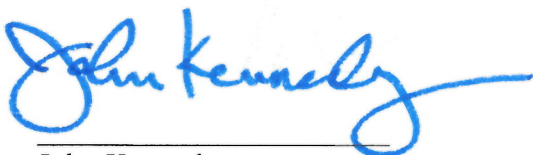
John Cornyn
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



John Kennedy
United States Senator