

Countdown to a crisis

Date	Developments	Date	Developments
20 Jan, 2025	Trump signs executive order for naming drug dealers as terrorists.	4 Nov, 2025	In the 16th strike, two people were killed aboard a vessel in the eastern Pacific.
20 Feb, 2025	Trump administration formally designated eight Latin American crime organizations as foreign terrorist organizations.	6 Nov, 2025	17th known strike, which killed three people.
19 Aug 2025	The US military deployed three guided-missile destroyers to the waters off Venezuela.	9 Nov, 2025	18th and 19th strike in the eastern Pacific, killing six people, according to an announcement from Hegseth the following day.
2 Sept, 2025	The US destroys a drug-carrying vessel that departed from Venezuela. All 11 people on boat were killed.	10 Nov, 2025	20th strike on a suspected drug boat killed four people in the Caribbean.
10 Sept, 2025	In a letter to the White House, Democratic senators said the administration had provided "no legitimate legal justification" for the strike.	11 Nov, 2025	Venezuela's government launched what it said was a "massive" mobilization of troops and volunteers for two days of exercises prompted by the U.S. military buildup.
15 Sept, 2025	Second strike on alleged drug boat, killing three people.	15 Nov, 2025	21st strike on an alleged drug-smuggling boat in the eastern Pacific killed three people.
19 Sept, 2025	Third strike against an alleged drug-smuggling vessel.	16 Nov, 2025	The Ford (US aircraft carrier) arrived in the Caribbean. Total troops committed to around 12,000 for "Operation Southern Spear."
2 Oct, 2025	Trump declared drug cartels to be unlawful combatants and said the U.S. was now in an "armed conflict".	4 Dec, 2025	Closed-door briefings to investigate alleged killing of the survivors in the first strike on Sept 2.
3 Oct, 2025	Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said he ordered a fourth strike on a small boat he accused of carrying drugs.		22nd strike on an alleged drug-smuggling boat in the eastern Pacific, killed 4 people.
8 Oct, 2025	Senate Republicans voted down legislation that would have required the president to seek authorization from Congress before further military strikes.	10 Dec, 2025	The US seized an oil tanker about 2 million barrels of heavy crude, off the coast of Venezuela.
14 Oct, 2025	Fifth strike against a small boat accused of carrying drugs, saying it killed six people.	15 Dec, 2025	23rd strike on alleged drug-smuggling boats, killing eight people, in the eastern Pacific Ocean.
15 Oct, 2025	Trump sent CIA into Venezuela, land operations being considered.	16 Dec, 2025	Hegseth said the Pentagon will not publicly release unedited video of the Sept. 2 strike that killed two survivors.
16 Oct, 2025	Sixth strike on suspected drug-carrying vessel in the Caribbean, killing two people and leaving two survivors.		Trump said he was ordering a blockade of all "sanctioned oil tankers" going into and out of Venezuela.

17 Oct, 2025	Seventh strike, three killed.	17 Dec, 2025	24th strike, attacked a boat accused of smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing four people.
21 Oct, 2025	Eighth strike against an alleged drug-carrying vessel, killing two people in the eastern Pacific.	18 Dec, 2025	25th and 26th strikes against allegedly boats smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific, killing five people.
22 Oct, 2025	Hegseth announced the ninth strike, another in the eastern Pacific, saying three men are killed.	20 Dec, 2025	Second Venezuelan oil tanker seized by US.
24 Oct, 2025	Hegseth ordered the U.S. military's most advanced aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, to the region.	22 Dec, 2025	Third oil tanker chased27th strike on boat accused of smuggling drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing four people.
	Tenth strike on a suspected drug-running boat, leaving six people dead.	30 Dec, 2025	The CIA was behind the drone strike at a docking area believed to have been used by Venezuelan drug cartels.
27 Oct, 2025	Eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth strikes were carried out in the eastern Pacific, killing 14 people and leaving one survivor.		28th strike on 3 alleged boat smuggling drugs, killing three people in the first boat others escaped.
29 Oct, 2025	14th strike on a boat he said was carrying drugs in the eastern Pacific, killing all four people aboard in the 14th attack.	31 Dec, 2025	The U.S. imposed sanctions on four companies operating in Venezuela's oil sector and designated four additional oil tankers as blocked property and part of the larger shadow fleet that was evading U.S. sanctions on Venezuela.
31 Oct, 2025	U.N. human rights chief Volker Türk called for an investigation into the strikes, in what appeared to be the first such condemnation of its kind from a U.N. organization.		29th strike on two boats, killing five people for allegedly smuggling drugs along known trafficking routes.
1 Nov, 2025	Hegseth announced the 15th known strike, saying three people were killed.	1 Jan, 2026	Maduro, in an interview said Venezuela was open to negotiating an agreement with the United States to combat drug trafficking.
3 Jan, 2026	The U.S. conducted a "large-scale strike" across Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, captured Maduro and Flores and flew them out of the country. Maduro was accused of leading a "a corrupt, illegitimate government that, for decades, has leveraged government power to protect and promote illegal activity, including drug trafficking."		

Sources: PBS News -- <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/a-timeline-of-u-s-military-escalation-against-venezuela-leading-to-maduros-capture>