

LP 01/2026 US Air Strikes on Venezuela and Impact on Shipping in the Region

On 3rd January 2026, several explosions were reported at approximately 02:00 Venezuelan local time, as a result of air strikes carried out by low-flying U.S. aircraft targeting strategic military installations in Caracas and other locations. The attacks reportedly struck air defense systems, antennas, and military vehicles, affecting at least the Francisco de Miranda Air Base (La Carlota), Fort Tiuna, and Higuerote Airport. Venezuela then declared a state of commotion, and pursuant to constitutional provisions governing temporary presidential absence, Vice President Ms. Delcy Rodríguez assumes presidential functions. Overall, conditions throughout the country – excluding Caracas – are reported to be relatively calm, although mobility nationwide may be affected by the declared state of commotion. Local correspondents GLOB-ALPANDI, S.A. issued several circulars to update on the current situation.

I. Impact on Shipping

Affected by the US blockade and sanctions, Venezuela's crude oil exports have fallen to historically low levels. It is reported that the state oil company PDVSA has suspended all product transactions. According to Clarksons Research opinions, given the current situation, Venezuela's oil production faces further downward pressure, and the market should look out for potential supply disruptions in the near term. Regarding other cargo types, as Venezuela's share in global maritime trade is relatively low, the impact is limited.

With regard to shipping and port activities, operational information gathered by the correspondents, and in their consultation with the Venezuelan Shipping Association (ANV), indicates that the status of commercial public ports handling bulk, breakbulk, and containerized cargoes remains largely unchanged. No specific instructions, orders, or navigational restrictions have, to date, been issued by the maritime authority (INEA) or the port authority (Bolipuertos, S.A.) altering normal operating procedures.

From a liner shipping perspective, major operators serving Venezuela have issued advisories confirming their continued engagement with the country. ZIM Integrated Shipping Services has advised that it is closely monitoring developments and will continue serving Venezuela on a regular basis so long as conditions, regulations, and

safety considerations permit, while prioritizing the protection of crew, vessels, and cargo. Maersk has similarly confirmed that its operations in Venezuela remain active, subject to security conditions and compliance with international regulations, noting that while physical offices are temporarily closed, customer service and operational support continue to be provided remotely, and services are expected to continue while conditions allow.

II. Port Operations

1. Port of La Guaira

La Guaira, the only commercial port reportedly affected by the air strikes, has been militarized and is currently under restricted access; however, port operations are said to be continuing without significant delays. Enhanced security measures remain in place, and the situation continues to be closely monitored. Vessel crews are advised to remain on board.

2. Puerto Cabello

The port of Puerto Cabello is confirmed to be operating normally, with bulk carriers and container or general cargo vessels currently alongside and working without reported operational difficulties, and additional vessels awaiting their scheduled berthing at anchorage. There are no special measures in place restricting vessel traffic or imposing differential treatment on foreign vessels, regardless of flag, origin, or next port of call.

3. Jose Terminal

Regarding the port and terminal complex of Jose, current conditions reflect a combination of heightened security measures and limited operational activity, reportedly mainly as a result of the U.S. oil blockade affecting sanctioned tankers. Notwithstanding this, vessels associated with Chevron are reported to be loading without difficulty. Bulk cargo operations involving urea and petcoke are proceeding on a limited basis, noting that neither commodity is subject to international sanctions. Terminal operations at Jose remain secure, with no incidents reported.

4. Port of Maracaibo

In the western region, the port of Maracaibo remains open and available for bulk and containerized cargo operations, notwithstanding the absence of vessels currently alongside. No incidents have been reported at this port.

5. Bajo Grande Oil Terminal

At the Bajo Grande oil terminal, which is used primarily for Chevron loadings, export activities have resumed following a brief pause, and several vessels are currently present in the area. As elsewhere, security levels at these terminals have been significantly increased, although operations are reported to remain safe and stable.

6. Other ports

The ports of Cumaná and Guanta are reportedly operating normally, while activities along the Orinoco River and at the Jose Terminal are ongoing.

III. Advice to Members

Colombian correspondents also report that maritime transit in the region continues without disruption. Colombian ports are operating without novelties, and no security alarms have been triggered. Yet sudden changes in the security environment cannot be entirely ruled out given the evolving political context. Vessels are advised to, where practicable, navigate outside Venezuelan territorial waters and maintain a distance of at least 24 nautical miles from the Venezuelan coastline. In view of the above, they recommend the following precautions.

1. Keep voyage and port risk assessments under continuous review, and obtaining the latest information on port conditions, berthing restrictions and security levels through local agents and correspondents, should proceeding to Venezuelan ports be unavoidable.
2. If proceeding to militarily controlled ports such as La Guaira, it is necessary to apply for and confirm the required permits in advance. While in port, strictly follow authorities' instructions and cooperate with possible inspections.
3. It is strongly recommended that crew remain on board during port stays. If shore leave is necessary, be accompanied and avoid sensitive or crowded areas.
4. Ensure the effective implementation of the Ship Security Plan (SSP). Check and ensure all ship access are secured, and monitoring equipment is functioning properly. Enhance deck patrol, especially at night. Maintain clear communication with shore personnel and elevate the security level when necessary.
5. Monitor daily for formal notices issued by the maritime authority (INEA), port authority (Bolipuertos, S.A.), and the flag state. Any navigational restrictions or operational changes must be based on written instructions.

6. Implement heightened contingency planning and have the emergency contact list updated, including local agents, correspondents, the embassy and security agents. Ensure satellite communication and backup power is in place.
7. Ensure all cargo documents are complete and accurate, especially for shipments involving sanctioned goods, where additional due diligence is required to avoid vessel detention or delays.

Full circulars from Venezuela correspondents GLOBALPANDI, S.A. and Colombia correspondents A&A MULTIPRIME can be read down on Club website. For more information, please contact Managers of the Association.