



VENEZUELA'S MEDIA AND NARRATIVE REALIGNMENT WITH RUSSIA, CHINA, AND IRAN

JANUARY 2026 – AUGUST 2026

Between October 2025 and January 2026, the flare-up in U.S.–Venezuela tensions once again laid bare the strategic communication component of Caracas's ties to Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran. In this report, “media alignment” refers to the systematic convergence of narrative framing, reliance on official state sources, and cross-platform amplification among government and allied media outlets—a coordinated effort designed to reinforce shared geopolitical agendas.

The final quarter of 2025 demonstrated a clear discursive convergence among Caracas, Moscow, Beijing, and Tehran, albeit with varying degrees of intensity and strategic commitment. Following the capture of Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores in Caracas, none of their key allies—Russia, China, or Iran—reacted beyond diplomatic protests and formal international condemnations, despite the foundational role these three nations played in bolstering Venezuela's military defense capabilities.

In terms of strategic messaging, however, the alignment was total. Rather than a “capture,” the operation was framed as a “kidnapping.” Maduro was branded a “prisoner of war,” the actions were denounced as a “flagrant violation of international law,” narco-terrorism

charges were dismissed as a “fairytale,” and the opposition was repeatedly cast as a “pawn of the empire.” This unified rhetoric circulated through state platforms like Venezolana de Televisión (VTV), reached regime-aligned outlets such as *Agencia Venezuela News* and *La Iguana TV*, and echoes across Russian, Chinese, and Iranian state media—part of an identified network of 44 media outlets¹ operating as a coordinated amplifier for state narratives.²

That initial surge of near-identical messaging in January gradually shifted over the first half of the year, evolving from militant solidarity into raw damage control. Russia railed against the U.S. for “evicting” its companies from the Venezuelan oil sector; China moved defensively to shield its “legitimate interests” even as Chinese social media channels weaponized the incident as a cautionary playbook for Taiwan; and Iran effectively dropped out of the picture entirely after being dragged into its own military conflict with the United States and Israel on February 28.

The pro-Washington pivot initiated by Delcy Rodríguez’s administration—marked by the restoration of diplomatic ties in March, the opening of the oil sector, and the replacement of both Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López and Foreign Minister Yván Gil—did not yield a visible media rupture. *TeleSUR* and *Venezolana de Televisión* (VTV) continued to amplify and launder Russian and Chinese state content, while Venezuelan officials publicly defended their “sovereign right” to preserve ties with all three allies rather than disavowing them.

1 Cazadores de Fake News. Cómo 44 medios globalizan el guion del régimen venezolano. 6/4/2026.
Available at: <https://www.cazadoresdefakenews.info/lamaquinariadeleco-como-44-medios-globalizan-el-guion-del-regimen-venezolano/>

2 Cazadores de Fake News. La red detrás de la exportación del relato oficial venezolano. 13/4/2026.
Available at: <https://www.cazadoresdefakenews.info/lamaquinariadeleco-la-red-detras-de-la-exportacion-del-relato-oficial-venezolano/>



Russia: A Fading Alliance

For years, narrative coordination between Venezuela and Russia operated through a reciprocal amplification circuit. The Russian state media ecosystem—comprising TASS, RT (Russia Today), and Sputnik—disseminated official statements and interpretive frameworks regarding Venezuela that were subsequently echoed by state-run outlets such as *Venezolana de Televisión* (VTV) and *TeleSUR*, as well as regime-aligned private platforms like the now-defunct Venezuela News.



In turn, RT amplified coverage favorable to the Venezuelan government—for example, reporting in 2025 on Caracas’s stance against U.S. operations in the Caribbean, highlighting the “mobilization of the people against imperialist aggression,” and even reporting on the plight of local fishermen afraid to set sail for fear of U.S. military attack,³ a narrative heavily pushed by state authorities.

The “information laundering” pathway between Russia and Venezuela has been documented for years.⁴ The report *Media Vassalage: How Venezuela’s TeleSUR Acts as Russia’s and China’s Information-Laundering Front*,⁵ published in March 2025, details how TeleSUR functioned as a laundering hub for Russian media content, catapulting it across the region.

3 RT en Español: Crece el rechazo dentro y fuera de Venezuela a la incautación del petrolero por parte de EE.UU. 14/12/2025. Available at: <https://actualidad.rt.com/video/577097-crece-rechazo-fuera-venezuela-incautacion-petrolero-eeuu>

4 Transparencia Venezuela. Russia and Venezuela: Allies in Disinformation. 2022. Available at: <https://transparenciave.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Russia-and-Venezuela-Allies-in-Disinformation.pdf>

5 German Marshall Fund. Media Vassalage How Venezuela’s TeleSUR Acts as Russia’s and China’s Information Laundering Front. 7/3/2025. Available at: https://securingdemocracy.gmfus.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/031125-Media-Vassalage-V3.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

This consistent pattern persisted through the final quarter of 2025, framed within the continuation of a Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed between Russia and Venezuela in October 2025, which renewed agreements maintained between Caracas and Moscow for over five years. Publicly, both governments have framed these accords as broad-based collaboration spanning key sectors including energy, mining, transportation, and communications. This builds upon an October 2021 inter-ministerial communications agreement signed during the XV Russia-Venezuela High-Level Intergovernmental Commission, which included a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in mass communications.

Historically, Russian narrative coordination operated through an institutional triangle comprising the Foreign Ministry, the permanent mission to the UN Security Council, and state media organs. Statements from Dmitry Peskov, Maria Zakharova, Sergey Lavrov, and Sergey Ryabkov were systematically echoed across Venezuelan media controlled by the national government, including “private”⁶ outlets such as Últimas Noticias and El Universal.

However, the political shift experienced in Venezuela following the U.S. operation that resulted in the capture of Nicolás Maduro and his extraction to New York to face trial and imprisonment also transformed the shared frameworks between Russia and Venezuela—at least regarding the position of the Venezuelan government—particularly by the close of the first trimester of 2026.

The persistent campaign appealing to “international law” regarding strikes against alleged “drug speedboats” in the Caribbean—alongside accusations of “modern piracy” over the interdiction of Venezuelan crude tankers—gradually lost momentum and faded from the public discourse.

Muscovite condemnations initially dominated shared channels following the events. Spokespersons for Vladimir Putin’s administration branded the January 3 operation a military aggression and a breach of international law. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stood as the highest-ranking official to articulate this position, reiterating it on January 14.⁷ That statement marked the last time the foreign minister addressed the Venezuelan crisis. Putin himself has remained silent on the subject throughout 2026.

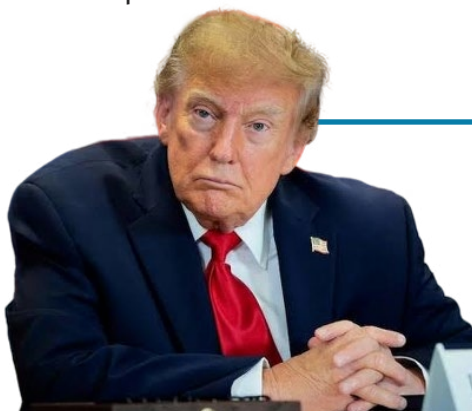
⁶ In 2013 and 2014, these media outlets were purchased by individuals close to the Maduro administration, although they are formally owned by companies in Spain and the UK

⁷ VTV. Acciones de EE.UU. en Venezuela son una grave violación del derecho internacional. 14/01/2026. Available at: <https://vtv.com.ve/rusia-acciones-eeuu-venezuela-grave-violacion-derechointernacional/>

Russian political scientist Alexandra Filippenko, an expert in U.S.–Russian relations, observes a gradual shift in Moscow’s rhetoric regarding the Latin American nation.⁸ “In January, they described Maduro as the legitimate president and claimed he had been kidnapped in an act of military aggression, insisting he remained Venezuela’s sole leader,”⁹ Filippenko notes. “By spring, as Washington officials visited Caracas, the coverage pivoted to Delcy Rodríguez negotiating with the United States¹⁰—at times framing her as acting under duress. By summer, Maduro had effectively vanished from the discourse, replaced by a focus on Venezuela’s ‘new dawn,’ with Delcy Rodríguez established as the country’s sole leader¹¹ and commercial interests taking center stage.”

The specialist notes that “Maduro practically vanished from state media coverage,” while Delcy Rodríguez was increasingly framed as a “master negotiator.” Meanwhile, Kremlin propaganda figures—commonly known as military bloggers—rapidly lost interest in the Venezuelan topic. “The most prominent pro-Russian commentator is Vladimir Solovyov, who occupies a role akin to Tucker Carlson in the U.S.,” she explains. “In January, he posted 40 times about Venezuela, Maduro, and Delcy Rodríguez. By March, he barely mentioned the country a few times, and then fell completely silent on the subject until late August, when he published two comments following the announcement of oil deals with the United States.”

The Spanish-language platform of Russia Today (RT) has likewise undergone a shift. While maintaining a steady cadence of publications regarding Venezuela—peaking in August around the landmark energy deal between Washington and Caracas—the network ran headlines such as “Trump:



‘We took control of Venezuela,’”¹² “Why are there more questions than answers regarding the unprecedented energy deal between the U.S. and Venezuela?”¹³ and “‘Yankees out’: Protests in Venezuela against oil agreement with the U.S.”¹⁴

8 Interview with Alexandra Filippenko. 18/8/2026.

9 RIA Novosti. President Maduro remains Venezuela’s sole leader. 3/01/2026. Available at: <https://ria.ru/20260103/rodrigues-2066274065.html>

10 Mail.ru. Rodríguez and Trump exchanged friendly messages on X. 5/03/2026. Available at: <https://news.mail.ru/politics/70040116/>

11 Vesti.ru. The Venezuelan leader thanked Putin for his support following the earthquakes. 25/06/2026. Available at: <https://www.vesti.ru/ns/lider-venesuehly-poblagodarila-putina-za-podderzhku-posle-zemletryasenij>

12 Available at: <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/625645-trump-derrocar-maduro-tomar-control-venezuela>

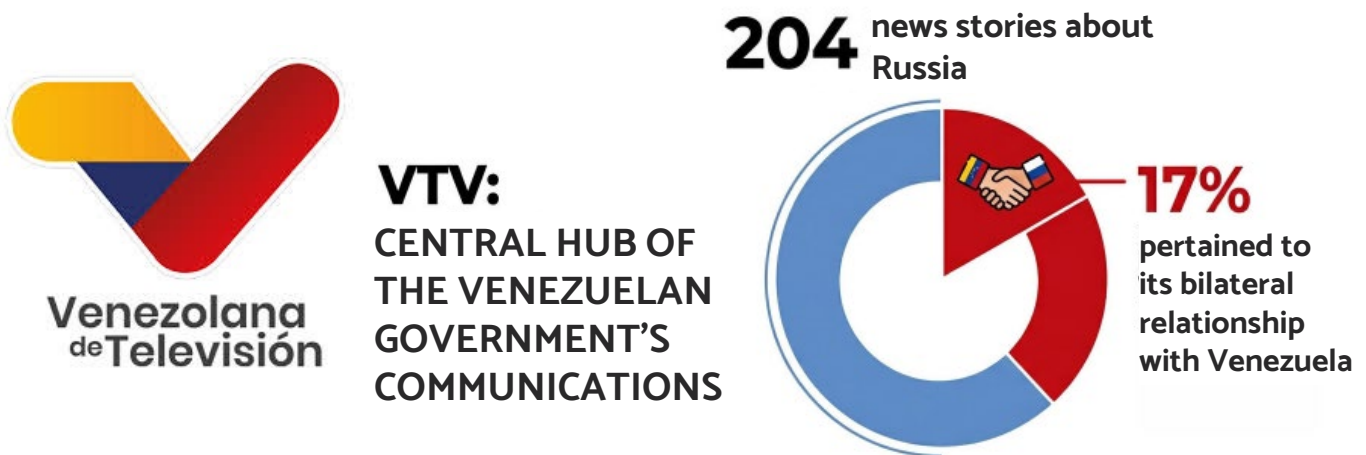
13 Available at: <https://actualidad.rt.com/a-fondo/625170-detras-inedito-acuerdo-energetico-venezuela-eeuu>

14 Available at: <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/624892-simpatizantes-izquierda-protestar-venezuela-acuerdo>

In Venezuela, however, Russia continues to make headlines across state information and propaganda platforms, albeit with glaring omissions. Media outlets that previously amplified every statement from top Moscow officials began doing so far more selectively. For instance, local state media turned a blind eye to comments made on January 25 to the state television channel *Rossiya-24*¹⁵ by Russian Ambassador to Caracas Sergey Melik-Bagdasarov, who claimed, “we know the names of the traitors” who facilitated the operation by working “systematically for U.S. intelligence” before fleeing the country.

That same week, Russia’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia, told the same state outlet on January 30¹⁶ that “in Venezuela, a betrayal undoubtedly took place. It is something discussed completely openly. A portion of high-ranking officials, in fact, betrayed the president.” Just days later, on February 5, Foreign Minister Lavrov stated on Russian RT that Russian companies were actively being driven out of Venezuela.¹⁷

Meanwhile, *Venezolana de Televisión*—the central hub of the Venezuelan government’s communications—published 204 news stories about Russia, of which only 17% pertained to its bilateral relationship with Venezuela. The coverage slowed noticeably over time. Most of these reports were concentrated in the first four months of the year, focusing on the reaffirmation of diplomatic ties and the signing of tourism agreements. A minor surge occurred around participation in the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, followed by a final uptick between June and July 2026 driven by Russian humanitarian aid shipments in the wake of the June 24 twin earthquakes.



- ¹⁵ Infobae. Rusia afirmó que el ex dictador Maduro fue traicionado por su entorno: “Conocemos los nombres”. 25/01/2026.
Available at: <https://www.infobae.com/venezuela/2026/01/25/rusia-afirmo-que-el-ex-dictador-maduro-fue-traicionado-por-su-entorno-conocemos-los-nombres/>
- ¹⁶ Agencia EFE. Rusia descarta que en Cuba haya traidores que colaboren con EE.UU. como en Venezuela. 30/01/2026.
Available at: <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/rusia-descarta-que-en-cuba-haya-traidores-que-colaboren-con-ee.uu.-como-en-venezuela/90861315>
- ¹⁷ RT. Russian Companies Forced Out of Venezuela, Lavrov Says. 5/02/2026.
Available at: <https://russian.rt.com/world/news/1591859-lavrov-kompanii-venezuela>

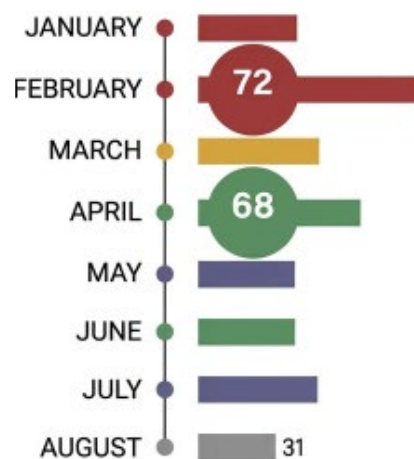
The remaining coverage, accounting for 83% of the reports, focused on technological, scientific, or military developments, alongside content related to the war in Ukraine, escalating tensions with Europe, and strategic alliances with nations such as China.

In the case of TeleSUR, the volume of coverage featuring Russian state perspectives remained steady, even as references to Venezuela fell away. Between January and August, the outlet published 419 news items aligned with Moscow's interests, peaking in February (72) and April (68), before dropping to its lowest point in August (31).



TELESUR: ANALYSIS OF MOSCOW-ALIGNED CONTENT (JANUARY-AUGUST)

419
news items aligned with
Moscow's interests





China: From Condemnation to Asset Claims

Unlike Russia, the media relationship between Venezuela and China never depended as heavily on explicit diplomatic coordination as it did on shared editorial infrastructure. For years, TeleSUR has maintained a dedicated section—“*Ruta a China* (Route to China)”¹⁸—that republishes content from the state-run Xinhua News Agency almost verbatim, while CGTN Spanish rebroadcasts pieces originally produced for Venezuelan audiences.



This institutional architecture faced a stress test distinct from Russia’s following January 3. The Chinese Foreign Ministry moved quickly to define its stance, demanding the “immediate release” of Maduro and Cilia Flores while branding the operation a “clear violation of international law.”¹⁹ Hours later, in a meeting with Ireland’s Prime Minister, Xi Jinping himself spoke of “unilateral bullying” that “severely undermines the international order”—though throughout 2026 he has avoided naming Nicolás Maduro or Venezuela specifically—while Xinhua maintained that the “rules-based international order” invoked by Washington merely “serves American interests.” These statements were extensively covered across the Chinese press.

¹⁸ Telesur. Ruta a China. Available at: <https://www.telesurtv.net/ruta-a-china/>

¹⁹ South China Morning Post. ‘Shocked’ China demands US release Maduro after ‘trampling’ Venezuela’s sovereignty. 4-5/1/2026. Available at: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3338828/shocked-china-demands-us-release-maduro-after-trampling-venezuelas-sovereignty>

Parallel to diplomatic channels, the incident spilled over into Chinese social media platforms. According to analyses compiled by CNN, topics related to Maduro’s capture garnered over 650 million impressions on Weibo—China’s most popular microblogging platform—in the initial days. Users openly debated whether the U.S. operation could serve as a template for future Chinese action regarding Taiwan. The Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRLab) documented network activity exhibiting “Spamouflage” patterns that amplified this reading.²⁰ However, Chinese state media exercised caution, refraining from officially endorsing the parallel. Analysts such as William Yang of the International Crisis Group noted that the Venezuelan situation is unlikely to have “any direct or fundamental impact” on Beijing’s calculations regarding Taiwan, which remain tied to domestic economic factors rather than Latin American precedents.

Once the initial wave of outrage subsided, Chinese coverage of Venezuela settled into an extended period of relative silence. This lull broke only in late August, following the announcement of the Washington-Caracas energy agreement that granted the United States control over a significant portion of the country’s proven reserves—amid reports that fields previously operated by Chinese firms would change hands.²¹ Only then did Beijing re-emerge to declare that it maintains “legitimate interests in Venezuela that must be protected.”²²

On state-run network VTV, 300 news items concerning China were broadcast during 2026, of which only 40 touched upon Venezuela (13%). These cross-cutting stories peaked in January following Nicolás Maduro’s capture, driven by Beijing’s calls to respect Venezuelan sovereignty and commercial ties free from U.S. intervention.



**GENERAL COVERAGE
DATA**

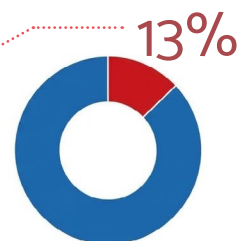
300

**TOTAL REPORTS ON
CHINA PUBLISHED
ON VTV**

**DATA RELATED TO
VENEZUELA**

40

**REPORTS ON CHINA
RELATED TO
VENEZUELA**



²¹ Reuters. “U.S. firm to take over some Venezuela oilfields previously run by Chinese, Russian firms, officials say.” 1/9/2026.

Available at: <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/business/international/2026/09/01/us-firm-to-take-over-some-venezuela-oilfields-previously-run-by-chinese-russian-firms-officials-say-reuters-exclusive/>

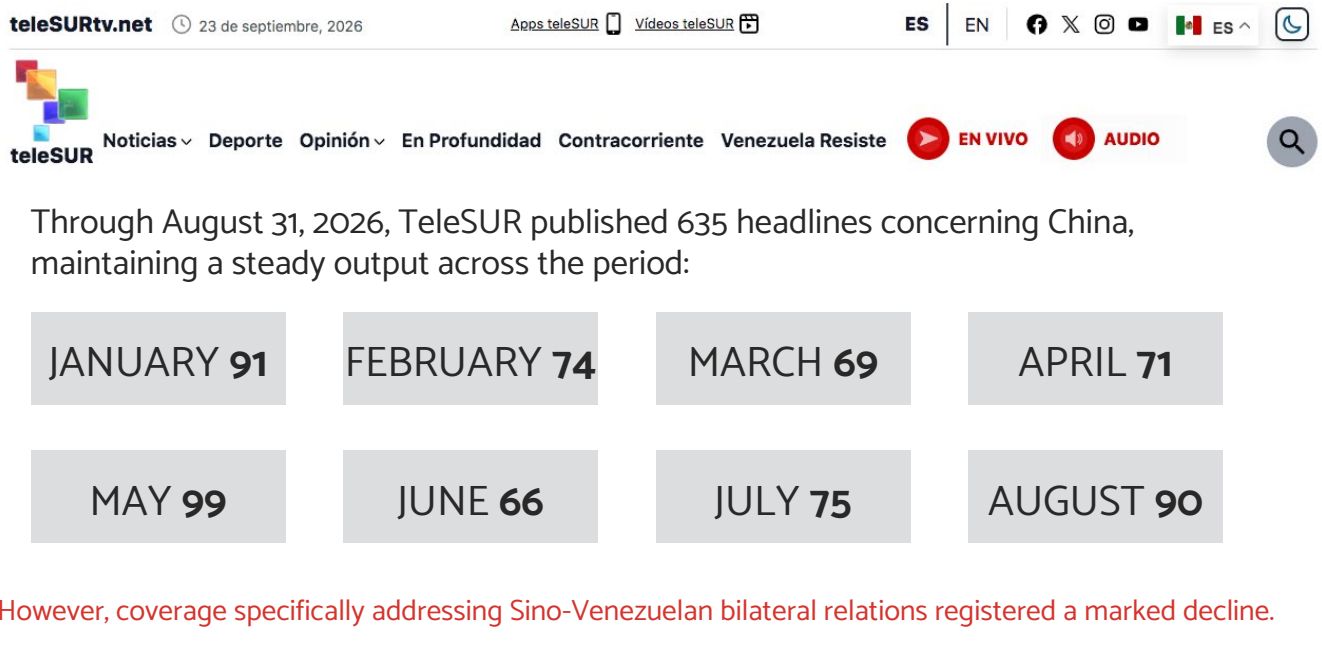
²² Telesur. China defiende sus inversiones y derechos legítimos en Venezuela. 2/9/2026.

Available at: <https://www.telesurtv.net/china-defiende-inversiones-derechos-venezuela>

Subsequently, coverage shifted toward trade and tourism agreements, experiencing a brief resurgence in July following emergency relief assistance after the June 24 twin earthquakes.

The remainder of the coverage focused on China’s technological developments, Xi Jinping’s international agenda, and Beijing’s strategic partnerships with nations such as Russia, Cuba, and Vietnam, alongside reportage on natural disasters within Chinese territory.

In the case of TeleSUR, the “*Ruta a China*” section focuses on content sourced directly from the East Asian power, primarily covering technological innovation, educational advancements, and international relations. Broadly speaking, the network maintains a high volume of reporting on China, with a strong emphasis on geopolitical maneuvers, Latin American diplomacy, the global footprint of Beijing’s strategic and commercial partnerships, and its official stances on world events—alongside regular updates on Chinese technological and military developments.



The highest density of bilateral coverage occurred in January, with 18 headlines primarily highlighting opposition to the capture of Nicolás Maduro, demands for his and his wife Cilia Flores’s release, and assurances that commercial and geopolitical support for Caracas would persist following Delcy Rodríguez’s ascension to power.

In February, TeleSUR published just two bilateral headlines, both reiterating calls for Venezuelan sovereignty and denouncing the “kidnapping” of Nicolás Maduro as a “violation of international law.” In March, only a single item of a similar nature appeared (March 25), marking the sole report on bilateral relations that month. May saw complete silence with zero items published regarding the two nations, while June and July combined for eight reports, focused almost exclusively on disaster relief and post-earthquake solidarity with Venezuela.



Iran: An Alliance Eclipsed by Its Own War

Unlike ties with Russia and China, the partnership between Venezuela and Iran possessed a character more operational than rhetorical. The Mohajer-6 and ANSU-100 drone manufacturing plant at El Libertador Air Base—operated under the auspices of state airline Conviasa and its aeronautics subsidiary, EANSA—was sanctioned by the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) on December 30, 2025,²³ barely days prior to Maduro’s capture. This regulatory action set the tone for how HispanTV, the Spanish-language arm of Iranian state broadcasting, approached the events of January 3. While the Iranian Foreign Ministry promptly joined the chorus of diplomatic condemnation, the network maintained focus on the issue through opinion programming such as *GrinGo!*, which openly questioned “what becomes of Chavismo today and its rejection of Yankee imperialism” following what HispanTV defined as the “kidnapping” of Maduro.

That coverage, however, was short-lived. On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel launched joint strikes against Iran, precipitating an open war—which included the assassination of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei—that fully consumed Tehran’s news and diplomatic agendas for months.

HispanTV’s reporting on Venezuela—which through January had competed for airtime with coverage of Lebanon and the Persian Gulf—was fundamentally displaced by the immediate imperatives of its own domestic conflict: strikes on nuclear facilities, the escalating crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, and open warfare with Israel.

HispanTV published 162 news items on Venezuela between January and August 2026, only 13 of which directly linked the two nations. The vast majority of these headlines appeared in January (105) before collapsing to 22 in February, 9 in May, 8 in June, 7 in July, and 11 in August—a slight uptick driven by Washington’s oil agreements with Caracas and the interim administration under Delcy Rodríguez pursuing diplomatic overtures toward Israel. In March and April, coverage of Venezuela vanished entirely.

²³ Secure Free Society. “Neutralizing Iran’s Military Footprint in Venezuela.” 2026.
Available at: <https://www.securefreesociety.org/research/neutralizing-iran-military-footprint-in-venezuela/>

Within Venezuelan state-controlled media, this dynamic yielded a pronounced divergence. VTV published a modest total of 40 news items concerning Iran during the first eight months of the year. Conversely, TeleSUR aired 119 stories on the Islamic Republic, with reporting density spiking significantly in March (36) and April (23) in the immediate aftermath of the military conflict involving the United States and Israel.

On the political front, on July 16—with Delcy Rodríguez already drawing closer to Washington—Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi congratulated Félix Plasencia on his appointment as Venezuela’s new Foreign Minister. Araghchi expressed confidence that bilateral ties would “continue to strengthen” under Plasencia’s leadership.²⁴

However, four days later, the Iranian news agency Mehr published an interview with Foreign Minister Araghchi in which he asserted that “this is not Venezuela, where they capture one person and everyone else panics and retreats.”²⁵ That declaration prompted a formal letter of protest from the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry, delivered directly to the Iranian Ambassador in Caracas, Ali Chegini, rejecting what it characterized as “derogatory and improper expressions” regarding the country’s institutions and leadership.²⁶ Notably, this diplomatic rift received no coverage on HispanTV.

24 HispanTV. “Irán felicita a Plasencia por su nombramiento como canciller de Venezuela.” 16/7/2026.

Available at: <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/politica/647201/iran-felicita-plasencia-canciller-venezuela>

25 El Universo. “Esto no es Venezuela”: el provocador mensaje de Irán a la Casa Blanca durante una reunión bajo amenaza de misiles. 20/7/2026.

Available at: <https://www.eluniverso.com/noticias/internacional/esto-no-es-venezuela-el-provocador-mensaje-de-iran-a-la-casa-blanca-durante-una-reunion-bajo-amenaza-de-misiles-nota/>

26 Agencia EFE. Venezuela entrega nota de protesta al embajador de Irán por expresiones «despectivas». 29/7/2026.

Available at: <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/venezuela-entrega-nota-de-protesta-al-embajador-de-ir%C3%A1n-por-expresiones-%22despectivas%22/91813228>

Conclusions

Media alignment between Venezuela and its three extra-regional partners did not translate into strategic backing during Maduro's capture. The subsequent months further demonstrate that this alignment does not hold uniformly when the material interests of each ally diverge from those of the new Venezuelan government. The initial discursive convergence gave way to differentiated patterns of detachment, while the supporting media infrastructure—TeleSUR, VTV, and the broader network identified in previous research—continued operating with relative independence from the actual state of each bilateral relationship.

Each of the three nations followed a distinct trajectory. In the case of Russia, the disengagement was gradual: references to Maduro vanished from official rhetoric, Putin made no further mention of the incident throughout 2026, and Kremlin-aligned commentators steadily reduced their coverage of Venezuela over the course of the year. For China, media interest clustered around two specific moments—the initial condemnation in January and its re-emergence in late August, coinciding with the renegotiation of oil assets held by Chinese state enterprises—leaving an almost complete void in bilateral content during the intervening months. In Iran's case, coverage of Venezuela did not decline progressively; rather, it was abruptly displaced starting February 28 by the overwhelming imperative to cover the armed conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States.

A significant finding from this period is the emergence of the first documented diplomatic fracture between the Venezuelan government and one of its three primary allies since Maduro's capture. On July 20, the Iranian news agency Mehr published remarks by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi characterizing the Venezuelan political situation in terms the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry deemed offensive. This prompted the delivery of a formal note of protest to the Iranian ambassador in Caracas. Notably, this episode went entirely unmentioned on HispanTV, suggesting that state-aligned media coverage of the bilateral relationship does not necessarily reflect the actual diplomatic reality during moments of friction.