

OPERATION ABSOLUTE RESOLVE

Special Operations & Intelligence Briefing / Date: January 3, 2026



Based on: Multi-source intelligence and operational reporting

The Mission: A Surgical Strike on a Global Scale

THE MISSION



Target: On January 3, 2026, U.S. forces executed a complex joint operation to seize Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, from a defended compound in Caracas.

Scope: A large-scale air campaign involving over **150** aircraft launched from **20** land and sea bases across the Western Hemisphere.

THE FORCE



The Spear: A helicopter-borne assault force from the U.S. Army's Delta Force and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR).

The Shield: Integrated FBI Hostage Rescue Team and DEA agents to ensure the operation resulted in a prosecutable law-enforcement case.

THE RESULT



Duration: The entire kinetic operation lasted only a few hours.

Casualties: Zero U.S. KIA (2 wounded). Enemy killed in action estimated at over **80**, including **32** Cuban military and intelligence personnel.

THE JUSTIFICATION: LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION, MILITARY LOGIC



THE LEGAL BASIS

Framing: The operation was publicly justified as an enforcement of multi-year U.S. court indictments against Maduro for narco-terrorism, cocaine importation, and weapons charges.

U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi stated Maduro and his wife would "soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts."



THE OPERATIONAL LOGIC

Strategy: A "decapitation strike" designed to neutralize the head of state and his inner circle without committing to a large-scale ground invasion or occupation.

Key Principles: Utilized speed, surprise, and multi-domain power to create a brief, exploitable window over a defended capital.

Analyst View: Described by Small Wars Journal as a "modern decapitation strike" and a "masterclass" in joint direct-action capability.

THE PRELUDE: A MASSIVE MILITARY BUILDUP IN PLAIN SIGHT



TACTICAL MAP

- For months, U.S. assets moved into the region under the public guise of counter-narcotics operations, masking the true intent.
- At its peak, the force included the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group, positioning approximately 10% of the U.S. Navy around Venezuela.
- Assets included at least 10 major warships, a nuclear attack submarine, and over 400 vertical launch missile systems.

USS Gerald R. Ford

“

“You don't need a Ford-class carrier to interdict small drug boats. That direction of the Ford... is specifically to have it there, arrayed nearby Venezuela, in the event the President decides to start a war there.”

— Senator Tim Kaine,
Floor Debate, late 2025

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Intelligence Preparation: The Five-Month Chess Game



Regional Masking

CIA Ground Team: A clandestine team operated inside Venezuela for five months (since August 2025), providing continuous on-the-ground intelligence.



Clandestine Collection

Human Intelligence: A high-level source within Maduro's inner circle provided confirmation of his location and real-time updates during the operation.



Pattern of Life

Technical Surveillance: A stealth RQ-170 Sentinel drone mapped Venezuelan S-300VM and Buk-M2 air defense systems, identifying the corridor for the assault force.

The Cuban Connection: Maduro's Praetorian Guard

The Embedded Threat:

Intelligence planning assumed Maduro's immediate protection was composed of loyal Cuban intelligence officers and bodyguards, not just Venezuelan forces. Havana had become a key security provider, embedding its personnel within Maduro's presidential guard and counterintelligence structures to prevent internal betrayal.



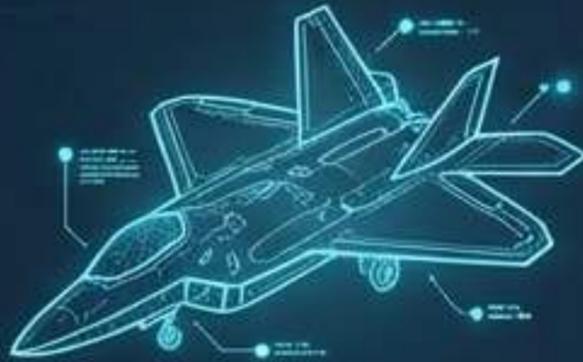
The Consequence:

During the assault, U.S. forces engaged in heavy fighting with this Cuban-led inner ring.

The Cuban government later confirmed **32** of its military and intelligence personnel were killed, exposing the depth of the Cuban-Venezuelan security architecture.

The Force Package: Assembling the Multi-Domain Armada

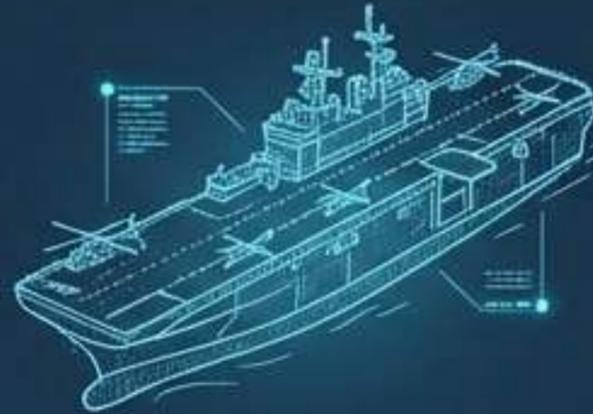
Air Component (The Enablers)



Air Superiority & Strike: F-22 Raptors, F-35 Lightning IIs, and B-1B Lancer bombers providing SEAD (Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses).

Specialized Support: EA-18G Growlers for electronic attack, ISR platforms, and tankers for long-range sustainment.

Maritime Component (The Staging Base)



The **USS Iwo Jima**, a Wasp-class amphibious assault ship, served as a forward operating base for SOF aviation and a temporary holding facility for the captured targets.

Ground & Interagency (The Assault Force)

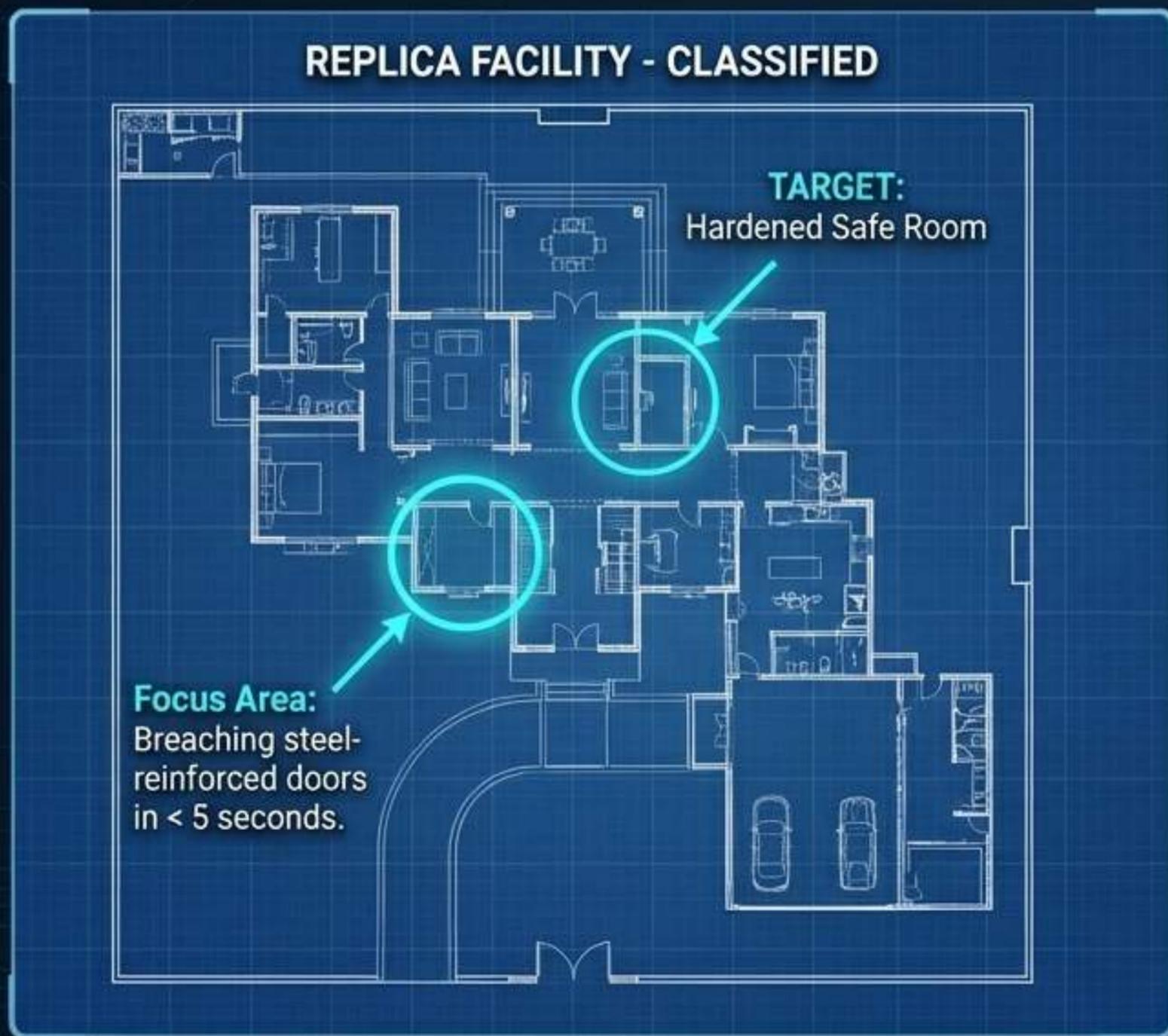


Delta Force: Primary 'breach and clear' element.

160th SOAR 'Night Stalkers': Elite helicopter crews for low-level infiltration.

Law Enforcement: Embedded FBI HRT and DEA agents to handle arrest, evidence, and custody transfer.

Rehearsal: The Ratio of Preparation to Execution



The Replica:

U.S. forces constructed a full-scale, physical replica of Maduro's residence, matching the reported layout, room structure, and defenses.

The Focus:

Training centered on breaching heavy, steel-reinforced doors in seconds to deny Maduro and his security detail access to a hardened safe room.

The "Rehearsal Culture":

Full-mission profile rehearsals integrated 160th SOAR pilots, Delta operators, and law enforcement partners to ensure seamless tactical and legal alignment.

This embodies the extraordinary ratio: 5 months of collection and rehearsal to enable mere minutes on target.

EXECUTION PHASE I: CRACKING THE SHIELD (SEAD CAMPAIGN)



PHASE I: SEAD



00:30 EST (Approx)

Stealth and conventional strike assets begin a coordinated SEAD campaign against Venezuelan radar sites, S-300VM, and Buk-M2 batteries around Caracas.

- **KINETIC STRIKES:** Cruise missiles and precision-guided munitions target airfields (La Carlota) and command-and-control nodes.
- **NON-KINETIC ATTACK:** U.S. Cyber Command and electronic warfare assets contribute to “plunging parts of Caracas into darkness,” degrading military systems and creating confusion.

EXECUTION PHASE II: THE ASSAULT ON THE COMPOUND



PHASE I: SEAD

01:01 EST

01:01 EST: 160th SOAR helicopters, flying at 100 feet over the water, arrive at the target compound. One helicopter is hit by ground fire but remains operational.



PHASE II: ASSAULT

01:01 EST

THE BREACH: Delta operators disembark and fight through layers of security, including the heavily armed Cuban inner ring.

THE CAPTURE: Maduro and Cilia Flores are intercepted inside the residence just before they could fully secure the door to their steel-reinforced safe room, forcing their surrender.



EXFILTRATION

03:29 EST

03:29 EST: After exfiltration, the entire party is confirmed to be aboard the USS Iwo Jima. The on-target time was measured in minutes.

THE UNSEEN NETWORK: A LESSON IN MODERN WARFARE

“Most special operations require non-SOF assistance.” — SOF TRUTH #5

INTELLIGENCE PRIMACY:

Success was impossible without the five months of patient work by the CIA, national ISR assets, and human sources.

JOINT ENTERPRISE:

The Delta Force team at the door was enabled by a massive joint force—carrier strike groups, B-1B bombers, cyber operators, and tankers—that created the window for their success.

INTERAGENCY FUSION:

The deliberate integration of law enforcement (FBI/DEA) transformed a military raid into a legally prosecutable action, creating a new operational template.