

September 12, 2018  
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Dear Mr President:

I am concerned about gunboat diplomacy. President Maduro has created a serious economic and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela and the US response - the way refugees are treated as well as the engagement with the government - will have a big effect. Traditionally the State Department has taken the lead with nuanced signaling around economic, diplomatic and even symbolic actions as well as enlisting coordinated moves by other governments. Military approaches have also been used, typically to disastrous effect. Even hints of military action often serve to support the target government by giving a convenient distraction from their own failings as well as undermining US moral standing for future diplomacy. Unfortunately your government has given this impression both through your own direct comments and through the recent news of high level meetings around a possible coup. Your government has also undercut diplomacy by decimating our diplomatic corps and fraying relations with countries whose support might be enlisted.

*Please assure me that you will defer Venezuelan diplomacy to diplomats.*

I am very proud to be a US resident and a large part of that derives from our effective diplomacy.

Sincerely,  
Eric Babson