

## Venezuela bans six airlines amid US tensions

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Venezuela has banned six major international airlines from landing in the country after they failed to meet a 48-hour deadline to resume flights to the capital, Caracas.

The carriers had temporarily suspended services following a U.S. warning of “increased military activity” in the area.

The Venezuelan government had set an ultimatum that expired on Wednesday ((Nov 26).

While several smaller airlines continue to operate flights to the country, thousands of passengers have been affected.

The US has deployed a large force in waters near Venezuela, which it says is to combat drug trafficking, but which Venezuela's leader has denounced as an attempt to overthrow him.

Venezuela's civil aviation authority said on Wednesday that Iberia, TAP Portugal, Gol, Latam, Avianca and Turkish Airlines would immediately lose landing and takeoff rights after failing to resume flights to Caracas.

The authority accused the carriers of "joining the acts of state terrorism promoted by the United States" by suspending operations amid increased U.S. military activity near the Venezuelan coast.

The U.S. has deployed 15 troops and the aircraft carrier USS Gerald Ford near Venezuela in what it says is a counter-narcotics operation, the largest U.S. deployment in the region since 1989.

U.S. forces have carried out at least 21 attacks on boats suspected of transporting drugs, killing over 80 people, though evidence has not been provided and analysts say the deployment is unusually large for such an operation.

Venezuela says the U.S. aim is to overthrow President Nicolás Maduro, whose re-election last year was widely denounced.

Amid rising tensions, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration issued a warning urging caution for operators at Maiquetía airport. The six airlines suspended flights following that warning.

An IATA attempt to restore operations failed to appease the Venezuelan government. In recent days, both Maduro and U.S.

President Donald Trump signaled openness to direct talks, with Trump saying he "could talk" with Maduro but warning of a "hard way" if necessary. Maduro also posted a video driving through Caracas, showing Christmas decorations to signal normalcy.

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