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Colombia and Venezuela reopen borders



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Venezuela and Colombia restore trade in what for the two countries is their main border.

With a simple act at the Simón Bolívar International Bridge, the border between Colombia and Venezuela was formally reopened for the transport of cargo. An important symbolic moment, in a process of rapprochement that faces dangers and enemies.

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Colombian President Gustavo Petro and some ministers of President Nicolás Maduro heard a martial band of Venezuela's Bolivarian National Guard play the notes of Colombia's anthem, and then the other way around, a Colombian army band performed the "Gloria al Bravo Pueblo," the Venezuelan anthem.

Immediately some large trucks passed in both directions. The Simón Bolívar bridge is mainly used as a pedestrian crossing, but now it will resume the daily dynamics of truck passage at night. Heavy cargo traffic was also restored through the Francisco de Paula Santander International Bridge, about 15 kilometers to the north.

Venezuela and Colombia thus restore trade in what for the two countries is their main border. The most porous and one of the most extensive and busiest in the entire continent. The reinstatement is directly related to the arrival of Gustavo Petro at the Casa de Nariño almost two months ago, who ended the inconsistent support for the virtual presidency of former Venezuelan deputy Juan Guaidó, which Gustavo Duque maintained.

Precisely Guaidó and Duque were two of the main actors of what in the same bridges, three and a half years ago, constituted an unprecedented attempt at border irruption, which sought to create a beachhead in Venezuelan territory for the project of the Trump White House to end the government of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela.

That February 23, 2019, Venezuela broke diplomatic relations with its neighbor Colombia, which were only resumed now, with the arrival of Petro to the presidency in Colombia.

"This is a symbol of unity, it must never be closed (the border). Globalization first of all is trade and unity between neighbors," Petro said, adding that the border closure "was a suicide that should not be repeated."

Nicolás Maduro was the great absentee in the greeting on the bridge, the Venezuelan president tweeted early that it was a "historic day". "We are resuming relations and taking firm steps to advance in the total and absolute opening of the border between fraternal peoples: Colombia and Venezuela," the Venezuelan president wrote.

The border opening that in several cities of Colombia the opposition managed to articulate a first street action against the Petro government.

The opening for cargo transport, although symbolic, is just one more moment in a process in which, they say from side to side, it will continue at a safe pace, on a path that is not without obstacles. For example, the air connection between Caracas and Bogotá that was scheduled to take place on Monday 26, was in sight, after the Colombian authorities denied the final ok for the operation at El Dorado airport of the Venezuelan state Conviasa, whose planes are sanctioned by the Department of the Treasury of the United States, in the so-called "Clinton list", that pursues assets of fractious countries and also those private and public companies of any country that maintain commercial relations with those sanctioned.

Although Colombia's ambassador in Caracas, Armando Benedetti, had assured that Colombian airlines and another Venezuelan private airline would begin to fly, the truth is that this is – at least for now – contingent on Conviasa finally being allowed to operate in Colombia.

Before Monday's salute on the bridge, the defense ministers of the two countries met over the weekend at a National Guard barracks next to the border crossing, with a handshake no less important. It is the barracks that Venezuelans with the undisguised support of the Colombian police and military authorities tried to take on February 23, 2019.

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