**New FRONTLINE and Armando.info Documentary Uncovers Corruption and the Cost of Journalism in Venezuela**

[***A Dangerous Assignment: Uncovering Corruption in Maduro’s Venezuela***](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/a-dangerous-assignment-uncovering-corruption-maduro-venezuela/)

Premieres Tues., May 14, 2024

7/6c: pbs.org/frontline, PBS App

10/9c: PBS stations ([check local listings](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/schedule/)), YouTube

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Three years after the death of Hugo Chávez and the presidential election of Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela was in economic freefall and consumed by hunger.

In 2016, President Maduro’s government responded with the CLAP program: a domestic aid initiative that was billed as providing high-quality, essential food items to Venezuelans impacted by the nation’s economic crisis — some of whom were at risk of starvation.

But the new FRONTLINE documentary [***A Dangerous Assignment: Uncovering Corruption in Maduro’s Venezuela***](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/a-dangerous-assignment-uncovering-corruption-maduro-venezuela/) shows that, in fact, the CLAP program was not all that the government claimed it to be. 

Made in collaboration with the independent Venezuelan news site [Armando.info](http://armando.info), the documentary features groundbreaking reporting from investigative journalist Roberto Deniz and his colleagues. They revealed that the government was purchasing low-quality products for the CLAP program. In fact, a chemical analysis conducted by the Institute of Food Science and Technology at Universidad Central de Venezuela at the request of Armando.info showed some of the powdered milk offered in the CLAP boxes was so deficient in calcium and high in sodium that a researcher noted it couldn’t be classified as milk at all.

Deniz and his colleagues also uncovered that the CLAP initiative itself was enriching a close associate of Maduro’s — Alex Saab, the biggest contractor for the food program.

The Armando.info journalists’ reporting ended up helping expose a vast corruption scandal that had benefited Maduro and other officials, spanning from Venezuela to Europe to the U.S. — and it ultimately made the journalists targets of the Maduro government.

Facing threats, harassment and possible jail time, Deniz and his colleagues made the difficult decision to flee Venezuela. As a result of Deniz’s reporting, he has a warrant out for his arrest, his family’s home has been raided, and he has been sued for criminal defamation by Saab.

As *A Dangerous Assignment* chronicles, Deniz continued to pursue this story of corruption in Venezuela from exile in Colombia, as it evolved into an international effort to bring Saab to justice.

In 2019, Alex Saab was indicted by the U.S. government on money laundering charges related to alleged violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and sanctioned for an alleged food corruption scheme involving the CLAP program. A federal prosecutor who met with Saab says in the documentary that Saab later went on to admit that he had paid bribes to Venezuelan government officials in connection with the lucrative food contracts.

Yet, today, Saab is free — released in a controversial prisoner swap by the Biden administration in exchange for imprisoned Americans.    
  
“This is a story of corruption, of kleptocracy, on a scale the world has not seen,” Marshall Billingslea, a former U.S. Treasury official who helped build the case against Saab, told FRONTLINE. “The things [Saab] was doing on behalf of Maduro were unconscionable.”  
  
Deniz has not set foot in Venezuela for more than five years. Yet, as Deniz says in the film, “Professionally, I always say it’s been worth it.” But on a personal level, things are more complicated. “It’s like I’ve always said: It would have been easier to look away.”

As governments across the globe crack down on a free press and journalists face increased intimidation, ***A Dangerous Assignment*** is a stunning look at the price of journalism in Venezuela — and the unflagging efforts of journalists to follow a story, even from exile.

***A Dangerous Assignment: Uncovering Corruption in Maduro’s Venezuela*** premieres on Tuesday, May 14 at 10/9c on PBS and on YouTube, and at 7/6c on [PBS.org/frontline](http://pbs.org/frontline), in the PBS App, and will also be available on the PBS Documentaries Prime Video Channel. The documentary is distributed internationally by PBS International. [Subscribe to FRONTLINE’s newsletter](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/newsletter-subscriptions/) to get updates on events, podcast episodes and more related to *A Dangerous Assignment*.

**Credits**

*A Dangerous Assignment: Uncovering Corruption in Maduro’s Venezuela* is an Assignment Film production for GBH/Frontline in association with Armando.Info. The director is Juan Ravell. The producer is Jeff Arak. The reporter is Roberto Deniz. The executive producer for Armando.Info is Ewald Scharfenberg. The editor-in-chief and executive producer of FRONTLINE is Raney Aronson-Rath.

**About FRONTLINE**

FRONTLINE, U.S. television’s longest running investigative documentary series, explores the issues of our times through powerful storytelling. FRONTLINE has won an Academy Award® as well as every major journalism and broadcasting award, including 106 Emmy Awards and 31 Peabody Awards. Visit [pbs.org/frontline](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/) and follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/frontlinepbs), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/frontline), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/frontlinepbs/) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3ScyryU9Oy9Wse3a8OAmYQ) to learn more. FRONTLINE is produced at GBH in Boston and is broadcast nationwide on PBS. Funding for FRONTLINE is provided through the support of PBS viewers and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Additional support for FRONTLINE is provided by the Abrams Foundation, Park Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Heising-Simons Foundation, and the FRONTLINE Journalism Fund, with major support from Jon and Jo Ann Hagler on behalf of the Jon L. Hagler Foundation, and additional support from Koo and Patricia Yuen. Support for *A Dangerous Assignment* is provided by Free Press Unlimited.

**About Armando.info**Armando.info is a Venezuelan website dedicated to investigative journalism. It was founded in July 2014, in the midst of a growing climate of censorship, self-censorship and persecution against the press in Venezuela. In 2018, its founders and some reporters were prosecuted and forced to emigrate. Another part of the newsroom is still located in Caracas. Armando.info focuses on covering corruption, organized crime and human rights stories, and has carried out collaborative transnational reporting projects with organizations such as ICIJ, OCCRP, and CLIP. It is a member of the Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN), the Consortium to Support Independent Journalism in the Region (CAPIR), and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP). Its work has been recognized with awards such as the María Moors Cabot from Columbia University (NYC), the Lorenzo Natali from the European Union, the Global Shining Light Award from GIJN, and the Javier Valdez Award from Ipys Latin America.

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