

CBS Mornings

01/06/26

7:08:38 a.m. [TEASE]

13 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Senator Mark Kelly (D) Arizona; 8 AM]

NATE BURLESON: And later in our 8:00 hour, we will hear from Democratic Senator Mark Kelly on the U.S. operation in Venezuela, and we'll also ask him about The Pentagon's decision to censure him for participating in a video message to servicemembers.

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8:00:08 a.m. [TEASE]

12 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Sen. Mark Kelly]

GAYLE KING: Coming up this 8:00 hour, Democratic Senator Mark Kelly weighs in on getting centered by the Trump administration. Why he says he's going to keep speaking up and what he thinks about the U.S. raid on Venezuela.

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8:00:43 a.m.

4 minutes and 42 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Maduro Appears in Court, Claims He Was "Kidnapped"]

KING: We're going to begin this hour with a fallout from that stunning U.S. raid in Venezuela and the arrest of the country's president. Nicolas Maduro, as you know, and his wife pleaded not guilty in New York yesterday to alleged narcoterrorism. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has been very busy explaining that military operation to lawmakers. Hegseth also found time to censure Democratic senator, that's Mark Kelly, who recently told servicemembers that they have the right to refuse illegal orders from the Trump administration. So, earlier this morning — about an hour ago — we sat down with Senator Kelly to talk about all of this. We started off by asking him what questions he still has for the administration about Venezuela.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Sen. Mark Kelly on U.S. Involvement in Venezuela]

SENATOR MARK KELLY (D-AZ): Are we now in the business of regime change? And what's next?

KING: They say it's not a regime change, it's a change in the behavior —

KELLY: Change in the behavior of —

KING: — of the regime.

KELLY: — well, I mean, just this entire operation, when you consider when this started, this is about fentanyl coming in on boats from Venezuela, and then the administration suddenly figures out, well, it's actually not fentanyl, cocaine comes on these routes, and by the way, not to the United States, mostly to Europe. And then this became about regime change, and that was about oil, and then it was back to regime change. I mean, they can't even get their story straight on this, but here's the thing that I really, really worry about. Now, Donald Trump is talking about maybe overthrowing the leadership of Colombia, who is an ally of ours. That's different than Venezuela or maybe —

KING: Sending messages to Cuba.

KELLY: — Cuba, Greenland. Is he going to bring up Canada again at this point? I wasn't really concerned about the Greenland thing again until this week, until he seems to be serious about going after a NATO ally of ours. That would blow up the entire NATO Alliance.

BURLESON: So, Senator, when does running Venezuela or another country cross into occupation motivated by power, oil, money?

KELLY: Well, this President ran on getting us out of foreign conflicts, and he's doing the exact opposite of that. And I mean, I would like to understand from him, why the change, you know? What has happened to him, you know, personally here, where he now feels like he, you know, wants to use the U.S. military, which is incredibly capable.

BURLESON: What does your gut say?

KELLY: He is a hard guy to figure out. And now it seems like Donald Trump is separating the world into their sphere of influence, the Russians and ours, and does what we did in Venezuela this week, does that provide justification for President Xi one day to go after Taiwan, or maybe even Putin to go beyond Ukraine and go to another — you know, one of the former parts of the Soviet Union?

ADRIANA DIAZ: So, Senator, we have three equal branches of government here. What is the role of Congress?

KELLY: Equal? We were. I think Republicans in Congress have ceded their constitutional power, their authority, to this White House. Very few of them will stand up to this President. We're the Article I branch of government and we are supposed to be providing oversight responsibility and then you look at what they have done recently, like to me, this administration doesn't like what I say. Now, they're talking about demoting me. That was after the President said I should be hanged for something I said. Yes, they are — it is hard to get the Republicans to stand up. I mean, it is their president, their party, and they refuse to stand up to him.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Sen. Mark Kelly Responds to Pentagon Censure]

KING: Pete Hegseth is now fully coming after you. How are you going to respond? What is your — what is your response back to him?

KELLY: Well, first of all, I spent 25 years in the United States Navy. I flew 39 combat missions. I flew into space four times, all in service of this country. I wore the U.S. flag, every uniform I've ever worn. And they didn't like — the President didn't like what I said in the video, and he said because of that, I should be hanged, executed, prosecuted. Pete Hegseth is going to prosecute me under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for saying something that is in the Uniform Code of Military Justice. It's nonsense. It's also hypocritical, because what I said in November is the exact same thing that Pete Hegseth said —

KING: Years ago.

KELLY: — in 2016, the same thing, almost word for word. Let me tell you what this is about. This is pretty simple. This is about stifling people's speech.

DIAZ: And we want to thank Senator Kelly for sitting down with us.