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Gunboat Anti-Diplomacy

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A boat in international waters off the coast of Venezuela was blown up by the U.S. military, on President Donald Trump's proud authorization.

It was not universally praised.

"The controversy erupted on Saturday when Vance [wrote on the social platform X](#)," Sabina Eaton [reports](#), quoting the vice president: "Killing cartel members who poison our fellow citizens is the highest and best use of our military," referencing the September 2 military strike."

The idea that the "best use" of our armed forces is to destroy—without arrest or declaration of war or even a serious legal case set before world opinion or, for that matter, U.S. opinion—sounds all too modern but not very American.

Does it matter that they were, or merely might have been, "narco-terrorists," as the president called the eleven people wiped out on the fast-moving boat? Or that Mr. Trump asserted their service to Venezuela's strongman Maduro—against whom the U.S. has not declared war?

"Sen. Rand Paul [all but accused](#) the vice president of celebrating war crimes," Eli Stokols and Dasha Burns [wrote](#) yesterday at *Politico*. "The Kentucky Republican ripped Vance over the weekend in a social media fight that could offer a preview of future skirmishes between President Donald Trump's heir apparent and another Republican with 2028 ambitions."

The Kentucky senator [asked](#), rhetorically, if the vice president had "ever read *To Kill a Mockingbird*?"

"Did he ever wonder what might happen if the accused were immediately executed without trial or representation??"

"What a despicable and thoughtless sentiment it is to glorify killing someone without a trial."

Rand is right. The use of unlawful or unaccountable power can never advance American interests. Because one of our interests is holding power to account, to the rule of law.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.