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VENEZUELAN LAW RELATIVE TO THE ADMISSION OF FOREIGN SHIPS OF
WAR INTO THE TERRITORIAL WATERS AND PORTS OF VENEZUELA.
CARACAS, JUNE 26, 1920

[Translation]

The Congress of the United States of Venezuela decrees :

ART. 1. In times of peace, foreign war vessels, having announced their visit through the diplomatic channel, are allowed to enter into the territorial waters and the seaports of Venezuela open to foreign trade. The number of ships flying the same flag in the territorial waters and ports of the Republic shall not be more than three. For entering into inland waters an authorisation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is required.

2. No war vessel shall stay more than fifteen days in Venezuelan territorial waters and ports, except by special authorisation of the Federal Executive, and they must leave within six hours if so demanded by the national authority, even though the period fixed for their stay has not expired.

The Federal Executive can modify the provisions of the two preceding Articles if special circumstances so require.

3. The provisions of Articles 1 and 2 are not applicable in the cases of :—

(1) Foreign warships, the admission of which has been authorised through the diplomatic channel in exceptional conditions.

(2) Ships which, on account of danger, bad weather, or other unforeseen causes have been obliged to take refuge in ports, so long as these conditions last.

(3) Ships carrying Chiefs of State, members of the reigning dynasty, or diplomatic officials, or a mission to the Venezuelan Government.

4. It rests with the harbour-master to point out and change the moorings of foreign warships.

5. Foreign war vessels in ports or territorial waters shall be bound to respect the laws and regulations concerning police, health, finance and harbour. They shall also comply with all the regulations of the port relative to vessels of the national navy.

6. Foreign warships in Venezuelan waters are absolutely prohibited from doing topographical and hydrographical works, from sketching or taking soundings and from performing any submarine work with or without divers; neither can they carry out exercises of landing, target or torpedo practices.

The harbour-master, in agreement with the commander of the ship, shall determine the number of men allowed to land at one time, and the time for landing and returning on board.

7. No death warrant shall be executed in any foreign warship during her stay in territorial waters.

8. No armed member of the crew shall be allowed to land. Officers and ratings are only allowed to carry arms forming a part of their uniform.

9. In cases of funeral honours or other solemnities, the Minister of War and Marine can grant a permit for the landing of an armed detachment accompanying the procession.

10. In the case of any foreign warship not acting in conformity with the rules laid down in this Law, the local naval or military authority shall in the first place draw the attention of the officer commanding to the infringement, and formally demand the observance of the regulations. Should this not lead to any result, he shall report the same to the Minister of War and Marine, who can decide to invite the ship to depart forthwith from the port and territorial waters.

11. On the arrival of one or more warships at a Venezuelan port, an official shall be sent to salute the commander of the foreign naval force. This official shall inform the said commander of the regulations which he is to observe, and ask for the names of the ship or ships, the names of their commanders, an indication of their war material, the name of the port whence they come, the period during which they intend to stay, and the state of health on board.

12. The access of submarines belonging to foreign nonbelligerent Powers to Venezuelan ports or waters is governed by the provisions of this Law. Submarines are allowed to enter into territorial waters only by day, and shall navigate on the surface and fly their national flag.

13. The admission and stay of warships of belligerent nations shall be governed by the provisions contained in the XIIIth Convention of The Hague.

14. In the event of war between two foreign nations, the Federal Executive can prohibit war submarines of the belligerent Powers from entering, navigating or staying in Venezuelan territorial waters and ports, but they may make an exception in the case of submarines obliged to enter into territorial waters on account of damage, state of weather, or with the object of saving human lives. In such cases the submarine shall navigate on the surface, fly the flag of its nationality and the international signal indicating the reason of its entering the territorial waters, which it shall leave as soon as the reasons justifying its entrance have ceased, or when so ordered by the Federal Executive.

15. The Federal Executive shall have the right of limiting and even prohibiting absolutely the admission of foreign warships in case of war or danger of war.

The admission and stay of foreign warships shall be subject to regulations which may be issued as occasion arises.

The provisions of this Law are applicable to auxiliary vessels of the war navy; to armed transports or armed hydroplanes.

The Federal Executive is authorised to promulgate rules concerning the admission of warships in war time.

The Decree of the 11th May, 1832, is hereby repealed.

Given in the Legislative Federal Palace in Caracas the 26th day of June, 1920—year 111 of Independence and 62 of Federation.

[L. S.] D. A. CORONIL,
President.

[L. S.] M. TORO CHIMIES,
Vice-President.

[L. S.] PABLO GODOY FONSECA,
Secretary.

[L. S.] R. CAYAMA MARTINEZ,
Secretary.

Federal Palace, Caracas, June 30, 1920—year 111 of Independence and 62 of Federation.

To be executed and its execution to be seen to.

[L. S.] V. MARQUEZ BUSTILLOS,

[L. S.] E. GIL BORGES,
Minister for Foreign Affairs.

(113 Brit. and For. State Papers, p. 1202.)