



# Exclusive: U.S. has been testing a device linked to Havana Syndrome, sources say

Four people tell me the U.S. government has this weapon, which has been tested.

SASHA INGBER

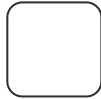
JAN 12, 2026

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The U.S. government has in its possession a device that is believed to cause Havana Syndrome




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A wild interview that made the rounds on social media caused me to start asking if the U.S. had some sort of equivalent weapon. In the interview, a supposed Venezuelan security guard for Nicolas Maduro [claimed](#) that they were incapacitated during the Delta Force raid earlier this month. “It was like a very intense sound wave,” the person said. “Suddenly I felt like my head was exploding from the inside. We all started bleeding from the nose. Some were vomiting blood. We fell to the ground, unable to move.”

Then White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt [shared it](#) with her 1.7 million X followers, saying, “Stop what you are doing and read this...” She added a string of American flag icons.

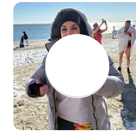
So off I went with my questions. One person with knowledge of special operations expressed skepticism of the Venezuelan’s conversation, pondering to me, “Was it an excuse for poor performance and we [the U.S. government] are exploiting it?”

Another person thought the interview sounded like straight propaganda, totally out of line with Venezuela’s machismo culture. And a third source, a former senior intelligence official, thought the manifestation of symptoms in terms



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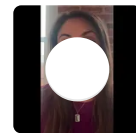
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But in the midst of these conversations, two people told me that a number of months ago, the U.S. captured a weapon that has been associated with Havana Syndrome. Both said it was seized by U.S. Special Forces during an operation.

I am not sure who, when, or where. They said the weapon has been tested so that the U.S. can understand how the device works. And to be clear, no one said that it had ever been used.

After this article initially published, another person linked to the intel community contacted me to confirm my reporting and said the weapons are under the Defense Department's [Intelligence & Security unit](#).

Then a few hours later, national security attorney Mark Zaid — who was not involved in my reporting — [wrote on social media](#), “As attorney for nearly three dozen federal victims, mostly from w/i Intelligence Community, of #AnomalousHealthIncidents, I can confirm that I had the same information of USG possessing one or more such devices - and from different sources.”

Mark and that third source told me they believe the weapon was purchased, not part of a special forces operation.

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And another person — someone who is very familiar with these operations, to include JSOC operations and the potential use of such a weapon — told me that the United States does possess a weapon that causes disturbing internal issues. The stuff that brings you to your knees, causes you to throw up and lose your bowels. The point is that it is less than lethal, incapacitating but not killing.

It's widely known that the U.S. has this weapon, the person added. So much so that back in 2018, the Israelis asked the Defense Department if they could use the weapon. But the request wasn't for a military operation or anything close to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack. It was for "crowd control" against the Palestinians.

The person said that Defense Secretary James Mattis, a retired four-star general, declined. It had never been tested on people, and the U.S. would not give it to the Israelis to test on the Palestinian people.

Even after that, the person had never seen it be used in an operation — and that no one in Delta Force is saying that such a weapon was used to grab Maduro in the middle of the night.

I reached out to the Pentagon and CIA for a

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As I [reported in years past](#), the working theory had been that Havana Syndrome was likely caused by some sort of gun, an easily transportable device, and that it had targeted people through directed energy. That means pulsed radio frequencies which can, silently or with a perceived loud sound, harm the brain.

Pretty much everyone thought this was the nefarious work of a Russian intelligence service. Some thought it potentially started as an innocent side effect of Russian surveillance efforts.

But the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, under Avril Haines, released a report saying a foreign government was “very unlikely” involved, and that “preexisting conditions, conventional illnesses, and environmental factors” were to blame.

I have spoken with good people involved in that research who stand by their analysis. But criticism and skepticism remain. And a House Intelligence subcommittee’s [interim report](#) began with a conviction “that a foreign adversary is behind some [Anomalous Health Incidents]” and that the intelligence community “has attempted to thwart the Subcommittee’s investigative efforts to uncover the truth at every turn.”

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eaders: DNI Tulsi Gabbard and Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Joseph Kent want it released. CIA Director John Ratcliffe and DOD Under Secretary for Intelligence & Security Bradley Hansell don't.

Is that why Gabbard, technically the nation's top intelligence official, wasn't involved in the Maduro raid planning? Add it to the list of things I still do not know.

A DNI spokesperson tells me that Gabbard believes "the mistreatment and dismissal of Americans impacted by AHIs [Havana Syndrome] is unacceptable." She has provided time, resources, and support to a "relentless" team conducting a review.

"DNI Gabbard remains committed to sharing findings from her investigation into Anomalous Health Incidents with the American people... However, we are not going to rush to put out incomplete information."

*(Updated with additional information after publishing.)*

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Judy Wessell  16h



 Liked by Sasha Ingber

It sure sounds like we have one of these weapons.

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