



The Americas Report

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The Americas Report is a continuation of the work of Dr. Constantine C. Menges' original America's Report. For almost two years that report chronicled the efforts of the Castro-Chavez axis and their allies in their efforts to undermine free nations and people throughout the Western Hemisphere. These efforts were in keeping with the theme of the July 1993 meeting of the Forum of São Paulo, which was founded in 1990 by Lula da Silva and Fidel Castro, "Our losses in Eastern Europe will be offset by our victories in Latin America."

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For any questions, comments, or those interested in receiving this report in the future or seeking to have their email removed from our list please contact **Nicole M. Ferrand** at our **new e-mail address: mengesproject@centerforsecuritypolicy.org**. If you have news stories that you think might be useful for future editions of this report please send them, with a link to the original website, to the same e-mail address. If you wish to contribute with an article, please send it to the same address, with your name and place of work or study.

[Highlighted Story I – THE RADICAL GRASSROOTS: A DANGER ON THE HORIZON.](#) By Luis Fleischman and Nicole M. Ferrand.*

The **emergence of neo-populism in Latin America** not only constitutes a tendency related to the rise of new leaders promising equality and rejection of the old elites but it is also **combines, in numerous cases, with the political mobilization of previously passive populations who lived on the margins of society, often of indigenous origins, who speak different dialects. These new groups have become a most desired political prey for populist leaders** willing to climb the political ladder and even carry a revolutionary change. These populations which include the **cocaleros** (coca leaf growers) in Bolivia or the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (**CONAIE**) indeed have been **key players in the election of leaders such as Evo Morales and Rafael Correa**. Ollanta Humala in Peru also used the **etnocacerista** group relatively successfully even though he lost the election.

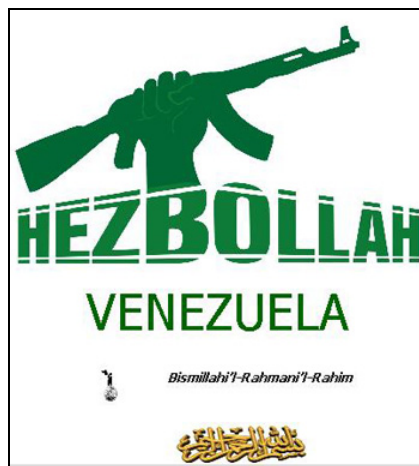
Despite being an interesting political capital for political leaders, some of these new populist movements have an element of independence and do not necessarily blindly follow leaders. One example is **the Piquetero Movement in Argentina**. Even though some of its leaders have associated themselves with President Nestor Kirchner, they have also **taken independent action** which, at times has become a problem for the President and at other times is useful and coincides with his purposes. **Indigenous movements such as the Zapatistas in Mexico, the CONAIE in Ecuador, the radical indigenous movement in Chile, and the landless movement in Brazil represent examples of more independent movements**. They represent a feeling of economic and political exclusion and their

demands include redistribution of land and expropriation of private property and foreign capital in favor of indigenous cooperatives and other forms of economic autonomy.

Often, these new movements tend to be radical, anti-systemic, and are inclined to reject the old political and economic order. In some cases, Indian movements have claimed their status as the majority and therefore claim all the power for themselves. Street protests and challenge of the government as well as rejection of the system and revolutionary unwillingness to compromise also characterize some of these movements.

Of course, **such discontent could be capitalized on by demagogue populist leaders,** but it can also go beyond. One such example is presented by **the Wayuu Guajira Indians who represent the largest indigenous group in Venezuela and Colombia** (about 135,000 in Colombia and 170,000 in Venezuela). On October 23, 2006, the police in Caracas found two explosive devices near the American Embassy. One of the bombs was in a box which also contained propaganda brochures for the Iran-backed organization, Hezbollah. One young man, a student at the Bolivarian University founded by Hugo Chavez, was arrested.¹

An organization called Hezbollah Latin America claimed responsibility for the attack. Hezbollah Latin America is an organization based in the Wayuu Indian population and also calls itself Autonomia Islamica Wayuu (Wayuu Islamic Autonomy). Its website <http://groups.msn.com/AutonomiaIslamicaWayuu> is written in Spanish and Chapateka (a combination of the Wayuu language and Spanish) and claims **activity in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador and Mexico. But the backbone of the organization is Venezuela.** Their website states: **“The brief enjoyment of life on earth is selfish. The other life is better for those who follow Allah.”** The members of this group are locals and not Muslim in origin and claim to be Shiites, supporters of Hezbollah and Iran.²



Logo of Hezbollah Venezuela. Source: Hezbollah Venezuela's website.

¹ [The Hezbollah Venezuelan Metastasis](#). September 4, 2006. Venezuela Today. By Gustavo Coronel.

² [“La Fascinación por el éxito: Hezbollah en América Latina.”](#) Jihad Monitor. Oct. 17, 2006. Manuel Torres Soriano.

The leader of Hezbollah Latin America is **Teodoro Rafael Darnott**. Mr. Darnott was initially the leader of a small Marxist faction called **The Guaicapuro Movement for National Liberation, (Proyecto Movimiento Guaicaipuro por la Liberación Nacional - MGLN)** which struggled against the oppression of the poor, indigenous peasants in the Valle de Caracas region. The organization initially proposed a concrete micro-farming project but it failed to obtain support from the authorities. It was then that Darnott decided to join the Chavez political party **Movimiento Quinta Republica**.³

It was reported that early in 2004 about 100 Wayuu Indians were massacred by Colombian para-military, guerilla and drug traffickers. These events also pushed hundreds of Wayuu to flee Colombia into Venezuela. It is thought that such genocide was the result of the need to control the drug trafficking ports in the Guajira littoral by the para-military and the guerillas, according to the Colombian army.



Teodoro Darnott. Source: El Revolucionario.

The organization opens up its website with a set of interesting quotations by the leader of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Rhuolla Khomeini. "Our struggle is the struggle against all inequalities. Our struggle is the struggle of the barefoot people against uncontrolled freedom. It is the struggle of the ideological values against the dirty world of power, money and greediness". Then it proceeds to two other quotations from Khomeini. The first states that "all the political activities are part of a religious duty" and the second points out that the "Koran is not a book of prayer but a manual to organize society and to train its leaders to rule. Islam and Islamic rules are divine and their practices guarantee prosperity in this world and salvation in the world to come. (Islam) can put an end to injustice, tyranny and corruption and help mankind to achieve perfection"⁴

The philosophy of this "new Muslim" group says that the Venezuelan revolution cannot take place unless it takes a path towards the moral and divine. The group claims that Venezuelans worship sex, money, industry and commerce leading society into a "swamp of immorality and corruption".⁵ Hezbollah Latin America claims that political movements and parties cannot provide an answer to these problems because they are also part of the problem. Thus, **only "a theocratic, Political-Islamic force can liberate society from this situation"**.⁶

Hezbollah Latin America "respects the Venezuelan revolutionary process, and supports its social policies as well as its anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism",

³ The Hezbollah Venezuelan Metastasis. September 4, 2006. Venezuela Today. By Gustavo Coronel.

⁴ <http://groups.msn/AutonomiaIslamicaWayu>.

⁵ <http://groups.msn/AutonomiaIslamicaWayu>

⁶ <http://groups.msn/AutonomiaIslamicaWayu>

even though it rejects socialism in favor of an Islamic order. **The group urges everyone to vote for and support Chavez.**⁷

Nobody seems to have an answer as to why and how this Wayuu indigenous group came to embrace Hezbollah and why. The first possibility is that Hezbollah has its own independent agenda trying to create terrorist cells and bases of support for their activities aimed at spreading Islam in the western hemisphere.⁸

Some of those covering the events since the October 23rd bombing have tended to downplay the role of Darnott and to question to what extent Hezbollah Latin America is a serious organization. Yet, **the phenomenon is worrisome for a number of reasons.** First, Hezbollah obviously has **ways to either bribe or convert so-called marginal and indigenous groups in Latin America that had already developed anti-system ideologies,** and, consequently, have a predisposition to make alliances with other groups that also detest the system and identify with the oppressed. In other words, **Hezbollah and radical Islamist groups do not have to import Islamists from the Muslim world; they can be "home-grown" in Latin America, itself,** because the social and emotional conditions provide fertile ground. Furthermore, **this new available human capital clearly does not have to have any previous connection to Islam, they can be converted to Islam because Islamism is not merely a religion but is foremost a political movement.**

This method is similar to Islamist methods we find in the U.S. The case of **Jose Padilla** comes to mind. Padilla, an American citizen of Hispanic ancestry was indoctrinated by Islamists while in prison for common crimes and later charged with terrorist conspiracy. Indigenous populations have been socially marginal and their status is comparable with criminals even though they are not criminals, by definition. **Those who have dismissed Mr. Darnott as a mere opportunist have ignored the systematic way in which the message of the organization was put together. The methods of indoctrination use images that are simple and consistent with the totalitarian ideology of the Iranian revolution.**



The Wayuu being indoctrinated by Hezbollah.
Source: <http://groups.msn.com/autonomiaislamicawayuu>

The second possibility worth exploring is that Hugo Chavez is fully cooperating with the Islamization process of indigenous and other populations. Indeed, such conversion is taking place as relations between Venezuela and Iran strengthen

⁷ [The Hezbollah Venezuelan Metastasis](#), September 4, 2006. Venezuela Today. By Gustavo Coronel.

⁸ [Hezbollah America Latina: strange group or real threat?](#) Feb. 12, 2007. By Ely Karmon. Reporter Associati Internacional.

at all levels and as **Chavez openly supports Iran's nuclear program and Hezbollah during the war against Israel.** In addition, Chavez has **strong sympathies for Islamic groups** and has provided **safe haven for financial activities benefiting Islamic terrorist organizations.** Chavez has given Venezuelan passports to individuals coming from Arab and Muslim countries, and, his administration maintains a very uneasy relationship with the Jewish community as anti-Semitism among Chavista circles becomes more apparent. **Chávez is supporting Hezbollah in the Middle East and will most probably support their criminal work in Venezuela.**⁹

Gustavo Coronel, an opponent of Chavez, reports that in October 2005 Hugo Chavez expelled a group of US Evangelical missionaries who were working with indigenous communities in the area for more than half a century. Coronel reports that as the evangelical groups left Venezuela, Hezbollah occupied the new territory.¹⁰

The presence of Hezbollah Venezuela is worrisome because of the **timing of their activities.** **They have become visible at a moment in which Hugo Chavez and the Iranian President Ahmadinejad have become really close allies.** Ahmadinejad visited Caracas in September 2006 and again in January 2007 and the two countries have signed more than 20 cooperation agreements in the fields of oil & gas, iron & steel, and infrastructure worth billions of dollars.¹¹

As stated in The America's Report of March 13, 2006, Luis D'Elia, one of the leaders of the Argentinean Piquetero movement and a former member of the Kirchner cabinet, has established both a relationship with Chavez and with the Iranian government. **D'Elia, like other Latin American "social" leaders from Latin America, attended the first Iran-Latin American conference that took place in Tehran on February 27 and 28, 2007.** The conference was characterized by a clear ideological agenda with strong anti-American tones and was not attended by the higher echelons of the political system in Latin America but by "social" leaders such as Mr. D'Elia. By the same token, **Chavez has been the main promoter of the reinforcement of relations between Iran and Latin America, as he has engaged in deepening relations between Iran and grassroots leaders in the region, mostly those newly mobilized social forces that we described above.**¹²



Hugo Chavez, left, welcomes Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at Miraflores Palace in Caracas on Sept. 17, 2006. (Reuters)

⁹ The Other "Axis of Evil." July 1st, 2003. The American Legion Magazine. By Paul Crespo.

¹⁰ Chávez joins the terrorists: his path to martyrdom. September 2, 2006. Venezuela Today. By Gustavo Coronel.

¹¹ Gustavo Coronel. The Hezbollah Venezuelan Metastasis.

¹² Jose Orozco, "Venezuelan Jews Fear Chavez-Iran Ties," The Jerusalem Post, September 19, 2006.

It could be said that **the road from socialist revolutionarily Marxism to Islam has been paved by no other than Hugo Chavez.** Therefore, should we rule out the Darnott episode as a farce? We do not think so. At this point the revolutionary fever led by Hugo Chavez, to mobilize the "politically" available marginal masses of society coupled with the Iranian penetration in the region should raise an eyebrow not only among American government officials but also among those in Latin America. Given its importance, we will continue to explore the radicalization of indigenous populations in the region.

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News Stories –The following are a summary of several news stories found in different media outlets. To access the information, the hyperlink is below each news story.

[Brazil's Lula Visits Bush for Ethanol and World Trade Talks – Brazil Magazine.](#)

Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, announced this Monday, March 26, in Brazil that he will ask American President George W. Bush to help advance global trade talks when he visits Washington this coming Saturday, March 31. **Lula is scheduled to meet Bush at Camp David in Maryland.**

Brazil wants to export more ethanol, a gasoline alternative that it makes cheaply and efficiently from sugar cane, but buyers are reluctant to rely on a fuel only Brazil can export. During the recent visit of US President Bush to Latin America a strategic bio-fuels promotion agreement was signed with Brazil. The United States is the world's largest ethanol producer and consumer, but it makes ethanol from corn, which costs more and is less energy efficient. **Lula also said: "I will discuss the World Trade Organization with Bush because the WTO's success depends heavily on the United States,"** Lula said on **Rádio Nacional**, a government-owned radio network.



Presidents Bush and Lula da Silva. Source: *Agência Brasil.*

<http://www.brazzilmag.com/content/view/8080/54/>

["Venezuela is a drug dealers' temple" – Infobae, Argentina.](#)

The latest in narco news comes from a captured Colombian *capo*, **Luis Hernando Gómez Bustamante**, who stated recently: **"Venezuela has become a temple for drug dealers. There is a union of Venezuelans, Colombians and Brazilians.** Drug dealing is very easy for no one gets prosecuted." Venezuela is a narco-terrorist's paradise since Chávez came to power. Bustamante was the boss of the cartel Norte del Valle and says that the

Mexicans are the ones who handle the 'business' and that the Venezuelan government just looks the other way. In addition, he has done deals with Vicente Carrillo from Mexico and Demetrio Chávez a.k.a. "Vaticano" from Peru. **US authorities claim that 500 tons of cocaine was sent to the United States through Mexico from Colombia.** Bustamante is currently in a prison in that country.

<http://www.infobae.com/notas/nota.php?Idx=307508&IdxSeccion=0>

The Venezuelan Government seizes private land – Terra, Perú.

The Venezuelan government has seized about 330,000 hectares of land it considers idle from 16 estates for use as collective farms. President Hugo Chavez announced the seizures Sunday on his weekly *Hello, President* Television show. He said the land will be mostly used to raise cattle for meat and milk production. He said the land belongs to everyone and will benefit everyone and that the move is part of a program to do away with large private estates.

<http://www.terra.com.pe/noticias/articulo/html/act780499.htm>

Under Chavez's rule, Jews fear for future in Venezuela – JTA.

The Venezuelan Jewish community who in the past few years a that had considered itself among the most well-established in South America, has lost up to one-fifth of its members, prompted by an increasingly hostile environment under the government of President Hugo Chavez. "People have left, but there hasn't been a massive exodus as some people have said," said Jacqueline Goldberg, editor of *Nuevo Mundo Israelita*, the community's weekly newspaper. Goldberg was referring to rumors in Caracas that up to half of the city's Jews had moved out of Venezuela since Chavez took power.

Accurate figures are hard to come by, but estimates suggest **the community now numbers between 15,000 and 20,000.** The vast majority are based in the capital, with small communities in the cities of Valencia and Maracaibo, and on the Caribbean island of Margarita. Venezuelan Jews feel a tangible discomfort. "We've never had anti-Semitism here in Caracas, so this situation is something new," community member Moises Nessim said. "I would say there is worry and concern, but not yet fear – more uncertainty about what's going to happen." **There is concern over Chavez's increasingly close economic and political ties to Iran.** As the world has condemned Tehran's nuclear ambitions, Venezuela has emerged as one of Iran's few solid allies in the world. A more worrying development was the **appearance of a Venezuela-based Web site claiming to be the local branch of Hezbollah.** The site warned, "Hezbollah Latin America is analyzing placing explosives against a U.S. ally in Latin America. This would indicate the launch of Hezbollah Latin America."

<http://www.jta.org/cgi-bin/iowa/news/article/20070326VenezuelanJews.html>

Venezuela and Argentina to Expand Trade – Prensa Latina.

Businessmen from Argentina and Venezuela discuss trade opportunities from Tuesday through Saturday during the visit of an Argentinean commercial mission. The delegation, led by the Governor of Santa Fe, Jorge Obeid, is made up of Production Minister Roberto Ceretto, Trade Undersecretary German Burcher and businesspeople. They represent spare parts, food and dairy industrial technology, children and sports clothing, glassware, cold storage equipment, veterinarian products and agriculture machinery. Santa Fe exports to Venezuela include soy oil, whole milk, and meat, planting machines, cold-store devices, spare parts and diagnosis reagents. The list may grow under Venezuela's booming economy.

<http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7BED938CA9-BA38-4111-8417-B4ADEB3CAE12%7D&language=EN>

Chile: Trouble for Bachelet – El Diario Exterior, Madrid.

A year after taking office as Chile's first female president, **Michelle Bachelet is having a tough time. Her centre-left government faces allegations of corruption and**

nepotism, the economy is growing at its slowest rate for three years and the 55-year-old leader has even been blamed for chaos in Santiago's new transport system. Bachelet's approval ratings have fallen 6 points in the last days. Bachelet's approval rating remained high during 2006 as Chileans responded to her warm, personal touch, but in recent months it has slipped. An overhaul of Santiago's mass transit system launched in February has not gone smoothly and some fault the president. Odd though it may appear to outsiders, **the death of Pinochet in December is also cited as a reason for the government's woes.** The ruling coalition was forged in opposition to the general and now he is no longer alive, the argument goes, it has lost its *raison d'être*. **"Pinochet is now dead and yet the coalition keeps going back to the dictatorship as its point of unity,"** analysts argue.



Michelle Bachelet. Source: El Diario Exterior.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=13657>

Bachelet shuffles Cabinet – *La Nación, Argentina.*

President Michelle Bachelet fired her chief of staff and three other members of her Cabinet on Monday in response to a public transportation crisis that has badly damaged her government. Bachelet removed Sergio Espejo, the minister of transportation, presidential spokesman Ricardo Lagos Weber announced. Also leaving the Cabinet are presidential Chief of Staff Paulina Veloso, Defense Minister Vivianne Blanlot and Justice Minister Isidro Solis. Bachelet, a socialist, admitted that "things have not been done well" and said the mistakes "hurt me deeply, because they have especially affected the poor." "I accept that changes are necessary," she said in a nationally televised address after the announcement. "This will be a new stage, and mistakes will not be accepted." Espejo will be replaced by fellow Christian Democrat Rene Cortazar, an economist and former labor minister.

http://www.lanacion.com.ar/exterior/nota.asp?nota_id=894955

Chile and Japan Sign Free Trade Agreement – *El Mercurio, Chile.*

Japan signed a bilateral free trade agreement with Chile on Tuesday, the first such pact with a South American country for the world's No. 2 economy. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso and his Chilean counterpart Alejandro Foxley signed an economic partnership agreement in Tokyo on Tuesday afternoon, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Chile will be the fifth country with which Japan has struck a free trade deal and the first from South America. Foxley said he hoped to further strengthen trade links, and urged Japanese companies to invest aggressively in Chile. He also invited Tokyo to use the South American country as a "gateway" to other markets in the region.

Under the agreement, expected to come into effect in September, Chile will abolish tariffs on automobiles, machinery and electronics from Japan. Tokyo will gradually abolish taxes on salmon and trout and wine from Chile, with tariffs on over 90 percent of bilateral trade phased out within 10 years. **Japan exported 103.95 billion yen (US\$880.93 million; euro664.1 million) worth of products to Chile in 2005, according to the Foreign Ministry. Chile exported 565.36 billion yen (US\$4.79 billion; euro3.61 billion) to Japan in the same year.**



Chile's Foreign Minister, Alejandro Foxley. Source: El Mercurio.

<http://diario.elmercurio.com/2007/03/27/nacional/nacional/noticias/6549AD3D-3828-4400-9013-B90EF8FA7E50.htm?id={6549AD3D-3828-4400-9013-B90EF8FA7E50}>

FARC calls upon Lula and Chávez for recognition – *El Diario Exterior, Madrid.*

Raúl Reyes, spokesman of the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), said he hoped the presidents of Brazil and Venezuela, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Hugo Chávez, respectively to help the organization by acknowledging that Colombia is faced with a new reality. “These are governments that, in a sovereign way, could recognize at a given time that in a given country a new political reality has emerged,” Reyes told Brazilian magazine Istoé. “And that is what we are building in Colombia. It is no longer a dream, just a wish,” Reyes added, as quoted by Efe.

Regarding the fears the Brazilian military have expressed in connection with the closeness of FARC to border with Brazil, Reyes replied, “this present time is not a time for conflict, but a time for a joint effort to achieve a transformation leading us to create free, sovereign and integrated motherlands.” According to Reyes, “such a significant task has started already. **Just like at the revolutionary Cuba, the Bolivarian Venezuela, the Sandinista Nicaragua, and Bolivia and Ecuador.** And there is Brazil of course, whose people has started to conquer the living standards they always dreamt of.”



Leader of FARC, Raúl Reyes. Source: El Diario Exterior.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=13643>

Colombia's FARC would accept US lawmakers in talks – *Infobae, Argentina.*

The FARC said they have accepted an offer from U.S. lawmakers to witness negotiations to free 61 hostages, including three Americans that they have held for years in secret jungle camps. Seven Democratic members of the U.S. House of Representatives wrote a letter to Colombia this month offering to accompany any future negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, which has been fighting since the 1960s.

The Colombian government, which has also said it would welcome the participation of the U.S. lawmakers, wants to exchange 61 politicians and other high-profile hostages for an unspecified number of rebels in government prisons. But the two sides have yet to agree on terms for starting talks.

Among the hostages held by the 17,000-member FARC is **French-Colombian national Ingrid Betancourt**, taken during her 2002 presidential campaign, and **U.S. defense contractors Thomas Howes, Keith Stansell and Marc Gonsalves**, captured

during a drug-eradication mission in 2003. **The FARC wants Colombia to withdraw government troops from a rural area to negotiate the exchange.**

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/308096-100891-0-FARC-acceptan-mediadores-norteamericanos-canjes>

Bolivia: head of state energy firm replaced for the fourth time – *Correo, Perú.*

President **Evo Morales** has replaced the head of Bolivia's state petroleum company after only two months, citing errors in contracts with foreign energy companies that have delayed the sector's nationalization. **Manuel Morales Olivera**, president of Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales Bolivianos (YPFB), was replaced Friday by **Guillermo Aruquipa Copa**, the vice minister of Hydrocarbons Exploration. It's the fourth time Morales replaces the head of YPFB.

Morales Olivera, who has no relation to the president, had come **under fire** in recent weeks as numerous **errors were discovered in the nationalization contracts** Bolivia signed last fall with foreign companies. Morales Olivera was also **criticized for leading YPFB employees to a training seminar in Cuba** after pictures of the group enjoying tropical drinks and playing on the beach surfaced this week in the Bolivian media.

http://www.correoperu.com.pe/paginas_notas.php?nota_id=45088&seccion_notas=9

Petrobras asks Bolivia to ratify natural gas deals – *Reuters.*

Brazil's Petrobras asked the Bolivian Senate on Monday to ratify a law that amends mistakes made in contracts signed by foreign energy investors last year, arguing it is **incurring a loss in Bolivia**. Bolivia's government this month conceded there were a series of mistakes in deals foreign energy companies such as Petrobras, France's Total, and Spain's Repsol YPF, signed last year to comply with the nationalization of Bolivia's energy industry.

Under the nationalization by leftist President Evo Morales last May, **Petrobras was forced to pay 82 percent of its revenue to the Bolivian state. For the time being the Brazilian company does not plan to invest in exploration or exploitation of new fields in Bolivia.** The only investment the company is considering is a \$200 million overhaul of its San Antonio natural gas field to increase production capacity.

http://investing.reuters.co.uk/news/articleinvesting.aspx?type=oilRpt&storyID=2007-03-26T224244Z_01_N26386277_RTRIDST_0_BOLIVIA-ENERGY-PETROBRAS.XML

Bolivia's Morales may extend term in office – *Infobae, Argentina.*

Evo Morales could stay in power until 2018 under constitutional rules proposed on Friday by his supporters. The proposal will fuel concerns that Mr. Morales is bent on concentrating his power, emulating Hugo Chávez, the Venezuelan leader, his closest regional ally. The governing MAS party's representatives in an assembly that is **rewriting Bolivia's constitution** have proposed that the new document allow presidential re-election. The MAS confirmed that **Morales will be a candidate for the presidency in elections likely to take place next year, under new rules currently being discussed in a constitutional assembly.**



Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales. Source: Infobae.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/308224-100891-0-Evo-se-quiere-perpetuar-el-gobierno-el-2018>

Thousands of Bolivians trying to flee their country to go to Spain – *El Diario Exterior.*

Many people in Bolivia pack up and away they go to make some "tourism". Only in Spain it is said that **200 incoming Bolivians are detected per day.** They come from several regions of Bolivia, such as La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz, **trying to flee due to the political**

instability of Bolivia. That's the sad situation of Bolivia today. A year ago, Bolivians didn't need a visa to enter Spain but now rules have changed and people are trying to enter Spain before they are required to have a visa.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=13669>

Zapatista “Subcomandante Marcos” launches countrywide tour – *El Diario Exterior.*

Fourteen members of Mexico’s Zapatista rebel movement prepared to begin a nationwide tour Monday, following up on leader Subcomandante Marcos’ solo tour last year. The male and female ski-masked rebel "commanders" who are demanding greater Indian rights will depart from the colonial city of San Cristobal to meet with advocacy groups in each of Mexico’s 31 states. **“Marcos” has been praising Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia in each stop.** People that have joined the tour are women, indigenous peoples, students, workers, gay, lesbian and transgender people, the elderly, youth and the poor to **‘build a new non-electoral national grassroots movement’ “FROM BELOW AND FOR BELOW”** against neo-liberalism and for humanity.



“Subcomandante Marcos.” Source NYT.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=13664>

Cuba and Nebraska Sign Trade Deals – *Prensa Latina.*

Authorities from Cuba and the US State of Nebraska are due to sign two trade agreements in the agricultural sphere, to make viable the island’s purchase of grains and other foods. The two accords are due to be inked at the Havana’s Palco Hotel today, in the presence of Nebraska governor Dave Heineman, who arrived in Havana Monday along with 30 businesspeople from his State. In statements to press, Heineman termed very significant the two accords to be signed here with executives of the Cuban Food Importing Company ALIMPORT, to give a boost trade in this sector, as he previously did in 2005 and 2006. Due to the blockade, Cuba is obliged to pay in cash and in advance for all goods imported from the US. Members of the US delegation confirmed to Prensa Latina that prior trade contracts between Nebraska and Cuba hover around \$60 million for the purchase by the Caribbean country of beans and other cereals, turkey and pork.

<http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID={5F6F544D-16A3-4705-9BD0-217834636B2A}&language=EN>

Colombia accused of violating Ecuador sovereignty – *Correo, Perú.*

The government of Ecuador called for an immediate investigation by the Bi-National Frontier Commission of Colombia and Ecuador into an **alleged military incursion by Colombian armed forces into Ecuadorian territory** that left two dead. According to the families of the victims, those killed were civilians. However, **according to the Colombian government, the fallen were FARC guerrillas.** Colombian armed forces referred over the weekend to the killing “in combat” of two members of the FARC. **Reports of cross-border incursions by the Colombian military have caused disputes between the governments of Colombia and Ecuador.** The Ecuadorian government recently denounced Colombia’s resumption of aerial spraying of Glyphosate herbicide (also known as ‘Roundup’) on crops

of coca bushes along the frontier between the two nations, threatening to take international legal action. Colombia cooperates with the US in reducing the production of the coca plant that is the basis for the cocaine that ultimately comes to North America.

http://www.correoperu.com.pe/paginas_notas.php?nota_id=45085&seccion_notas=9

Para-scandal: Colombia army chief denies role in 2002 raid – *Correo, Perú.*

The head of Colombia's armed forces on Monday denied allegations that he collaborated with rightwing paramilitaries in a 2002 raid, amid a growing scandal threatening to undermine the government of president Alvaro Uribe. Colombia's army chief, General Mario Montoya, told the country's leading daily, El Tiempo, that his "conscience is clear" over allegations contained in evidence obtained by the US Central Intelligence Agency and published by the Los Angeles Times at the weekend. The intelligence information claims Mr. Montoya worked with paramilitaries to plan a crackdown against guerrillas in a slum area of Colombia's second city, Medellin, in which some 12 people died.

The so-called "para-gate" affair has already led to the resignation of Colombia's foreign minister and the arrest of eight pro-government lawmakers for supposed links with paramilitary militias. It has also led to the temporary arrest of the former head of Colombia's secret police, Jorge Noguera, who was released from jail last Friday. But this is the first time that such a high-ranking military official has been linked with paramilitary groups. The allegations were strongly denied by Mr. Montoya. The CIA emphasized that the information implicating **Mr. Montoya told reporters that the accusations published in the LA times were an "immense slur" and have caused damage to the Colombian people and the army's morale.**

http://www.correoperu.com.pe/paginas_notas.php?nota_id=45172&seccion_notas=9

Mexico's State Oil Company in Financial Trouble – *Voice of America.*

Mexico's state-owned oil company, Petróleos Mexicanos, better known as Pemex, celebrated its 69th birthday on March 18, amid **concerns that it is on the brink of insolvency and its production is falling.** As VOA's Greg Flakus reports from Houston, Mexico, still has plenty of oil, but internal politics prevent the investment needed to develop the resources. President Calderon has made clear that he, like Presidents Vicente Fox and Ernesto Zedillo before him, sees a need for energy reform. But nationalist politicians have blocked reform, claiming any change in the constitution that would even allow a slight opening to private investment.

<http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-03-27-voa7.cfm>

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