



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 – [Two thumbs down for Insulza and the OAS](#). By Nicole M. Ferrand*.

The **Organization of American States (OAS)** or, as it is known in the three other official languages (**OEA**), is an international organization, headquartered in Washington D.C. Its members are the thirty-five independent states of the Americas, including the United States, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. In the words of Article 1 of the OAS Charter, the goal of the member nations in creating the OAS was "to achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence."¹

The OAS has adopted resolutions related to various themes that are part of the inter-American agenda, such as the promotion and protection of human rights, social and economic development, hemispheric security, the fight against corruption, strengthening democracy, conflict resolution and attention to crises, among others.

The 37th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) was held in Panama from June 3-5, 2007.² The event focused on "Energy for Sustainable Development," in recognition of the fundamental importance of energy resources for the future of the countries in the region. Ethanol has been a hot topic in recent months and since many countries in Latin America produce sugar cane, the

¹ www.oas.org

² AG/DEC. 52 (XXXVII O/07) DECLARATION OF PANAMA: ENERGY FOR sustainable DEVELOPMENT (Adopted at the fourth plenary session, held on June 5, 2007)

promotion of this alternative fuel could have great impact on the development of the Americas. It could also be a way to become less dependent on oil especially from Venezuela.

But in light of recent events that have and are occurring in Venezuela against freedom of expression, the event in Panama presented the perfect opportunity to discuss the shutting down of the Venezuelan TV channel, RCTV. Surprisingly, the OAS and its members refrained from denouncing what happened with the TV channel, a decision which is incomprehensible and worrisome.

Andres Oppenheimer in his editorial “OAS Silence on Venezuela Censorship Scary” writes: **“The failure by most Latin American countries to speak out against Venezuela’s censorship of its oldest nationwide television network at the OAS meeting in Panama marked a serious setback for freedom of the press -- and democracy -- in the region.** In one of the most blatant displays of disdain for democratic freedoms, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Ecuador, not only failed to denounce Venezuela’s narcissist-Leninist President Hugo Chávez’s decision not to renew the license of the RCTV network, but openly applauded it. Nicaragua’s president, Daniel Ortega, even visited Caracas and personally congratulated Chávez for his decision to silence the network.”³

Oppenheimer continues: “Caribbean countries, which increasingly depend on Chávez’s oil subsidies, remained silent. What is more difficult to understand was the failure of Latin America’s biggest countries -- Mexico, Brazil and Argentina -- to mention the RCTV case in their speeches at the OAS meeting. Only two countries made a clear reference to the importance of freedom of expression: the United States and El Salvador.”⁴

Roger F. Noriega from the “American Enterprise Institute,” accurately pinpoints, **“When challenged in recent months to confront glaring violations of freedom of expression, separation of powers, and constitutional order, the OAS and its member states have done nothing...**If the ideal of inter-American democratic solidarity is buried under such indifference, it is not merely because Chávez wants it dead. It is because most of the others in the region did not agree that the collective defense of democracy is a principle worth saving. In Venezuela, Chávez is consolidating dictatorial control over the legislature, the courts, the electoral apparatus, and now, with his closure on May 27 of the last independent broadcast station, the media. He is even bullying his domestic political allies into joining his unitary political party. He has militarized politics and politicized the military, and once-self-respecting, nationalistic Venezuelan soldiers are now forced to return salutes by barking the *fidelista* slogan, **“Fatherland, socialism, or death.”** “Chávez’s anti-democratic campaign is not confined to his own country. **Treating the largesse of his oil-rich nation as a petty cash box, Chávez has inspired and supported a band of elected autocrats like Ecuador’s Rafael Correa and Bolivia’s Evo Morales.**”⁵

US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, proposed including the freedom of expression situation in Venezuela in the OAS agenda because of the RCTV case,

³ OAS silence on Venezuela censorship scary. Jun. 07, 2007. ANDRES OPPENHEIMER.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The End of Democratic Solidarity in the Americas? Roger F. Noriega from the “American Enterprise Institute.” June 14, 2007.

which Venezuela rejected point blank as an intervention in the country's internal affairs. But Rice's proposal was not included and Chávez celebrated that Washington was once again "defeated" in the OAS as was its attempt to coordinate an international condemnation of Venezuela. Secretary Rice told her OAS counterparts:

"In a democracy the citizens of a country should have the assurance that the policies of their government will be held up for criticism by a free and independent press without the interference of their government. The citizens of the United States have that assurance. I sincerely hope that the citizens of Venezuela will have that assurance as well."⁶

While Secretary Rice's comments reportedly were met with loud applause, the OAS's official silence was deafening. The gathering of regional diplomats did not produce a single resolution or communiqué committed to act on this blatant restriction of freedom of expression in Venezuela.⁷

Mr. Noriega makes an excellent point when he states: "Tenderhearted critics will always be appalled when a U.S. official makes public declarations that irritate Chávez or his cronies, but there is a vast difference between hurling personal insults, on the one hand, and expressing concern about where Chávez is taking Venezuela and invoking his obligation to respect representative democracy, on the other. **If we send muddled messages and appear unwilling to make value judgments about troubling events in the region, we make matters worse for ourselves and for our friends in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, and elsewhere in Latin America.**"⁸

"...Ironically, those U.S. Latinamericanists who are the most offended by such value judgments or by the slightest criticism of unfriendly leaders are the first to find fault with our friends. They have very little to say as Chávez perfects a dictatorship in Venezuela, but in recent weeks they have been quick to make harsh--even humiliating--public statements about Álvaro Uribe, a U.S. ally and president of Colombia. Back in Venezuela, university students have led intense protests challenging President Chávez's decision to silence Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV), the sole remaining broadcast network that was not a mouthpiece for his regime. This latest move is but one more step on the path toward dictatorship--with Chávez having undermined systematically the already weak democratic institutions of his country."⁹

In Noriega's words "Most governments in Latin America and the Caribbean are unwilling to intervene in the internal affairs of a sister state--and even less so if it means risking a bilateral confrontation with the volatile and wealthy Chávez. For this reason, the OAS can serve a critical role as an instrument for concerted regional inquiry and action. If the OAS secretary general is strong and enjoys the confidence and the backing of key countries, he can speak and act--albeit cautiously and respectfully--as a representative of the region to examine troubling events and make recommendations for a regional response."¹⁰

⁶ Quoted in Pablo Bachelet, "Rice Calls for OAS Action on Venezuela," Miami Herald, June 4, 2007.

⁷ Noriega Ibid.

⁸ Noriega Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Upon his election as secretary general in 2005, **Chilean José Miguel Insulza** pledged to make the OAS an effective instrument to deal with those elected leaders who do not govern democratically. But when member states failed to back these ideas in Panama, he apparently retreated.¹¹ Even worse, Insulza issued the following statement: “We should wonder why a number of democratic countries where freedom of expression prevails decided not to take a stance on this issue”. “I believe the reason is that they believed this is an administrative measure a member State has taken which does not endanger its democracy”. **Insulza claimed that, under OAS, certain interventions are allowed “only when there is a serious threat of rupture of democracy.”** However, in his view **democracy in Venezuela is not threatened, he added.**¹²



Chilean José Miguel Insulza. Source: El Nuevo Diario.

Andres Oppenheimer adds: “When diplomats were asked (in Panama) about RCTV, they merely stated that they could not make an explicit reference to the case at the OAS meeting because Venezuela -- as a sovereign country -- has the legal right not to renew television licenses. In addition, they said the OAS meeting was to discuss alternative energy sources, and that Ms. Rice’s speech requesting an OAS mission to Venezuela to look into the RCTV case is something that Washington must now present officially in writing, so it can be discussed at the OAS’ regular sessions at the group’s headquarters in Washington.”¹³

Oppenheimer differs by stating “these arguments are sounding pretty weak. First, Chávez's decision not to renew RCTV’s license was an openly political move: **Chávez himself announced five months before RCTV’s May 27 shutdown that he would not renew the network’s license because of its news coverage during a 2002 coup attempt. Most importantly, Chávez shut down RCTV -- which had been on the air for 53 years -- without calling for a public hearing. Chavez simply took over the network and turned it into another pro-government mouthpiece,** in what was an effective government takeover of a private network. Now, Chávez controls most nationwide television networks, and the ones that remain in private hands -- except for Globovisión, which is on cable and doesn’t have a nationwide reach -- are self-censoring their news. Venezuela’s television has become a one-man show.”¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Chavez thanks OAS for not intervening in the RCTV case. June 17, 2007. MercoPress, Uruguay.

¹³ OPPENHEIMER Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

“What could Latin America’s democracies have done? **Under OAS rules, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and other countries could have perfectly well expressed their alarm over Venezuela’s assault on freedom of the press, citing the group’s 2001 Democratic Charter.** In its Article 4, it says that “freedom of expression and of the press” are “fundamental components” of the regional treaty. In the end, the OAS meeting adopted a wishy-washy resolution in support of freedom of the press, but without mentioning either Venezuela or the RCTV issue by name. Worse, **the OAS meeting appointed a Venezuelan government nominee as one of the seven members of the OAS Human Rights Commission.**¹⁵

The OAS and Mr. Insulza have made a terrible mistake. In its Resolution N° 1932 titled **“ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION: STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY”** which was adopted at the fourth plenary session, held on June 10, 2003 states: THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY establishes that the right to freedom of thought and expression includes freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas, regardless of frontiers and through any medium.¹⁶

If the OAS doesn’t honor its resolutions, it risks losing its credibility. With that in mind, how can it dismiss Chávez’s grotesque censorship of an independent media outlet? This decision sets a terrible precedent suggesting to leaders from countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua who are now threatening the free press in their respective countries that this may be an opportunity to carry out their threats effectively with the guarantee that no one will do anything about it.

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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 to propound RCTV issue in Mercosur parliament – Infobae, Argentina.](#)

Parlasur, the Parliament of the Common Market of the South (Mercosur), is meeting Monday in Montevideo, where lawmakers are expected to propose a debate on the cessation of broadcasts of Caracas-based private television station RCTV, but Venezuelan representatives told AFP they would reject any "meddling" in this issue. Parlasur was inaugurated last May 7 in Montevideo, and comprises 90 deputies from Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela, and Monday it is holding its first work session. During the session, "Brazil is addressing the issue of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez' statements on the RCTV case," said Uruguayan socialist parliamentarian Roberto Conde. "This could be a more comprehensive political discussion than just the RCTV case. We will see," he told reporters. Venezuelan pro-government deputy Alfredo Murga told AFP

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/ga03/agres_1932.htm

that in the event that "this issue can be proposed for discussion or not, we have always said we are willing to talk about the role of major news media in our societies, but regarding the particular issue of non-renewal of RCTV license, this is a matter of domestic affairs." "Any attempt at discussing this would be an intervention in Venezuelan domestic affairs, which Venezuela is not accepting in any way, just like we did not accept it at the Organization of American States. We are going to reject this issue in all scenarios." Murga said that RCTV "was not shut down, but its license was not renewed, and that is different from the legal and political standpoints."

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/323419-100891-0-El-Parlamento-del-Mercosur-analiza-censura-Chavez>

RCTV case not an item in Mercosur agenda according to Paraguay – *El Universal, Venezuela.*

The case of private TV channel Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV) does not form part of the Mercosur agenda for the 37th summit starting Friday in Asunción, said Wednesday Paraguayan Minister of Foreign Affairs Rubén Ramírez. Ramírez made the remarks during a press conference to open the journalists' hall that will be operating during the event. The chair of the trade bloc will go from Paraguay to Uruguay. In addition to these countries, Mercosur encompasses Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela, the latter is applying for full membership. Non-renewal by the Venezuelan government of a broadcasting license for the TV network resulted in clashes between Venezuela and Brazil following the comments made by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. In this regard, Ramírez claimed that his country had issued an opinion already, Efe quoted. "It is an internal affair of the Venezuelan government. We are very respectful. Paraguay does not make any unilateral description on this matter," Ramírez said.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2007/06/27/en_pol_art_rctv-case-not-an-ite_27A891343.shtml

Brazil-Venezuela dispute marks Mercosur summit without Chávez – *M&C*

Amid a muffled dispute with Brazil, outspoken President Chavez has decided to skip the summit of the Mercosur regional trade alliance set to take place Thursday and Friday in Asuncion, Paraguay. Chavez will instead travel to Russia, leaving what he recently pejoratively called 'the old Mercosur' led by Brazilian President Lula da Silva to engage in debate. Relations between Venezuela and Brazil are going through a tough patch. Venezuela joined the South American trade bloc only last year, with full membership still pending the parliamentary approval of member countries Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

http://news.monstersandcritics.com/americas/news/article_1322864.php/PREVIEW_Brazil-Venezuela_dispute_marks_Mercosur_summit_without_Chavez

Work to resume on Brazil nuclear reactor – *El Diario Exterior, Madrid.*

Brazil's national energy council has recommended restarting a long-stalled and controversial project to build the country's third nuclear reactor. Brazil currently has two nuclear energy plants, located at Angra dos Reis some 150km (100 miles) from Rio de Janeiro. Work on the third stopped in the 1980s over security fears and lack of funds. **The proposal must be approved by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who supports nuclear power as a solution for Brazil's energy problems.** Brazil's two nuclear plants, Angra 1 and Angra 2, which have an installed capacity of about 2,000 megawatts, are situated near the coastal resort area of Angra dos Reis between Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Angra 3, located in the same region, would increase capacity to 3,000 megawatts. Brazil, which is heavily dependent on hydro-electricity, could face energy shortages in a couple of years if generating capacity is not increased, analysts say. A severe drought in 2001 led the authorities to introduce energy rationing. Angra 3 would require an investment of about \$3.7bn (£1.85bn) with construction due to be completed by 2013, Mr. Hubner said.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=15073>

Chávez weapons shopping spree (Iran, Russia and Belarus)– *Infobae, Argentina.*

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez will travel to Iran, Russia and Belarus in order to buy arms including submarines and missiles. The leader will depart on Tuesday for his week long tour, predicting his trip to Moscow, Minsk and Tehran was sure to bother his critics in the US. Chavez will begin building relations with each of the regimes in a bid to step up his country's line of defense. It's reported the Venezuelan President is looking to buy a number of submarines from Russia and possibly an air defense system from Belarus. During the trip, Chavez says he hopes to put the "finishing touches" on an agreement to walk away with an integrated air defense system, equipped with a range of 200-300-kilometres. In 2006, Chavez signed contracts with Russia to buy more than 50 Mi-24 armored helicopter gun ships, Sukhoi 30 fighter planes and up to 100,000 Kalashnikov rifles. Last week, Chavez addressed up to 15,000 young members of his new party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, saying the international community believed the trip to Russia would complicate US-Russian relations.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/323849-100556-0-Las-oscuras-intenciones-Chávez-y-su-armamento>



Hugo Chávez. Source: AFP.

Exxon, ConocoPhillips Say No to Chavez – *Forbes.*

Exxon Mobil Corp. and ConocoPhillips refused to sign deals Tuesday to keep pumping heavy oil under tougher terms in Venezuela's Orinoco River basin, signaling their departure from one of the world's largest oil deposits. Analysts said the move, however, won't have a major effect on supplies or lead to higher prices at U.S. pumps because production by the two companies will shift to other producers who agreed to the pacts. Four major oil companies - U.S.-based Chevron Corp., BP PLC, France's Total SA and Norway's Statoil ASA - signed deals to accept minority shares in the oil projects under new terms set by President Hugo Chavez's government. "Exxon Mobil is disappointed that we have been unable to reach an agreement on the terms," the Irving, Texas-based company said in a statement. "However, we continue discussions with the Venezuelan government on a way forward." Elogio Del Pino, a director of the state oil company, said Houston-based ConocoPhillips, the third largest U.S. oil company, is not leaving the country completely and will maintain a 50-percent share in the Deltana Platform natural gas project. Officials said Exxon Mobil, the world's largest publicly-traded oil company, will have no remaining oil interests in the South American country.

<http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2007/06/26/ap3859211.html>

Venezuela's Chavez seen wanting office "for life" – *The Washington Post.*

Insecurity, "malignant narcissism" and the need for adulation are driving Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's confrontation with the United States, according to a new psychological profile. Eventually, these personality traits are likely to compel Chavez to declare himself Venezuela's president for life, said Dr. Jerrold Post, who has just

completed the profile for the U.S. Air Force. Chavez won elections for a third term last December. Since then he has stepped up his anti-American rhetoric, vowed to accelerate a march towards "21st Century socialism" and suggested that he intends to stay in power until 2021 -- a decade beyond his present term. But Post -- who profiled foreign leaders in a 21-year career at the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and now is the director of the Political Psychology Program at George Washington University -- doubts that Chavez plans to step down even then. "He views himself as a savior, as the very embodiment of Venezuela," Post said in an interview. "He has been acting increasingly messianic and so he is likely to either get the constitution rewritten to allow for additional terms or eventually declare himself president-for-life." Post portrays Chavez as "a masterful political gamesman" who knows that his popularity largely rests on being seen as a strong leader who takes on the United States, the Venezuelan elite and a host of other perceived enemies -- often with public insults that are rarely used by other leaders. "To keep his followers engaged, he must continue outrageous and inflammatory attacks," Post said. Even Chavez's most determined opponents concede that he is a gifted orator and has a rare ability to mesmerize audiences. In the language of political psychology, this is a "charismatic leader-follower relationship."

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/26/AR2007062601909_pf.html

Colombian Navy Captures top FARC member – *Infobae, Argentina.*

The navy has captured a suspect of masterminding a wave of recent bombings that killed three people and wounded dozens in Colombia's most violent city, the government said Wednesday. Edwin Alexander Torres, wanted for allegedly running urban militias for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, in the port city of Buenaventura, was arrested Tuesday night, President Alvaro Uribe's office said in a statement.

<http://www.infobae.com/notas/nota.php?Idx=323927&IdxSeccion=100>

Bolivia Govt. Takes Over Two Oil Refineries – *El Diario Exterior, Madrid.*

Bolivia has reclaimed two oil refineries from the Brazilian state-owned energy company, Petrobras, following a \$112m buy-back deal as part of President Evo Morales' wider energy nationalization program. The two refineries together process about 40,000 barrels of crude oil a day. President Morales said he would ask the popular assembly to include in the constitution a ban on future privatization of state companies. The head of the state energy company, YPFB, said Bolivia had taken back "what we never should have lost," thus giving the state more control and a larger slice of profits. President Morales has pledged to reduce poverty by increasing state revenues from the energy sector, which was privatized in the 1990s. The refineries, in the eastern city of Santa Cruz and central Cochabamba, were sold to Petrobras for \$104m during that period.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=15079>

Morales to visit Iran, Russia seeking investment in Bolivian gas – *IHT.*

President Evo Morales plans to visit Iran and Russia to drum up investment in the Bolivia's natural gas industry, the government said Monday. Tentatively scheduled for August, the trip could also include stops in Libya, Angola, and Qatar, according to Hydrocarbons Minister Carlos Villegas. The tour will seek "strategic partnerships between (state energy company) Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales Bolivianos and the state petroleum companies of these gas-producing nations," Villegas said. Bolivia has the second largest natural gas reserves in South America after Venezuela but depends heavily on foreign investment to drive the industry. Morales' oil and gas nationalization last year allowed foreign energy companies to remain in Bolivia after agreeing to give a higher share of their revenues to the government and

turn over majority control of their Bolivian operations to the state. But industry analysts fear the nationalization may have frightened off future foreign investment.



Evo Morales. Source: Forbes.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/06/26/business/LA-FIN-Bolivia-Iran-Russia-Morales-tour.php>

Ortega Balances Venezuelan Aid, IMF – *Resource Center of the Americas.*

Having played the revolutionary card in exchange for a generous social-aid package from the socialist government of Venezuela, the administrations of Daniel Ortega put on its suit and tie this week and sat down with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to begin negotiating an entirely different type of economic package. The meeting with the IMF, which started April 30 in Managua, will test the Sandinista government's ability to balance its revolutionary promises with macroeconomic stability. Though Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has urged his Nicaraguan counterpart to dump the IMF – echoing sentiments that Ortega had expressed in past years as opposition leader – as President, Ortega has displayed restraint and pragmatism in dealing with the monetary fund. Ortega has said that he would like to free Nicaragua from the IMF within the next five years, but acknowledges that it will be a gradual process and that he can't afford to just throw them out overnight. Instead, the Ortega administration is reportedly developing a new strategy to negotiate with the IMF on more equal terms, without giving in to the fund's every demand for structural readjustment, as the previous administration of President Enrique Bolaños was criticized for doing. Nicaragua's failure to advance in talks with the IMF could put some \$528 million in international aid at risk. A day before returning to Nicaragua to open talks with the IMF this week, Ortega was in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, participating in a weekend summit called by Chávez to discuss the future of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), an alternative trade and development agreement aimed to counter U.S. commercial influence in the region. The ALBA Summit, according to EFE wire services, concluded April 29 with the approval of important social, political and economic projects that emphasize Venezuela's commitment to cover the energy needs of its partners in ALBA, as well as offer other assistance for health and education. Chávez said that ALBA members and Haiti will have to pay only 50% of their energy bills within 90 days and will have the other half financed by Caracas, which will promote social projects in the those nations. Though Ortega claims that ALBA is the only serious alternative to helping countries out of poverty, his administration insists that it will be able to balance its relations with Chávez's leftist influence and the United States and other institutions on the right. The Sandinista government has insisted that opening new doors to economic and political opportunity doesn't mean closing old ones. The administration's ability to negotiate seriously with the IMF, especially following on the heels of last weekend's revolutionary meeting in Venezuela, will put its economic- and political-diversification aspirations to the test.



Hugo Chavez and Daniel Ortega. Source: Otraxpression.

http://www.americas.org/item_31837

Ortega Hits Approval Low in Nicaragua – *Angus Reid.*

Only about a quarter of people in Nicaragua are content with Daniel Ortega's performance, according to a poll by CID-Gallup published in *La Prensa*. 26% of respondents say the president's tenure has been good or very good, while 36 per cent think it has been bad or very bad. On Jun. 24, Ortega referred to recent energy blackouts happening across the Central American country due to an electricity shortage, and vowed to put an end to the "energy bankruptcy" that has affected Nicaragua. The president declared: "We have come to take this country out of the energy situation." Ortega announced that other nations, like Iran, would help build new energy plants to address the issue.

<http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/index.cfm/fuseaction/viewItem/itemID/16266>

Brazil's Lula popularity still high – *Reuters.*

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's popularity rose six months into his second term despite growing violence in cities and a series of corruption scandals in national politics, an opinion poll showed on Tuesday. Brazilians were pleased with the country's strong economic performance, rising wages and social welfare programs, according to a Sensus opinion poll published by the National Transport Confederation. Lula's personal approval rating rose to 64%, its highest rate since February 2005, from 63.7% in April. Approval of Lula rose despite a welter of corruption allegations against friends and allies. The energy minister quit in May over a kickback scandal and the head of the senate is defending himself against accusations he took bribes.



Condoleezza Rice with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. Source: US State Department.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/bondsNews/idUSN2634763020070626>

Argentina: Kirchner's black month – *El Diario Exterior, Madrid.*

Argentine President Nestor Kirchner's losses in two regional elections, including Buenos Aires city, are bolstering the country's fractured opposition four months before the presidential election. Kirchner's hand-picked candidate for mayor of Buenos Aires, Education Minister Daniel Filmus, was routed yesterday by Congressman Mauricio Macri, president of the Boca Juniors soccer club. In Tierra del Fuego, the country's southernmost province, incumbent governor and Kirchner ally Hugo Cocco lost to opposition ARI party candidate Fabiana Rios. Kirchner, eligible for re-election in October, hasn't said whether he or his wife, Senator Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, 54, will

run in October's national vote. Elisa Carrio, leader of the opposition ARI party and a possible presidential candidate, said the defeats show Kirchner's popularity is dwindling.
<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=15062>

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