



The Americas Report

From the Menges Hemispheric Security Project

Center for Security Policy

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Argentina



Bolivia



Brazil



Canada



Chile



Colombia



Costa Rica



Cuba



Dominican Republic



Ecuador



El Salvador



Guatemala



Haiti



Honduras



Mexico

*The Americas Report is the continuation of the work of **Dr. Constantine C. Menges'** original Americas Report. For almost two years that report chronicled the efforts of the Castro-Chavez axis and their allies in their efforts to undermine the new spirit of democracy and freedom in Latin America, in favor of autocratic forms of regimes throughout the Western Hemisphere. The report also monitors events in the area as they effect regional and US security in this era characterized by the emergence of terrorist groups of global reach seeking international influence. The current Americas Report and the Menges Hemispheric Security Project of which it is a part will continue to support genuine democracy, free trade and the fostering of strong inter-American relationships as well as exposing growing tyrannies in the area.*

Nancy Menges

Editor in Chief - "Americas Report"

Nicole M. Ferrand

Editor - "Americas Report"

For any questions, comments, or those interested in receiving this report or seeking to have their email removed from our list please contact **Nicole Ferrand** at: themengesproject@centerforsecuritypolicy.org or themengesproject@gmail.com. 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 – Implications of the recent Change in Cuban Leadership

Cuban Excerpt from the Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign affairs.

Sub-committee on the western hemisphere

United House of Representatives

Submitted by: Nancy Menges*, Luis Fleischman*, and Nicole Ferrand.*

The Americas Report, Center for Security Policy



Nicaragua



Panama



Paraguay



Peru



The United States



Uruguay



Venezuela

Due to his illness, Fidel Castro appointed his brother, Raul Castro acting president of Cuba in July, 2006. On February 24, 2008, Cuba's highest governing body, The Council of State, made this appointment permanent. Though characterized as a better and more pragmatic manager, Raul, who has been Defense Minister for the past forty nine years, has been a life long communist and remains ideologically close to his brother. Therefore, many believe that though

there may be some minor changes that he will not deviate significantly from the last almost half century of Castro rule. From his hospital bed, Fidel remains an important presence and continues in his post as the head of the Cuban Communist Party.



Fidel and Raul Castro. Source: AP.

Since becoming president, Raul has promised “structural changes” and said “we have to make our government’s management more efficient”. According to recent news reports, he has acknowledged that the average Cuban salary of twelve to seventeen dollars a month is too little to live on. **While Raul talks of increasing salaries and lessening government control over the economy, his actions have only been reflected in minor changes in policy.** For example, the Cuban government has decentralized the production and distribution of milk and has ordered new buses from China to ease major transportation problems. **However, in terms of how the majority of the Cuban population still lives, very little has changed.** Food continues to be rationed by neighborhood block committees, goods such as eggs and chicken are in short supply, the monthly ration reportedly only lasts for one or two weeks, housing is limited and overcrowded, and in spite of people’s efforts to get ahead, the government taxes income earned from private initiatives or refuses to grant licenses to “businesses on the side”.

What is interesting is that after the fall of the Soviet Union and the halt in their economic support, Cuba’s economy (according to a February 23, 2008 report in the Economist) shrank by 35 percent. As a result, **Castro declared a “special period” and opened the economy to tourism, foreign investment in certain sectors,** farmers markets, small privately owned businesses, and legalized the use of the dollar which opened the way to hard currency via remittances from one million plus Cuban Americans.¹ **This special period lasted from 1989 to 1996 and was reversed even though the economy was beginning to stabilize. The reasons why it was reversed perhaps have implications for how the current leadership may react. Apparently, the reforms were stopped because Castro believed that some people in society were benefiting more than others and that “it was a threat to the regime as it undermined party control”.**² In terms of current financial support, Cuba now relies on Chinese credit and three to four

¹ The Economist, Feb 23, 2008. The Commandante’s Last Move.

² The Economist, Feb 23, 2008. The Commandante's Last Move

billion dollars worth of free oil from Hugo Chavez as well as an additional one and a half billion dollars of additional aid from the Venezuelan president.

While there has been a change in leadership in Cuba, there has not been a transition to any significant change in ideology, in governance, in the abysmal living conditions of most Cubans, nor in the area of human freedoms. As reported by various human rights organizations, there are approximately two hundred political prisoners incarcerated in Cuban jails. It is also important to keep in mind that the Castro brothers remain hostile to American values and principles, especially democratic governance, capitalism and free markets and that they have spent their entire adult lives fighting against our way of life. In addition, it was not that long ago that Castro met with Ahmendinejad of Iran and proclaimed, **“Together, we will bring the U.S. to its knees”**.

The Embargo

The United States embargo against Cuba is an economic, commercial and financial instrument enacted on February 7, 1962 after Cuba expropriated the properties of U.S. citizens and corporations. The embargo was tightened in 1963 after the Cuban Missile Crisis and was reinforced in October 1992 by the Cuban Democracy Act and in 1996 by the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity Act (known as the Helms-Burton Act). This latter measure applies to foreign companies trading with Cuba and is meant to penalize those companies that allegedly traffic in property formerly owned by US citizens but expropriated by Cuba after the revolution. In October 2000, the embargo was further altered by the Trade Sanctions, Reform and Export Enhancement Act that relaxed the sale of agricultural goods and medicines to Cuba for humanitarian reasons.

Contrary to critics' claims, **lifting of the embargo and the travel ban without meaningful changes in Cuba will have several negative repercussions.** First, it will send a poor message about U.S. toleration both of Cuba's patterns of unsavory behavior and its totalitarian system. Second, a cessation of the embargo will strengthen state enterprises since most Cuban businesses are run by the state and since the Cuban government retains a partnership interest in all foreign investment. Third, it will lead to greater domestic repression and control because the leadership fears the “subversive” effects of U.S. influence upon the Cuban people. A transition to democracy on the island will thus be delayed.

The economic impact of tourism, while providing the Castro government with much needed dollars, would be limited. **Dollars will flow in small quantities to the Cuban poor;** state and foreign enterprises will benefit most. We have to keep in mind that no foreign trade that is independent from the state is permitted in Cuba and workers are paid below comparable wages. Cuban leaders, in any event, would allow only enough commerce to maintain their regime.

Investments will be directed and approved by the Cuban government. The Cuban government is unlikely to create a level plain field for American companies, allowing some to invest while discriminating capriciously against others. It is illegal for foreign companies to hire or fire Cuban workers directly and hiring is done by the Ministry of Labor. Foreign companies must pay the wages owed to their employees directly to the Cuban government in

hard currency. The Cuban government then pays out to the Cuban workers in Cuban pesos, which are worth 1/20 of a U.S. dollar, pocketing 90 percent of every dollar it receives.³

The lifting of the embargo would allow the Castro's to borrow from international organizations: such as the IMF, the World Bank, etc. Since Cuba owes billions of dollars to the former Soviet Union, to the Club of Paris, and to others, and has refused in the past to acknowledge or pay these debts, new loans will be wasted by Castro's inefficient and wasteful system, and will be uncollectible. **The reason Castro has been unable to pay back loans is not because of the U.S. embargo, but because his economic system stifles productivity and he continues to spend on the military, on adventures abroad, and on supporting a bankrupt welfare system on the island.**⁴

Opponents to the embargo cite US trade with China as a reason for ending the Cuban embargo; but this example merely illustrates that American policy has been inconsistent. **Trade with China, if it shows anything, demonstrates that there is little correlation between commerce and political liberalization,** at least over the short term. After all, the Chinese Communist Party has, in the last two decades, managed to increase both trade and political repression. So far, **commerce has strengthened the hands of communists in China.**⁵

The embargo should only be lifted when Cuba changes its current system and develops a democratic society. U.S. policy towards Cuba is not anachronistic but is rather aimed at the legitimate goal of a free Cuba; the lifting of the embargo now will be an important psychological victory for Castro and would be interpreted as a defeat for U.S. policy. There is also no indication that negotiation and incentives can influence Cuba, which has ignored such "carrot and stick" approaches in the past. **Without major internal reforms in Cuba, the Castro government – not the Cuban people – will be the main beneficiary of the lifting of the embargo,** since it will use this newly-acquired wealth to strengthen its hold on the Cuban people, to rebuild its military apparatus, and to engage again in supporting anti-American terrorist and violent groups in Latin America and elsewhere.⁶

The reason for Cuba's economic suffering is a Marxist system that discourages incentives. As in Eastern Europe under Communism, the failed Communist system is the cause of the economic suffering of the Cubans, not the U.S. embargo.⁷

The embargo was never established to overthrow the Castro government. The embargo was established to punish the Castro government for the confiscation of American properties and to pressure it to slow down its move into the Communist camp. The embargo has been maintained to show that Marxist-Leninism does not work as an economic or political system and to use it as a tool to extract human rights, economic and political concessions from the current or future Cuban government.

³ Cuban Communism. By Irving Louis Horowitz, Jaime Suchlicki.

⁴ What lifting embargo on Cuba would really mean. By Georgie Ann Geyer. July 20, 2000.

⁵ In Defense of the Cuban Embargo. Gordon G. Chang. February 20, 2008.

⁶ In Defense of the Cuban Embargo. Gordon G. Chang. February 20, 2008.

⁷ Why the Cuban Trade Embargo Should Be Maintained. November 10, 1994. The Heritage Foundation.

Hugo Chavez plays a crucial role in providing life-oxygen to the Cuban regime. In this time of history it is Hugo Chavez who represents the main threat to regional stability and geo-political security in the western hemisphere and perhaps beyond.

***Nancy Menges, Editor in Chief of the Americas Report.** *Mrs. Menges, the co-founder of the Menges Hemispheric Security Project, is in charge of the weekly edition of CSP's Americas Report. Fluent in Spanish, she holds a degree in International Relations from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has studied at the University of the Americas in Mexico City. Her postgraduate degree has been earned from the University of Maryland. She has testified in Congress and submitted CSP's statement regarding US-Colombian relations to the House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere.*

***Dr. Luis Fleischman** *is an advisor to the Menges Hemispheric Security Project at the Center for Security Policy in Washington DC. He is also an adjunct professor of Political Science and Sociology at Wilkes Honor College at Florida Atlantic University.*

***Nicole M. Ferrand** *is a research analyst and editor of "The Americas Report" of the Menges Hemispheric Security Project at the Center for Security Policy in Washington DC. (www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org). She is a graduate of Columbia University in Economics and Political Science with a background in Law from Peruvian University, UNIFE and in Corporate Finance from Georgetown University.*

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

[No. 2 FARC Commander Reyes Killed in Gunfight – FOX News.](#)

Security forces killed the No. 2 commander of Colombia's main guerrilla group in combat Saturday, dealing what the government called the biggest blow to the leftist force since its formation. Raul Reyes, who became the public face of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia as the group's spokesman, died in fighting just across the border in neighboring Ecuador, Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos told a news conference. "This is the strongest blow dealt to the terrorist group to date," Santos said. A total of 17 rebels and one soldier died in the operation, which involved Colombia's army, police and air force. Among the rebel dead was a senior FARC member and songwriter known as "Julian Conrado." A statement from the presidential palace said President Uribe monitored the operation throughout the night. Uribe spoke to Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa after the operation concluded. Correa, who has criticized cross-border incursions by Colombia's military in the past, confirmed that **combat took place on Ecuadorian soil.** He interrupted a political meeting in Ecuador to state "the situation needs to be clarified," according to RCN TV in Colombia. Reyes, who was wanted for extradition by the United States on drug-trafficking charges, was a Marxist union leader at a Nestle dairy plant in Caqueta province before going underground and joining the FARC decades ago. The 59-year-old Reyes, whose real name was Luis Edgar Devia Silva, was considered a contender to take over the rebel group, known as the FARC. It wasn't immediately clear how Reyes' death would affect efforts to negotiate the release of rebel-held hostages, including French-Colombian president candidate Ingrid Betancourt and three U.S. defense contractors.



No. 2 FARC Commander Reyes. Source: AP.

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,334288,00.html>

BARACK OBAMA MENTIONED IN SEIZED FARC DOCUMENTS – *El Universal*.

Was a Slain FARC Leader Meeting ‘Gringos’ About Obama? The letter found is reportedly from Reyes to “members of the FARC Secretariat.” The link is to an English-language version of *El Universal*, a major Venezuelan newspaper based in Caracas. **Excerpt:** “The gringos called for a meeting with the minister to ask him to tell us they are interested in talking about several topics. They claim they new president in their country will be Obama and that these people are interested in their fellow citizens. **Obama will support neither Plan Colombia nor the signature of the Free Trade Agreement. In this regard, we replied we are interested in relations with the governments that are on equal grounds and that in the case of the United States, a public statement voicing their interest in talking to the FARC is needed, given their eternal war against us.”** **Link to letter:** http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/03/en_int_art_memorandum-found-in_03A1403679.shtml



Barack Obama mentioned in FARC memorandum. Source: Cristianos.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/03/en_int_art_memorandum-found-in_03A1403679.shtml

Summary of meeting with President Correa's Envoy in FARC laptop – *El Universal*.

a) He asked for a personal meeting in Quito with the Secretariat. He offered assurances and transportation from the border to the meeting place. b) He expects us to send back a reply as soon as possible, including the meeting date. c) He asked whether we would like to make this with military support or with support of his minister of state security. d) He wants to talk to the FARC about the humanitarian agreement, the border policies, the political solution, Ingrid, and Chávez's role. He wants to establish communications with us over the bilateral border. e) He wants to explain the purposes of Plan Ecuador, through which he intends to offset the harmful effects of Plan Colombia and which is to be implemented over the border. f) For the purposes of Plan Ecuador, they are asking us for courses on mass organization for people living in the border, which the government would later designate to coordinate work in the border. The advantage in this is the fact that these people are part of the Clandestine Army or in the Bilateral Committee

oriented by Front 18. g) He insisted he is interesting in cooperating with the swap of prisoners, for which he is calling for the release of Moncayo's son or any other prisoner. Regarding their invitation, we thanked for it and explained to them that such decisions have to be made by the Secretariat, and that this requires some time. **We made it clear that we are interested in making a contribution to the goal of coming closer in the border, which is consistent with the policies we exposed in the Bolivarian platform, the manifesto and other documents issued by the Secretariat.** Full letter: http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/03/en_int_art_memorandum-found-in_03A1403679.shtml



Rafael Correa also in FARC's leader laptop. Source: Esmas.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/03/en_int_art_memorandum-found-in_03A1403679.shtml

[Chávez's call to Reyes revealed location of FARC camp – El Universal.](#)

A phone call Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez allegedly made to rebel leader Raúl Reyes revealed the location of the FARC leader, according to Colombian intelligence reports radio station Radio Cadena Nacional (RCN) disclosed on Wednesday. The phone call was made last Wednesday, February 27, the day when the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) delivered four former Colombian lawmakers - Gloria Polanco, Luis Eladio Pérez, Orlando Beltrán, and Jorge Eduardo Gechem- to Chávez's government after almost seven years in captivity, Efe reported. "Chávez was thrilled by the release of the hostages, and called (Luis Edgar Devia, alias Raúl) Reyes to tell him that everything went well," said RCN, quoting "senior (Colombian) military sources." Intelligence agencies detected the call and uncovered that Reyes was in Colombia, near the border with Ecuador. He crossed the border and "then the raid was launched" late February 29 and early March 1, when the FARC leader and other 20 rebel troops were killed. Reyes died in a bomb attack Colombian troops launched against his rebel camp in Ecuadorian territory. The incident ignited a serious diplomatic crisis between the two countries, as Quito severed ties with Bogotá. Quoting the same intelligence source, **RCN reported that the top leader and founder of the FARC, Pedro Antonio Marín, also known as Manuel Marulanda Vélez and Tirofijo, "is taking shelter in Venezuela."** RCN added that the Colombian intelligence services "found that Tirofijo is ill" and "is taking shelter in a ranch in Venezuela located not very close to the border, but to the other side of the border with the Colombian department of Norte de Santander." According to RCN's intelligence source, "Chávez ordered military battalions to move to the border with Colombia to protect Tirofijo, to prevent him from being done in the Venezuelan territory the same thing Reyes was done in Ecuador."

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/05/en_colcd_art_alleged-chavez-cal_05A1410439.shtml

[Colombia discloses documents linking Chávez to the FARC – El Universal.](#)

Colombia Monday unveiled documents seized from guerrilla leader Raúl Reyes, who was killed last Saturday by the Colombian Army, which show an alliance, old contacts and even financial aid between the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. The documents were disclosed by General Oscar Naranjo, head of the Colombian National Police, in the Colombian government

palace during a news conference. The records include a letter from Luis Devia, alias Raúl Reyes, found in his computer. The letter stresses Chávez's gratefulness for some USD 50,000 the FARC gave him when he was in jail in 1992, after his failed coup d'etat, AP reported. According to Naranjo, the documents included a letter dated last February from Commander Luciano Marín, alias Iván Márquez, a member of FARC Secretariat, to other colleagues. In the letter, Márquez talks about **“Venezuela's financing to the FARC at USD 300 million.”**



Iván Márquez, FARC representative; Hugo Chávez and Piedad Córdoba, Colombian Senator. Source: Tribuna Latina.

[HTTP://ENGLISH.ELUNIVERSAL.COM/2008/03/03/EN_INT_ART_COLOMBIA-DISCLOSES-D_03A1403879.SHTML](http://ENGLISH.ELUNIVERSAL.COM/2008/03/03/EN_INT_ART_COLOMBIA-DISCLOSES-D_03A1403879.SHTML)

Colombia Worried FARC Seek Uranium – Univision.

Colombia is worried about a document on the laptop of a slain rebel leader indicating the guerrillas were trying to obtain uranium, but has no evidence they intended to use it as a weapon, the vice president said Wednesday. Francisco Santos told The Associated Press that despite fears he expressed to the world disarmament agency in Geneva on Tuesday, his government doesn't have any indication that the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia are seeking to build a radioactive dirty bomb. Santos told the 65-member Conference on Disarmament on Tuesday that his government is alarmed because uranium is "the primary basis for generating dirty weapons of mass destruction and terrorism." A day later, he was backing off slightly. "What I said was, "Take note. **To put the FARC and the word uranium in the same sentence is to make anyone's hair stand up,**" Santos said in a telephone interview from Brussels, Belgium. **"Don't take it lightly."**

<http://www.univision.com/contentroot/wirefeeds/50noticias/7424218.html>

Seized Laptop Shows Chavez's - Correa FARC Ties – ABC News.

Files in a laptop computer seized from the wreckage of a Colombian rebel camp in Ecuador offer new insights into Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's desire to undermine Colombia's U.S.-allied government. The computer files suggest Chavez has been in league with the rebels for more than a decade. While Chavez is not one of the correspondents, his sentiments are conveyed in numerous messages exchanged by the rebels. Venezuela contends the texts are lies and fabrications. If so, they are expertly done. Not only do they offer an unprecedented glimpse into the rebels' mind-set, they also reflect **deepening rebel contacts with European governments and even representatives of the United States, who have tried to negotiate the release of dozens of hostages.** They are signed electronically by the most powerful men in the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, the hemisphere's oldest and most potent rebel movement. Those signing the documents include Raul Reyes, the FARC's foreign minister and public face, who was killed when Colombian commandos raided his jungle hideout in Ecuador on Saturday. His killing, along with 23 of his comrades, struck a chilling blow to the group. Others who signed messages include Manuel Marulanda, the rebels' 77-year-old supreme leader; Jorge Briceno, their much-feared field marshal, and Ivan Marquez, the insurgents' apparent go-between with Chavez. Marquez is believed to live in Venezuela. Copies of 13 documents were sent to reporters Tuesday by Colombia's national police chief, Gen. Oscar Naranjo. He revealed their existence Sunday as his

government came under a withering diplomatic attack for violating Ecuador's territory with the raid. They indicate that Chavez, seeking to raise the FARC's stature and relieve it of its international pariah status, wants to isolate and discredit Colombia's president, Alvaro Uribe. <http://www.abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=4390879>

The Washington Post: Venezuela and Ecuador rulers are "backers of criminals" –

The presidents of Venezuela and Ecuador, Hugo Chávez and Rafael Correa, respectively, "are backers of the criminals who fight Colombia's democracy," with the former "growing increasingly reckless," The Washington Post said in an editorial Wednesday. According to the newspaper, the attack the Colombian Army launched against a camp of the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in the Ecuadorian jungle "is comparable to those the United States has recently carried out against al-Qaeda in lawless areas of Pakistan," Efe reported. The raid also shows that "Colombia's democratic government may be finally gaining the upper hand over the murderous gangs that have tormented the country for decades." The Washington Post branded as "extraordinary" Chávez's reaction to the attack, saying that the Venezuelan ruler "has been revealed as an explicit supporter and possible financier of the FARC." According to the editorial Chávez openly mourned the death of the FARC leader and "made a show of ordering Venezuelan troops to the border with Colombia while loudly warning that war was possible." The Washington Post added that the Venezuelan ruler "goaded his client, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa -whose initial response to the raid was subdued- into mimicking his reaction." According to the newspaper, "there is little chance that this will lead to conventional war, despite the bluster of Mr. Chávez." "In his zeal to divert attention from a rapidly worsening domestic economic situation and his defeat in a recent referendum, Mr. Chávez is growing increasingly reckless. The principal danger, however, may be to his own country and government," The Washington Post editorial added. http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/05/en_colcd_art_the-washington-post_05A1410079.shtml

Chávez sends troops, aircraft to border with Colombia – El Universal.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez ordered sending tanks and 10 battalions to the border with Colombia and closing the Venezuelan Embassy to Bogotá, following a military operation by Colombia last Saturday in Ecuador where the second man of the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces Raúl Reyes was killed. Chávez claimed that after the incident he talked several times to his Ecuadorian counterpart Rafael Correa, adding that Venezuela is backing up any move Correa may make following the incursion, Reuters reported. "Mr. Minister of Defense (General Gustavo Rangel Briceño) sends 10 battalions to the border with Colombia, immediately, tank battalions. I want the military aviation to deploy," Chávez instructed during his weekly radio and television show on Sunday. "I am declaring Venezuela in alert, and we are going to support Ecuador under any circumstance," he stressed. Further, Chávez instructed Foreign Minister Nicolás Maduro to withdraw "all of the staff from the Embassy to Bogotá." According to Chávez, Correa was "outraged" for the results of their preliminary investigations into the incident in Putumayo. Chávez added that Quito found that the attack against the FARC camp was launched from Ecuadorian territory, which implies "an invasion." **The Colombian government, which Chávez branded as "terrorist," claimed it did not violate Ecuador's sovereignty and underscored that it was self-defense.** Caracas and Bogotá share strong trade relations, but they are facing serious diplomatic tensions ever since President Álvaro Uribe terminated Chávez's mediation to seek an agreement to swap 45 hostages for some 500 FARC troops in jail. For Chávez, the Colombian move could be "the beginning of a war" in the hemisphere. Chávez harshly criticized Uribe, accusing the Colombian ruler of acting by the orders of the United States, Chávez's ideological enemy. Uribe "is a criminal. He is a liar, a mafia boss, a paramilitary; he conducts a narco-government and conducts a government that is a lackey of the US administration. Furthermore, he is a subordinate (of US President

George W. Bush)," Chávez claimed. **The Venezuelan ruler deemed it necessary to set Colombia free from the US imperialism, but he would not elaborate.**



Colombian President Alvaro Uribe. Source: Esmas



Venezuelan Troops in border with Colombia. Source: El Comercio.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/03/en_pol_art_chavez-sends-troops_03A1402645.shtml

[Uribe's charges against Chávez to be revised – *El Universal*.](#)

Colombian President Álvaro Uribe accepted to analyze with a jurists commission charges against his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chávez that Bogotá intends to file with the International Criminal Court "for sponsorship and funding of genocidal" groups, former Colombian President Ernesto Samper said. With a democratic spirit, Uribe accepted the suggestion and promised to hold consultations with a jurist's commission to revise or examine his accusation, Samper told Radio Caracol. The committee discussed with Uribe the diplomatic crisis Colombia is facing with its neighbor counties Ecuador and Venezuela, following a military attack by the Colombian Army on a camp of the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in Ecuador where the FARC number-two Luis Edgar Davia, better known as Raúl Reyes, was killed. During the meeting, the committee requested President Uribe to redefine his accusation against Chávez, Samper said. "Colombia plans to file with the International Criminal Court a lawsuit against Hugo Chávez, President of Venezuela, for sponsorship and funding of genocidal" groups, Uribe told journalists. Likewise, on March 3, **the Colombian government said they intended to request the Organization of American States (OAS) an investigation into a grant of USD 300 million the Venezuelan government made to the FARC, as well as a supply of arms. The alleged supply of money to the FARC and the "gift" of weapons were denounced after the Colombian army found data in Raúl Reyes' computers following the attack on the rebel camp in Ecuador. Samper also reported that during the meeting of the committee "different" stances were expressed regarding the operation of the Colombian army in the Ecuadorian territory. Ecuador decided to cut off diplomatic relations with Colombia and Venezuela expelled all the diplomatic staff of the Colombian Embassy in Caracas, headed by Ambassador Fernando Marín Valencia.**

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/06/en_colcd_art_uribes-charges-agai_06A1412879.shtml

[Colombia's vice-president denounces alliances – *El Universal*.](#)

Colombian vice-president Francisco Santos Calderón told European Union chief diplomat Javier Solana that it is imperative to take bold actions to put an end to the aid that, according to him, Venezuela provides to the FARC "The commitment of Hugo Chávez's government to the FARC, which is evident, clear and for the first time proven, must be an issue of public, international discussion," Santos said following a meeting with Solana. As long as this close relation prevails -in which funding, shelter and political and economic support are provided- Colombia will resort to all the legal and political, but not military, mechanisms to combat the guerrilla. The vice-president said that the alleged "alliance" between Chávez and the

FARC is a "continental project" that entails a long range "threat." "It is an ideological, military and political project that uses violence with the aim of imposing their vision of the world over the democratic dictates," Santos said about the link between Venezuela and the guerrilla groups. Santos made a difference between Venezuela and Ecuador, declaring that while relations with Quito may be recovered, it will be "very difficult" to reach a diplomatic solution with Caracas.
http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/06/en_colcd_art_uribes-charges-agai_06A1412879.shtml

OAS doesn't condemn Bogotá. Colombia acted in self-defense. – El Universal.

The Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) on Wednesday approved a resolution agreed upon by Colombia and Ecuador which states Colombia violated Ecuador's sovereignty with a cross-border raid to kill a FARC member. **The text did not include a condemnation of the Colombian military operation Saturday on Ecuadorian soil, as sought by Quito, but did feature an explicit acknowledgement that Colombia violated Ecuadorian territory,** reported DPA. The raid on Saturday, which claimed the lives of Raul Reyes -second-in-command of the rebel Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)- and some 20 other rebels, has provoked great tension between Colombia, on the one hand, and its neighbors Ecuador and Venezuela. The resolution also establishes the creation of a commission headed by OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza to look into the incident, although it is to determine whether it is to be an "investigative" commission, as Ecuador wanted, or an "exploratory" commission according to Colombia's wishes. The text calls for a meeting of OAS foreign ministers on March 17 in Washington.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/05/en_colcd_art_oas-says-colombia-vi_05A1410959.shtml

OAS: Ecuador, Colombia reach agreement on resolution – El Universal.

Colombian Ambassador Camilo Ospina Wednesday said Colombia and Ecuador reached an agreement on the text of the resolution the Organization of American States (OAS) is to issue later today about their diplomatic crisis, with Ecuadorian Foreign Minister María Isabel Salvador claiming the document would be "a success for Ecuador." "We consider this is a resolution adequate to the Colombian circumstances," Ospina told reporters before resuming a special session of ambassadors to OAS. The meeting was convened to hear the claims of two countries in connection with the incursion of Colombian troops in Ecuadorian territory to attack a camp of the FARC. The first session was suspended early on Wednesday without agreement, some 10 hours after the meeting began. According to Ospina, the resolution states that Colombian troops entered Ecuadorian territory, "just like the Colombian government acknowledged initially, but it also suggests the possibility of violation by Colombia insofar as other rebel groups may be located in the Ecuadorian side." "There is no condemnation whatsoever," he stressed.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/05/en_colcd_art_oas-ecuador,-colomb_05A1410289.shtml

Bush told Uribe the US is to back democratic allies – El Universal.

US President George W. Bush Tuesday accused his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chávez of making "provocative maneuvers" against Colombia and made a call to oppose to any act of aggression in the Andean region. "Our message to (Colombian) President (Álvaro) Uribe and the Colombian people is that we will continue to stand by their side and defend our democratic allies," Bush said during a phone talk with the Colombian ruler, Reuters reported. The Andean region is facing a diplomatic crisis that emerged after the Colombian Army launched attack last Saturday against a camp of the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in Ecuadorian territory that killed the second man in the guerrilla group, Raúl Reyes, and at least other 20

FARC troops. Uribe has accused both Chávez and Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa of supporting the FARC.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/04/en_colcd_art_bush-told-uribe-the_04A1407679.shtml

Nicaragua severs ties with Colombia – *El Universal*.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega Thursday announced he cut off diplomatic relations with Colombia, in a gesture of solidarity with Ecuador and because of the repeated threats by Bogotá against the maritime spaces that the two countries share in the Caribbean Sea. "We are breaking up with the terrorist policy the government of Álvaro Uribe is implementing. **It is him we are cutting**" diplomatic relations with, Ortega said during a press conference he offered jointly with **Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, who is visiting Managua**, AFP reported. Ortega's announcement came after he showed dissatisfaction at the resolution the Organization of American States (OAS) issued regarding the conflict that emerged following a Colombian Army attack against the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in Ecuadorian territory. "We are not pleased with the OAS resolution. We do believe that in the next meeting at least a clear condemnation should be expressed against the crime the Colombian government perpetrated against the Ecuadorian people's sovereignty," he stated. Ortega claimed the OAS stance regarding Colombia was not satisfactory, as "Nicaragua is also threatened by the Colombian arrogance" in a dispute over maritime borders the two countries have taken to the International Court of Justice.



Daniel Ortega. Source: Esmas.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/06/en_colcd_art_nicaragua-severs-tie_06A1414201.shtml

Venezuela: Pdvsa is "reengineering" its finances to avoid sanctions – *El Universal*.

The Venezuelan Minister of Energy and Petroleum and president of the state oil company Petróleos de Venezuela (Pdvsa) Rafael Ramírez informed that the oil holding is "reengineering" its finances, after the freezing of part of its accounts and assets following a petition by US oil company Exxon Mobil. Ramírez's declarations were produced in Viena, where he is attending the 138 meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). When asked about the use of an account in the Central Bank in Zurich to receive payments for the sales of oil, Ramírez said: "I am not talking about that specific case. But we are reengineering the handling of our finances due to the actions undertaken by Exxon. This means to take measures and be watchful. We have nothing to fear." In January, Exxon Mobil requested a Manhattan court to freeze an account of Pdvsa Cerro Negro with \$315 million. The freezing, still in force, was ordered just few hours after Pdvsa made a transfer to the US Company for \$250 million as part of payments for a shared business. Exxon has requested several banks to freeze Pdvsa's accounts.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/06/en_eco_art_pdvsa-is-reengineer_06A1412759.shtml

Pdvsa customers making payments through C. Bank acct. in Switzerland – *El Universal*.

Venezuelan state-run oil giant Pdvsa has instructed foreign customers to pay shipments of oil, byproducts, and even sub products such as coque and sulphur, by making deposits in an account of the Venezuelan Central Bank (BCV) in Zurich-based UBS bank. Traders said that over the last few weeks they made the payments to such account, following a court order freezing a USD 315 million account of Pdvsa Cerro Negro in the New York Bank, at the request of US oil major Exxon Mobil. Unofficial sources said BCV and Pdvsa agreed to a mechanism to make the oil-related deposits in an account in UBS they own jointly. In this way, they can determine what the payments for Pdvsa's oil sales are. Exxon Mobil won a temporary freezing injunction hitting one of the BCV accounts in the United States amidst a dispute over the nationalization by the Venezuelan State of Exxon Mobil's assets in Cerro Negro and La Ceiba projects in Venezuela. Ever since London-based and Netherlands Antilles-based courts issued orders to freeze up to \$ 12 billion in Pdvsa's assets, Exxon Mobil has sent letters to the banks where Pdvsa holds accounts calling for the freezing of the conglomerate's funds.
http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/04/en_eco_art_pdvsa-customers-are_04A1406279.shtml

OPEC backs Venezuela in legal dispute with Exxon Mobil – El Universal.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) issued a resolution supporting both Venezuela and its state-run oil conglomerate Pdvsa in the face of the legal actions US oil Major Exxon Mobil has undertaken in connection with the nationalization of its assets in heavy crude oil project Cerro Negro. "The Conference expresses support for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its national oil company in the exercise of their sovereign rights over their natural resources," said the document read by Minister of Energy and Petroleum Rafael Ramírez, during a phone talk to official television channel VTV. According to Ramírez, the OPEC members were astonished at the "very aggressive way" the US firm has acted. "We all can see that Exxon Mobil intends to run counter the principles of the United Nations as to the capacity of the oil producing countries to manage their resources in a sovereign way." Regarding the hearings in the London High Court, Ramírez said Pdvsa submitted all of its allegations. He added that the goal was "preventing this kind of actions (such as the freezing of assets) from becoming a precedent that may create additional disturbances in the world oil markets."
http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/05/en_eco_art_opec-backs-venezuela_05A1410239.shtml

Investigation requested into Venezuelan ideological infiltration in Peru – El Universal.

A Parliament committee agreed to request the creation of a special taskforce intended to delve into claims of Venezuelan ideological infiltration in Peru through the so-called Houses of ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas). The Committee on Defense, Peruvian Congress, is to submit the request to the plenary session for approval. The motion is expected to be passed, as it is backed by the pro-government Aprista party, the conservative National Union and the group of followers of former President Alberto Fujimori, AFP reported. **The three factions believe there is evidence that the President Hugo Chávez's government is involved in ideological and financial interference in Peru, through the Houses of ALBA.** The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas is an integration mechanism sponsored and founded by Venezuela. It also comprises Bolivia, Cuba, and Nicaragua. **The move by the Committee of Defense came following Peruvian President Alan García's claims earlier this web that he "almost certain" that foreign countries were meddling in Peru.** The Peruvian ruler added he would make "a serious and dramatic" decision to defend his country's sovereignty.
http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/06/en_colcd_art_investigation-reques_06A1414439.shtml

"Houses of ALBA" linked to extremists in Peru – El Universal.

Peruvian Interior Minister Luis Alva Castro said he has evidence that the so-called "Houses of ALBA" (which stands for Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas), are linked to extremist groups encouraging violent protests and intending to boycott the summits to be held this year in Peru, DPA reported. Alva Castro told radio station CPN that the Peruvian government is in possession some checks a country -which he would not name- paid, which "clearly state the purpose and the receiver." While he avoided pointing to Venezuela as the place where the funds are coming from, as suggested by some government officials, he said the police is concerned about the participation of some radical and extremist organizations in social protests in Peru. Alva Castro -whom the opposition has asked to resign amidst a corruption scandal- said the proofs allegedly establish a connection between the Houses of ALBA and the Bolivarian Continental Coordinator (CCB). The Houses of ALBA, which are organizations headed by followers of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in several Peruvian towns, have been accused by the Peruvian government, conservatives and media of allegedly supporting social protests and of boosting a supposed Venezuelan interference in Peruvian domestic affairs.
http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/03/en_pol_art_houses-of-alba-lin_03A1402723.shtml

[Argentinian President goes to Venezuela to show support for Chavez – Prensa Latina.](#)

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez led the official ceremony to welcome Argentina President Cristina Fernandez to Miraflores Palace Thursday, where they will sign several cooperation agreements. The regional issue on the agenda of Fernandez' visit to Venezuela, where she will also meet Ecuadorian Rafael Correa and Yolanda Pulecio, mother of Colombian ex presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt, who is a FARC prisoner. Correa arrived in Venezuela yesterday, part of a tour that will take him also to Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic, starting today. The Argentine president asserted that Buenos Aires will continue supporting the humanitarian exchange of people detained by the insurgent FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and a concrete action to this end" would be an important factor to solve the conflicts in the region". With Chavez she will sign agreements in the fields of energy and food; Venezuela counts on tested oil reserves of around 100 billion barrels, while Buenos Aires is among the continent's main food and agriculture powers, which would complement Caracas' momentary shortages in that sphere.
<http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7BD716657B-6D7C-4436-BED6-3101B25A9B63%7D&language=EN>

[Argentina suitcase scandal: Kauffman pleads GUILTY – El Universal.](#)

Carlos Kauffman pleaded guilty to conspiring in a scheme to cover up smuggling of USD 800,000 in cash supposedly destined for the campaign of Argentina's president Cristina Fernández. A document from a US federal court states that Kauffman pleaded guilty on Friday. Carlos Kauffmann, who has ties to the Venezuelan state oil company Petróleos de Venezuela, also faced the charge of acting illegally as a covert agent of a foreign government. There is no mention to this charge in the document.
http://www.eluniversal.com/2008/03/03/en_caval_art_kauffman-pleads-guil_03A1405129.shtml

[People's Party: Zapatero is an accomplice of Chávez's attitude – El Universal.](#)

Gustavo de Aristegui, foreign affairs spokesperson for Spanish conservative People's Party (PP), Tuesday accused the Spanish government of being an accomplice of the provocative attitude President Hugo Chávez has adopted in the face of the Colombia-Ecuador crisis stemming from the killing of rebel FARC leader Raúl Reyes. De Aristegui hailed as positive the Spanish government's willingness to facilitate a diplomatic agreement between Colombia and Ecuador, Efe reported. However, the spokesman claimed that the Spanish government was acquiescent to Chávez's "militaristic expansionism." The spokesman of PP -the major opposition party in Spain-

reminded that the President of the Spanish government, **José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero**, in **May 2005 Okayed an agreement to sell 12 cargo aircraft and eight boats to Venezuela. The sale of the airplanes was not completed, but the coastal patrol boats were actually sold to Venezuela**, Efe reported. According to De Arístegui, such purchase of defense equipment highlighted Chávez's military strategy, which Zapatero "refused to see." "We knew the military escalation in Venezuela would eventually result in serious consequences for regional peace," he added. For De Arístegui, **Chávez is looking for "any excuse" to ignite some "skirmish" in order to "get the attention off from his serious domestic problems."**



Hugo Chavez bought weapons from Spain. In picture Mr. Chavez and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Source: El Proyecto Matriz.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/04/en_colcd_art_peoples-party-the_04A1406719.shtml

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