



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.*

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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: mengesproject@centerforsecuritypolicy.org or hemisphericsecurity@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.

The following article, originally published in "The National Interest", has been modified and appears here because of the importance of free trade with our allies in Latin America.

Highlighted Story – [Free Trade: An antidote to Chavez.](#)

By John R. Thomson*

As Congress debates the merits of ratifying free-trade agreements with three Latin American countries, many arguments have been advanced from both sides. **The politically charged climate on Capitol Hill obscures the underlying rationales favoring the treaties—and, broadly, free trade.**



Nicaragua



Panama



Paraguay



Peru



The United States



Uruguay



Venezuela

Agreements have been negotiated with **Colombia, Panama, and Peru**, each geopolitically and commercially important to the United States.

- **Colombia is our closest friend in Latin America.** Washington has worked to strengthen U.S.-Colombian ties and to assist Bogotá in eradicating its narcotics production and stabilizing its democracy. Venezuela's autocratic socialist President Hugo Chávez presents an enormous external challenge.
- **Panama**, created by a U.S.-Colombian treaty in 1903 as an independent entity to construct a Pacific-Atlantic canal, enjoys significant growth and is planning a major expansion of the critical waterway. China sought to become a major factor in the country before the United States ceded control of the canal to Panama in 1999. Hong Kong's Hutchison-Whampoa group has since operated the canal, so crucial to world trade.
- **Perú is one of three major centers of cocaine production in South America, with Bolivia and Colombia.** President Alan García, elected in 2006, has committed his second term to free-market, democratic policies, in sharp contrast to his 1985–1990 first presidential term, which was characterized by a radical socialist agenda. García has also pledged to cooperate with Washington to replace cocaine production with economically viable, legal agricultural activities.

Each of these nations plays a key role in Latin America, for the region as a whole and for the United States.

In *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith considered free trade a great boon to the participating nations' economies, workers and consumers. Charles Rangel (D-NY), chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, frequently opines that free trade is especially beneficial to unemployed workers in developing countries. Both assessments are correct, as we have witnessed in virtually every free-trade agreement (FTA) enacted by recent administrations.

Most recently, the U.S.-Uruguay FTA changed Montevideo's political orientation from sympathy towards Hugo Chávez's populist, socialist Bolivarian Revolution to solid friendship with the United States, re-committed to the market economy. The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) with four Central American nations and the Dominican Republic, also concluded during the current Bush Administration, has stabilized their economic and political climates.

Perhaps most important, the **NAFTA agreement among the United States, Canada and Mexico, enacted during the Clinton Administration, has seen significant stabilization of all three signatory countries' economies and of Mexico's unpredictable political situation.**



NAFTA Logo.

Two observations illustrate NAFTA's enormous positive impact. During the twelve years the agreement has been in force, **the U.S. economy has added thirty million jobs and unemployment has steadily declined to the current five percent level**—despite AFL-CIO fears to the contrary. While this did not happen solely because of the trilateral accord, economists generally agree that NAFTA has been a significant contributor.

Several Mexican analysts credit domestic economic improvements created by NAFTA with the victory of Felipe Calderón in last year's presidential election. Calderón won despite being a member of the same political party as the disappointing outgoing president, Vicente Fox, defeating ultra-leftist Andrés López Obrador by less than 234,000 out of 41.6 million votes cast, a razor-thin margin of 0.56 percent.

President Calderón has further opened Mexico's economy, and is aggressively fighting endemic corruption by replacing thousands of corrupt police and sacking hundreds of conniving government officials. Calderón is also helping the United States' illegal immigration dilemma by deploying 20,000 army regulars to the border area. These troops are fighting the extremely powerful narcotics organizations that refine and ship 90 percent of the cocaine that enters the United States.

Uruguay and Mexico exemplify a critical benefit of free-trade agreements, well-understood by America's enemies: **Fair and balanced economic relations set the stage for close relations at all levels.**

Opposition in Bogotá to the pending U.S.-Colombia free-trade agreement comes virtually exclusively from the Left, particularly from those in open or covert alliance with Venezuela's Hugo Chávez. Opposition to what Colombians call the TLC (for *tratado de libre comercio*, free-trade agreement) is based solely on critics' not wanting Colombia to have close economic, military, political or cultural relations with the United States.

Chávez's allies in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua show no interest in being part of what Chávez refers to as the Bush "empire." They have been co-opted into close political—and anti-American—relations by the checkbook diplomacy of Venezuela's president. (In just the last two years, Venezuela has loaned Argentina's tottering government at least \$6 billion.)

Two of the three pending FTA's are with Colombia and Peru, major cocaine-producing countries. **The agreements, along with existing governmental programs, will create hundreds of thousands of jobs, a large majority of which will allow farmers who cultivate coca to desist from doing so.** General Freddy Padilla de Leon, commandant of Colombia's armed forces, observes:

Growing cocaine allows the farmer to buy his family rice, meat and other necessities. But our farmers don't want that. To work cleanly and legally gives a man peace; to work illegally puts the [communist narco-trafficking guerrilla movement] FARC in control of his life.

We must fight the narcotics scourge at every level, but especially the agricultural sector. With solid economic growth, small farmers can enter the legal economy, which will decimate the cocaine crop and sharply cut the FARC's income options.

Plan Colombia, instituted by the Clinton Administration, has for eight years trained and upgraded Colombian military and police forces, established job training programs for demobilized guerrillas and paramilitaries, and trained local government officials in effective community administration.

The U.S.-Colombia FTA, coupled with the extension of Plan Colombia, can deal a lethal blow to the Colombian drug trade and strengthen democratic forces prior to critical 2010 presidential elections.

Hugo Chávez is reportedly plotting with Colombia's far left Polo Democrático Party to elect a radical socialist successor to President Álvaro Uribe, who was resoundingly re-elected in 2006. They plan to focus on some two million Colombians living in Venezuela—most of them illegally—offering permanent resident status, jobs and stipends in return for voting the Chávez-anointed presidential ticket. This, and Chávez's commitment of five or ten billion dollars or more behind the chosen candidate, threatens to halt Colombia's steady progress under Uribe's leadership.

Colombian-American Manuel Rocha, a retired U.S. ambassador whose career focused on Latin America, including tours in Havana, Buenos Aires and La Paz, Bolivia, sees a continuation of Washington's:

Self-punishing neglect of the region if Plan Colombia is not renewed and the FTA with Colombia not ratified. It will do far more than undermine our closest friend and the most entrenched democracy in Latin America. It will tell those who wish to be friends and allies of the United States they cannot rely on us, and open the door for more lethal mischief by Hugo Chávez. In so doing, we set the stage for a revolutionary hotbed south of the Rio Grande, and face the loss of Latin America to the free world for a generation.

On the other hand, informed Latin American and U.S. observers agree that successful implementation of free-trade agreements with Colombia and Peru, together with ongoing progress in Mexico, can substantially curtail the cocaine industry in Latin America and simultaneously strongly challenge Chávez's Bolivarian revolution.

In addition to everything else, as political analyst and commentator Michael Barone recently observed, passage of all four pending free-trade pacts will provide 125 million potential customers for U.S. manufactured products.

Those who urge that a global World Trade Organization agreement is preferable to a series of bilateral and multilateral pacts ignore the **WTO's very limited progress towards creating global free trade**. When the current expansion of free-trade accords has covered an overwhelming percentage of world trade, it may be possible for the WTO to fix the system, so no nation has preferential bias with one or another trading partner over others countries.

Indeed, **as Congress demurs on the four critical agreements, a host of progressive-minded governments continue pursuing free trade with nations important to their economic and overall geopolitical interests**. The creation and steady expansion of the free trade European Union of 27 countries is a fundamental reason for the region's return to at least limited growth. Japan has negotiated an agreement with Indonesia canceling duties on 90 percent of products the countries trade, and is negotiating similar pacts with India and ASEAN. The 10 country Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is progressively converting the four decade old mutual defense organization, into a free trade bloc by 2015.



ASEAN logo.

Colombia is undertaking free trade negotiations with 32 countries: the European Union plus Canada, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. Mercosur, the world's fourth largest trading block with a 250 million population and \$1.1 trillion in cumulative GDP, has been invigorated by Venezuela's entry in 2006. Chavez is promoting free trade among the signatory nations – Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela – accounting for 75 percent of South American GDP, as he pushes for Bolivian and Nicaraguan membership. Ecuador, currently an associate, is a likely additional full member.



Mercosur logo.

Colombia's lead negotiator, Hernando Gomez, president of the Private Competitive Council, observes that during the four year process;

Both sides made compromises, resulting in a fair, strong, positive agreement, which our legislatures must now approve. Neighboring Peru will surely be approved in Washington first. If they have, say, a 20 vote margin in the House of Representatives, Colombia's chances are good, but if it is very close....This is why it is so important for us to move forward with other FTA's. When Congress realizes we are going to be importing wheat, soybeans and barley at favorable prices from Canada, they may see the value of taking action.

After a one and a half hour meeting, a visitor wonders why the articulate, well-informed Gomez is not involved in Colombia's Washington lobbying effort. Knowledgeable advocates like General Freddy Padilla and Hernando Gomez could well make the difference.

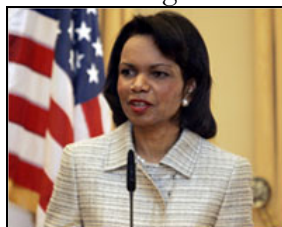
There can be no doubt that taken together with strengthening bonds of friendship among like-minded governments in an increasingly tense world, passage of the pending FTA's is clearly a deal Congress should not refuse.

**John R. Thomson is a businessman and journalist who writes frequently on geopolitical issues. He served as senior trade development representative in the Africa, Near East, South Asia (ANESA) region during the Reagan Administration. Mr. Thomson welcomes comments at thomson.john.r@gmail.com.*

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.

[Condoleezza Rice supports Free Trade with Latin America – El Diario Exterior.](#)

Failing to extend free-trade agreements (FTA's) to Colombia, Panama and Peru would be a “huge” mistake at the time when Latin America faces real challenges to democracy and peace, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says. “Trade helps new democracies to consolidate their political transitions and to prevent backsliding,” Rice said. “It helps them to build the effective institutions of a free society. And trade helps to give citizens a greater stake in the long-term stability and success of their democracy.” “We will have important commercial deals with Latin America,” she said, referring to the trade deals still pending with Colombia and Peru. She also recognized that these countries have made difficult decisions to have close relations with the United States facing threats from populists Presidents like Hugo Chavez.



Condoleezza Rice. Source: usinfo.state.gov

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=16269>

[Peru: Fujimori extradited from Chile and suffering harsh conditions in prison – Peru 21.](#)

Former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori is experiencing a deteriorating health due to high blood pressure and seclusion, his defense lawyer Cesar Nakazaki told media here on Monday. "It is his second night of health problems," Nakazaki said after visiting Fujimori who is held in a 15-square-meter cell in the National Police's Special Operations Directorate, in Ate-Vitarte, a town within the Capital District area controlled by Lima municipality. **Fujimori has not been able to control his blood pressure due to the harsh conditions of this prison**, the lawyer said. Fujimori arrived in Peru from Chile on Saturday, after being extradited to face two charges of crimes against humanity and five of corruption by Chile's Supreme Court. Nakazaki called for the Peruvian government to guarantee his client's right to health and respect his status as a former president entitled to dignity and justice.



Former President Alberto Fujimori. Source: Living in Peru.

<http://www.peru21.com/p21online/Html/2007-09-25/onp2portada0789799.html>

Fujimori supporters welcome their leader – *Living in Peru.*

On the afternoon the extradited former president was to arrive to Peru, "Fujimoristas" - supporters of Fujimori's political party - swamped the airport and stopped traffic in the street. Attempts were made to cross into the airstrip and landing fields where it was thought that the former president would arrive. Signs were waved in the air as people chanted in support of the man that had done away with terrorism. As Peru's police attempted to organize the crowd, resistance was fierce and the Fujimoristas were unwilling to be tamed. Fires were lit in the street and tires were burned. When asked about the situation, Keiko Fujimori responded that the Fujimoristas were peacefully exercising their right to protest. Alberto Fujimori did not arrive to Jorge Chavez national airport that afternoon, instead he was transported to a police facility in Ate. Politicians and authorities have stated that the issue should not divide the country. That has yet to be seen.

<http://www.livinginperu.com/news-4779-politics-3-days-after-alberto-fujimori-arrives-to-peru---protests-fires-marches-vandalism>

Terrorist group threatens Peruvian government through a "Chavista" website – *Correo, Peru.*

The terrorist group MRTA, which murdered thousands of Peruvians until President Alberto Fujimori came to power and enacted tough laws against such groups, threatened the Peruvian government with the support of the "Chavista" group: Coordinadora Continental Bolivariana (CCB). The MRTA used the web page property of CCB www.conbolivar.org to publish a communiqué titled: "Let's organize a Popular Rebellion," where they announce massive armed protests to topple current President Alan Garcia. The terrorists say they welcome people from different sectors of society, social and political to create a Popular National Assembly which would take over the leadership of the country. Curiously, such proposition coincides with the position of Ollanta Humala's party (PNP).

http://www.correoperu.com.pe/paginas_notas.php?nota_id=56011&seccion_notas=1

Venezuela to build 400 houses after earthquake in Peru – *Expreso, Peru.*

The Venezuelan ambassador in Peru, Armando Laguna Laguna, said that his government will build 400 houses in Pisco and Chincha that were affected by the 8^o earthquake that hit the area on August 15th. Laguna said the project will be named

“petrocasas” since the Money will come from a Venezuelan petrochemical plant designed by local engineers. These houses will be built with materials from the petrochemical plant that are being used in industrialized nations and they have a 50 year guarantee that they will no be needed to be painted again, Laguna said.

http://www.expreso.com.pe/edicion/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8726&Itemid=32

Iranian President visits Venezuela and Bolivia this week – *El Universal, Venezuela.*

"This is a petrochemical revolution, rather than atomic bombs. In three days, (Iranian President Mahmoud) Ahmadinejad, is visiting Venezuela, and some people will say we are moving to build atomic bombs," Sunday said President Hugo Chávez in El Tablazo Petrochemical Compound, northwestern Zulia state. According to press reports quoting Iranian authorities on Sunday, **Ahmadinejad is visiting both Venezuela and Bolivia.** But the sources refused to disclose further details. The visit to the Latin American countries comes as part of a tour that is also taking the Iranian ruler to New York, where he is speaking before the Annual Assembly of the United Nations next Tuesday. "Our support and solidarity for the Iranian people. We will be pleased to welcome President Ahmadinejad in a few days. He is honoring us with his presence. This is your house, Mr. President, and the house of Iranians too!" said Chávez. **This is the second visit the Iranian ruler pays to Venezuela, while Chávez has visited Iran three times.**



Chavez and Ahmedinejad. Source: caracaschronicles.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2007/09/24/en_pol_art_iranian-president-vi_24A1060397.shtml

Chavez Tells Private Hospitals to Lower Costs or Face Nationalization – *Infobae.*

Venezuela President Hugo Chavez announced on Tuesday that if private medical clinics and hospitals in Venezuela fail to reduce health care costs than they will be nationalized. "If the owners of the private clinics don't want to obey the laws, then the private clinics will be nationalized," Chavez announced. Under Chavez, thousands of doctors have been sent to poor areas where they provide free health care.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/339052-100799-0-Chávez-quiere-expropiar-las-clínicas-privadas>

Letter exchange between FARC leader and Chavez – *Correo, Peru.*

Mr. Chavez said during his weekly address on Venezuelan TV he had received a letter from the FARC leader, Manuel Marulanda, who said he was unable to travel to Venezuela and instead invited the Venezuelan president to meet him in Colombia. While rejecting the Venezuelan leader's offer, Mr. Restrepo reiterated his government's support for talks between Mr. Chavez and the FARC leadership in Venezuela. Chavez, who is trying to broker an exchange of rebel-held hostages for imprisoned rebels, said he had just received the message from Manuel Marulanda, leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC. He did not say what it contained or how it was sent. The socialist president said he has become a conduit for communication between Marulanda, also known as “Tirofijo” or “Sure Shot,” and Colombian President Alvaro Uribe. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez says he received a new message from Colombia's largest rebel group as he mediates a standoff between the leftist rebels and the Colombian government. Mr. Chavez said the message received Friday is from Manuel Marulanda, the commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC. He did not reveal the details of the letter.



Picture of President Alvaro Uribe, “Tirofijo” and Chavez. Source: Semana.

http://www.correoperu.com.pe/paginas_notas.php?nota_id=55953&seccion_notas=9

Israel sends hurricane aid to Nicaragua – Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is sending \$25,000 worth of medical supplies to Nicaragua, aid to the victims of Hurricane Felix, which struck Nicaragua at the beginning of the month. The hurricane, which hit the northern Caribbean coast of Nicaragua close to the Honduras border, left a trail of devastation and at least 40 people dead. Tens of thousands of people have been left homeless by the category five hurricanes. The International Red Cross made an appeal to the international community for help, and as a result Israel is sending medical equipment which will reach Nicaragua within a few days. The Israeli ambassador to Costa Rica and the Israeli Honorary Consul in Nicaragua will present the equipment to the representatives of the Nicaraguan government.

<http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/MFA+Spokesman/2007/Israel+sends+hurricane+aid+to+Nicaragua+23-Sep-2007.htm>

ALBA members to attend “summit” in Managua – Infobae.

A Permanent Coordinator of the regional cooperation bloc, which has now been established with headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela, will have its first meeting in November, while the first stage in the creation of its bank is expected to conclude in December. They agreed to hold the Sixth ALBA Summit in Managua, Nicaragua, on December 20. It was agreed that the Coordinator could count on the participation of a permanent coordinator from each country, with the rotation of overall coordination to occur every two years between the four current ALBA members: Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua. In addition, the meeting approved a declaration of support for the effort to draft a new constitution in Bolivia, while rejecting all attempts to violate the territorial integrity of that nation. The group expressed its support for the efforts led by Bolivian President Evo Morales for that nation to gain control over its own natural resources and to regain its full sovereignty. There was also a special appeal made to the international community to provide additional emergency assistance to Nicaragua, particularly that country’s Atlantic region, which was hard hit by Hurricane Félix in recent weeks.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/339000-100556-0-Managua-será-sede-la-VI-Cumbre-del-ALBA>

Social Conflicts in Bolivia – Infobae, Argentina.

Multiple conflicts have converged in the once-sleepy city of Sucre, resulting in growing and often violent protests. The bitter regional struggle over the location of the nation’s capital has the potential to turn into chaos with the announced arrival of pro-MAS social movements. In addition, friction over the Constitutional Tribunal and the consideration of the extradition request for ex-president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada are occurring simultaneously in Sucre. The demand to move the capital, or part of it, from La Paz to Sucre has exploded into a divisive nationwide power struggle. Protests are ongoing in Sucre and on September 5, pro-Sucre protestors attempted to storm the Assembly’s meeting space to prevent the Constitutional Assembly from meeting because

they would not be discussing the capital issue. The Assembly had been suspended for over three weeks due to previous protests. The MAS leadership of the Assembly called for a session, despite social unrest, ostensibly in order to deal with unresolved issues of Security and Defense and the National Vision. The police responded with tear gas and the protests continued for the next two days. Over 80 people have been injured. The capital issue was initially introduced by Podemos (the leading opposition party) Assembly members from Sucre. Despite the lack of infrastructure there and the financial complexities of moving the capital to the small colonial city, the issue has once again brought deepening regional divisions to the foreground of Bolivian politics. On August 15, MAS put forward a proposal to end debate of the issue in the Assembly and it was approved. Protests by citizens of Sucre and those of the four eastern lowland departments forced the Assembly to suspend their meetings. Opposition Assembly member Javier Limpias (Podemos) announced "We are trying to impede the plenary session by any means necessary, we won't let it happen."



Evo Morales. Source: Infobae.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/339219-100799-0-Se-agravan-los-conflictos-civiles-Bolivia>

Bolivia to sign agreements with Iran – Infobae.

Bolivia's President Evo Morales on Tuesday defended collaboration with Iran on the sidelines of the 62nd United Nations General Assembly, according some newspapers. "We are from the culture of dialogue and life, without marginalization and discrimination. We are about unity, solidarity and complementarily," he said, adding that he would open negotiations with all nations which can help defend life. **Iran's President Mahmud Ahmadineyad will arrive in Bolivia on Thursday to sign aid agreements as well as deals on technology transfer and construction of industrial plants.**

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/339835-100891-0-Morales-desoye-criticas-y-firma-acuerdos-Iran>

Brazil receives Palestinian refugees – Infobae, Argentina.

A group of 35 Palestinian refugees arrived in Brazil on Friday after spending three years in a barren and rocky encampment between Iraq and Syria. The 35, the first Palestinian refugees Brazil has received, are part of a larger group of 117 that is expected to arrive by year's end. The group traveled via Jordan to Barcelona, Spain, and flew to this southeastern Brazilian city, said Luis Varese, a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR. Of the 35 refugees, 25 went to a town in the interior of Sao Paulo state and 10 went to the far southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, both regions with large Palestinian communities. UNHCR officials said they would not identify the towns until the refugees were settled, but said the refugees would live at least two years in houses or apartments the U.N. group had rented and would receive Brazilian identity papers, qualifying them for government health care, schooling and bank credit.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/338997-100556-0-Brasil-acoge-refugiados-palestinos>

[Argentine favorite treats presidential campaign more like a coronation – IHT.](#)

With just over a month to go before voters will choose a new president of Argentina, **Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, or Queen Cristina**, as she is widely known here, is living up to her nickname. With a healthy lead of at least 25 percentage points over her closest rival, she has all but eschewed photo-ops with Argentines in favor of coverage abroad with foreign bankers, dignitaries and international investors in Europe and the United States. **She has piled up frequent-flier miles in trips to Mexico, Spain, Austria and Germany. This week she is in New York for her husband's speech at the UN General Assembly. Cristina Kirchner's focus on international relations has drawn criticism from opponents who say she is conveniently ignoring a number of serious domestic problems that threaten to carry over for the next president, no matter who wins the election.** "There is a risk she will be so captivated by international politics and foreign relations that she will avoid the mounting problems in Argentina," said Michael Shifter, vice president for policy at Inter-American Dialogue, a private research group in Washington focusing on Latin America. Among those issues are energy shortfalls, a shrinking budget surplus and a ballooning inflation rate that several independent economists say is now over 15 percent, almost twice what official government statistics show.



Cristina Kirchner. Source: MercoPress.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/09/25/america/argentina.php>

[Mexico: plane carrying cocaine crashes – La Nación, Argentina.](#)

A small aircraft containing tons of Colombian cocaine crashed in the jungle of southern Mexico on Monday, police said. Local police officer Eustaquio Arredondo told reporters no casualties had been found but one person who was apparently on board the aircraft had been arrested. Mexican army planes had been tracking the aircraft since it was spotted entering Mexican air space. Drug planes packed with South American cocaine, often with passenger seats ripped out to make space, frequently fly through Mexico and Central America en route for the United States.

http://www.lanacion.com.ar/exterior/nota.asp?nota_id=947227

[Correa to win assembly Elections - poll – Reuters.](#)

Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa's Alianza Pais movement should win around 50 seats in Sunday's election for a 130-member assembly, but he will need to form alliances to pass constitutional reforms, a local pollster said on Wednesday. Cedatos-Gallup chief pollster Polibio Cordova said the voting intention for Correa's party was stable compared to the previous poll taken earlier this month. "The government party has the highest chance of forming a simple majority through alliances," Cordova said. The national assembly will be charged with drafting a new constitution and Correa, a leftist former economy minister, needs a simple majority of 66 seats to pass reforms he says will

curb the influence of traditional political parties. (Ecuadorian law prohibits the dissemination of polls 20 days prior to the election. This article is for publication outside of Ecuador)



Rafael Correa. Source: AFP.

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/oilRpt/idUKN2620419920070926>

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