



VENEZUELA IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS

Wednesday, 31 August 2005

Venezuela's Leader Is a Regional Nuisance

Mark Falcoff

[National Review](#)

It's Sunday in Venezuela, which means it's time for President Hugo Chávez to go on radio and television to "dialogue" with his people. Dialogue is actually not the right word; except for this week's special guests (Cuban dictator Fidel Castro by telephone from Havana, and later, Cuba's health minister), Chávez does all the talking--endlessly, tediously, often jumping from topic to topic in no apparent order. This time it's a full eight hours. The subjects include the evils of capitalism and "neo-liberalism," the unspecified contribution Cuba can make to solving Venezuela's energy problems, the nefarious George W. Bush, the dangers of a free-trade agreement with the United States ("a grinding stone to crush peoples"), the vast wave of support that Venezuela and its president now supposedly enjoy throughout the hemisphere and even the world...

Welcome to South America's newest revolution, if that indeed is what is going on here. To the casual visitor who knew Venezuela before Chávez's first election in 1998 it's difficult at first to see what's so new and different. Despite the increasingly incendiary rhetoric issuing from government sources, almost everything seems remarkably unchanged. The Venezuelan capital is still the same, sprawling, overdeveloped city it always was--part Los Angeles, part Third World slum--plagued by too many cars trying to squeeze into excessively narrow streets. The hotel lounges are full of foreign businessmen in deep conclave with their Venezuelan counterparts. The restaurants are heavily booked. The malls are stocked with foreign imports. The newspapers carry ads for vacations in Miami and Europe, as well as for luxury cars. The only important news--today, as always--is the price of oil. Good news, too, since it's inching up to \$60 a barrel, with reasonable hope

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of rising yet further. It's only when one looks beneath the surface that one can perceive that something very sinister is afoot.

To say that Venezuela is all about oil is an understatement. For nearly a century the black gold has underpinned every regime here, military and civilian, good and bad. Venezuelans know this: Surveys show, in fact, that an overwhelming number think their country is the richest in the world. This claim seems remarkably inconsistent with widespread poverty, malnutrition, and substandard housing on one hand, and all the luxury high-rises and elegant villas on the other, but that is precisely the point. As one mulatto woman, the hostess of my hotel dining room, explained to me on the eve of Chávez's first election, "We have everything. The only reason we are poor is that the politicians have robbed us." She had it half right; the politicians did stuff their pockets during the boom years. But the real problem was oil prices. After spiking in 1972 and 1979, they collapsed in 1982. During the good years there was plenty of jam to go around; then, for nearly two decades, depressed prices deprived successive governments of much of the resources--subsidized bus fares, cheap gasoline prices, and other amenities--with which to buy painless social peace. The economic slump, juxtaposed against a rising population and growing unemployment, was bound to take its toll. The great beneficiary turned out to be a once-unknown lieutenant colonel who convinced the underprivileged masses that the simple act of electing him would turn oil prices around and bring back the good times.

Not surprisingly, this didn't happen--at least not immediately. In fact, during Chávez's first three years in office oil prices averaged slightly more than \$20 a barrel. Failure to deliver the goods overnight caused support for the leader to slip precipitously; by some reckonings, by early 2001 as much as 60 percent of the population had turned against the president. A militant opposition took to the streets and public disenchantment peaked in April 2002 when Chávez barely survived a bungled military coup involving elements of the business community and the labor movement. In December, a general strike produced widespread economic chaos but failed to force Chávez's resignation. Since 9/11, however, oil prices have turned sharply northward, pushing Chávez well into the clear. The latest surveys now show him with as much as a 70 percent approval rating.



This year alone Venezuela will receive \$36 billion from its oil exports. Government accounting since Chávez took power has become something of a murky science, but it is known that of this amount the president has helped himself to \$5 billion for his “discretionary budget.” He has further, unlawful plans to raid the Central Bank treasury for another \$5 billion, apparently for his social projects. Another \$3 billion is earmarked for a new chain of government supermarkets selling foodstuffs to the public at greatly reduced prices. In addition, Chávez announced a 50 to 60 percent increase in the pay of military personnel, which might well peg the salary of a noncommissioned officer higher than that of a university-trained professional. Another \$2 billion is being appropriated to buy military hardware from Russia, ostensibly to secure Venezuela’s troubled frontier with Colombia, and also to equip a huge “reserve” force.

A Familiar Setup

In some ways the Chávez regime represents nothing new at all in Venezuela or indeed for the region as a whole--it is merely an exaggerated version of the classical Latin American populist regime, one that rewards loyal followers and buys off potential opponents through the promiscuous use of government funds. But unlike its predecessors elsewhere, this regime survives not by borrowing heavily from abroad, or expropriating foreign investors’ assets, or printing money (or all three), but by earning hard dollars from the export of oil by the state oil company, PDVSA. Nor is Chávez himself a unique phenomenon in Latin America--he merely represents the latest incarnation of the phenomenon pioneered by the late Argentine strongman Juan Perón in the 1940s: the authoritarian by popular consent. Chávez, we should recall, has been elected twice, was reaffirmed in a referendum last year, and is a sure bet for reelection next year. While in theory Venezuela is a constitutional democracy, in practice Chávez has packed the courts, converted the armed forces into a private constabulary, and disobeyed his own new constitution which, on paper at least, established a limited system of checks and balances. Where the rules cannot be bent, the government often reverts to low-grade thuggery and intimidation.

Chávez resembles Perón in another important respect: He regards his country as too small a stage for the role he is called upon to play. His plan is



to become the leader of Latin America, perhaps even of the entire Third World. Thus Venezuelans are not to be the only beneficiaries of his largesse. A new regional alliance, Petrocaribe, has been established to buy influence among Venezuela's Caribbean and Central American neighbors by selling them oil at a deep discount (delivery free of charge). There are plans for something still bigger: a South American energy company, Petrosur, servicing Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, and Peru. He is promising to build a \$1 billion oil refinery for Uruguay and a fleet of 40 oil tankers for Brazil (price tag: \$2 billion). Chávez also has plans for his own network (Telesur) to take his "Bolivarian" message to the far corners of the earth.

No doubt some of Chávez's plans are delusionary, but the regime has introduced a new element into the equation, namely, the presence of Castro's Cuba in places high and low. In exchange for 80,000 to 90,000 barrels of oil a day--much of which the Cuban dictator resells on the world market for desperately needed hard currency--Havana has dispatched thousands of doctors, dentists, teachers, and sports trainers, as well as police, security personnel, and intelligence experts.

Meanwhile, Cuban medical personnel are assigned to Chávez's "missions," which fan out across the country to provide services--most of them mediocre and second-rate, to be sure, but in many cases brought to people whom no previous government thought it worth bothering with. These benefits offer little hope of real improvement over the longer term. As one Catholic priest from Spain, who has worked in Caracas's slums, recently told the British press, they are no substitute for a thoroughgoing reform of the health-delivery system. "What we have now in the end is a waste of time and resources . . . I expect a collapse in less than six years." The statistical result is already in: The poverty level in Venezuela since Chávez took office has increased from 44 to 54 percent.

Venezuela as Chávez imagines it to be can be glimpsed on state television. There viewers are treated to a parade of images familiar to anyone who has ever attended a radical film festival in the United States--toothless hags and decrepit pensioners uttering effusive thanks to Señor Presidente, interviews with schoolteachers, excerpts from concerts by well-scrubbed children's choirs. When the president takes to the air he lectures his people endlessly



on the virtues of the Castro regime and also the supposed value of its contribution to his country's development--so vehemently, in fact, as to suggest that there might be considerable private grumbling about his billion-dollar oil giveaway to Cuba.

The Opposition

Historically, Venezuela has been controlled by two large centrist-populist parties, one of social-democratic orientation (Acción Democrática, or AD), and one styling itself "social Christian" (COPEI). Both today languish in deep discredit, partly deservedly, for over time they built a wasteful and inefficient economic and social system shot through with corruption and jobbery. Even so, if oil prices had remained where they were in 1979, it's safe to say nobody would ever have heard of Hugo Chávez. As it is, he can credibly claim that the only alternative to his regime are the bad old days, an era that at this point is still quite vivid in the memory of most Venezuelans.

"The old parties are dying," one Venezuelan friend of many years' standing assured me. Another disagreed: "They aren't dying; they're dead already." While Chávez is promising Venezuelans effortless prosperity and an unearned international importance, the opposition has no vision of its own to offer--merely a return to the day before the strongman's first election. Worse, all the opposition forces--not just AD and COPEI, but the smaller groups that have evolved to replace them--are hopelessly divided and confused.

The only really serious opposition in the country these days is the privately owned media. Not surprisingly, to counteract their influence Chávez has been toying with a new media law. Instead of imposing outright censorship--which might call down the wrath of the international media establishment--the new legislation has the quiet potential to make these enterprises financially unrewarding. At present, given Chávez's popularity, such extreme measures seem unnecessary. In any case, the media cannot overthrow Chávez or--so long as oil prices remain high--even dent his popularity.



Evidently the real source of Chávez's power is not the weakness of his opposition--striking as that may be--but his virtually unlimited access to the accounts of the state oil company. But these may not always be the windfall they are at present. Aside from the distinct possibility that oil prices will decline at some point, the government's management of its basic resource leaves much to be desired. Since the general strike there has been a massive purge of the company's upper management, as well as the dismissal of some 18,000 engineers, exploration personnel, and financial specialists. The effects are already being felt. In 2004 PDVSA produced roughly 2.65 million barrels per day, which was well below the 3.3 million anticipated by the government. Just to keep the operation going requires a minimum investment each year of \$3 billion; over the last three years the figure has reached barely \$2 billion. As one foreign oil-company executive told *Le Figaro* (July 12), "Chávez believes it's enough to put a soldier behind each oil well to assure production, but with oil it's not like that." This is particularly true for Venezuelan crude, which is exceptionally heavy and imposes intensive maintenance routines on the machinery. Meanwhile, PDVSA's share of production is declining vis-à-vis that of the multinationals that set up shop in the 1990s. Chávez's solution is to change the royalty arrangements agreed to a decade ago, a move to which the companies have no choice but to submit--for the moment. Over the middle and longer term the government may succeed in discouraging new investment and thus drastically reduce the size of the golden egg.

What to Do

Is Venezuela on its way to becoming another Cuba? In spite of superficial similarities and even Chávez's stated intentions, the answer is: probably not. The country is simply too informal, too disorganized, too corrupt--and too vulnerable to foreign, particularly U.S., cultural influences--to be easily pushed into a totalitarian template. Chávez has not even bothered building a political party of his own; the ranks of his regime are drawn from an undifferentiated mass of pocket-lining military officers, opportunists, and leftist ideologues. Nor is there a clear blueprint for where the president intends to take the country. Priorities change without warning, for instance, so that no cabinet minister dares miss the president's Sunday broadcasts: He may not find out what next week's agenda will be.



To be sure, none of this is cause for celebration. Chávez has plenty of money to throw around, and its effects have already been felt in nearby countries like Bolivia, where Venezuelan-funded NGOs and “indigenous” organizations recently brought down a constitutional government. “Anti-imperialist” books and magazines of a type formerly financed by Soviet embassies are suddenly reappearing in other Latin American countries. And security experts around the hemisphere are worrying aloud that some of the weaponry Chávez is buying will end up in the hands of Colombia’s FARC guerrillas or Chiapas in Mexico. Such concerns provoked secretary of state Condoleezza Rice’s South American trip this past April, intended to isolate Chávez diplomatically from his neighbors. Because the Venezuelan president uses the ballot box so successfully there is a movement afoot, presumably sponsored by our own State Department, to compel the Organization of American States to define more precisely what might represent a departure from democratic practices above and beyond the actual act of electing officials.

But it is difficult to see how such efforts can succeed. A country that supplies oil to half the hemisphere, including the United States (which relies on Chávez’s country for as much as 15 percent of its imports), cannot be, by definition, isolated. By providing cheap oil to his hard-pressed Caribbean neighbors, Chávez is now assured of support from the largest bloc of votes at the OAS. Even if this were not so, our long experience with Castro should have taught us by now that the Latins can be expected to hide under tables any time a difficult political decision shows up on the agenda. We can draw some consolation, however, from the fact that Chávez, unlike his Cuban mentor in his great days, enjoys virtually no popular support in the region, even among the Left--many of whose leaders privately refer to the Venezuelan president as a clown. If the clown feels like mindlessly lobbing cash in their direction, the Latins seem to be saying, they’d be crazy not to take it. And who can blame them? But judging by our more than half a century’s experience in these matters, you can’t buy friends. A policy that holds out more hope for us over the longer term is the effort by our National Endowment for Democracy to help nurture the Venezuelan civic organizations attempting to rebuild the country’s shattered democratic



political culture. But this cannot be accomplished overnight and certainly not wholly from the outside.

Is the United States vulnerable to a shutoff of Venezuelan oil? Chávez has lately threatened such a measure, particularly if he is the subject of an assassination plot, an invasion, or another coup attempt. In fact, he would find it extremely difficult to carry out such a threat. For one thing, Venezuelan industry is heavily oriented toward the United States and it would take at least two years to redirect it. During that time Chávez would run out of the ready cash on which he is so heavily dependent for power and popularity. Even China, which lately has become a major customer, could not absorb such a large quantity of oil immediately, and in any case, at this point Beijing lacks the ability to refine Venezuelan crude. An oil boycott of the U.S. by Chávez would simply induce other suppliers to step in and replace him in our huge and profitable market.

The United States would therefore be well advised to take a low profile on Chávez and treat his regime as an unpleasant fever that will eventually pass, which it surely will when either oil prices decline or the Venezuelan oil industry begins to fully register the effects of politicization. Most likely, both will happen. To be sure, this may take some years, perhaps even decades. The country will have wasted perhaps the equivalent of five or ten Marshall Plans and have nothing whatever to show for it at the end of the day. Venezuela will not become a better educated, more productive, more socially integrated society no matter how many billions Chávez throws at it. Moreover--again, borrowing a page from Perón's Argentina--when the great man finally does go he will leave behind him a deeply divided society and the prospect of semi-permanent political instability.

To be sure, this is a huge misfortune for Venezuela but merely a moderate inconvenience for the United States. In any case, we cannot save the country from its un wisdom and it would cost us more than it would be worth even to try. Indeed, by seeing Chávez in his proper dimension and treating him as a purely folkloric phenomenon we will go a long way toward denying him the prestige and influence he so desperately seeks. We can afford to wait until the curtain falls--inevitably and ingloriously--on Latin America's latest opéra bouffe.



China is cautious

VENECONOMY

It's no secret that President Hugo Chávez is putting his money on closer trade relations with Beijing as part of a pointed strategy aimed at eliminating Venezuela's dependence on the U.S. as an oil market. He is clearly moving his pieces in that direction.

Last week Minister/President of PDVSA Rafael Ramírez paid an official visit to China, and offered evidence of the progress made so far: the signing of several oil agreements, granting the state-owned CNPC rights to a block in Orinoco Oil Belt, a preliminary agreement for development of the Zumano fields in eastern Venezuela, and the opening of a PDVSA China commercial office in Beijing.

Nevertheless, reading between the lines of Roberto Giusti's interview with Chinese ambassador Ju Yigie (published in two installments in *El Universal* this past Sunday and Monday), it would seem that the picture may not be as bright as the Bolivarian government is painting it.

The first clue is that, so far, China has not bought a single barrel of crude oil from Venezuela. Negotiations have been limited to the purchase of small volumes of fuel oil. The second is that, for the negotiations to bear fruit, changes will have to be made to the refineries, to adapt them to Venezuelan crude, which is very different from that of the Middle East, and this will only be done provided that, as regards supply, there are "stable and sure prospects on the part of Venezuela." And, far more important, the Ambassador made clear that this interest is tied to "the levels of production and marketing of Venezuelan crude." This being the case, Venezuela will have to show more than good intentions; it will have to draw up and sell a well-defined, sustainable and credible policy for relations with the Far East if it really expects to count on China as an alternative partner.

The Ambassador said that it is up to Venezuela to define "how much production will increase" and, moreover, the country will have to "invest, improve the facilities and optimize both the technology and efficiency.



Then, once the horizon is clear, calculate how much can be sold to Japan, Korea and China.”

Another item that cannot be ignored is that, when it comes to the cost of shipping crude to China, things would not be working in Venezuela’s favor, because the far eastern countries are not willing to absorb the high cost of shipping. Therefore, switching from a neighbor like the U.S. –very close to the Venezuelan ports with the advantage of low costs and frequent trips– for another partner half way around the world would seem far from a good business deal and could work against the country.

Last of all, the Ambassador was very clear: The U.S. is China’s second largest trading partner, and China intends to keep things that way. He seems to feel that Venezuela has no need to cast off the U.S. as a trading partner. For a government that has pared investment in the industry down to the bare bones and who is always talking of distancing itself from the north, this Far Eastern challenge does not look that easy.

The Miami Herald
 Found on Miami.com

Robertson merits stronger rebuke

Question: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez said Sunday that his government would take legal action against television evangelist Pat Robertson and possibly seek his extradition for calling for Chávez’s assassination. How should the Bush administration respond? How can the U.S. retake the initiative in relations with **Venezuela**?

Answer from Donna Hrinak, member of the Advisor board and co-chair of the International Trade, Competition, and Government Affairs Practice at Steel Hector & Davis : Many people in the United States can take a consider-the-source attitude toward these latest outrageous comments. We forget that others without a knowledge of Robertson’s history are unable to be so dismissive. Further, there is no denying that Robertson has influence among his many followers and that his words carry a weight far greater than those of the average U.S. citizen and might even motivate others to act on his behalf. Accordingly, his statements merit unequivocal condemnation



from the highest levels of our government. [But] Giving Robertson more attention and spending the energies of both countries on lawsuits and extradition requests is less than either the United States or **Venezuela** deserves.

Answer by Beatrice Rangel, member of the Advisor board and president and CEO of AMLA Consulting : All the government of **Venezuela** can do is file a case against Robertson, charging him with instigation to commit a murder. Should a Venezuelan judge admit the case, which will most probably happen, as the judiciary is under government control, a trial would ensue. Alternatively, the government of **Venezuela** could sue Robertson in the United States and get an apology and probably a fine. Extradition is out of the question. President Chávez knows that and was simply preaching to his constituency that lacks knowledge in legal matters but believes anything he says. To raise the issue of extradition is politically savvy, because when it does not take place, President Chávez will tell his constituency that the Great Satan is protecting a would-be assassin. From the viewpoint of the Bush administration the best policy is oblivion.

Answer from Howard Glicken, chairman of the Americas Group : I think the time has come for the Bush administration to be more convincing in its response to Robertson's remarks. Token statements by Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld such as "assassination is against the law and not U.S. policy" and by the State Department saying "the comments were inappropriate" in my opinion fans the flames of distrust by their very tone of condescension and gives Chávez yet another opportunity to ratchet up his verbal conflict with the United States. I believe that we should use all of the global attention that this incident has brought to launch a bold new approach to **Venezuela** and the region by offering a peer to peer meeting with Chávez at the very highest level to clear the air and to put all of the issues on the table. Let's put all of this saber rattling to rest and change the image of our trying to persuade, dissuade, enforce or manipulate to one of a tone of genuine respect for the self-determination of our partners in the hemisphere. I think it is time to wash away the impression that our policy in the region is based upon the U.S. determined course of action as the only one.



Chavez's offer to US.

[Irish Times](#)

As if president George Bush did not have enough troubles at home, with soaring petrol prices after the impact of Hurricane Katrina adding to his falling popularity over Iraq, he now has to contend with a cheeky offer from an old foe, president Hugo Chavez of **Venezuela**, to sell cheap fuel to poor Americans.

The plan was announced after Mr Chavez met the radical black pastor Rev Jesse Jackson in Caracas, through whose charity networks the fuel could be channelled by a Venezuelan oil company with 10,000 outlets in the US. It comes days after the ultra-conservative US television evangelist Pat Robertson, a close political associate of Mr Bush, suggested Mr Chavez be assassinated for defying American policy. "We have the ability to take him out," he told his audience on August 22nd, "and I think the time has come that we exercise that ability. We don't need another \$200 billion war to get rid of one, you know, strong-arm dictator." Mr Chavez wants Mr Robertson to be extradited on terrorism charges to **Venezuela**. The White House says there is no legal basis for this - although it has firmly dissociated itself from Mr Robertson's outburst.

Mr Chavez can afford to make such commitments because of his country's huge oil wealth. It is now the world's fifth largest producer, with estimated cash reserves of \$31 billion; experts say its oil reserves could exceed Saudi Arabia's. This wealth has sustained Mr Chavez's flamboyant left-wing populist programme at home, where his popularity remains undimmed despite successive attempts to unseat him with US support. In fact Venezuelan oil is set to become even more important for the US if Middle Eastern supplies are affected by spreading instability from Iraq.

In recent days Mr Chavez has also offered free eye treatment to poor citizens of any country in the Western hemisphere, including up to 150,000 US citizens. Along with president Fidel Castro of Cuba he has set a target of saving the sight of 600,000 people a year for 10 years as part of a campaign against commercialised medicine. Along with the offer of cheap fuel to poorer Americans, this is an imaginative way to encourage practical solidarity and attract political sympathy at a time when Mr Chavez's star is



higher in Latin America than that of his fellow radical, president Lula da Silva of Brazil, which has been dimmed by a funding scandal.

It is an aggravating prospect for Mr Bush, whose own nationalistic rhetoric about the "war on terror" has distracted attention from growing inequalities at home. It will be interesting to see if these offers are taken up.



Bodyguards Remove Woman Who Nears Chavez

A woman who rushed up on a stage to hand President Hugo Chavez a note was pulled away by bodyguards on Tuesday, and the Venezuelan leader urged supporters to remember there have been threats against his life.

The incident occurred while Chavez was addressing thousands of supporters in a Caracas convention center.

"It's dangerous, because I'm threatened with death, so you have to understand that the security team surrounding me is on alert," Chavez told the crowd.

The incident came more than a week after the U.S. religious broadcaster Pat Robertson drew condemnation from **Venezuela's** government and others for suggesting that Chavez should be assassinated because he poses a threat to the United States.

Robertson, founder of the Christian Coalition of America, later apologized.

Chavez said the young woman who jumped up on the stage had tried to give him a note asking for help and saying she was homeless, living in the streets with her children.

Chavez told his supporters afterward "the period should pass into history in which Hugo Chavez has to be mayor, governor and has to be in charge of everything."



Before the incident, Chavez urged the crowd to calm down as some were shouting personal requests during the ceremony, which was held to announce funds for community projects.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who was in **Venezuela** this week to try and reduce tensions between the United States and **Venezuela**, toured a state-run farming cooperative and praised social programs established by Chavez.

"Those who worked on the plantation own the land now," Jackson told more than 100 workers.



Barbados To Negotiate Cheap Oil Deal With Venezuela

Barbados said Tuesday it would take **Venezuela** up on its offer to provide Caribbean countries with oil under flexible financial terms.

The announcement came two months after Barbados declined to sign the Petrocaribe agreement during a summit in **Venezuela**, saying it wanted more details. Thirteen other Caribbean countries signed and have been negotiating bilateral agreements to work out specifics.

Barbados Energy Minister Anthony Wood said his government had needed time to study how Petrocaribe would affect the country's commitments to other oil exporters, particularly neighboring Trinidad.

Although Barbados still has concerns about the original document, it will start negotiating a bilateral agreement with **Venezuela**, Wood said.

"It will have to be the best possible deal for Barbados as it relates to the security of petroleum products at a most affordable and economic price," Anthony said. "Barbados will not sign the agreement in its original form as we have numerous concerns about it."

Petrocaribe extends and improves financing arrangements under past oil deals and calls for an expanded fleet of Venezuelan tankers to deliver fuel



directly to bypass costly intermediaries. The pact intends to help small Caribbean economies cope with rising oil prices.

Trinidad also refused to sign the agreement, saying it would hurt its economic interests in the region. Trinidad provides about 60,000 barrels a day to the 15-nation Caribbean Community.



U.S. oil reserves become political swamp for Bush

By TOM RAUM

The Bush administration has signaled it is willing to tap the nation's crude oil stockpile if needed to help refiners whose supplies were disrupted by Hurricane Katrina.

If it should happen, the action wouldn't have much effect on soaring gasoline prices. As fuel costs keep rising, President George W. Bush might find himself under increasing pressure from both parties to do more.

As the shutdown of oil platforms, refineries and pipelines drove energy prices to new highs Tuesday, Bush decided to end his summer vacation on his Texas ranch and return to Washington on Wednesday to monitor hurricane recovery efforts.

Even before the massive, powerful storm ripped through the oil-rich Gulf of Mexico, White House advisers were blaming Bush's slide in the polls at least in part on high gas prices. Lawmakers home for their August recess have been getting an earful of complaints about prices at the petrol pump.

The average price for a gallon (3.8 liters) of gasoline approached or surpassed \$3 (euro2.45) in many areas, not much in many countries but unspeakably expensive to Americans.

The political reality for Bush and for the lawmakers, especially the Republicans who run both houses of Congress, is that few realistic options are available to ease prices in the short term. The storm damage joins other



factors that are relentlessly pushing up prices, including continuing war in Iraq, tensions with **Venezuela** and rising demand in China.

"In the next few months, there's no upside," said economist Mark Zandi of Economy.com, an economic consulting service. "And this winter, we're going to feel it more noticeably as people pay record gas prices and record home-heating bills."

If repairs on oil production sites take longer than expected, it could generate severe shortages of oil, gasoline and natural gas, which could threaten the U.S. economy.

The crisis draws attention to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, the nation's emergency supply of 700 million barrels of crude oil buried in salt caverns in Texas and Louisiana.

Bush is expected to authorize release of just enough oil from the reserve to help make up for production losses directly related to the powerful storm, with a stipulation that oil companies replace the oil later with a larger quantity.

With gasoline prices at their record levels and tending higher, some lawmakers want the president to go further and open the stockpile's spigots to help drive down prices.

The administration contends that would defeat the purpose of the reserve, which is to protect the nation against supply disruptions like the Arab oil embargoes of the 1970s.

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., a leading advocate of aggressively tapping the reserve, disagrees.

"We have more oil in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve than we've ever had. It's full. And using about 30 or 40 million barrels for a few months to get the prices down will not hurt us strategically," Schumer said in an interview, adding, "I think pressure will build" on Bush.



Joining Schumer in a letter to Bush urging action was Republican Sen. Olympia J. Snowe of Maine. "Now is the time to utilize our strategic reserves to soften the blow" of rising prices, she said.

Texas Republican Rep. Joe Barton, chairman of the House Energy Committee, also has urged Bush to release oil to help protect the economy.

Bush has long insisted that the reserve be used just for emergencies and not as a way to ease prices, which he accused President Bill Clinton of doing in 2000 to help Vice President Al Gore's presidential campaign.

Most policy-makers agree that there are ways to bring down prices in the long term, including production incentives like those in the Bush-backed energy bill passed by Congress last month, construction of new refineries, development of alternate fuels and various conservation measures.

With global demand soon expected to outstrip supplies, however, the path of least resistance right now for energy prices seems up.

"I wish I could just snap my fingers and lower the price of gasoline for you," Bush told an Arizona audience Monday. "The markets don't work that way. I'd be snapping if I could do it."

Frank Verrastro, director of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' energy program, said the maximum drawdown rate of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve is 4.2 million barrels a day for the first 90 days. He said that could easily cover the output lost because of the storm, estimated so far at about one million barrels a day.

The real problem is "the refining bottleneck. ... You don't just turn them back on."

American University political scientist James Thurber said that with the 2006 elections approaching, the high energy prices are a clear-cut political issue. "Whether it's a crisis or not depends on how long these high prices are sustained," he said.



Jesse Jackson Praises Social Programs In Venezuela

U.S. civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson toured a state-run farming cooperative in **Venezuela** Tuesday and praised social programs established by President Hugo Chavez as noble efforts to help the poor.

Jackson told workers at the sprawling vegetable farm that programs bringing the poor free health care and education are positive, and that the U.S. government should start more projects like those Chavez has championed.

The visit came as Jackson wrapped up a three-day visit in which he met Chavez and urged both his government and the U.S. to tone down their "hostile rhetoric," and said U.S. President George W. Bush should strongly condemn recent remarks by conservative religious broadcaster Pat Robertson calling for Chavez's assassination.

"We must make it clear that talk of isolating **Venezuela**, talk of assassinating its leader, this is unacceptable, and it must be denounced roundly by our president," Jackson told The Associated Press shortly before a meeting with Chavez.

Jackson arrived by helicopter at the farming cooperative, which was set up five months ago on land turned over to the poor as part of an agrarian reform program.

"Those who worked on the plantation own the land now," Jackson told more than 100 workers, speaking from the porch of a building used as the cooperative's office. "This is the dawn of a new day."

Jackson said good relations are in both countries' interests since **Venezuela** is a top supplier of U.S. oil.

"I hope that we've done something to facilitate a detente on threatening rhetoric," Jackson said. "We're not going to have an oil war."



Chavez offered the U.S. cheap heating oil for poor communities and said he was willing to cooperate with the U.S. in anti-drug efforts, a program he recently suspended saying U.S. drug agents were involved in spying.

"In spite of the differences and the tense relations that exist, we're always willing to continue working together with Mr. Bush's government in the fight against drugs," Chavez said, adding that it "cannot be a mask to carry out spying or violate a country's sovereignty."

"We never lose hope that we'll regain a good tone with Mr. Bush's government," added Chavez, who offered Venezuelan aid to the U.S. in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Jackson, who said it was his first visit to **Venezuela**, said he expressed concern to Chavez about a move to temporarily suspend visas for foreign missionaries in **Venezuela**.

The Interior Ministry said Monday that one-year visas for missionaries seeking to enter the country had been suspended for at least 15 days. It said the measure was aimed at "achieving improved control" and was not specifically aimed at Americans.

Chavez did not comment on the measure but said some of his enemies have directed calls for his assassination at "religious fanatics."

During his visit, Jackson said he also held talks with religious and opposition leaders.

Jesse Jackson Meets with Chavez to Repair Relations

Jane Skinner

[Fox News: The Big Story With John Gibson](#)

SKINNER: Earlier this hour, we told you about the meeting between the Reverend Jesse Jackson and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

Reverend Jackson joins us now on the phone from Caracas, **Venezuela**, with more on, what's really being termed a good-will mission.



Reverend Jackson, thank you for being here.

REV. JESSE JACKSON, RAINBOW/PUSH COALITION: Very well.

SKINNER: We know that President Chavez was very aware of the comments that Pat Robertson had made and the subsequent apology. What does he have to say about them?

JACKSON: Well, that was a very disturbing threat that was heard around the world, in part because we've had a history in this region of political assassinations in Chile, and in Guatemala and in the Congo, and so it conjured up old fears.

It was such an ugly policy, the -- President Reagan had to make it illegal, and that was -- it would have been helpful, I think, President Bush himself had made it clear and quick that that is not U.S. policy, because he and Mr. Robertson have a kinship.

I'd like to get beyond that to focus on the future. **Venezuela** and the U.S. need each other. We get a million and a half barrels of oil a day from **Venezuela**. It's the largest crude oil deposit in **Venezuela** in the world. We are four days from **Venezuela** to U.S., and four weeks from Saudi Arabia to the U.S., and so we need for very practical reasons, to in fact, diplomatically work out this problem.

Secondly, the issue of drugs. They have 1,300 miles of boarder with Colombia. Unless they're our ally in stopping the drug flow, we simply cannot win it. I would hope that we would have the kind of detente, non-hostile (ph) rhetoric to deal with issues as basic as terrorism and drug flow and access to energy.

SKINNER: Reverend Jackson, it sounds like you think you made progress diplomatically there, but do you feel that if President Chavez is acting good faith? I mean, he's the one that threw out some of our drug agents, accusing them of being spies. And the administration has said he is not a part of our war on terror.



JACKSON: Talking about diversion, after all, he was elected with 59 percent of the vote. That was a coup on his government. And within 24 hours we and the coup lost, and so there is a certain paranoia about the U.S.'s intentions in the region.

I might add when Pat Robertson gave his statement about perhaps we should just kill him, there are two contexts. One, he was just on a 15- minute tape before he gave his commentary with interviews of those who led the coups. And that Mr. Rumsfeld had been in this area of the world, saying that this government is a menace. And Robertson said, "Therefore, if that's true, let us kill him."

There's a certain biblical context to what Reverend Robertson said. I think that we take a strong diplomatic initiative now and make it clear that it's not the U.S. policy. We are in a good position now on account of cooling down of this rhetoric, after the rhetoric detente, and focus now on energy.

He wants to, for example, he wants to pump 660,000 barrels a day. He wants to send that 10 percent of that to the U.S., to low-income areas. We're going to need it. Why should be risk that by not assuming the diplomatic initiative?

SKINNER: Reverend Jackson, thank you very much for joining us here, joining us from Caracas, **Venezuela**, in the week of his meeting with Hugo Chavez, the president of **Venezuela**, a controversial figure in our country.

We should point out, though, that the State Department did say that Pat Robertson's comments were inappropriate and that our government does not share his view, for the record.

And as we go to the break here to take a quick commercial break, this is some videotape from earlier today. This really harrowing and heroic rescue by the U.S. Coast Guard there.

You can see there are children -- there were entire families trapped on the roofs of their homes in the general New Orleans area. And they were able to save dozens, if not more people today. And those rescues do continue at this hour. We'll be right back.



Chavez to target Robertson, not U.S. ; Tells Jackson he won't cut off oil to U.S.

Sharon Behn

[The Washington Times](#)

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said yesterday he would take legal action against the Rev. Pat Robertson because of his call for the leader's assassination, but he said he would not do anything to worsen his already strained relations with the United States.

"There are various levels of relationships, and we have not harmed the economic and commercial relations, and we don't want them damaged," Mr. Chavez said at a joint press conference with the visiting Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Venezuela is the fourth-largest provider of oil to the United States, and Mr. Chavez had threatened to turn off that supply if the United States made an attempt on his life or invaded.

It has become a bitter war of words between the two nations.

"When we have said some things - sometimes hard things - it has always been in response to something," Mr. Chavez said.

During Mr. Jackson's brief visit to **Venezuela**, he worked to patch up relations between Caracas and Washington.

"We have not done, nor will we do, anything to worsen or, even less, to break relations with the United States," Mr. Chavez said, even though he conceded that ties with the Bush administration had reached an "undeniable" low.

The Venezuelan leader emphasized that his country had never failed in its daily export of 1.5 million barrels of oil to the United States, and said he and Mr. Jackson were working out details of providing heating oil to the poor in the United States.



Citgo, the Venezuelan oil refining and distribution company in the United States, would be willing to set aside 10 percent of its daily refined deliveries to provide poor consumers with 66,000 barrels a day, the president said.

"We have to work out the details," he said.

Mr. Jackson said he and Mr. Chavez had reached agreement on several issues, including reviving cooperation on drug interdiction. **Venezuela** has become a major transshipment country between cocaine-producing Colombia and the United States.

Venezuela has stopped cooperation with the Drug Enforcement Administration, accusing DEA agents of spying on **Venezuela**.

"We reached agreement on each issue: to reconnect the drug agencies, to address poverty, and reaching out to churches, reaching out to Jewish communities," Mr. Jackson said.

"In spite of the differences and relationship with the Bush administration, we are willing to work with Bush in the fight against drugs," Mr. Chavez said.

But, he added, the work has to be performed transparently and not become "a mask for other operations."

The United States is suspicious of Mr. Chavez's ties to Cuban leader Fidel Castro and his desire to spread his leftist politics across Latin America. Mr. Chavez has said the Bush administration is hostile and was involved in a failed 2002 coup to oust him.

Mr. Robertson's remarks, rejected by the administration, have helped Mr. Chavez portray himself as a victim of U.S. aggression.

"We are not going to have an oil war," said Mr. Jackson. "We are going to stop the threats. ... That is what mature people do."

Caption: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez met the Rev. Jesse Jackson at the Presidential Palace in Caracas yesterday. Mr. Jackson said he and Mr. Chavez reached agreement on several issues, including reviving cooperation on drug interdiction.



US want to resume anti-drug efforts with Venezuela

[LANS English Abstracts Service](#)

United States listed Tuesday a number of areas to resume anti-drug efforts with **Venezuela**, when President Hugo Chávez expressed willingness to improve relations during the visit of US Reverend Jesse Jackson.

"We welcome renewed joint efforts to fight illicit drugs, as they were strong in the past," US Department of State Spokesman Sean McCormack said. The George W. Bush's administration wants to resume anti-drug cooperation, "including Venezuelan cooperation with (Drug Enforcement Administration) DEA," as published by El Universal newspaper.

Venezuelan officials accused of selling Citgo building in the US

At least two Venezuelan officials received in Miami "questionable payments" from a realtor in Florida to sell a building property of the Venezuelan state.

Recipients, according to press sources, were Fadel Muci, senior advisor to Citgo, the US-based subsidiary of oil-state holding Petróleos de **Venezuela** (Pdvs), and William Grillet, then administrative executive office of the Bank for Economic and Social Development (Bandes.) Building 11101, located in the Miami financial district, Brickel Avenue, was property of Bandes, the bank of the Venezuelan government.



US Interested In Resuming Venezuela Counterdrug Efforts

The U.S. would welcome a return to the once-robust counterdrug cooperation with **Venezuela**, the State Department said Tuesday, and it listed a number of areas in which the two countries could work together.

Spokesman Sean McCormack commented in response to a statement by Venezuelan President Chavez in which he said he is prepared to resume anti-drug cooperation.



Venezuela recently suspended cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, charging that DEA agents were spying on his government.

McCormack expressed interest in resuming DEA cooperation with **Venezuela**, sharing information on illicit drug trafficking by air and sea, disrupting narco-terrorist groups inside Venezuelan territory, implementing anti-money-laundering efforts and targeting drug-related corruption, among other areas.

"So there's a lot to do. And certainly, we would welcome a return to the previously robust cooperation," McCormack said.

Asked about the Rev. Jesse Jackson's discussions with Chavez in Caracas on U.S.-Venezuelan relations, McCormack said: "He's a private citizen and is free to travel."

Venezuelan offers better ties with U.S.

[EFE News Service](#)

Giovanna Ferullo.

With a prominent U.S. liberal by his side, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said he would seek to improve relations with the United States and get beyond what for months has been increasingly harsh rhetoric between Caracas and Washington.

Chavez declared Monday that he wants better relations with the United States during his meeting with U.S. Rev. Jesse Jackson in which he also confirmed his offer to provide "cheap" heating fuel to poor U.S. residents.

Chavez and the African American civil rights leader emphasized the "importance" of Venezuelan-U.S. relations and urged that both parties end the verbal clashes that have brought, according to the Venezuelan leader, "an appreciable and undeniable degree of deterioration" in bilateral relations.

Venezuela is the fifth largest exporter of crude oil in the world and the fourth largest petroleum supplier to the United States, which is Caracas' largest customer for oil and its derivatives.



"We have not done - nor are we going to do - anything to break relations with the U.S. We will continue making every effort possible to improve relations" between Caracas and Washington, Chavez said at a press conference with Jackson at his side.

The leftist populist Venezuelan leader insisted that when he has spoken "harshly" against the United States, he has done so "in response ... (to the) constant attacks" on his government by the administration of President George W. Bush.

In the interests of normalizing relations between the United States and **Venezuela**, Jackson underscored "the need for a detente in the hostile rhetoric."

Later on Monday, Chavez offered humanitarian aid to the United States to deal with the damage caused in three states by Hurricane Katrina.

"We have given instructions to our international Simon Bolivar task force, and we place it at the disposal of the U.S. people, if needed," Chavez stated.

Venezuela can "send food, potable water, fuel, humanitarian aid," he added, expressing his regret over the devastation left by the deadly storm along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

In earlier comments during Jackson's visit here, the U.S. activist had denied Bush administration allegations that Chavez was a "de-stabilizing" force in Latin America.

"There is no evidence that is stated and established that this government is in fact a source of instability," Jackson said Sunday.

At Monday's joint press conference following his meeting with Chavez, Jackson also asked Caracas to resume the joint anti-drug struggle with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and to start giving visas to U.S. missionaries again.

On that subject, Chavez said that he would restore the agreement he suspended with the DEA in early August after claiming that U.S. anti-drug



agents were "infiltrating" Venezuelan intelligence agencies in ways that "threatened the security and defense of the country."

The tensions in the relationship between the two nations began when Chavez came to power in February 1999, but it has increased substantially in recent months as both sides exchanged harsh accusations.

The U.S. criticism has focused on Chavez's alleged "totalitarian" plans for his country, while Caracas has denounced what it claimed was Washington's "imperialist and interventionist" attitude vis-a-vis **Venezuela**.

Chavez repeated to Jackson his offer to provide heating fuel at a 40 percent discount to poor people in the United States, where energy costs have moved up sharply as crude oil has reached record prices.

"We can provide up to 66,000 barrels a day (of heating fuel), without middlemen, to poor communities, hospitals, elderly care facilities, and so on," Chavez said.

The substantial price reduction can be offered, according to Chavez, because all middlemen will be eliminated from the transactions and heating fuel sales will be made directly to the poor via Citgo, the U.S. affiliate of state-run Petroleos de **Venezuela** SA, of PDVSA.

In Chavez's fuel distribution plan, civil rights organizations such as the one Jackson heads would be in charge of getting the fuel to poor communities.

The Venezuelan leader said that the cheap fuel offer was made in an attempt to include the United States in the "alternative integration project" being pushed by Caracas.

Chavez and Jackson acknowledge that the Venezuelan fuel offer was a project that "must be analyzed" and that "many technical details" remained to be worked out before it could potentially be put into operation.

Jackson, who was decorated by Chavez with **Venezuela's** Libertador award, one of the highest honors the country bestows, wound up his four-day visit



to the South American country, during which he had held meetings with political and religious officials.

Robertson: a man at odds with himself ; He's one of those people who think that if you say you're sorry, that's the end of it.

JEFFREY PAGE

[The Record](#)

By rights, this should be the last column about the Rev. Pat Robertson, but history suggests it won't be. Robertson's strange interpretation of scripture and big mouth indicate he'll soon be the subject of more reporting. The man just can't help himself.

Robertson is supposed to know the word of the Lord. Recently he put aside John 3:16 and Matthew 7:12, smiled his loopy smile into the TV camera, and with supreme ease called for the murder of the democratically elected president of **Venezuela**.

This was Robertson, the minister who is forever thundering about how badly we live our lives. Give a woman feminism, he once said, and she'll turn around and murder her children. Now he was advocating assassination.

Robertson rails about the sorry shape of the American culture. He would create a separate planet for feminists, a separate universe for gay people. But while he condemns you, you wretched feminist, and you, you sinning gay man, to live on Pluto and beyond, he says nothing about what he would do with people like himself who call for the killing of foreign leaders Robertson doesn't like.

There's no slimier form of hypocrisy.

Robertson tries to avoid criticism by telling you that he occasionally speaks with God.

But he does no such thing. For, if a mere man were to talk with God - in Robertson's case that would be the father of the Prince of Peace - and the Almighty heard that Robertson had advocated murder, the father would



whisper into Pat's eager little ear to shut his ugly little mouth and go stand in the corner. Of that there is little doubt.

It was a spectacularly unholy moment on his TV show "The 700 Club" recently when Robertson said without irony, "If he [Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez] thinks we're trying to assassinate him, I think we really ought to go ahead and do it."

Did his means for imposing Hemispheric Pax Robertsoniana sound familiar? It should have. In recent years, he called for the murders - not the trials - of Saddam Hussein, Kim Jong Il, and Osama bin Laden. When it came to those three characters, people might have been inclined to smile. But most Americans believe in the rule of law and quickly disabused themselves of fantasies about homicide.

Usually Robertson waits a couple of days and then weasels out of his outrages with an apology. He's one of those people who think that if you say you're sorry, that's the end of it.

He's running true to form this time. One day after he called for the death of Chavez - in clear violation of federal law, the laws of human morality and that little trifle known as the Sixth Commandment - Robertson said his remarks had been misinterpreted.

Misinterpreted? Read it again: "If he thinks we're trying to assassinate him, I think we really ought to go ahead and do it."

The Bush administration was disinclined to take Robertson to task and could not have been gentler in dismissing him. The State Department said his call to kill Chavez was - duh! - "inappropriate." Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said lamely, "Private citizens say all kinds of things all the time."

One more day with no one in his right mind buying Robertson's misinterpretation gambit, and Robertson apologized. But not really. "Is it right to call for assassination?" he said. "No, and I apologize for that statement." Hmmm. He was sorry for the "statement." He didn't say if he was sorry for the un-Christian thought of murder in the first place.



Robertson has a bizarre history. He has called for nuking the State Department.

In 1992, when Iowans considered inserting an equal rights amendment for women into their state constitution, Robertson said it would encourage women "to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." See what equal pay does?

And on "The 700 Club" in 2001, just days after Sept. 11, he listened as the Rev. Jerry Falwell said the attacks were partially the fault of "the pagans and the abortionists and the feminists and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way"

As Falwell stopped to take a breath, Robertson said: "I totally concur."

Then he said, "Amen."

Then he said, "Jerry, that's my feeling."

One day later, he dismissed Falwell's remarks as "totally inappropriate." This is a man at odds with himself.

It is pleasant to think that maybe America has had enough of Robertson and that there will be no more perversions of God's word from him.

But his catalogue of past outrages indicates that he will be back.

Venezuela approaches Nicaragua with crude supply proposal [El Universo](#)

President Chavez Bolivariana ideology to use **Venezuela**'s vast energy resources to captivate the Central American crude importing countries is working well into Nicaragua, with mayors of top cities as Managua, willing to import from Pdvsa around 9mil barrels per year crude for domestic distribution to 152 municipalities. Chavez irresistible offer to Nicaragua, as well as Uruguay and Cuba, is crude at lower prices and soft payment conditions. It is not discarded the creation of a mixed Nicaragua - **Venezuela**



oil company that would tackle transport, storage and distribution. One of the issues is the storage facilities in the country as controlled by Exxon, Shell, Chevron and Texaco and on a lesser extent by the local Petronic.

Venezuela X China enter hydrocarbon agreements; Rafael Urdaneta tender on time
[El Universal](#)

The Ministry of Energy & Petroleum started to receive applications from companies interested in the tender for the Rafael Urdaneta project, that includes over a first stage six natural gas blocks in the Venezuelan Gulf and Falcon Northwest. The first attempt to call this tender was put on hold, and now plans are to license winning companies until end September. Meanwhile, the Chinese CNPC has signed several agreements with the Venezuelan state run Pdvsa, but would keep them in low profile until concrete progress. CNPC has been granted rights over the 640 Km2 Junin 4 hydrocarbons block at the Faja del Orinoco, estimated to have reserves of 20mil barrels. It also and signed with PDVSA a preliminary agreement to develop fields in Zumano to develop reserves estimated at 400mil barrels of crude and 4,000mil cubic feet of gas.

Essentially the negotiations **Venezuela** - China aim at increasing crude exports from the current 70,000 bpd to 300,000 bpd over the next years with **Venezuela** accounting for 15% - 20% of the Chinese imports, estimated at around 2.45mil bpd in 2004. That would be a major change in the trading patterns of Pdvsa, that uses to export most of the output to the US market.

Venezuelan exiles differ on Chavez assassination
 MIGUEL PEREZ
[The Record](#)

Pat Robertson may have set off an international firestorm when he called for the assassination of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez last week, but among some North Jersey Venezuelans who fled their homeland because of Chavez, the television evangelist made a lot of sense.

"I agree with him," said Excenia Perica, who lives in West New York.
 "Definitely, Chavez should be eliminated. We should get rid of him as soon



as possible before he totally destroys **Venezuela** and before he exports communism to other countries."

Others counter that, as much as they would like to see Chavez removed from power, political assassinations are illegal, immoral and unacceptable.

"Definitely, what Robertson proposed is not right," said Librada Sanchez, a Venezuelan who directs the Hispanic Support Center at Union County College in Elizabeth. "Nobody, especially somebody who preaches the Christian faith, should even think of taking the life of another human being. I think it's terrible.

"I'm a Christian, and Robertson has done terrible damage to the Christian community," Sanchez added. "There is nothing logical about killing another person, not even an assassin."

Nevertheless, Robertson's comments have sparked some heated debates among Venezuelan exiles. At Ricon Taino, a Venezuelan sandwich shop in West New York, owner Maria Ester Quitian said her customers have been arguing about it all week.

"All the Venezuelans here are against Chavez," Quitian said. "And some say that it's true, that eliminating him is something that should be done. But others say that Robertson's comments were a bit too strong. They want him out of power, but not by assassination. And I agree with that."

Chavez, a strong ally of Cuban leader Fidel Castro and a harsh critic of the Bush administration, has been charging that the United States is conspiring to topple his government and is backing plots to assassinate him.

But although U.S. officials have adamantly denied the accusations, Robertson said in a Christian Broadcasting Network telecast of "The 700 Club" that the U.S. government should oblige.

"You know, I don't know about this doctrine of assassination, but if he [Chavez] thinks we are trying to assassinate him, I think that we really ought to go ahead and do it," said Robertson. "It's a whole lot cheaper than starting a war, and I don't think any oil shipments will stop."



Venezuela is the world's fifth-largest oil exporter, and the U.S. State Department has accused Chavez of using his country's oil wealth to destabilize the region.

Robertson's comments earned him worldwide condemnation from political and religious leaders. Last Wednesday, he apologized.

But in New Jersey's small Venezuelan community - just under 4,000, as of the 2000 Census - even those who don't agree with Robertson's comments noted that it sounded tempting to people whose lives have been altered by Chavez.

"There is no doubt that Robertson committed an error," said Hector Contreras, who lives in Fort Lee. "First, you don't say that publicly, and even less when you are a minister preaching Christianity. But you have to admit that a part of his argument makes some sense. He is saying that killing the man [Chavez] is a lot cheaper than going to war, like in Iraq."

Robertson had argued that "we don't need another \$200 billion war to get rid of one, you know, strong-arm dictator. It's a whole lot easier to have some of the covert operatives do the job and then get it over with."

Sanchez disagrees. "President Chavez is not a dictator," she said. "He was elected by the people and has been kept in power by the people. Maybe he has a dictatorial style. But who gets to determine which world leader should be eliminated? I believe that those who find some logic in Robertson's arguments are not thinking in democratic terms. They are the ones thinking in dictatorial and arbitrary terms. They are determining who should be eliminated in the world. And who are they to make that determination?"

But to hard-core Chavez enemies such as Perica, who came here five years ago, no punishment is enough. "Maybe instead of killing him they should kidnap him and torture him," she said. "For all the damage he has done, for all the people who have disappeared under his regime, they should make him pay while he is still alive."

Contreras said many Venezuelans are still hoping to remove Chavez from power by democratic means.



"But with Cuba there, and knowing how history repeats," he added, "every day I'm a little less confident of that."

El asesinato como arma política

[El Nuevo Herald](#)

SERGIO MUÑOZ BATA

Recurriendo a sus acostumbradas estridencias, el pastor televangelista Pat Robertson ha sugerido que Estados Unidos debería ordenar el asesinato del presidente de **Venezuela** Hugo Chávez.

Ni la cercanía del presidente Bush al movimiento evangélico ha logrado que, fuera de su secta religiosa, la ciudadanía tome en serio a quien dice que con sus plegarias cambia el rumbo de huracanes; describe el feminismo como "un movimiento político socialista, antifamiliar, que incita a las mujeres a abandonar a sus esposos, a matar a sus hijos, a practicar la brujería, a destruir el capitalismo y a volverse lesbianas"; sugiere que la explosión de una bomba nuclear en el Departamento de Estado sería la salvación del país.

Los desatinos de Robertson le han dado actualidad al viejo debate sobre la moralidad, la legalidad y la eficiencia del magnicidio. Desde una perspectiva moral, recomendar el asesinato es un acto reprobable y doblemente reprobable en el caso del pastor de una iglesia cristiana.

Reaccionando a las escandalosas sugerencias de Robertson, el secretario de la Defensa, Donald Rumsfeld, se apresuró a señalar que el asesinato de dignatarios extranjeros es "ilegal". En efecto, Estados Unidos es el único país que cuenta con una política explícita de renuncia al asesinato de líderes extranjeros, derivada de las revelaciones del Reporte Church de 1975, que recoge las investigaciones del Senado sobre las actividades de los organismos de inteligencia estadounidenses en el extranjero. Las órdenes ejecutivas de los presidentes Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter y Ronald Reagan dan sustento a la prohibición.

Según el reporte del senador Frank Church, agentes de la CIA planearon los asesinatos del congolés Patrice Lumumba y de Fidel Castro, asumiendo que la operación había sido autorizada y era legal. Contra Castro hubo ocho intentos de asesinato, incluyendo un contrato con la mafia, puros



envenenados y otros más rudimentarios. Todos fallidos. Los pistoleros de Mobutu Sesé Seko se le adelantaron a la CIA y mataron a Lumumba a golpes.

En 1960, Eisenhower aprobó un plan para "remover" al dominicano Trujillo. Al año siguiente fue baleado por disidentes armados y apoyados por la CIA. En 1961, John F. Kennedy ordenó remover al dictador iraquí Abdul Karim Qassem, quien fue derrocado antes de que la CIA llegara. El dictador vietnamita Ngo Dinh Diem murió durante un golpe de estado apoyado por la CIA. En Chile, entre los muchos esfuerzos de la CIA para desestabilizar al gobierno de Allende, quizá el más perverso previo al golpe de estado fue el apoyo a los secuestradores del general René Schneider, quienes finalmente lo asesinarían.

Quienes abogan por el uso del magnicidio destacan dos argumentos. Uno reconoce la larga tradición de la práctica y no ve razón para renunciar a ella de manera unilateral. El segundo se sustenta en el concepto de la "guerra justa", que justifica matar al líder de un país para evitar la guerra y la muerte masiva de inocentes civiles.

Del otro lado están quienes reprueban moralmente el asesinato y aducen que invita a la reciprocidad. También señalan que no siempre tiene éxito y, sobre todo, que a pesar de las evidencias al contrario, el magnicidio va en contra de los valores estadounidenses más preciados.

Chávez ofrece petróleo de calefacción barato para comunidades pobres de Estados Unidos

[El Nuevo Herald](#)

IAN JAMES

El presidente de **Venezuela**, Hugo Chávez, ofreció ayer a Estados Unidos petróleo a precios baratos para utilizarlo en la calefacción de las comunidades pobres, y declaró que estaba dispuesto a cooperar con el gobierno norteamericano en la lucha antidrogas, un programa que recientemente suspendió argumentando que los agentes antinarcóticos de Estados Unidos realizaban labores de espionaje.



"A pesar de las diferencias y las tensas relaciones existentes, siempre tendremos la disposición de trabajar juntos con el gobierno del señor Bush en la lucha contra las drogas", dijo Chávez, agregando que "no puede utilizarse como un pretexto para introducir espías ni violar la soberanía de un país".

Chávez, un cercano aliado de Fidel Castro que ha tenido enfrentamientos repetidamente con Washington, dijo que su gobierno podría ordenarle a sus refinerías Citgo Petroleum Corp. en Estados Unidos que le vendan petróleo a bajo costo directamente a las comunidades pobres del país y de este modo evitar los intermediarios y disminuir los precios.

Los detalles del plan tienen todavía que perfilarse del todo, pero Rafael Ramírez, ministro venezolano del Petróleo, dijo que espera poder iniciar el suministro de petróleo para calefacción el próximo invierno.

Chávez hizo el anuncio durante una reunión que tuvo con el reverendo Jesse Jackson, quien dijo que tenía la esperanza de reducir las tensiones que existen entre Estados Unidos y **Venezuela** después que el televangelista Pat Robertson pidió el asesinato del estadista venezolano.

El líder afroamericano de los derechos civiles le pidió a ambas partes que suavizaran su "retórica hostil", y dijo que el presidente George W. Bush debía condenar enérgicamente las declaraciones del líder conservador religioso Robertson.

Jackson señaló que los dos países tienen interés en mantener buenas relaciones, teniendo en cuenta que **Venezuela** es el principal suministrador de petróleo a Estados Unidos.

"Espero que hayamos logrado algo que disminuya todas estas amenazas", dijo Jackson. "No vamos a tener una guerra por el petróleo". De igual modo, Chávez dijo que **Venezuela** podría "ejercer sus derechos" legales como respuesta a las declaraciones de Robertson con las que pedía su asesinato. Indicó que su gobierno podría solicitarle a Estados Unidos que extradite a Robertson.



Ayer, Sean McCormack, portavoz del Departamento de Estado, dijo que **Venezuela** no parece tener una base legal sólida para reclamar la extradición de Robertson. Chávez habitualmente ha acusado al gobierno norteamericano de conspirar para sacarlo del poder y dijo que EEUU apoyó el frustrado golpe de estado del 2002. Los funcionarios estadounidenses han negado rotundamente estas declaraciones, si bien han expresado serias preocupaciones por las relaciones entre Chávez y Castro y lo que los oponentes califican como tendencias autoritarias.

"Nunca hemos perdido la esperanza de llegar a tener buenas relaciones con el gobierno de Bush", dijo Chávez, que se ofreció para enviar ayuda tras el paso devastador del huracán Katrina.



Aspero encuentro entre el presidente Chávez y sus seguidores

Miles de simpatizantes del presidente Hugo Chávez como de costumbre se concentraron para escuchar al mandatario venezolano en uno de los frecuentes actos multitudinarios organizados por el gobierno.

Pero esta vez un incidente estuvo a punto de provocar el fin abrupto de la ceremonia. Chávez fue tomado por sorpresa el martes cuando una joven mujer burló a su equipo de seguridad, subió al podio y se le echó encima, causando alarma entre los agentes que lo custodiaban, quienes entre jalones y empujones rápidamente se llevaron la mujer del lugar.

Chávez, sorprendido primero y visiblemente molestó después, reprendió severamente a sus seguidores, señalando que "debe pasar a la historia la etapa en la que Hugo Chávez tiene que ser alcalde, gobernador y tiene que estar encargado de todo".

Minutos después ya más calmado, el jefe de estado recordó a los cerca de 15.000 partidarios que colmaban el Poliedro de Caracas --un gigantesco centro de espectáculos ubicado en el suroeste de la ciudad-- sus denuncias de que existen planes para asesinarlo y que en consecuencia se exponen a ser lastimados al incurrir en actos de "indisciplina".



"Es peligroso, porque yo estoy amenazado de muerte. Tienen que entender que el equipo de seguridad que me rodea anda alerta, entonces una persona que llegue corriendo, puede generar (en los agentes) una respuesta violenta", enfatizó.

"Ustedes saben que a mi me quieren matar, esto no es cuento", comentó.

El mandatario venezolano ha denunciado desde el inicio de su mandato, en 1999, varios planes de magnicidio y repetidamente ha acusado al gobierno estadounidense de promover un complot para derrocarlo, incluso matarlo e invadir **Venezuela**. El Departamento de Estado ha rechazado las alegaciones.



OEA pide a Venezuela y EEUU normalizar relaciones bilaterales

La Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) pidió el martes a **Venezuela** y a Estados Unidos que normalicen sus deterioradas relaciones bilaterales a través del diálogo.

"Estamos (...) a tiempo de normalizar la situación, en la medida en que se baje un poco la retórica que se ha producido entre los gobiernos de **Venezuela** y Estados Unidos", dijo el secretario general de la OEA, el chileno José Miguel Insulza.

Las relaciones entre Caracas y Washington se deterioraron de manera progresiva desde que Hugo Chávez asumió la presidencia en 1998 e introdujo reformas de corte populista, que según el ex militar buscan mejorar la vida de los millones de pobres que habitan en **Venezuela**.

Estados Unidos dice que Chávez, quien en abril del 2002 sobrevivió a un derrocamiento, es una amenaza para la estabilidad regional.

Pero el líder de 51 años acusa a Estados Unidos de apoyar los intentos de sus enemigos de derrocarlo y asesinarlo.



"Nosotros somos partidarios del diálogo para resolver los problemas entre países, Estados Unidos y **Venezuela** tienen una cantidad enorme de intereses comunes. No olvidemos la envergadura en materia de petróleo y en otros aspectos", declaró Insulza en Bogotá, donde se entrevistó con el presidente colombiano Alvaro Uribe.

El secretario de la OEA celebró el anuncio de Chávez de que está dispuesto a restablecer la cooperación con Washington en la lucha contra el narcotráfico, luego que el mandatario venezolano la suspendió.

"Creo que es fundamental que trabajemos todos en eso (la lucha antidrogas). Es una buena noticia, estoy contento de eso y ojalá sea posible", aseguró Insulza.

El secretario general de la OEA concluyó el martes su primera visita a Colombia, en la que analizó el proceso de paz que mantiene el gobierno de Uribe con los escuadrones paramilitares de ultraderecha, que cuenta con el respaldo de la organización.

Insulza se declaró optimista de la negociación en medio de la que más de 9.000 combatientes de esos escuadrones ilegales armados que combaten a la guerrilla izquierdista entregaron las armas y se reintegraron a la vida civil y dijo que "el proceso está bien encaminado".

La negociación de paz fue cuestionada por grupos de derechos humanos como Human Rights Watch, que aseguran que abre paso a la impunidad porque la ley aprobada por el Congreso sólo establece penas de entre cinco y ocho años de cárcel para los jefes paramilitares acusados de delitos atroces como asesinatos, masacres, secuestros y desapariciones.

Litigio saca a la luz cuestionables comisiones a funcionarios de Chávez

By GERARDO REYES

[El Nuevo Herald](#)

Al menos dos altos funcionarios públicos de **Venezuela** recibieron pagos cuestionables de la firma de bienes raíces de la Florida seleccionada para poner en venta un edificio de la Avenida Brickell, propiedad del gobierno de



ese país, según se desprende de declaraciones bajo juramento de directivos de dicha firma en una corte estatal de Miami.

De acuerdo con los testimonios, los beneficiarios de los pagos fueron Fadel Muci, asesor del presidente de Citgo, la filial en Estados Unidos de Petróleos de **Venezuela** (Pdvs) y William Grillet, quien para la época se desempeñaba como vicepresidente de administración del oficial Banco de Desarrollo Económico y Social de **Venezuela** (Bandes).

El edificio era propiedad de Bandes. En la actualidad Grillet es intendente operativo de la Superintendencia de Bancos de **Venezuela**.

En una declaración jurada, Ray Barreth, presidente de la firma inmobiliaria Barreth Business Group (BBG), reconoció que pagó alrededor de \$1.4 millones a Muci por actividades de "cabildeo" en **Venezuela** y otras gestiones que Muci realizó a fin de que BBG fuera escogida en el 2004 como intermediaria en la venta del edificio.

Sin embargo, la figura legal del cabildeo no existe en **Venezuela** y la legislación anticorrupción de ese país penaliza la conducta de funcionarios que acepten dinero por hacer gestiones ante el Estado para favorecer intereses particulares.

También bajo juramento, Peggy Linares, jefa del proyecto de la venta del edificio en BBG y representante para América Latina de la firma, aseguró que Grillet recibió una parte no determinada aún de la suma que se le entregó a Muci por haber logrado que el gobierno de **Venezuela** adjudicara el contrato.

"La corrupción ha desbordado las fronteras de **Venezuela**", dijo Linares en su declaración.

Por su intermediación inmobiliaria, la firma recibió en mayo de este año \$2.8 millones, de los cuales un 50 por ciento fue girado a Muci, según declaró Barreth.

El motivo de los pagos ha sido objeto de continuos cuestionamientos del abogado de Linares, Martin A. Feigenbaum.



El mes pasado Feigenbaum sometió a Barreth a un intenso interrogatorio sobre la posible ilegalidad del pago a Muci.

"¿No le despertó a usted sospechas que, al no saber si él [Muci] era o no un empleado del gobierno de **Venezuela** y con una compañía offshore en un paraíso financiero; no se le levantó una bandera roja a usted, como corredor de bienes raíces con licencia en la Florida [que le permitiera] asegurarse de que no iba a violar alguna ley, ya fuera de la Florida o de otro país?", preguntó el abogado Feigenbaum.

Barreth respondió que no lo consideró ilegítimo.

"El [Muci] está perfectamente en capacidad de recibir [la comisión] bajo la ley de la Florida", dijo Barreth, según la transcripción del careo obtenida por El Nuevo Herald.

"El es un consultor activo, que trabaja como tal en **Venezuela**... la ley de **Venezuela** le permite recibir una comisión, así que nosotros estamos autorizados para pagarle", agregó

Respecto a la posición que Muci tenía en **Venezuela**, Barreth dijo que siempre confió en Linares, la jefa del proyecto, por ser ella quien llevó a Muci a la oficina y lo presentó como un "enlace" entre el banco y el gobierno que se movía ``entre telones, cabildeando en favor de nosotros y ayudándonos en la preparación de los documentos".

Sin embargo, Barreth admitió que, a pesar de haber cedido a Muci la mitad de la comisión, no se molestó en averiguar si trabajaba o no para el gobierno de **Venezuela** y nunca elaboró un documento en el que se describieran las características del trabajo desarrollado por el venezolano.

Barreth envió el pago desde una cuenta suya en Northern Trust Bank a una compañía offshore de Muci localizada probablemente en Cayman Island, según explicó en su testimonio.

Durante el interrogatorio, rendido el 25 de julio, Barreth no recordó con precisión el monto de la comisión que le pagó a Muci como consultor y dio la impresión de no tener mayor información sobre el funcionario venezolano



"¿Cuánto recibió él [Muci]?", indagó Feigenbaum.

"No lo sé de memoria con seguridad, pero [pudo ser] un millón, quinientos, seiscientos, setecientos mil dólares, algo así", respondió Barreth

"¿Y Muci es un agente de bienes raíces o un vendedor bajo la ley de la Florida?", le preguntó el abogado

"No, no lo es", contestó Barreth.

"¿Dónde reside?", inquirió Feigenbaum.

"Presumo que en **Venezuela**", indicó Barreth.

"¿Usted no está seguro?", insistió el abogado.

"No, no estoy seguro", dijo Barreth.

En una declaración posterior, Barreth reconoció que Muci trabaja para Pdvsa y aseguró que no consideraba necesario establecer si tenía o no vínculos con el gobierno venezolano al momento de recibir el pago.

Al ser contactado por El Nuevo Herald, Feigenbaum dijo que no considera apropiado, en esta etapa del litigio, hacer comentarios sobre el caso.

Gary Nagle, abogado de Barreth no respondió llamadas de El Nuevo Herald a su oficina en Juno Beach, Florida.

Tanto Barreth como Linares coincidieron en sus testimonios que la participación de Muci y de Grillet fue fundamental para ganarse el contrato.

"Estuvo con nosotros desde el principio", dijo Barreth al referirse a Muci.

Muci ingresó a Citgo a finales del 2003 como asesor del presidente de la compañía, informó el representante de prensa Fernando Garay. Llegó con la nueva administración de Luis Marín, agregó.



El contrato de intermediación inmobiliaria fue adjudicado a BBG en noviembre del 2004 y Barreth le giró la comisión a Muci en mayo del presente año, según su propio testimonio.

Muci no respondió llamadas hechas por El Nuevo Herald a su oficina en Houston.

Grillet tampoco devolvió las llamadas a su oficina en Caracas.

Durante el interrogatorio, Barreth reconoció haberle preguntado a Grillet si él había recibido un porcentaje del millonario pago a Muci. Según Barreth, Grillet negó esa posibilidad.

Situado en el 1101 de Brickell Avenue, el edificio de dos torres fue finalmente vendido por \$70 millones a Leviev & Boymelgreen. En el litigio civil de Linares vs. Barreth en Miami no se ha cuestionado esta adjudicación.

A pesar de que las ofertas de las firmas inmobiliarias que aspiraban al contrato eran secretas, Barreth indicó que se enteró de objeciones que Bandes señaló del monto de la comisión exigida por su empresa en la propuesta.

Es más, agregó, BBG tuvo la posibilidad de enmendar su oferta y reducir la comisión.

Mientras en Bandes se estudiaba la propuesta, BBG ofreció cenas y atenciones a Grillet en Miami, incluyendo un paseo en el catamarán de Barreth.

La relación entre BBG y Muci era tan estrecha que la firma inmobiliaria terminó asesorándolo en inversiones personales de propiedad raíz en la Florida, agregó Barreth.



ADMITE HUGO CHAVEZ QUE LE ES IMPOSIBLE ATENDER TODO EN VENEZUELA

[Agencia Mexicana de Noticias, NOTIMEX](#)

El presidente de **Venezuela**, Hugo Chávez, admitió hoy que le es imposible resolver todos los problemas sociales que aquejan al país, por lo que le pidió "paciencia" a la ciudadanía, ya que "yo no puedo encargarme de todo".

"Yo no puedo encargarme de todo, tienen que entender eso", dijo Chávez en respuesta a una mujer que interrumpió este martes un acto del Encuentro Nacional de Comités de Tierras Urbanas, para expresarle a gritos sus demandas al gobernante.

Ante la sorpresiva interrupción, el militar retirado afirmó que "si cada quien va a venir aquí corriendo a pegar gritos y a entregar papeles, yo suspendo el evento y entonces buscamos otro momento para hacerlo".

"Cualquier solicitud individual debe ser atendida, pero yo debo concentrarme en el evento, me entienden, entonces yo les pido paciencia a los que tengan problemas individuales, bueno, que los planteen ante los organismos correspondientes", agregó.

El jefe de Estado advirtió, sin embargo, que "tiene que pasar a la historia la etapa en la que Hugo Chávez tiene que ser alcalde, gobernador, y tiene que estar encargado de todo, yo no puedo encargarme de todo, ustedes tienen que entender eso".

Recordó además a los asistentes al encuentro de este martes, que se realizó en el Poliedro de Caracas, que "hay que tener disciplina en estos eventos" y aquellos que tengan problemas graves deben saber canalizar sus demandas de forma apropiada.

"Hay que ir madurando, este es un acto colectivo, yo no vine a hacer atenciones particulares, yo no puedo desdoblarme en dos", añadió Chávez.

Explicó que la mujer que lo interrumpió, violando el anillo de seguridad, "se llama Damarys y está desempleada, con cuatro hijos y viviendo en la calle", por lo que anunció que pasará su caso a las autoridades competentes.



Advirtió que la actitud que ella tuvo fue peligrosa "porque yo estoy amenazado de muerte, ustedes me tienen que entender que el equipo de seguridad que me rodea anda alerta".

La seguridad en torno al mandatario se reforzó después de que el pastor estadounidense Pat Robertson sugirió la semana pasada en el programa televisivo, Club 700, de la cadena ABC, el asesinato de Chávez.

"Desconozco esa doctrina del asesinato, pero si él (Chávez) piensa que estamos tratando de asesinarlo, creo que realmente deberíamos hacerlo. Es mucho más barato que iniciar una guerra, y no creo que se suspenda ningún suministro de petróleo", aseveró Robertson en esa ocasión.



Canal Telesur busca difundir su señal en México

Telesur, el canal de televisión latinoamericano impulsado por el presidente venezolano Hugo Chávez para combatir el "imperialismo cultural", se encuentra conversando con operadores de cable y gobiernos estatales para aterrizar en México.

Telesur, una iniciativa creada por los gobiernos de **Venezuela**, Cuba, Argentina y Uruguay, busca además abrir una corresponsalía y producir programas en tierras aztecas, dijo Aram Aharonian, director general del canal.

La señal comenzó a emitirse en julio con el objetivo de producir contenidos regionales, difundir información con un punto de vista latinoamericano y competir contra las grandes cadenas estadounidenses.

"Los planes en México son muy amplios, tienen que ver con la producción mexicana, tanto de documentales como de información, tiene que ver con la difusión de la señal", dijo a Reuters Aharonian.

De paso por la nortea ciudad de Monterrey para participar en un seminario de la Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano (FNPI), que preside el



escritor colombiano Gabriel García Márquez, Aharonian dijo que espera que en un mes Telesur se pueda comenzar a ver en México.

El canal está en conversaciones con distintos operadores de cable, televisoras universitarias y con organismos públicos para negociar un acuerdo de difusión de la señal.

RAPIDA DEFINICION

"Esperamos que en un mes podamos tener definiciones al respecto y después empezaremos una campaña en cada uno de los estados (...) tratando que la difusión de la señal sea la más amplia posible", dijo Aharonian. "México va retomando su mirada hacia el sur, aunque todavía sigue mirando hacia el norte".

La corresponsalía de Telesur en México podría comenzar a funcionar dentro de un mes.

La independencia de Telesur ha sido cuestionada por la relación con los gobiernos de Chávez y del líder cubano Fidel Castro, pero Aharonian pidió a la gente que le de una oportunidad a la iniciativa.

A fines de julio, un ministro y estrecho colaborador de Chávez, Andrés Izarra, fue designado presidente del canal.

También en ese mes, la cámara de representantes de Estados Unidos aprobó una enmienda que autoriza a Washington a hacer transmisiones por radio y TV que contrarresten el "anti americanismo" de Chávez, crítico del gobierno estadounidense.

"Desde antes de conocernos intentaron desacreditarnos. Quizá era obvio (...) la meta no puede ser Telesur, sino la democratización del espectro televisivo con 5, 10, 15, 20 canales latinoamericanos que puedan ser alternativa a todo ese bombardeo que viene desde norte", dijo Aharonian.



Da Presidencia bienvenida a Telesur dentro de la ley [El Universal](#)

El gobierno de México dio hoy la "bienvenida" a Telesur, el canal que impulsa el presidente venezolano Hugo Chávez como una alternativa latinoamericana a otras cadenas internacionales, siempre que cumpla la ley local.

"La posición de la Presidencia es que siempre que se cumpla con la ley y se mantenga en el ámbito de lo que nuestras instituciones y leyes señalan, pues será bienvenido", afirmó hoy el portavoz de la Presidencia, Rubén Aguilar.

Subrayó que México es un país abierto y democrático y que la "única exigencia" es que la nueva iniciativa periodística "sea en el marco de las leyes y de acuerdo a nuestros reglamentos".

El vicepresidente de Telesur, el periodista uruguayo Aram Aharonian, anunció recientemente en México que están en conversaciones con varios canales de televisión por cable para iniciar sus transmisiones en el país en septiembre.

La llegada de Telesur no ha estado exenta de polémica y ayer lunes un grupo de renombrados periodistas latinoamericanos reunidos en un seminario en Monterrey, en el norte de México, señalaron que el proyecto de Chávez sólo tendrá éxito si se maneja con autonomía periodística por "estatuto" frente a su Estado patrocinador.

El seminario fue organizado por la Fundación para un Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano (FNPI), que encabeza el Premio Nobel de Literatura en 1982 Gabriel García Márquez.

Telesur, con sede en Caracas, comenzó a transmitir vía satélite el 24 de julio con financiación de **Venezuela**, Cuba, Uruguay y Argentina.



China está cauta

VENECONOMIA

Para nadie es un secreto que el presidente Hugo Chávez está jugando a estrechar sus relaciones comerciales con Beijing en su clara estrategia de romper la dependencia de Venezuela con los EE.UU. en materia petrolera. Y es evidente que está moviendo las fichas en ese sentido.

La semana pasada el ministro/ presidente de PDVSA Rafael Ramírez visitó oficialmente a la China y dejó evidencias de los avances realizados hasta ahora: la firma de varios acuerdos petroleros, el otorgamiento a la estatal CNPC de derechos sobre un bloque de la Faja Petrolífera del Orinoco, un acuerdo preliminar para desarrollar campos en Zumano, en la región oriental de Venezuela, y la apertura de una oficina comercial de PDVSA China en Beijing.

Sin embargo, en la entrevista de Roberto Giusti al Embajador chino, Ju Yigie (publicada en dos partes en El Universal del domingo y lunes) se pueden extraer algunas lecturas que indicarían que los avances no son tantos como intenta vender el gobierno bolivariano.

La primera es que hasta la fecha China no ha comprado un solo barril de petróleo crudo a Venezuela. Las negociaciones sólo se han limitado a la compra de volúmenes menores de fuel oil. Pero además informa que para concretar las negociaciones se deberán hacer cambios en las refinerías para adaptarlas al crudo venezolano, el cual es muy diferente al del Medio Oriente, y esto lo harían siempre y cuando se mantengan "las perspectivas, estables y seguras, por parte de Venezuela" de suministro. Y mucho más importante, aclaró que ese interés está relacionado con "los niveles de producción y comercialización del crudo venezolano". Siendo así, Venezuela deberá demostrar más que buenas intenciones, y deberá elaborar y vender una política bien definida, sostenida y creíble de relaciones con el Lejano Oriente si de verdad quiere tener como socio alternativo a China.

El Embajador afirmó que Venezuela es quien deberá definir cuál será "el aumento de la producción"; además, tendrá que "invertir, mejorar las instalaciones y optimizar tanto tecnología como eficiencia. Luego, una vez



claro el horizonte, calcular cuánto se puede comercializar con Japón, Corea y China".

Algo que no se puede dejar de lado es que, en cuanto a costos de transporte del crudo a China, Venezuela no las tendrá de ningún modo consigo, y es que los orientales no están dispuestos a absorber el costo del alto flete. Por lo tanto, cambiar a un vecino como los EE.UU. -muy cercano al puerto venezolano, y por tanto con bajos costos de transporte y frecuencia de viajes- por otro aliado a miles de kilómetros, luce por lo menos como un pésimo negocio que irá en perjuicio de la República.

Por último, el Embajador habló muy claro: EE.UU. es el segundo socio comercial de China, y tienen intenciones de que ello continúe igual. También duda que Venezuela tenga necesidad de descartar a los EE.UU. como aliado comercial.

Para un gobierno que ha llevado la inversión en la industria a niveles subterráneos y que pregona su deseo de distanciarse del norte, el reto que le plantea el Lejano Oriente luce difícil.



APPEL AU MEURTRE - Chavez demande aux Etats-Unis d'agir

Le président vénézuélien Hugo Chavez s'est déclaré prêt à dénoncer les Etats-Unis devant l'ONU s'ils ne prenaient pas des mesures contre Pat Robertson.

Le président vénézuélien Hugo Chavez a menacé dimanche 28 août de dénoncer les Etats-Unis devant les organismes internationaux s'ils ne faisaient rien contre le pasteur Pat Robertson, qui a proposé la semaine dernière de l'assassiner. "Si le gouvernement américain ne prend pas les mesures qu'il doit prendre, nous irons à l'Onu et à l'OEA pour dénoncer le fait que le gouvernement des Etats-Unis protègent un terroriste qui a lancé un appel pour assassiner un président", a déclaré Hugo Chavez. "J'ai donné instruction à notre ministre des Affaires étrangères et à l'ambassadeur à Washington pour tenter un procès. Le **Venezuela** pourra demander l'extradition de ce pasteur grâce aux conventions internationales", a ajouté le



président vénézuélien qui considère que les Etats-Unis "devraient le mettre en prison pour faire un exemple".

Appel au meurtre

Mardi 23 août, le célèbre télévangéliste américain Pat Roberson avait créé une vive émotion en appelant à assassiner le président Chavez, des propos immédiatement qualifiés de "déplacés" par Washington. L'élimination physique de Chavez "coûterait beaucoup moins cher que de lancer une guerre", avait expliqué le prédicateur, avant de prononcer des excuses le lendemain tout en poursuivant ses diatribes anti-Chavez.

Le Monde

L'harmonisation Internationale a beaucoup de mal à voir le jour

BIEN QUE la sécurité aérienne soit, par définition, un problème international, il revient à chaque pays d'élaborer ses règles. Or celles-ci varient considérablement.

Allemagne. Le ministère allemand des transports a décidé de ne pas publier la liste des compagnies interdites. Cependant, explique un porte-parole, le gouvernement " soutient les efforts de la Commission européenne » en vue de parvenir à une liste européenne qui permette de fournir aux consommateurs une information " unique et transparente » à même de rassurer le public. Si l'Allemagne ne souhaite pas publier une liste isolée, c'est sans doute pour tirer les conséquences des tensions nées en mai lorsqu'elle avait été parmi les pays qui avaient retiré son autorisation de vol à la compagnie charter turque Onur Air alors que la Belgique avait continué à autoriser ses vols.

Outre-Rhin, c'est l'Office du transport aérien (Luftfahrt-Bundesamt, LBA) qui est chargé du contrôle des compagnies et des autorisations de vol. En 2004, le LBA a retiré l'autorisation d'opérer en Allemagne à trois compagnies étrangères et à quatre appareils. Le LBA a aussi mené, en 2004, quelque 1 426 contrôles surprises. Dans 94 % des cas, les avions satisfaisaient aux normes internationales et dans 6 % des cas des



manquements ont été relevés et signalés aux autorités des pays concernés. Dans 18 cas, les appareils ont été interdits de décollage.

Belgique. Le ministère belge des transports devait mettre en ligne, lundi 29 août, une liste noire des compagnies aériennes. Celle-ci devrait comprendre celles qui ont connu des difficultés sur le territoire belge ou ont déjà été frappées d'interdiction. Elle ne devrait pas viser des Etats en tant que tels, afin de pas susciter de problèmes diplomatiques, a indiqué un porte-parole du ministère. Le ministre de la mobilité, Renaat Landuyt, affirme être partisan d'une harmonisation européenne. La Belgique opère un revirement après avoir fait bande à part, il y a quelques semaines, dans l'affaire Onur Air : interdite aux Pays-Bas, puis en France et dans d'autres pays, la compagnie turque avait pu dérouter une partie de son trafic vers Bruxelles-National, où l'on ne trouvait rien à lui reprocher.

Italie. L'Italie ne compte pas publier la liste des compagnies aériennes qui ne respectent pas les normes de sécurité car, selon le ministre des transports, Pietro Lunardi, il s'agit d'un exercice inutile. L'Italie a sa liste " blanche », celle des compagnies aériennes autorisées à voler dans son espace aérien après avoir répondu à toutes les conditions de sécurité prévues. " Dans notre pays, si une compagnie ne répond pas aux normes de sécurité, elle ne vole pas. Voilà pourquoi il n'y a pas besoin d'une liste noire, c'est-à-dire d'une liste des compagnies peu fiables. Si une compagnie n'est pas fiable, elle ne vole pas », a expliqué le ministre dans des entretiens récents. Impossible de connaître donc le nom des 12 compagnies, devenues 6 après de nouveaux contrôles réalisés par l'Autorité nationale de l'aviation civile (Enac).

Suisse. Jusqu'à présent, touristes et agences de voyage suisses pouvaient demander à l'Office fédéral de l'aviation civile (OFAC) si des compagnies bien précises figuraient sur sa liste, qu'elle gardait dans son ensemble secrète. L'OFAC, dont les contrôles sont réputés parmi les plus stricts en Europe, a annoncé son intention de publier sur son site Internet, le 1^{er} septembre, le nom des compagnies étrangères interdites sur son territoire. Une décision conjointe entre le ministre des transports suisse, Moritz Leuenberger, et son homologue français, Dominique Perben. En 2004, lors du crash de son appareil à Charm el-Cheikh, la compagnie égyptienne Flash Airlines était interdite en Suisse depuis 2002. L'OFAC avait alors publié une liste de sept appareils figurant sur sa liste noire.



Etats-Unis. Les autorités de l'aviation civile américaines (FAA) établissent, depuis 1992, une liste d'une centaine de pays dont les autorités se conforment, ou non, aux règles internationales. La catégorie 2, celle des pays où les contrôles sont jugés insuffisants, met notamment en cause l'Argentine, le Belize, la Bulgarie, la Côte d'Ivoire, la République démocratique du Congo, le Nicaragua, le Paraguay et le **Venezuela**. Des pays qui, pour la plupart, n'assurent pas de liaisons avec les Etats-Unis.

PRIME-TASS
economic news agency

Во вторник на NYMEX был зафиксирован рекордный уровень закрытия фьючерсов на нефть - 69,81 долл за баррель

Котировки фьючерсов на нефть и нефтепродукты на торгах на Нью-йоркской товарной бирже /NYMEX/ во вторник установили новые рекорды закрытия на фоне лихорадочных покупок, спровоцированных опасениями относительно последствий урагана "Катрина". Об этом сообщает Dow Jones.

"Я думаю, что ущерб от урагана, вероятно, окажется намного значительнее, чем ожидалось", - сказал Майкл Гидо, директор стратегического отдела по товарно-сырьевым рынкам в нью-йоркском отделении Societe Generale.

По его словам, нефтеперерабатывающей отрасли был нанесен ущерб "такого же порядка, как от крупной террористической атаки, может быть, даже более значительный". "Кто может сказать, когда ситуация нормализуется? Вероятно, это займет не недели, а месяцы", - сказал Гидо.

Котировки октябрьских фьючерсов на легкую малосернистую сырую нефть на NYMEX выросли на 2,61 долл до нового рекордного уровня закрытия – 69,81 долл за баррель. Росту цен на нефть способствовали опасения о сокращении поставок после урагана, пронесшегося в понедельник над побережьем Мексиканского залива. В ходе торгов цены на нефть поднимались до нового максимума 70,85 долл за баррель.



Котировки фьючерсов на последующие месяцы поставок с ноября 2005 г по апрель 2006 г превысили цены на октябрьские фьючерсы. Цена на фьючерсы со сроком исполнения в марте 2006 г выросла до 70,11 долл за баррель, что указывает на усиливающиеся опасения о возможности нехватки поставок.

В ходе торгов на Международной нефтяной бирже в Лондоне /IPE/ во вторник котировки октябрьских фьючерсов на нефть марки Brent также выросли до нового рекордного уровня, приблизившись к 69 долл за баррель. На момент закрытия торгов цена на эти фьючерсы установилась на уровне 67,57 долл за баррель, что на 2,70 долл выше по сравнению с предыдущей сессией.

Котировки сентябрьских фьючерсов на бензин и топочный мазут, которые истекают в среду, выросли в ходе торгов на NYMEX до новых рекордов, а в конце дня достигли рекордного уровня закрытия.

Котировки сентябрьских фьючерсов на бензин выросли на 41,39 цента до 2,4745 долл за галлон после роста до внутридневного максимума 2,50 долл за галлон.

Котировки сентябрьских фьючерсов на топочный мазут повысились на 16,71 цента до 2,0759 долл за галлон после роста до внутридневного максимума 2,09 долл за галлон.

На IPE котировки сентябрьских фьючерсов на газойль повысились на 28 долл до 623,50 долл за тонну.

Рост цен на бензин во вторник был таким резким, что торги на NYMEX были приостановлены на пять минут, а затем на нефтяном рынке продолжился рост.

Точных данных о состоянии нефтеперерабатывающих предприятий на побережье Мексиканского залива во вторник было очень мало, поскольку многие компании, работающие в этом регионе, не могут попасть на свои объекты, чтобы полностью оценить масштабы ущерба.



"Учитывая риск занижения размеров ущерба, нанесенного морским нефтяным платформам в Мексиканском заливе, я сконцентрировал все внимание на НПЗ, которые пока не подают признаков возобновления работы", - сказал Джим Риттербуш, глава консалтинговой компании в области энергетики Ritterbusch & Associates /Иллинойс/. "Наиболее важным продуктом остается бензин", - сказал Риттербуш, отметив высокий спрос на топливо, а также сокращение коммерческих запасов бензинов в США, отмечавшееся в течение восьми недель подряд еще до урагана "Катрина".

По данным Управления энергетической информации Министерства энергетики США, за прошедшую неделю розничные цены на бензин в США составили в среднем 2,61 долл за галлон. Однако, по оценкам Американской автомобильной ассоциации /American Automobile Association - AAA/ рост на наличном рынке, наблюдавшийся на текущей неделе, повысил вероятность безудержного роста цен на бензин.

На фоне перебоев в работе трубопроводов, которые негативно отражаются на доступности топлива, а также на фоне продолжающихся сбоев в работе НПЗ, розничные цены на бензин могут взлететь до трех долларов за галлон, считают в ассоциации.

Некоторые наблюдатели во вторник говорили о том, что после урагана "Катрина" розничные цены на бензин еще до конца года могут вырасти до 5 долл за галлон.

Тем временем, объем добычи нефти и газа в Мексиканском заливе сократился еще значительно.

Как минимум одно нефтеперерабатывающее предприятие, пострадавшее от урагана "Катрина", подало заявку в Министерство энергетики с просьбой выделить резервы из Национального стратегического запаса нефти. Представитель министерства Крэйг Стивенс сообщил, что в настоящее время этот запрос рассматривается, однако не назвал компанию, подавшую заявку.



Представитель компании Citgo Petroleum сообщил в понедельник о том, что его компания хотела бы получить займы из стратегического запаса до 500 тыс баррелей легкой высокосернистой сырой нефти до восстановления нормального объема поставок. Citgo является хьюстонской дочерней компанией Petroleos de **Venezuela**.

По данным Службы управления минеральными ресурсами США, по состоянию на вторник из-за урагана "Катрина" объем добычи нефти в Мексиканском заливе сократился на 95,2 проц или на 1,427 млн баррелей в день, что на 3,45 проц пункта выше по сравнению с понедельником.

Объем добычи газа сократился на 87,9 проц или на 8,8 млрд кубических футов в день, что на 4,9 проц пункта выше по сравнению с понедельником.

В целом, по официальным данным, после урагана объем добычи нефти в заливе сократился на 4,635 млн баррелей, а объем добычи газа – на 25,4 млрд кубических метров.

В связи с приближением урагана в Новом Орлеане и штате Миссисипи были закрыты восемь НПЗ, и точные данные о состоянии этих предприятий, вероятно, появятся не раньше конца этой недели. Объем перерабатывающих мощностей закрытых НПЗ составлял около двух миллиона баррелей в день, или 12 проц от общего объема нефтеперерабатывающих мощностей в США.

Согласно среднему прогнозу 10 аналитиков, опрошенных Dow Jones Newswires, в среду Управление энергетической информации Министерства энергетики США сообщит о сокращении запасов бензина на 1,63 млн баррелей.

Запасы нефти, по оценкам аналитиков, выросли за неделю, закончившуюся 26 августа, на 530 тыс баррелей, а запасы дистиллятов увеличились на 1,24 млн баррелей.

Загруженность нефтеперерабатывающих мощностей, по прогнозам, выросла на 0,45 проц пункта до 93,85 проц от объема



нефтеперерабатывающих мощностей. В то же время, эксперты считают, что в дальнейшем картина, скорее всего, изменится в связи с последствиями урагана "Катрина".