



The Americas Report

From the Menges Hemispheric Security Project
Center for Security Policy

Vol. 3 - Issue 19 – June 7, 2007

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

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

Highlighted Story – [RCTV: Dictatorship Chávez style](#). By Nicole M. Ferrand.*

At last and sadly for those who believe in Democracy and who have been trying to alert the world of the dangers of the Hugo Chávez Regime, Venezuela is now a dictatorship. If someone had any doubts, the closing of RCTV is enough proof of the intolerance of the Chávez government.

Although the news has received worldwide condemnation from the European Parliament, the Chilean Congress, press freedom groups, the US and leaders from many countries who have urged Chávez to reverse the closure, their plea fell on deaf ears because, as he himself declared just recently: **"It's over...Say what they say, do what they do, howl where they want, the license will not be renewed."**¹ Although it has become a hot topic of the international press, US TV stations and the media in general have demonstrated poor coverage of the Venezuelan situation.

What has really surprised many observers is Brazil's response. Even though Lula has been an ally of Hugo Chávez for a long time, that didn't stop the Brazilian Senate from condemning Venezuela's refusal to renew the license of RCTV. **Chávez responded by saying that the institution was acting as a "parrot" of the U.S.** Congress and added it would be easier for Brazil to return to rule as a Portuguese colony than for his government to renew the RCTV license. Lula ordered Brazilian diplomatic officials to summon Venezuela's ambassador to explain the Venezuelan leader's comments. The presidents of

¹ Chávez silences critical TV station - and robs the people of their soaps. May 23, 2007. The Guardian.

Brazil's lower house and Senate both issued statements condemning Chávez's declarations. "The presidency of the Chamber of Deputies declares vehement repudiation of the capricious and irresponsible declarations of the president of Venezuela, which don't befit the stature required of a head of state," said lower house chairman Arlindo Chinaglia.²

Since having obtained the power to rule by decree, Chávez has nationalized telecommunications and electricity companies, taken over oil fields developed by multinationals, and formed a single pro-regime political party. **However for Venezuelans, the loss of RCTV was the greatest shock of all.** In order to further Chávez's quest for total control, it was no surprise that he decided to go after the media. For 53 years, RCTV has been part of Venezuela's culture, offering the public, comedies, soap operas, and game shows. But on May 27th, Chávez sent in troops to seize RCTV's broadcast equipment. **The TV channel has been replaced on the airwaves with pro-Chávez programming run by a state-funded network called "Venezuelan Social Television."**

Many believe that power has become so centralized in Venezuela that there are no checks and balances and the executive controls the Congress, the Supreme Court, the electoral commission, and the military. **RCTV and Globovisión, in a way, did the job these institutions failed to do, publicly denouncing the wrongdoings of Chávez's regime** and that is why one was shut down and the other has been threatened with closure if it doesn't stop covering the demonstrations.

Aware of the controversy the closing of RCTV would create, the Venezuelan Government made an all out effort to tell their absurd side of the story **arguing that they were not closing the TV channel, they were just not renewing the license and that they made the decision based on RCTV's support of the April 2002 "Coup."** (The Supreme Court ruled that what occurred was not a coup). The reality is that Chávez doesn't want any opposition and RCTV represented that.

Protests against the move continue to grow and expand across Venezuela, with students and others taking to the streets in many cities. Independent press agencies have reported that there are thousands of demonstrators, while the government has minimized the number count. The police have acted with extreme violence and there is information that many protesters have been jailed and many others have been injured.



Protests in Venezuela. Source: EFE.



Protests in Venezuela. Source: EFE.



Protests in Venezuela. Source: EFE.

² Senado brasileño repudia declaraciones de Chávez. June, 2007. El Universal.



Protests in Venezuela. Source: EFE.

Hugo Chávez seems unmoved by the concerns voiced by international press freedom groups that liberty of expression is under attack in his country. In fact, the Chávez regime has launched an investigation of another broadcaster, Globovisión, accusing it of using subliminal messages to incite an assassination attempt on the president. Chávez called Globovisión an enemy of the state, attacking its coverage of the protests against RCTV's closure. "Enemies of the homeland, particularly those behind the scenes, I will give you a name: Globovisión. Greetings, gentlemen of Globovisión, you should watch where you are going," Mr. Chavez said. "I recommend you take a tranquilizer and get into gear, because if not, I am going to do what is necessary." CNN is also under scrutiny.³ Chávez doesn't want the media to report or cover the protests and will stop at nothing to achieve that.

It seems RCTV is not going down quietly. It has found a way to continue its daily broadcasts, on YouTube. Although the station is officially off the air, CNN's Harris Whitbeck said its news department continues to operate on reduced staffing, and the three daily hour-long installments of the newscast "El Observador" are uploaded onto YouTube by RCTV's Web department. In addition, RCTV's Colombia-based affiliate, Caracol, has agreed to transmit the evening installment of "El Observador" over its international signal. The program, which will run at midnight, could reach about 800,000 people in Venezuela. Although this is drastically reduced from RCTV's previous audience, its continued presence is a sign of hope for the staff. "We're just doing our job as journalists," said an employee of RCTV. "As long as somebody is seeing us, we consider what we are doing to be valid."⁴

Not far away, Ecuador and Bolivia are following the ideas of their mentors Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez with regards to the press and have already announced their plans. Morales proposed creating a tribunal to oversee the operations of privately owned press and broadcast outlets and Mr. Correa announced over the weekend that he would order a review of the broadcasting licenses of opposition news channels in his

³ La oposición venezolana pide un referéndum sobre el cierre de RCTV y los estudiantes vuelven a la calle. May 30, 2007. El País.

⁴ Silenced Venezuelan TV station moves to YouTube. June 3rd, 2007. CNN.

country. “The main adversaries of my presidency, of my government, are certain communications media,” Mr. Morales said at the Fifth World Conference of Artists and Intellectuals in Defense of Humanity, a Venezuelan-backed group supporting “the process of change in Latin America.” Meanwhile, Mr. Correa issued a statement saying that “radio and TV frequencies have been granted in ways that are frequently dark and it's time to analyze the matter.” He accused owners of major news outlets of using political influence to get their broadcasting licenses and using the press “to defend private interests that are often corrupt.” He also announced legal action against Ecuador’s opposition newspaper “La Hora”.⁵

Freedom of expression and freedom of information are fundamental rights of human beings and they are under attack in Venezuela, and possibly in Bolivia and Ecuador. It appears that Chávez is trying to suppress any possible outlet for further opposition. Unfortunately, without an independent media that is able to report what is going on, the opposition will most likely be silenced, and their ability to oppose Chávez and his ever tightening grip on power will become ever more dangerous. Once the curtain falls on freedom of speech, the outside world will lack the necessary information to protect those who have the courage to stand up against this growing tyranny.

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

[Brazil opposes Venezuela’s membership in Mercosur – Infobae, Argentina.](#)

The Venezuelan government decision not to renew a broadcast license for private TV channel Radio Caracas Televisión (RCTV) divided the coalition of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and made the opposition threaten to block the ratification at the Brazilian Congress of Venezuela’s membership in Mercosur. The Party for Brazilian Social Democracy (PSDB) of former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and the right-wing Democrat Party (DEM) voiced Monday their intention not to ratify the Adhesion Protocol that should be voted by both chambers in the legislature. PSDB and DEM plan to hinder Venezuela’s inclusion in the trade bloc as long as Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez “retracts his coarseness” against the Brazilian Senate, said representatives Arthur Virgilio and José Agripino Maia. Last week, Chávez said that Brazilian Senators “repeat as parrots whatever Washington says,” when he was asked to reconsider his stance on RCTV, which went off the air last May 27th. **Meanwhile, in Argentina, no government official has denounced the closing of RCTV.**

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/320471-100556-0-En-Brasil-no-quieren-que-Chávez-ingrese-al-Mercosur>

[Brazil and India Plan to Expand Trade – El Diario Exterior, Madrid.](#)

India and Brazil plan to increase their annual bilateral trade by four times the current level to \$10 billion by 2010, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Monday.

⁵ Morales dice que los medios son su “primer adversario.” May 25, 2007. La Prensa.

“That’s perfectly feasible if we work to achieve the full potential of our two economies,” Silva said of the trade target after a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The two countries signed several agreements to boost economic cooperation. Brazil-India ties have strengthened in recent years as they have emerged as leaders among developing nations, taking similar positions on trade issues and calling for more representation on the United Nations Security Council.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=14757>

European Commission proposes EU-Brazil strategic partnership – *El Diario Exterior, Madrid.*

The European Commission (EC) announced Wednesday that it had proposed a strategic partnership with Brazil to be launched at the first European Union-Brazil summit on July 4, 2007 in the Portuguese capital of Lisbon. Citing the increasing role Brazil plays on the international stage, its regional clout and the strong bilateral ties with Europe, the EC, the executive arm of the European Union (EU), proposed in a statement a number of initiatives to promote relations between the two sides in the framework of a strategic partnership. “Brazil is an important partner for the EU,” EC President Jose Manuel Barroso said in the statement. “We not only share close historic and cultural ties, values and a strong commitment to multilateral institutions, we also **share a capacity to make a difference in addressing many global challenges such as climate change, poverty, multilateralism, human rights and others.**” **“By proposing stronger ties, we are acknowledging Brazil’s qualification as a ‘key player’ to join the restricted club of our strategic partners,”** he said. The statement also proposed a wide range of areas and sectors for closer cooperation and partnership with Brazil, including strengthening multilateralism to work jointly on a more effective UN system and promoting human rights.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=14690&subtema=>

Thousands Protest Closing of Anti-Chavez TV Station in Venezuela – *Fox News.*

Police fired toward the crowd of up to 5,000 protesters from a raised highway, and protesters fled amid clouds of tear gas. They later regrouped in Caracas’ Plaza Brion chanting “freedom!” Some tossed rocks and bottles at police, prompting authorities to scatter demonstrators by firing more gas. It was the largest of several protests that broke out across Caracas hours after Radio Caracas Television ceased broadcasting at midnight Sunday and was replaced with a new state-funded channel. Chavez had refused to renew RCTV’s broadcast license, accusing it of “subversive” activities and of backing a 2002 coup against him. At least three protesters and one police officer were injured in skirmishes. Some protesters were seen in television footage hurling spent tear gas canisters back at police. RCTV talk show host Miguel Angel Rodriguez led the crowd in chants of, “They will not silence us!”

Globovisión not afraid of Chávez – *CNN.*

As thousands of students marched in the streets in support, a Venezuelan television channel denied accusations that it was inciting violence against the government. Globovisión’s director, Alberto Ravell, was unimpressed. **“We are not going to change our editorial line that we are not afraid of the threats from this government,”** he told CNN.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/americas/05/29/venezuela.media/index.html>

Rice criticizes Chavez for closing TV station –

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice criticized Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez for the closure of a key opposition television station that has prompted mass protests, calling it the “sharpest and most acute” of his moves against democracy. “Everyone recognizes that when you start closing down television stations because they express opposition

to the leadership, that that is, in fact, a strong move against democracy,” she said. “It is not the first in Venezuela, but it is perhaps the sharpest and most acute,” Rice told reporters aboard her plane en route to a meeting of foreign ministers of the Organization of American States in Panama. At the gathering, **she called on the group to send its secretary-general, Jose Miguel Insulza, to Venezuela to look into the closing of Radio Caracas Television, RCTN, and to provide a full report on his findings.** “Freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of conscience are not a thorn in the side of government, they are the beginning of justice in every society,” Rice told the ministers.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/320157-100891-0-Duro-cruce-verbal-los-EEUU-y-Venezuela>

Colombia releases first group of FARC members – *El País, Madrid.*

Colombia released a first group of FARC members, in what officials hope will prompt an exchange for dozens of hostages, including three Americans and French-Colombian ex-presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt held by the terrorist group. President Alvaro Uribe has moved toward releasing the rebels in the hopes the process will lead to a swap with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). FARC has so far rejected the move. Colombian President Uribe on Monday released the first and highest-ranking FARC prisoner, **Rodrigo Granda**, at the request of French President **Nicolas Sarkozy**. Uribe said he hoped Granda, known as FARC’s “foreign minister,” would now serve as a peace broker. “The government is giving him guarantees so that he may promote peace,” Uribe said on television late Monday. “The government trusts that he will not be involved in kidnappings, in assassinations.” Sarkozy’s office said the French president had “explicitly requested” Granda’s release and welcomed Uribe’s “very important and courageous decision.” Sarkozy “now hopes that this development will be heard by FARC” and that “they will respond,” his office said Tuesday in a statement.

http://www.elpais.com/articulo/internacional/Gobierno/colombiano/excarcela/preso/detenido/FARC/dentro/plan/canje/elpepuint/20070604elpepuint_11/Tes

Mexico’s Calderón and Sarkozy agree on bilateral cooperation – *El Diario Exterior, Madrid.*

Mexico and France put the spotlight on common interests in economic and cultural projects, during a meeting between Presidents Vicente Calderon, Mexico, and Nicolas Sarkozy, France, an official source informed Wednesday. Governmental spokesman David Martinon said in a press release Calderon and Sarkozy dealt with different issues in a “very friendly” climate. **With his brief stay in Paris on a European tour, Calderon was the first Latin American president to meet with Sarkozy.** Martinon indicated the French leader expressed his wish that the two countries maintain intense dialogue over different issues, to thus consolidate bilateral cooperation in as many fields as possible. Sarkozy also advocated increasing links allowing privileged exchange, and expressed hopes that the European Union and Latin America will be able to adopt common stances over current world key issues.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=14781>

Judges across Bolivia on strike against President’s policies – *El Diario Exterior, Madrid.*

Bolivian judges called a one-day strike Tuesday to protest President Evo Morales’ attempts to overturn the suspension of four Supreme Court justices he appointed last year. Some 900 judges and magistrates sat out work and the Supreme Court issued a statement calling Morales’ actions “an intent to cast aside the judicial branch and implant a totalitarian regime.” The left-leaning Morales said he respects the separation of

powers and would accept the justices' suspension "if it is legal, if it is constitutional." He earlier said judges were "the most corrupt" segment of Bolivian society.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=14779>

Bolivia's Morales and Ecuador's Correa target TV critics – *The Washington Times*.

The leaders of Bolivia and Ecuador are moving with Cuban encouragement and in concert with their mentor, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, to restrict press freedom in their countries. Bolivian President Evo Morales and Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa both announced steps to crack down on independent broadcasters within days of Mr. Chavez's closure on Sunday of Venezuela's main independent television station, RCTV. Speaking before an international gathering of leftist intellectuals in Cochabamba last week, Mr. Morales proposed creating a tribunal to oversee the operations of privately owned press and broadcast outlets. Mr. Correa announced over the weekend that he would order a review of the broadcasting licenses of opposition news channels in his country. Both leaders have drawn support and inspiration from Mr. Chavez's increasingly authoritarian government since coming to power in the past 18 months, and both are drafting new constitutions that would greatly increase their own powers.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20070531-121115-7740r.htm>

Castro appears on Cuban TV – *Infobae, Argentina*.

Cuban President Fidel Castro appeared on state-run television Tuesday for the first time in nearly a year since his illness prompted him to step aside. In a taped interview, the ailing Castro talked about his recent meeting with Vietnamese Communist Party leader Nong Duc Manh. Cuban officials assert Castro is recovering and taking on more leadership responsibilities.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/320004-100891-0-El-dictador-Fidel-Castro-reapareció-un-video>

Wear your uniform, Chavez tells Castro – *Infobae, Argentina*.

Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez urged his idol to resume wearing his customary military uniform instead of the trackies he has sported since having surgery last year. "I believe the time has come to return to wearing the uniform," said Chavez, a staunch supporter and protégé of Castro. "We want you in uniform ... That's an order," he said joking, adding "Fidel, I congratulate you for your interview on television. He spoke for four hours, almost a speech." Chavez was alluding to the Cuban leader's habit of delivering long-winded talks lasting several hours.

<http://www.infobae.com/contenidos/320603-100891-0-Chávez-Castro-Es-hora-ponerse-el-uniforme>

Uruguay's Vazquez ends speculation over seeking re-election – *Mercopress*.

Uruguayan president Tabaré Vazquez put an end on Monday to months' long speculations about his possible re-election stating during a public ceremony that **he would not be a candidate in the next election.** Addressing his cabinet and the press from Government House Vazquez recalled that when his speech taking office before the General Assembly on March 2005 he had clearly stated that this "would be the first and surely the only" time he would be visiting Parliament as president. And if such option is proposed (re-election) "I would not accept it", underlined President Vazquez who has always stated he prefers medicine his professional formation, to politics. Actually he dedicates two mornings of the week to his cancer clinic and patients in downtown Montevideo.

<http://www.mercopress.com/vernocia.do?id=10642&formato=HTML>

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