



The Americas Report

From the Menges Hemispheric Security Project

Center for Security Policy

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Argentina



Bolivia



Brazil



Canada



Chile



Colombia



Costa Rica



Cuba



Dominican Republic



Ecuador



El Salvador



Guatemala



Haiti



Honduras



Mexico

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

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

Highlighted Story – [Chavez's early ties with the FARC and the ELN.](#)

By Jose Noguera.*

Hugo Chavez recently proposed a humanitarian plan to free several people kidnapped by the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), a Colombian narco-guerrilla terrorist organization. Although Chavez has always denied supporting the FARC, we now know he was not telling the truth. In fact, information found in the computer of the FARC's second-in-command, Raul Reyes, reveals that Chavez openly assists the guerillas. This is not surprising, as the relationship between them goes back to the 1970s.



Nicaragua



Panama



Paraguay



Peru



The United States



Uruguay



Venezuela

Venezuelan democracy started in 1958 with a broad political agreement among the country's main democratic forces called the *Pact of Punto Fijo*. The first years of democracy were difficult. Marxist organizations, with the support of Cuba and the USSR, opted for armed struggle in order to install a communist regimen. The guerrillas placed bombs, destroyed pipelines, and kidnapped and murdered people as a means of terrorizing the civilian population. In 1966, a Cuban expedition led by General Arnaldo Ochoa invaded Venezuela from the coast of Machurucuto. The invasion failed and by 1967 the guerrillas had been defeated. During the early 1970s, the Venezuelan Government decreed a general amnesty in order to pacify the country. However, some small Marxist groups continued to operate clandestinely, in an attempt to revive the guerrilla war. Those groups were Red Flag, Socialist League and the Party of the Venezuela Revolution (PRV). Some of the most important and active members of the PRV were its leader Douglas Bravo, as well as Rafael Ramirez, and Adam Chavez, the brother of Hugo Chavez.

Hugo Chavez's closest advisors:



José Vicente Rangel. Source: La Jornada.



Venezuelan minister of Interior, Ramon Rodriguez Chacin. Source: Univision.



Adam Chavez – Hugo's brother and close advisor. Source: Pateira.

The overwhelming defeat suffered by the guerrilla groups made them rethink their strategy. They decided the best way to achieve their goals was to infiltrate the armed forces. In 1970, their first contact was established between former Lieutenant William Izarra and Douglas Bravo. Then in 1971, **Hugo Chavez entered the Military School and immediately established contacts with the PRV through his brother, Adam, and began organizing the clandestine Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement (MBR) to recruit other military personnel for the revolution.** The failed coup that Hugo Chavez led in 1992 was organized in cooperation with the clandestine organizations MBR, PRV, Red Flag and the Socialist League.

Adam not only introduced his brother, Hugo, to Marxism but also provided him with the necessary contacts to the Venezuelan guerrillas as well as to their Colombian counterparts, with whom their Venezuelan mates had had a long-standing relationship. The first contact between Hugo Chavez and the Colombian guerrillas was made through two members of the Colombian Army, Majors German Cadena Montenegro and Mario Alberto Galeano, who collaborated with the now dissolved guerrilla group M-19 since they were in the Colombian military school. Those contacts and activities

did not represent a major threat until the 1992 coup changed the political situation in Venezuela, and the difficult economic situation made Venezuelans look for unconventional alternatives that made Chavez popular.

When Hugo Chavez left prison in 1994, he visited Colombia, where Majors Cadena and Galeano, by that time already retired, received him. Chavez then stayed in Colombia for six months, adopting the nickname of *Commander Centeno*, while establishing contacts with the Colombian Marxist narco-guerrilla group, the National Liberation Army (ELN). At this time Chavez proposed to the ELN that they organize a joint Colombian-Venezuelan guerrilla force in order to fight a “true independence war.” That same year, Chavez established contacts with the other major Colombian guerrilla group, the FARC. This contact was made by Ramon Rodriguez Chacin. It is now well-documented that the FARC gave money to Chavez when he was in jail, and most likely, in 1998, during his first electoral campaign.

From Colombia, Chavez traveled to Cuba where he established contacts with Fidel Castro. Later, in 1999 when Chavez began his first presidential term, the retired Colombian Majors Cadena and Galeano join his Bolivarian Movement 2000 with the mission of winning adherents within the Colombian Armed Forces, as a means of destabilizing democracy inside Colombia. Since then, **Chavez has repeatedly tried to establish direct contacts with the Colombian Armed Forces and did so again by talking directly with the chief of the Colombian Armed Forces, General Mario Montoya, against the wishes of the President of Colombia.** That is why President Uribe decided to remove Chavez as a mediator in trying to free some of the hostages from the Colombian guerrillas. Once fired, Chavez became so mad that he insulted President Uribe, and stated that Venezuela does not have borders with Colombia but with the FARC’s territory.

Yet, recent events indicate that the exact position of the FARC’s second in command was detected from a direct phone call from Chavez to Raul Reyes, and among the documents found was one listing a 300 million dollar “donation” that Chavez gave to the Colombian guerrillas. Currently, the FARC operates freely in Venezuela in seven different areas and receives protection from the government. **Chavez’s closest collaborators are his brother, Adam, his minister of Interior, Ramon Rodriguez Chacin, Jose Vicente Rangel (former presidential candidate of the communist party), Jorge Rodriguez (Socialist League), Minister of Energy Rafael Ramirez (PRV), Minister of Propaganda William Izarra (PRV) and the foreign Affairs Minister, Nicolas Maduro (Socialist League).** Now the former Venezuelan guerrillas, the long standing close friends of their Colombian counterparts, are the individuals who now govern Venezuela.

**Jose Noguera obtained a Ph.D. degree from State University of New York at Buffalo. He currently teaches and conducts research on macroeconomics, political economy and development with the rank of Associate Professor at the Whittemore School of the University of New Hampshire. He has also been appointed at Michigan State University, CERGE-EI (Prague, Czech Republic), the University of Warsaw, Central University of Venezuela and Mobila Academy University of Kiev.*

[Highlighted Story II - “Representatives Mack and Ros-Lehtinen introduce congressional resolution calling for Venezuela to be named a state sponsor of terrorism.”](#)

Citing Venezuela's continued support of and ties to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), an internationally-recognized terrorist organization, Congressman Connie Mack (FL-14) and House Foreign Affairs Committee Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL-18) introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives today that calls on the Administration to add Venezuela to the state sponsors of terrorism list.



Rep. Connie Mack. Source: Open Congress.



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Source: House.gov.

Their resolution also condemns the Venezuelan government for its support of terrorist organizations and urges the Venezuelan government to immediately cease all support and ties to the FARC. The resolution is cosponsored by Reps. Michael McCaul (TX-10), Lynn Westmoreland (GA-03), Mike Pence (IN-06), Mario Diaz-Balart (FL-25), Doug Lamborn (CO-05), Patrick McHenry (NC-10), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (FL-21) and Mary Bono Mack (CA-45). Mack, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and one of Congress' sharpest critics of Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez, said: "For decades, the FARC has terrorized Colombians and foreign citizens through kidnappings, bombings, killings, and drug trafficking. The evidence that Hugo Chavez is assisting a recognized terrorist organization is overwhelming. He has supported these terrorists by giving them fuel, money, a safe haven within Venezuelan borders, and public support. "Chavez has not only befriended and supported the FARC, he has developed strong relationships with the leaders of Iran and Cuba - both state sponsors of terrorism - and has used those relationships to systematically disrupt stability in Latin America and the rest of the Western Hemisphere." "Naming Venezuela a state sponsor of terrorism and passing the Colombia Free Trade Agreement in Congress will strengthen the stability of the Andean region and help in the effort to preserve freedom, security and prosperity for the Latin American people. I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution." **The resolution was referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee where it awaits further action.**

Full resolution: http://mack.house.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressReleases.View&ContentRecord_id=549

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

[Bush: FARC-Chávez links are stronger than we thought – *El Universal*](#)

United States President George W. Bush Tuesday turned up the volume of a verbal clash between Washington and Caracas, as for the first time he openly mentioned an investigation into the alleged links between President Hugo Chávez's government and the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC). In a speech in Jacksonville, southeast Florida, Bush would not mention Chávez's name, but he did refer to an investigation the Colombian authorities are conducting to determine whether Venezuela-FARC relationship goes beyond simple meetings in Caracas. **“Recently, when Colombian forces killed one of the FARC's most senior leaders they discovered computer files that suggest even closer ties between Venezuela's regime and FARC terrorists than we previously knew,”** Bush said. “Colombian officials are investigating the ties but this much should be clear: the United States strongly supports, strongly stands with Colombia in its fight against the terrorists and drug lords,” Bush added. Last week US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said her country was attentive to the alleged links between Venezuelan authorities and the FARC, who the US brands as a terrorist organization. However, this is the first time Bush speaks publicly about this issue. According to Bush, Chávez's regime “has railed against America, has forged an alliance with communist Cuba, has met with FARC leaders in Venezuela, has deployed troops to the Colombian border.” **The US President also recalled that FARC had been holding three Americans hostage since 2003, when their plane was captured, noting they were “the longest-held American hostages anywhere in the world.”**

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/18/en_pol_art_bush:-farc-chavez-li_18A1443959.shtml

Court unfreezes Pdvsa's oil assets – El Universal.

A legal battle US oil major Exxon Mobil and Venezuela's state oil firm Pdvsa fought in the England High Court ended on Tuesday, when Paul Walker, the judge hearing the case, decided to overturn “immediately” an injunction freezing up to US 12 billion in Pdvsa's oil assets worldwide -an order that was issued late in January. Within 48 hours, Exxon Mobil is supposed to forward letters to all of the institutions it had asked to freeze Pdvsa's assets and advise them on the judicial decision. Further, the US Corporation has an additional 48 hours to advise any institutions or customers Pdvsa may deem necessary. Finally, Walker's decision asked Pdvsa to file an estimate of the court costs incurred. Meanwhile, Walker ordered Exxon Mobil to pay USD 767,000 in legal fees of Pdvsa immediately. The US oil company had made an escrow deposit with the court, amounting to USD 1 million. On Tuesday, Minister of Energy and Petroleum and CEO of Pdvsa Rafael Ramírez said the England High Court's decision revoked the freezing injunction implemented both in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and Netherlands Antilles. However, **the ruling does not unfreeze USD 315 million in a New York bank that were frozen by the Manhattan District Court. Such assets are likely to remain frozen as long as a pending arbitration is not settled.**

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/19/en_eco_art_court-unfreezes-pdvs_19A1445483.shtml

Business sector urges Gov. to define trade policies at border with Colombia – El Universal.

Venezuelan companies exporting products to Colombia are becoming exasperated as the Ministry of Light Industries and Trade (Milco) has not resumed issue of the certificates of origin required to sell their goods abroad. José Rozo, chair of the Venezuelan Confederation of Trade and Industry Chambers (Fedecámaras) in Táchira state, southwest Venezuela, once again rejected the situation. He claimed the certificates of origin have not been issued for the last two weeks, even after the diplomatic crisis between Colombia and Venezuela came to an end. Rozo explained that exporters “may cross the border, but they can get only to

Cucuta, where they are waiting for the certificate allowing domestic producers to be given trade preferences, as provided under the Andean Community” of Nations (CAN). He urged President Hugo Chávez’s government to “be honest” as to their stance. “It is adequate to take a decision on whether bilateral trade is going to continue or not,” as the present situation is “undermining Venezuelan exports, and also worsening the climate of mistrust in the country.”

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/18/en_eco_art_business-sector-urge_18A1442005.shtml

Venezuelan oil production down 9,300 bpd in February – *El Universal*.

Venezuelan domestic crude oil output fell 9,300 bpd in February compared to the previous month and amounted to 2.39 million bpd, according to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' monthly report. The number of oilrigs operating in Venezuela was 83, two more than in January, according to Baker Hughes International. The OPEC said Venezuelan oil production in 2007 averaged 2.39 million bpd, thus dropping 147,000 bpd from 2.54 million bpd in 2006. The downward trend in Venezuelan domestic production is opposed to OPEC's overall growing output. In February, the organization's overall production climbed 82,500 bpd to 32.09 million bpd, primarily boosted by an increase of 149,000 bpd in Iraq's output. Algeria, Angola, Indonesia and Nigeria expanded production as well.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/19/en_eco_art_venezuelan-oil-produ_19A1445521.shtml

Venezuelan oil exports down 192,000 bpd in 2007 – *El Universal*.

In a year when domestic crude oil output continued to decrease and fuel demand in the domestic market climbed, Venezuelan oil exports were seriously hit, dropping 192,000 bpd (6.4 percent) to 2.78 million bpd in 2007. The figures were disclosed by state oil conglomerate Pdvsa in its 2007 Report submitted to the National Assembly. The document shows that Pdvsa's direct oil exports took a 5.9 percent dive, falling 142,000 bpd. Oil exports by the joint ventures operating in the Orinoco oil belt decreased by 8.5 percent of 50,000 bpd. Most of the decline in Pdvsa's exports took place in crude oil shipments, which fell 64,000 bpd to 1.67 million bpd. Further, shipments of byproducts dropped 54,000 bpd (10 percent). The Energy Information Administration -the statistical arm of the US Energy Department- also highlighted this fall. Average domestic oil production was 3.14 million bpd, which represents a decline of 3.1 percent or 103,000 bpd compared to 2006. Production shrunk as Pdvsa's own production fell 83,000 bpd (including the joint ventures that replaced the operational agreements) and a decrease of 20,000 bpd in the Orinoco belt production.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/18/en_eco_art_venezuelan-oil-expor_18A1442001.shtml

Venezuela: Capital flight reaches record – *El Diario Exterior*.

Funds sent out of Venezuela reached a record high in 2007, according to a report by the country’s central bank. According to the bank, almost \$19 billion in private Venezuelan capital was transferred offshore last year, El Nuevo Herald reported online Tuesday. That amount was a record since leftist Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez assumed office in 1998, the newspaper said. The Central Bank's former chief economist, Jose Guerra, said there is a “strong mistrust of the national currency” and “a great uncertainty” about the future of Venezuela under Chavez.

<http://www.eldiarioexterior.com/noticia.asp?idarticulo=19479>

Chávez prepares meeting with Uribe and visit to Brazil – *El Universal*.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez is preparing to meet with his Colombian counterpart Álvaro Uribe, in an attempt at mending bilateral relations, Wednesday said Brazilian President's Aide for Foreign Affairs Marco Aurelio García. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s aide met Wednesday with Chávez. Following the encounter, he showed optimism that Colombia-Venezuela frictions -which worsened after a Colombian attack against a camp of the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) where the second

highest-ranking leader of the terrorist group, Raúl Reyes, was killed in Ecuador- would be overcome. García told Brazilian reporters who accompanied him in his visit to Venezuela that he trusted Chávez's willingness to smooth the sharp edges with Bogota. He said Chávez "wants to meet with President Uribe, and bring relations back to normal." Further, García stressed that Chávez showed satisfaction at the resolution the Organization of American States (OAS) issued to reject the violation of Ecuador's territorial sovereignty during the attack launched by the Colombian Army against the FARC.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/19/en_pol_art_chavez-prepares-meet_19A1446481.shtml

Peru reveals Chávez's meddling in region – Azstarnert.

There are an estimated 200 pro-Chávez "Casas del ALBA" operating in Peru. These "homes" are believed to be tied to the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas — ALBA by its Spanish acronym — a Chávez-led Latin American alliance to counter U.S. influence in the region. The residences, mostly private homes with an ALBA sign on the front, have been described by Peruvian officials as meeting places for pro-Chávez radical leftist and coca-growers groups which in many cases have ties to armed rebel groups. Ostensibly, they do charity work, including sending nearly 5,000 Peruvians for eye operations in Venezuela over the past year. There are a series of indications that the ALBA homes have ties to the Venezuelan government. On Thursday, the Peruvian Congress unanimously voted to start an investigation into whether these pro-Chávez meeting points have ties with violent groups or "another government that is interfering in our country's internal affairs." The congressional investigation will review government intelligence information, and will have 90 days to produce a report. Peruvian officials say that Venezuela is funneling support for ALBA homes through Bolivia, Caracas' closest ally in the region. Much of the support comes from a joint Venezuela-Cuba-Nicaragua embassy complex being completed in southern La Paz, Bolivia's capital, Peruvian officials say. The complex is also thought to house some Bolivian government offices. The Peruvian officials believe the building, in the Obraje neighborhood, has already become the headquarters for Chávez's revolutionary training and propaganda operations in the Andean region. Among other things, the "Bolivarian" countries' regional headquarters has arranged for military training of young Indian people from southern Peru in Bolivia's military police academy, the officials say. Officials say that the La Paz-based embassy complex "seems to be serving as a general Bolivarian headquarters." There are indications that the Bolivarian headquarters may be supporting the ALBA homes in Peru, as part of a strategy to promote an Indian uprising in the region. **"There is talk that they want to create an 'Aymara (Indian) nation,' which would bring Bolivia, (southern) Peru and northern Chile together into one single nation," one insider said.**

<http://www.azstarnet.com/allheadlines/230090>

Peru claims interference of pro-Chávez groups is notorious – El Universal.

Peruvian Minister of Defense Ántero Flores-Aráoz said the interference of groups supporting Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in Peru is notorious, but he conceded he had no evidence showing that the Venezuelan government is funding the controversial Houses of ALBA, Monday said press reports in Lima. "We still do not have any picture of someone being given money, but this does not mean that no proofs will surface in the future. There are pieces of evidence. The 'Chavista' interference in Peru is notorious," the minister told daily newspaper El Comercio. Since the so-called Houses of ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of the Americas) first emerged in 2006, some senior Peruvian officials, including Prime Minister Jorge del Castillo, have reported that the Venezuelan government is meddling

with Peru's domestic affairs. Caracas has denied such claims, Efe reminded. **Both the Executive Branch and the Congress are delving into the organization, operation, activities and funding of the Houses of ALBA, as well as other pro-Chávez groups.**

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/17/en_pol_art_peru-claims-interfer_17A1439799.shtml

Presidents of China, Peru Meet in Beijing – Prensa Latina.

Chinese President Hu Jintao welcomed Peruvian President Alan Garcia at Beijing's Great Palace of the Peoples, where they held a private meeting. Garcia, first president that Hu welcomes after his reelection by the Chinese Parliament, called this visit a trip from a time machine to the future due to the overall changes and progress. He also extolled the Communist Party's smart and successful leadership and stated Peru's will to further tighten political, economic and cultural ties. Bilateral exchange expands fast and in 2007 they netted \$5.2 billion, making Peru a leading Chinese partner in South America, while China's investments there rounded two billion dollars. Both countries currently are negotiating a free trade agreement. After the meeting, both Jintao and Garcia signed eight bilateral accords on justice, energy and mining, culture, agriculture and transportation.



President Hu Jintao Meets with Peruvian President Garcia. Source: Xinhuanet.

[http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7B72E534FC-10F7-4E50-BC06-5766E1C23761%7D\)&language=EN](http://www.plenglish.com/article.asp?ID=%7B72E534FC-10F7-4E50-BC06-5766E1C23761%7D)&language=EN)

Peru arrests 2 carrying \$150,000 over Ecuador border, suggests Venezuelan link – IHT.

Authorities arrested two Peruvians on Monday as they tried to enter the country from Ecuador carrying some \$150,000 in cash, and a top official said they are linked to groups that may be funded by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's government. "This morning police captured two individuals, one carrying \$50,000 and the other \$100,000," President Alan Garcia's Cabinet chief, Jorge del Castillo, said in a meeting with foreign journalists. "Where did they get it?" A congressional investigation concluded last week that Venezuela likely funds Peruvian leftist groups, including organizations backing a trade bloc promoted by Chavez as an alternative to U.S.-sponsored trade initiatives.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/03/17/news/Peru-Venezuela.php>

Venezuela denies "Bolivarian mega-embassy" in Bolivia – El Universal.

The Venezuelan Embassy to Bolivia Wednesday denied claims that it is opening up a "Bolivarian mega-embassy" in La Paz, which is reportedly going to represent the Cuban, Nicaraguan and Bolivian governments. Both the Venezuelan Embassy and the Bolivian government rejected a report published by Argentinean newspaper La Nación. The article claimed that "a common Bolivarian Embassy" was under construction, and was to encompass four countries that endorse President Hugo Chávez's political project. Douglas Pérez, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Venezuelan Embassy in La Paz, told TV channel Unitel that a six-floor building mentioned in the report would be the new Venezuelan Embassy to Bolivia. So far, the Venezuelan diplomatic representation in La Paz operated in two apartments only. "It is not a mega-embassy," he said, adding that the

building would comprise “cultural spaces,” as well as offices of state oil firm Pdvsa and the Social and Economic Development Bank (Bandes).

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/19/en_pol_art_venezuela-denies-bo_19A1447283.shtml

Argentina: Antonini paid for dinner for officials in suitcase scandal – *El Universal*.

During his visit last August to Buenos Aires, when he unsuccessfully tried to smuggle USD 800,000, US-Venezuelan businessman Guido Antonini Wilson paid for dinner for all of the defendants in the so-called suitcase scandal, Argentinean press reports said on Monday. Besides Antonini, the dinner party was attended by then vice-president of Venezuelan state-run oil firm Pdvsa Diego Uzcátegui Matheus, his son, Daniel Uzcátegui Specht, and his secretary Marjory Gutiérrez. All of them are Venezuelan citizens. Another diner was Victoria Bereziuk, the secretary of Claudio Uberti, who was removed from his position as the head of Occovi, the Argentinean agency in charge of monitoring the services provided by private road licensees, when the suitcase scandal erupted, judiciary sources told Argentinean daily newspaper La Nación. Antonini Wilson and his guests had dinner at La Rosa Negra, an exclusive restaurant in the outskirts of Buenos Aires. They arrived in the restaurant in two cars belonging to the Argentinean government and attended an act headed by then Argentinean President Néstor Kirchner and his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chávez. Uberti is viewed as the “politically responsible man” for the flight -chartered by Argentinean state energy firm Enarsa- that took Antonini Wilson, Enarsa and Pdvsa officials, and Uzcátegui Specht to Buenos Aires. The Argentinean justice accuses Antonini Wilson -a man born in Venezuela who is also a US citizen- of money laundering and attempted smuggling. Buenos Aires has requested his extradition from the United States. According to Bereziuk, while the Venezuelan and Argentinean citizens already mentioned, and Antonini Wilson, were invited by Uberti, he called Bereziuk to announce he would not show up. Therefore, once dinner was over, Antonini Wilson paid the USD 558 bill with his American Express credit card, according to the investigations conducted by María Luz Rivas Diez, a prosecutor for economic-related offenses.



Cristina Fernandez, President of Argentina, Guido Antonini Wilson and Hugo Chavez. Source: El Nuevo Herald.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/17/en_caval_art_antonini-in-argentin_17A1440359.shtml

FARC Cash found in Costa Rica – *El Nuevo Herald*.

Costa Rican authorities found \$480,000 in cash believed belong to Colombia's biggest terrorist group, the FARC, in a safe house near the capital, San Jose. Costa Rica made the seizure based on a tip from the Colombian military, the newspaper said, citing a Colombian judiciary source it didn't identify. The house had been occupied by a retired teacher and his wife since 1985, El Nuevo Herald said. The two left the country on Feb. 14. Colombia found out about the money stash from files seized from the computer of Raul Reyes, a leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia who was killed in Ecuador earlier this month, the newspaper reported. **In the computer there is information of FARC ties with high profile figures in Costa Rica such as politicians.** The money is believed to belong to senior Colombian FARC leader, Rodrigo Granda.

http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/america_latina/story/176460.html

OAS Insulza: Colombia violated Ecuadorian sovereignty – *El Universal*.

Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS) José Miguel Insulza said in a report published on Monday that the incursion of Colombian Army troops in Ecuadorian territory was “a violation of the sovereignty” of Ecuador. The document said the military attack launched last March 1 against a camp of the rebel Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) in Sucumbíos, Ecuador, took place “without specific authorization” from the Ecuadorian government. The report added that the violation Colombia perpetrated runs counters the OAS Charter, under which “The territory of a State is inviolable; it may not be the object, even temporarily, of military occupation or of other measures of force taken by another State, directly or indirectly, on any grounds whatever.” Insulza recommended organizing a group of observers, with the Dominican Republic and Uruguay holding the presidency and vice-presidency, respectively.



OAS General Secretary José Miguel Insulza. Source: Venezuela Analysis.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/17/en_colcd_art_insulzas-report-rat_17A1440519.shtml

Mexico willing to restore ties with Venezuela – *El Universal*.

Gerónimo Gutiérrez, the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry's Assistant Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, said President Felipe Calderón's government would strengthen diplomatic efforts to reestablish relations with Venezuela fully. “We are restoring confidence and at the same time we are paving the way to smooth our differences out, as we do have differences with Venezuela and President Hugo Chávez,” Gutiérrez told daily newspaper El Financiero in Mexico. The official added that his country wants to replicate the success achieved in Havana, where last Thursday the Foreign Ministers of Cuba, Felipe Pérez Roque, and Mexico, Patricia Espinosa Castellano, officially resumed bilateral diplomatic ties. “We want to secure a relationship that is based on mutual respect and the principle of non-intervention in domestic affairs that are only the responsibility of each country,” said Gutiérrez. He added that before setting a date for Calderón and Chávez to meet, the relevant officials would work to define a common agenda.

http://english.eluniversal.com/2008/03/19/en_pol_art_mexico-willing-to-re_19A1445527.shtml

Iran to build \$230 million hydroelectric dam in Nicaragua – IHT.

Iran will build a hydroelectric dam in northern Nicaragua, despite U.S. reservations, the energy minister said Thursday. A state-owned Iranian company will build the \$230 million Bodoke project on the Tuma River in the Jinotega province with financing by Iran's export bank, Energy Minister Emilio Rappaccioli told Nicaragua's Channel 2 on Thursday. "The construction will take place once both sides reach an agreement on a series of factors that have to be studied further," Rappaccioli said. **The dam is one of numerous projects Iran agreed to sponsor in Nicaragua under accords President Daniel Ortega reached with Iranian Energy Minister Hamid Chitchian during Chitchian's visit last August.** Under the Iran-Nicaragua pact, Iran will fund a farm equipment assembly plant, 4,000 tractors, four hydroelectric plants, five milk-processing plants, a health clinic, 10,000 houses and two piers in the western port of Corinto. In exchange Nicaragua will export coffee, meat and bananas to Iran. The planned dam is part of Nicaragua's plan to shift toward renewable energy sources. Currently 80 percent of the country's energy needs are met by oil imports.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/03/13/news/Nicaragua-Iran.php>

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