

US STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH HUGO CHAVEZ'S ESTABLISHMENT OF MILITIAS

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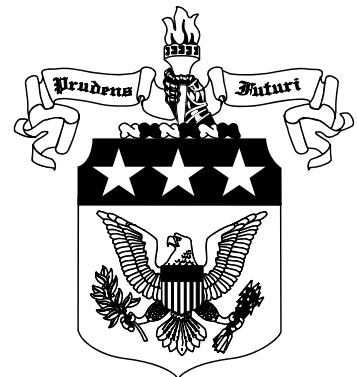
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

US STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH HUGO CHAVEZ'S ESTABLISHMENT OF MILITIAS

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ABSTRACT

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Hugo Chavez was reelected for another six year term as President of Venezuela in December 2006 and has aggressively put policies in place to remain in power for many years to come. His aggressive "Bolivarian Revolution" agenda, and anti-US policies, has spread his influence throughout Central and South America in countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua through "democratic" elections. After a 2002 failed coups attempt, Hugo Chavez began developing and training neighborhood-based militias to defend against an invasion of the country. He claimed that the United States supported the coups attempt and has convinced Venezuelans that the US is planning an invasion of their country. This project examines the roles of his militias as defenders of the country, a means to suppress dissent and support his continued Presidency. It also examines the militia's role as an asymmetric force used to destabilize states and spread his Bolivarian ideology throughout the region. The paper concludes with a recommended strategy to deal with Venezuela's militias that looks across the spectrum of national power in order to ensure a successful result conducive to our national interests.

US STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH HUGO CHAVEZ'S ESTABLISHMENT OF MILITIAS

Introduction

Hugo Chavez was democratically elected president of Venezuela in December 1998 and began what he calls a Bolivarian revolution, named after Simon Bolivar, a nineteenth-century leader of Latin American independence wars.¹ He has repeatedly reformed the democratic government into an ever increasing socialist state with increased control by the executive branch, development of large social programs, and government control of energy companies and the media.² Chavez is an extremely vocal anti-US., anti-capitalist who wants to be the leader of Latin America and a world player.³

Overall United States credibility in Central and South America has declined over the last decade due to the Iraq war and the “perceived failure of the pro-market reforms that it championed in the 1990s.”⁴ Widespread social inequality and poverty are the regions largest problems with an estimated 40 percent of the citizens of Latin America living in poverty.⁵ With Venezuela's recent increase in oil revenues Hugo Chavez is able to spend millions on anti-poverty, health care, and social development initiatives thereby significantly increasing his Bolivarian ideology and his stature.

Problem

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's anti-US crusade includes: anti-democracy, anti-free market economy, anti-free trade agreements and global economies, destabilizing the region, lack of cooperation with drug enforcement operations, and building alliances with U.S. adversaries including Cuba, Iran and North Korea.⁶ On April 11, 2002 the Venezuelan military conducted a coup and held Chavez in custody at a military base for a few days before he was released and again grabbed power.⁷ The

United States responded suspiciously to the coup with the White House Press Secretary indicating that “the United States looked forward to working with the transitional government, thereby giving the impression that the administration had welcomed, even supported, Chavez’s forced departure.”⁸ The perceived U.S. involvement in the coup fueled Chavez’s suspicion and hate for the American government.

Subsequently, Chavez built, funded, and armed militias to defend the country from a United States attack and as a means to suppress internal dissent and support his continued Presidency.

The principle security threats to the United States today are unconventional in nature and seek to respond to America’s massive conventional force superiority in asymmetric ways. The lesson of the Persian Gulf War, Kosovo, and most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq is that no nation-state can afford to oppose the United States in a symmetrical manner with heavy Army divisions or tactical fighter planes.⁹

Chavez has studied the lessons of fighting the U.S. and has built his strategy around asymmetric warfare. He has “closely followed the Iraq insurgency, and has called on his armed forces to learn how to mimic the Sunni resistance”¹⁰ should the United States invade his country. In a speech by the Venezuelan Minister of Defense, Gustavo Reyes Rangel Briceno, on 18 July 2007, he defines the United States as the enemy and states that the U.S. uses 6 phases to gain power in regions.¹¹ The first phase is the destabilization of the society through “transculturization, ungovernability, economic war and communicational war” while pretending to be friends and defending democracy, Human rights, etc. The second phase is consolidation of subversive groups with the intent of debilitating the constituted government. The third phase is promotion of regional conflicts, the fourth – threats of direct intervention, the fifth phase is the

invasion, and the final phase is the imposition of puppet governments and distribution of gains so they become visible to the “great corporations”. To defend against U.S. aggression brought on by a “clear deficiency of energy” and a need to attain vital energy using military and economic power, the Minister of Defense stated that Venezuela would conduct an asymmetric war, a war of resistance, “a long war of all the town” to answer the “imperialistic aggressions in defense of our Mother country.”¹² This is not rhetoric from a lunatic dictator’s appointee but a strategy and process that is engrained into all parts of the government and society.

Hugo Chavez is using the country’s oil wealth to subsidize his Bolivarian revolution, destabilizing Latin America in order to unify it under his rule. He is following the dream of his idol, the region’s 19th-century liberator Simon Bolivar, who expelled Spanish rule from South America with the dream of unifying the subcontinent.¹³ Chavez is using all elements of national power to achieve his goal, including training his militias as an asymmetric force not only to defend the country from a United States invasion and to protect his internal power, but also to destabilize Latin American states in order to spread his Bolivarian revolution.¹⁴ To accomplish this grandeur strategy he will need a powerful tool, militias that can provide the means by coercion, and possibly force, for spreading the revolution throughout the region.

Chavez’s strategy to deal with the United States in the 21st century includes what he calls a “Super Insurgency”, “fourth-generation warfare” (4GW), “Asymmetric War” or “War of all the People”.¹⁵ This war among the people has combatants more likely deployed in small groups of armed soldiers, not necessarily in uniforms, and interspersed among ordinary people.¹⁶ This type of warfare uses all elements of national

power – political, economical, social, and military – “to convince the enemy’s political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.” This theory uses a principle that superior “political will”, over an extended period that could be measured in decades, can defeat a greater military and economic power like the U.S.¹⁷ Colonel Thomas Hammes in his book *The Sling and The Stone* points out that only fourth-generation warfare has defeated a superpower and has defeated both the United States and the Soviet Union on multiple occasions.¹⁸ The Bolivarian revolution ideology is Chavez’s “will” imposed over Venezuela and his loftier goal of the region. His strategy could also be used to defeat U.S.’s interests in the region and an American intervention into his country. Clearly Chavez recognizes that the U.S. strategic center of gravity is our “political will” and he is building a strategy to engage his enemy to the North.

Recent history has shown Hugo Chavez that building conventional military forces to impose his revolution by force in neighboring countries will likely end in their defeat, international condemnation and possibly his fall from power. Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 illustrates the vulnerabilities with using conventional forces to impose “will” on neighbors. The Iraqi dictator was condemned by the United Nations and Arab countries, his forces were expelled from Kuwait, and most were destroyed by an immense coalition of forces led by the United States. In watching the U.S. military in other actions in the last two decades most notably: the Panama invasion in 1989, Bosnia, Kosovo, Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq; Chavez understands that his conventional forces are no match against the United States. However, lessons of the current irregular insurgencies in Afghanistan

and Iraq give him hope and a possible “way” to achieve his objective of a Bolivarian revolution throughout the southern hemisphere, that the United States has little political resolve and lasting power against.

U.S. Core Interests

There are four generally agreed upon core U.S. national interests: physical security, promotion of values, economic prosperity and stable international order. All administrations focus on these interests and may emphasize one over another.¹⁹ Chavez’s anti-U.S., Bolivarian policies threaten all of these interests.

By supporting states like Iran that are tied to terrorist organizations, Venezuela is threatening the physical security of the people of the United States. This is a vital interest in our National Security Strategy.

Throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s the United States was instrumental in assisting the spread of democracy throughout Central and South America. However, these fragile democracies have not brought sweeping social and economic prosperity to the large lower class of Latin America. Chavez has used this to promote his anti-democratic socialist reforms and promises of prosperity to the poor, funded almost exclusively with oil profits.²⁰ The promotion of democratic values and economic prosperity is an important interest in Latin America, which if unfulfilled, will eventually affect our ability to help raise most of Latin American’s out of poverty. Rampant poverty, some 70 percent of Latin America living on \$300 a month, fuel the discontent with former political and economical policies spread by the U.S., and cause instability and anti-U.S. sentiments within most of the poorer countries.²¹

Hugo Chavez has been successful in spreading his ideology through state sponsoring and political support in Bolivia, with the election of his prodigy Evo Morales, and in Ecuador with Rafael Correa's election victory in November 2006.²² When these peaceful ways of Bolivarian Revolution are not successful with other states, Chavez will be required to destabilize countries in the region in order to promote his radical ideology. Militias trained in asymmetric warfare could be sent into other regional countries to promote Bolivarian revolutionary ideology, coerce vulnerable masses, disrupt governments, and destabilize internal security. Once destabilized the state is susceptible to Chavez's mass appeal, promises of social programs, and can unite against a common enemy, the United States.

National Interests

Why is Venezuela and President Chavez important to the United States? Our interests are categorized as: continued access to energy, protection of democracy in Venezuela and the region, economic development, and regional stability and security.²³ The White House issued a "vital national interests" certification allowing the funding of opposition groups due to Venezuela "deterioration of democratic institutions."²⁴ Clearly the United States understands the importance of Venezuela and must develop a policy and strategy that tips the scales of democracy and partnership that favors both countries.

Venezuela is the United State's fourth-largest supplier of petroleum imports, roughly 11 percent of our imported oil, behind only Canada (18 percent), Mexico (17.5 percent) and Saudi Arabia (14 percent). U.S. refineries on the gulf coast are dependant on Venezuelan heavy crude. Most of Venezuela's oil is heavy grade crude which

requires specialized refining for which these refineries are specially designed.²⁵ Should Chavez cut crude exports to the U.S., if only for a few days, the impact would surely be detrimental on the economy. It would require a significant increase in production and imports from elsewhere in the world which may not be able to sustain indefinitely. Because of proximity and specialized refining capabilities, the U.S. is the natural market for Venezuelan oil and we do not want to disrupt this supply with tightening global oil markets.

The United States foreign policy has promoted democracy in Latin America for decades with the premise that representative democracies will further regional peace and stability. Indeed much of Central and South America became democracies by the early nineties. However, many in Latin America, especially the poor, have decreased confidence in the ability of liberal democracies to meet their social and economic needs. Their country became a democracy but the income levels and amount of persons living in poverty improved little.²⁶ Chavez is using this environment to advance his political agenda of a “participatory” democracy with heavy anti-Americanism and socialist ideas. Popular suspicions of U.S. involvement in the 2002 coup are used by Chavez to discredit United States claims of pro-democracy support to Venezuela.²⁷ The war in Iraq has also made Americans, and our heavy handed approach to spreading democracy very unpopular and Venezuelan’s remain skeptical of American intentions. Chavez was democratically elected in 1998.²⁸ Since then he has methodically centralized his power while weakening any opposition within the government. The December 2007 constitutional referendum to allow Chavez to serve as President for life was narrowly defeated but he has vowed to continue his quest to be Venezuela’s supreme ruler past

the second term of his presidency.²⁹ The U.S. must work with regional and world allies to prevent any further weakening of Venezuelan democracy and Chavez's continued destabilizing of Latin American governments.

The United States has long promoted a policy of open, free-market, global liberalization as the best way to increase long-term economic growth and stability. Chavez has implemented an economic model fed with oil dollars based on state intervention and control of business. His programs have been successful largely due to relatively high oil prices. Oil revenues have fed Chavez's social growth.³⁰ The World Bank Group suggested that his economic success is not sustainable over the long term and that a modest fall of oil prices will strain his social budget.³¹ Foreign investment in Venezuela has declined significantly in the last few years due to Chavez's taxing and seizing of company assets. "Without financial transparency, foreign investment, non-oil-sector growth, and publicly accountable and independent institutions, Venezuelan officials will find it difficult to sustain economic growth and maintain current investments in education and health care."³²

U.S. economic investment and assistance to Latin America remains strong to support our commitment to economic development and regional stability. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that the United States direct investment in Latin America and other Western Hemisphere countries in 2006 was approximately \$403 billion or 17 percent of our total direct investment worldwide. Direct investment in Venezuela remained modest with \$11.5 million U.S. investment or 2.8 percent of direct investment in Latin America. This is lower than the 4 percent investment in 2000 shortly after Chavez's election and subsequent nationalizing of industry, but higher than 1990's

1.5 percent direct investment in Venezuela.³³ USAID's investment in Latin American developmental assistance was \$224 million in 2006, or 20 percent of their total worldwide developmental assistance. Also in 2006, the USAID Child Survival and Health Program Fund contributed \$125 million to Latin America, or 10 percent of the fund's world contribution.³⁴ The United States continues our commitment to Latin America with modest regional economic assistance and aid even with our large nation building bills in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Chavez has worked to destabilize the region by directly and indirectly backing candidates sympathetic to his political agenda. Chavez openly supported Evo Morales in Bolivia, Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador, in their election wins; all of which have moved towards "participatory" democracies and anti-Americanism. However, in Peru Ollanta Humala, a radical nationalist, was defeated in elections by a moderate anti-Chavez leftist, despite Hugo's support. In another defeat Venezuela failed to win enough votes at the United Nations for the non-permanent seat at the Security Council.³⁵ His influence has been felt in fragile parts of Latin America but his manipulation and destabilization efforts are generally resisted in the nationalist political cultures of Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Chavez's bilateral agreements and support of Iran are cause for concern and could destabilize Latin America if nuclear ambitions and Iranian brand of terrorism are accepted as viable means of warfare by Venezuela.³⁶ The U.S. should continue to work with regional partners and the international community to hold Chavez's unacceptable interventions, those that use force or the threat of force, in check and clearly communicate what the U.S. will not tolerate.

Not only do we have national interests in Venezuela and Latin America but we also have international and regional obligations. These obligations derive from our position as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and our role as a leader in the Western Hemisphere. As the worlds only remaining superpower most countries, especially in the western hemisphere, look towards the United States for leadership, especially with regards to security. The international community expects us to work with them towards mutually accept solutions. Our strategy towards Venezuela requires a more holistic, integrated approach to the regions challenges using combined U.S. interagency, hemispheric and international partners.

Militia's Current and Possible Uses In the Chavez Ideology

In preparation for his asymmetrical warfare in the event of a U.S. invasion, Chavez has formed a two million strong workers' council called the Bolivarian Circles for the defense of his revolution. This includes the Francisco de Miranda Front (FFM) formed in 2003, and the National Reserve and Territorial Guard in 2005 to defend Venezuela against United States aggression.³⁷

Critics are concerned with Chavez's militias for many reasons. Internal to Venezuela they constitute Chavez's private army and will allow him to tighten his political control through domestic repression. They are directly identified with his revolutionary process, which causes concerns that they will be deployed against opponents, obstruct election processes and will defend the administration if it is defeated in elections.³⁸

External to Venezuela the United States is concern that militias trained in asymmetrical warfare guerrilla tactics will be used to spread the Bolivarian revolution

into the rest of the region, particularly unstable countries. In fact, in 2004 the U.S. was concerned about Chavez spreading revolutionary ideas in Ecuador and Bolivia prior to those countries' elections.³⁹ As it turned out pro-Chavez, anti-American Correa and Morales were elected in Ecuador and Bolivia respectively. However, tying Chavez's militias promulgating Bolivarian revolution in these countries hasn't surfaced. Professor Max Manwaring concluded in his August 2007 publication about Chavez's irregular asymmetric conflict that: Chavez's political-economic, social, informational, and military/ security programs (which include militias)

allow him the singular pursuit of his political-strategic objectives. At a minimum, then, Venezuela may be becoming capable of helping to destabilize large parts of Latin America. The political purpose of any given destabilization effort would be to prepare the way to force a radical restructuring of a target country's government and economy – and bring it under Venezuelan political-economic influence.⁴⁰

Of course the Chavez administration has defended the creation of the militias on the grounds that articles 322 and 326 of their constitution define defense of sovereignty as the responsibility of all citizens.⁴¹ The international community would not disagree with this sovereign right of his country. As long as his militia forces are not caught outside Venezuela destabilizing other countries his argument remains consistent with international norms. The militias also have a pragmatic motive of social program improvement; the reserves assist with the unemployment problem and create opportunities for new skills-based training and a body capable of supplementing the role of the armed forces in humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and social program operation.⁴² Reportedly "guard members are paid \$7 for each weekend day they train" which is a substantial income for members who have come from families living in poverty on less than \$2 per day.⁴³

Ends, Ways, and Means - Short Term

The United States' short term objective is to prevent Hugo Chavez from using militia's to spread his influence in Latin America. We do not have the authority or resources to act alone in the region. Only through partnership at an international and regional level can we counter a potential use of militia force from Chavez. The resources available to meet this end are:

1. Diplomatically leveraging the international community through the United Nations Security Council and the Latin American powers in the region such as Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, and Peru to deter and prevent Chavez small arms proliferation, coercion and force to destabilize Latin America. In fact, recently South American power Brazil, rejected Chavez's authoritarian regime, aggressive regional tactics and continual confrontation with the U.S. and reaffirmed its national interest in the stability of the region.⁴⁴ Brazil has the political power and charismatic leader in President Lula da Silva to lead the region against Hugo's Bolivarian revolution.

Leveraging the critical political power of elites in the Andean region is another available resource. "Elites in the Andes typically wield power through informal institutions such as political machines and powerful family firms."⁴⁵ The Andes Independent Commission sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations believes that "policy engagement with the elites can bolster good governance and anticorruption initiatives through nongovernmental channels."⁴⁶ This "mean" can leverage the common interest of the elites, the U.S., and democratic international community in strengthening democratic governance and security in the region.⁴⁷

Another source of diplomatic power in much of Latin America is the Catholic Church. Chavez previously attacked leaders of the Catholic Church by publicly

declaring they were “possessed by the devil.”⁴⁸ By appealing to the churches convention of equality, government transparency, right to expression, non-violence, respect for rule of law and human rights; the U.S. and regional leaders could ally with the churches leaders in denouncing Chavez’s spread of violence and instability with militias. Catholic leader’s could appeal to an 80 percent Latin American population that claims affiliation with the church⁴⁹ and over 3.5 million, or 85 percent, Catholics in Venezuela that could be a deciding force in quelling the influence of Chavez and the militia’s use of asymmetric warfare.⁵⁰

2. With our support, international and regional partners must conduct an aggressive strategic communications campaign that avoids public sparing matches and demonizing which only validates Chavez as a global actor worthy of our leader’s attention. Chavez’s strategic communications is clearly one of his strategic Centers of Gravity (a source of power that provides strength) that we must counter. Our campaign should work with the regional partners on a comprehensive communications campaign to develop alliances in dealing publicly with Hugo’s militias. A Chavez public attack against an alliance will further alienate him from international and regional norms, reducing his credibility and ability to build his hegemony and spread his Bolivarian revolution. We must expose Chavez’s militias for what they really are; an armed tool to influence the region and the people of Venezuela to keep him in power. When members of Hugo’s militia are found in other countries undermining or subverting the government to assist in spreading his Bolivarian revolution, we must expose and exploit their intentions through the host country, regional partners, and the international community.

The United States must also demonstrate to the Venezuelan military and common people that there are no intentions of invading their country and that the U.S. is not their enemy. Again working through regional partners in military exchanges and Peace Keeping, Humanitarian Assistance, and Disaster Relief exercises so they are reassured of the US military's peaceful intentions in the region and they carry this to the Venezuelan military through their joint training and regional exercises. Broadcast messages of peaceful intentions in "free" radio and television are necessary to get the message to the countries poor and least educated who embrace Chavez's social programs and blindly believe his hateful message of the US as their enemy.

We must communicate effectively that the United States cares about the people in the region and publicize the efforts of all U.S. agencies and private sector. Let's inform them of the \$350 billion of U.S. foreign direct investment to Latin America, millions of non-governmental volunteer hours, to the quarter million medical patients treated and the water wells, schools, and medical clinics constructed each year by the United States military.⁵¹ The message should be spread in Venezuela's poor areas to show them that if Hugo Chavez would allow U.S. assistance in their country they could benefit as well.

3. The United States must build regional partner nation's defensive military capabilities to counter asymmetric warfare. Continued officer exchange programs in schools, participation in counter-insurgency training programs and exercises, and providing necessary tools and equipment to counter asymmetric warfare is necessary with regional partners to counter Chavez's spread of revolution and other future asymmetric threats from others in the future. We must share intelligence and information among government and military intelligence agencies to legitimize threats to

the region. This is especially important to vulnerable democracies in Latin America, not just amenable partners, to ensure they can recognize the threat to their country's government and are strong enough to counter Chavez's militia influence in their country.

4. We must conduct a comprehensive assessment of Latin America to determine vulnerable countries that Chavez will target for his Bolivarian revolution. We then must target them by increasing economic assistance and political outreach to these countries, prior to Hugo's deliberate operations toward them, to strengthen their will against his autocratic - socialist form of government. A short term approach for economic stimulus for these vulnerable countries is international debt relief. Last year President Bush asked members at the G8 Summit for debt relief of the five poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere to allow them to focus their resources on better education and healthcare. The Inter-American Development Bank responded with a \$3.4 billion debt relief for Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guyana, and Haiti.⁵² If other Latin American countries that are targeted by Chavez for Bolivarian revolution require debt relief to jump start their economies, precedence has clearly been set to assist them with the generosity of the large global economic countries.

The U.S. must continue to lead the international community in economic assistance to the region and focus effort on failing democratic economies vulnerable to outside influence. We must also assist in the development of regional trade agreements to accelerate economic growth, create jobs, and build relations with vulnerable democracies in the region.

We should employ all of these Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic means by avoiding any direct American intervention with Venezuela knowing full well

that anything the US says or does, or perceived to do, to Venezuela will add fuel to Chavez's anti-US media machine. We must work through the international community and regional partners to forge legitimacy with our policies and indirect actions. Chavez's militias are a threat to the region requiring the countries in Latin America to develop ways and means (with U.S. and international support) to deal with the danger.

Ends, Ways, and Means - Long Term Approach

The long term objective to neutralize Chavez's militias must address the broader issues of the region that enable Chavez to employ these means against unsuspecting neighbors. To spread his Bolivarian revolution forcefully, Chavez must use the militias trained in asymmetric warfare to destabilize weak states. The United States, international and regional partners must tackle the root causes of issues in the region that empower Chavez and weaken nation states in Latin America that can become vulnerable to the militias.

Richard Lapper postulates that the United States' long term strategy towards Venezuela should be a regional approach that redirects our "policy toward Latin America to address the underlying issues of poverty and inequality that fuel Chavez's appeal."⁵³ Our long term objectives tied to our national interests also include protection and promotion of Democracies throughout Latin America (to include Venezuela), and promotion of Latin American regional security and stability. The US resources available to meet these ends are:

1. The U.S. must lead diplomatic engagements within the region to promote Democracy. The United States was very effective in the 80s and early 90s with promoting democratic values throughout the region and much of Latin America became

democracies, except for the last bastion of hard core Communism under Castro in Cuba. But like Venezuela, these democratic gains were short lived due to a lack of continued support and emphasis by the United States. It is true Chavez was democratically elected but he has slowly led the country in an authoritarian, socialistic direction. His rule has constitutionally concentrated power at the presidency, trimmed the legislative branch, and eliminated congressional oversight of the military allowing the purge of disloyal military officers, while his cronies intimidated government employees, the media, and any political dissent.⁵⁴

To reverse this trend the United States must find a way to balance our engagements throughout the world to prevent less engaged regions from becoming havens for anti-democratic, anti-free-market radicals. Through multilateral diplomatic outreach we must assist our partners in attacking inequality and social exclusion. We must support diffusion of political power in an accountable and democratic fashion with special attention to rural and poor areas.⁵⁵ Continued support of the Organization of American States' programs to assist elected governments respond to democratic governance challenges that include launching networks of practitioners with expertise in legal, judicial, electoral, and citizen participation reform areas.⁵⁶ We must also increase support to the Millennium Challenge Corporation that supports efforts to eliminate corruption, promote government transparency, improve healthcare and education, and build roads to connect people with markets.⁵⁷ Strong diplomatic regional engagement that assists fledgling democratic governments in dealing with the fragile start-up pains is necessary to thwart the attacks from anti-democratic instigators that prey on their vulnerability through force and coercion.

2. We must conduct a long standing strategic communications campaign through regional partners that works to expose the problems with Chavez's authoritarian/ socialistic government. Media intimidation and restrictions, government corruption, and power grabbing by the executive branch should be communicated to the Venezuelan population as well as the Latin American region. The United States should provide historical examples of failed socialist governments and highlight gains of free-market democracies throughout the region. This campaign must also show why many countries that have tried democracy haven't experienced the benefits due to corruption, lack of will among the elite and ruling party to continue a democratic process which effectively deposes or retires them from their benefits and power. Many countries simply may not have allowed their democratic form of government enough time to see the benefits throughout society.

3. Militarily the United States must reach out to all Latin American countries with education and training exchanges that promote values, transparency, and democracy in foreign governments and militaries. The positive effects in the military and governments of Colombia, Honduras, and El Salvador are examples that the U.S. should build on and broaden throughout the region. Non combat exercises such as Humanitarian Assistance /Disaster Relief and Peacekeeping Exercises should continue to be sponsored by the United States and encouragement for all in the region to participate. For example, the SOUTHCOM sponsored annual Peace Keeping Operations-South (PKO-South) exercise, is highly coveted by South American country's government and militaries to show their neighbors in the region their professionalism and competence. These exercises build mutual respect and confidence in participating country's governments

and militaries and helps pressure countries who are anti-U.S., or leaning towards anti-U.S. sentiments, to “save face” among their neighbors to participate in these humanitarian exercises. A public invitation must go out to Venezuela, as well as all other countries in the region, for the multiple coalition humanitarian exercises conducted every year in hopes that Chavez constructively participate.

4. Economically Latin America is rich in natural resources, agriculture, labor, and an important trade partner with the U.S. USAID reports that approximately 40 percent of imports to Latin American countries come from the United States and 50 percent of the region’s exports are shipped to the U.S.⁵⁸ We must continue to open markets within the hemisphere and around the globe to fuel economic development to help fight poverty and establish a middle class in Latin America. Since Chavez’s rule, the middle class in Venezuela have felt excluded and harassed between the wealthy elite or “Bolivarian bourgeoisie” (those benefiting from oil revenues and Chavez’s Bolivarian revolution), and the poor.⁵⁹ In the Andes region, issues facing market economies, which include – credit for small and medium size enterprises, access to property title, functioning infrastructure, market-based land reform, and equitable tax reform must be addressed to stimulate economic development.⁶⁰ In conjunction with international and regional partners the U.S. must improve economic growth by funding and implementing economic prosperity through employment and development programs in rural areas, land reform, and law enforcement into rural areas.⁶¹ In partnering with the World Bank we must promote small business by encouraging market-based bank lending programs and infrastructure development programs financed through international financial banks. We should create incentives for direct foreign investment and job growth in the region,

while working to reduce tariff barriers and building intraregional commerce. Government incentives and reduction of risk can attract companies to countries with resources with a reciprocating requirement for wages and benefits to bring workers into a middle class standard of living. Prosperity and hope of a better life will thwart revolution and build free-market based democracy in Latin America that can resist the pressure of a coercive revolutionary motivated by autocratic rule.

5. Lastly, the interagency approach to the long term strategy to deal with Hugo Chavez's anti-United States, anti-democracy, socialist agenda would not be complete without addressing law enforcement's ability to address corruption and rule of law within Venezuela and throughout the region. Within sovereign states it is extremely difficult to prosecute corruption in the government from an international legal or law enforcement agency. Corruption has been a part of many societies for centuries and it appears engrained in Latin American governments which mirror their society. However, corruption remains a root of the problem for poverty and the large separation between the wealthy and lower class in the region.⁶² We must chip away at the problem over the long term by using international business norms that prohibit corruption and expose business corruption as an illegal activity rather than an accepted norm. By leveraging the United States and Western European business practices among corporations and international companies doing business in Latin America, and encouraging free and open investigative press that exposes corruption and denounces it to the populace, we could begin moving in the right direction in fighting corruption and helping to reduce poverty in the region.

Risk - Sovereignty

With the current military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and our political engagements in potential hot spots of Palestine, North Korea, Iran, Sudan and Pakistan; it is clear the United States cannot go it alone and must leverage International and regional partner nations in dealing with Chavez's aggressive revolutionary activities. The Administration is working multi-laterally with the Organization of American States, the European Union, and the Council of Europe, to support Venezuelan civil society and speak out against abuses of democracy.⁶³

The United States must be subtle when dealing with the sovereign right of a country to govern and arm its citizens for the inherent right of self defense. We, as a society, have always vehemently defended our right to bear arms and raise an army.⁶⁴ However, we must be watchful of Chavez's actions outside Venezuela to destabilize other countries using irregular trained militia forces. Partner countries in the region are probably even less likely to act against Chavez's military force upsurge. Historically regional countries have not intervened in Chavez's arms purchases and military build up. In fact Brazilian and Argentine governments have not supported interfering with past arms purchases by Venezuela and refer to it as a sovereign matter.⁶⁵ And Hugo Chavez justifies his actions of asymmetric warfare training and equipping as simply to defending "the sovereignty and greatness of his country and the region."⁶⁶

The risk of less than full attainment of a contained Chavez is the spreading of his anti-American, anti-free market influence and revolutionary ideology throughout Latin America. The forceful spread of the Bolivarian revolution will negatively affect energy and agricultural markets and significantly reduce our influence and security in our own hemisphere. Without Latin American allies and partners with shared values and

interests, we will be less likely to achieve effective solutions to the ever increasing complex security challenges shared by all throughout the Americas.

Conclusion

Since the early 1990s Hugo Chavez has built militias to defend Venezuela from a United States attack and as a means to suppress internal dissent and support his continued Presidency. Chavez has studied the lessons of fighting the U.S. and has built his strategy to counter the conventional military threat using asymmetric warfare. He is using his country's oil wealth to subsidize his Bolivarian revolution, destabilizing Latin America in order to unify it under his rule.

The United States interests in the region and Venezuela are categorized as: energy, protection of democracy, economic development, and regional stability and security. Our strategy requires a holistic, integrated approach to the region's challenges using combined U.S. interagency, hemispheric and international partners.

Our short term objective is to prevent Hugo Chavez from using militia's to spread his influence in Latin America. The means available to achieve this objective span across the Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic elements of national power. The U.S. must diplomatically leverage the international community and Latin American powers to deter and prevent Chavez's small arms proliferation, coercion and use of force to destabilize Latin America. We must also leverage the critical political power of the region's elites and the appeal of the leaders of the Catholic Church to reinforce the convention of good governance and denouncing Chavez's spread of violence and instability with militias. Our information campaign should work with regional partners on a comprehensive communications campaign to develop alliances in dealing publicly

with Hugo's militias. The United States must also demonstrate to the Venezuelan military and common people that there are no intentions of invading their country and that the U.S. is not their enemy. We must communicate effectively that the United States cares about the people in the region and publicize the aid efforts of all U.S. agencies and private sector. The United States must build regional partner nation's defensive military capabilities to counter asymmetric warfare. We then must target vulnerable countries by increasing economic assistance and political outreach, prior to Chavez's destabilizing operations toward them, to strengthen their will against his autocratic - socialist form of government. All the while, the U.S. must work through the international community and regional partners to indirectly forge legitimacy with our policies.

To forcefully spread his Bolivarian revolution, Chavez may use his militias trained in asymmetric warfare to destabilize weak regional states. In the long term the U.S., international and regional partners must tackle the root causes of issues in the region that empower Chavez and weaken nation states in Latin America that can become vulnerable to the militias. We must lead diplomatic engagements within the region to promote Democracy. Through multilateral diplomatic outreach we must assist our partners in attacking inequality and social exclusion, and support diffusion of political power in an accountable and democratic fashion with special attention to rural and poor areas. The strategy must support efforts to eliminate corruption, promote government transparency, and improve healthcare and education. The strategic communications campaign must be implemented through regional partners that expose problems with Chavez's authoritarian government. Militarily the United States should reach out to all

Latin American countries with education and training exchanges that promote the values in our military and highlight the advantages in our transparent, free-market, democratic form of government. We must continue to open markets within the hemisphere to fuel economic development to help fight poverty and establish a middle class in Latin America. In addition, law enforcement's ability to address corruption and rule of law within Venezuela and throughout the region must be addressed. Finally, corruption remains the root of the poverty problem and should be addressed using international business norms that prohibit corruption and expose business corruption as an illegal activity rather than an accepted norm.

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