

Chavez sees US, Europe behind Iran protests

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President Hugo Chavez said Wednesday that he believes the United States and European countries have had a hand in stirring up protests in Iran.

Chavez reiterated his support for Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a close ally, and said he is "completely sure" Ahmadinejad fairly won re-election on June 12.

He said protests and violence that have rocked Iran since the contested vote appear part of a recurring strategy by U.S. and European intelligence agencies to destabilize enemy governments.

He didn't offer any evidence but said the unrest follows a pattern seen in various countries, where "behind it is the CIA and the imperial hand of European countries and the United States."

"From my point of view, that's what's happening in Iran," Chavez told allied leaders from Ecuador, Bolivia and other countries at a summit meeting.

The Venezuelan leader has long accused the U.S. government of backing a 2002 coup against him. U.S. officials have denied Washington was involved.

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