

Destabilizing Venezuela Pre-Election

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On October 7, Venezuelans get to choose between Bolivarianism under Chavez and Henrique Capriles Radonski's corporatism they rejected resoundingly in 1998.

Polls show they'll do it again. IVAD late August results show Chavez ahead 55% to 34%. Only 10% of Venezuelans are undecided.

Eight major July polls showed Chavez leading by 15 – 27%. Subsequent ones weeks later revealed his support remains strong. Few doubt October's outcome. At issue is only by how much. On December 16, regional elections follow.

In late August, Chavez warned that opposition forces plan to declare victory before electoral results are announced. They'll say they won, reject National Electoral Council (CNE) totals, and claim fraud.

They'll call for violence, destabilization and US help. "They are gearing up....with some allies in the world, some media, some social organizations to claim victory," said Chavez. "We know they are capable of anything."

He urged respect for official results, adding:

"We will support the National Electoral Council. We call on all sectors to respect the referee, the Constitution, the laws."

Capriles' economic advisor, Ricardo Hausmann, said his campaign will announce its own results independently of official ones.

Ultimas Noticias editor Eleazar Diza Rangel said they'll "claim fraud (and won't) recognize the people's will."

Since Chavez took office in February 1999, 15 national and regional elections were held. Independent observers declared them open, free and fair. America's Carter Center calls Venezuela's electoral system one of the world's most reliable.

Around 200 or more international observers will monitor October 7 voting. Expect confirmation of another exemplary democratic process. It puts America's to shame and then some. US federal and many regional ones lack legitimacy. Big money controls them. Ordinary people have no say.

Venezuelans get the real thing. They're not about to accept pre-Chavez harshness. They want no part of corporatism at their expense.

The [Venezuela Solidarity Campaign](#) published a report saying a leaked internal right wing

document revealed plans to roll back public services if elected.

It calls for reducing state funding. Health care, education, food subsidies, housing assistance, communal council projects, and other programs Venezuelans rely on will be affected.

The document titled “First Ideas for Economic Actions of the National Unity Government” calls for “concrete steps to decrease, in the medium and long term, the heavy load of goods and services” by slashing overall social spending.

Privatizations and neoliberal harshness are planned. What Venezuelans rejected years ago they want reinstated. They plan presidential diktat authority to enforce it. They want to “dismantle the socialized and collectivized state model.” Their plan replicates IMF financial terrorism.

It mandates mass layoffs, deregulation, deep social spending cuts, wage freezes or cuts, corporate-friendly tax cuts, prioritizing the divine right of capital, crushing trade unionism, and harsh crackdowns against non-believers.

Ahead of October 7, destabilization began. Expect more. Washington’s dirty hands bear full responsibility. Chavez is relentlessly targeted. Bush policy was vicious. Obama promised better but lied.

He wants corporatism replacing Bolivarianism. He failed but won’t stop trying. Chavez knows the stakes and what he faces. Hegemons demand unchallenged dominance. No holds barred tactics go all out.

Weeks ahead of October 7, a suspicious oil refinery fire occurred. A gas explosion ignited it pre-dawn. An immediate investigation was launched. Venezuela’s Amuay facility was hit.

It’s the nation’s largest. It’s part of state owned PDVSA’s Paraguana Refining Complex (PRC). It produces 645,000 barrels of oil per day. Extensive damage halted production. Vital revenues were lost. Reports said operational areas weren’t affected.

On August 31, production resumed. PRC head Jesus Luongo said strong winds complicated firefighting. PRC vice president Asdrubal Chavez said shipments resumed on September 2.

He also explained that contingency plans were implemented during down time. Regular distribution continued. “If the whole network of refineries were stopped,” he added, “we’d be able to supply fuel for more than 10 days.”

The incident took 48 lives. Plant workers and National Guard forces died. Over 100 others were injured. Hundreds of homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged.

It’s one of Venezuela’s deadliest incidents. Earlier Tocoa and Las Tejerias refinery accidents killed 260 and 48 respectively. Around 160 died from a Ricardo Zuluaga electric power plant explosion.

Amuay’s fire burned for days and spread. Damage caused was extensive. Chavez declared three days of mourning, saying:

“At this time of great pain, and from the bottom of my soldier’s heart, may you and all

of our comrades in arms from the National Bolivarian Guard receive a huge embrace in solidarity for the painful loss of such brave lives in the tragedy in Amuay."

"As the Son of Bolivar that I am, today my mourning is the same mourning as that of the entire country."

Following the incident, opposition forces and media scoundrels accused authorities of "gross negligence," "under-investment," and poor maintenance.

Chavez called it "very regrettable if some Venezuelans tried to use the pain of the victims to take advantage of the situation" and use it for political advantage.

"I know who is saying this," he said, "but I will not stoop to their level." Energy Minister Rafael Ramirez said the plant received around \$4.3 billion in 2012.

At the time of the explosion, reports said government web sites were hacked. Corporate-owned Globovision broadcast exclusive footage. Someone unnamed was positioned outside the plant at 2AM to film it. Suspensions followed that Amuay was no accident.

On September 3, [Press TV](#) headlined "Sabotage more probable than mishap in Venezuela refinery blast," saying:

Responding to spurious charges of government negligence and other accusations, Chavez said:

"You can't exclude any hypothesis....It's practically impossible that here in an installation like this which is fully automated everywhere and that has thousands of responsible workers night and day, civilian and military, and that there is a gas leak for 3 or 4 days and nobody responds. This is impossible."

On September 6, [Press TV](#) headlined "US-backed opposition devises plots to destabilize Venezuela," saying:

Chavez supporters accused them of spreading fear and terror ahead of October's election. Amuay's incident was Exhibit A. Political activist Hindu Anderi said:

"Our principal is to always be mobilized, to be on alert against anyone attempting to sabotage the election on October 7."

"They will do this to create an environment in which Venezuela will be looked upon as an outlaw state."

"This will make it easier for military intervention or at least sanctions against Venezuela."

He and others accused Washington of plotting against Chavez, his allies and Bolivarianism. Chavez said America and opposition forces want his government destabilized.

On August 28, he showed how Bolivarianism differs from neoliberal harshness. He allocated millions of aid dollars for victims and family members.

Spouses of victims got lifetime pensions. Their children get educational scholarships. Damaged and destroyed properties will be rebuilt. Interim housing was provided. One victim

said state help came quickly. No one needing it is excluded.

Chavez congratulated everyone who pitched in to help. "The spirit of patriotism, national unity, and the battle for life is being financed," he said.

Vice minister Hugo Carvajal of Venezuela's Integrated System of Crime Investigation said:

"The Bolivarian government has organized a multidisciplinary team of the best disaster investigators of the Investigation Division of Disasters of the CICPC and the Board of the Technical Scientific and Investigation Consultancy of the Attorney General's office to work out the precise actions that lead to the fire."

Evidence is being examined. Satellite and ground photos were taken. Witnesses were questioned. Information is being carefully analyzed. Findings will be released when available.

Industrial accidents aren't uncommon. Amuay's timing and extensive damage raised suspicious red flags. Latin American expert [James Petras](#) agrees.

The incident, he believes, "was an act of sabotage, planned and executed by a clandestine group of terrorist specialists acting on behalf of the US government." Convincing arguments back this reasoning.

Cui bono is most obvious. Washington, Capriles, and corporate fascists hoped to benefit. They planned taking full advantage. Chavez was blamed. Venezuelans hear it ad nauseam. It wore thin long ago.

Nonetheless, dark forces never quit. Washington funds opposition forces. It's gone on throughout Chavez's tenure. CIA operatives infest the country. All independent governments are targeted. Chavez is Latin America's prime target. Its oil riches alone explain why.

Several times he said Washington wants him assassinated. Regional US bases threaten him. He's a marked man. He's also resilient.

He's not about to let threats roll him over. He pulls no punches. He condemns imperial US policies. Few anywhere match his outspokenness. Most Venezuelans support him for good reason.

Reelection next month looks certain. Imagine if America had leadership like his. He doesn't seek regional or global hegemony. He endorses peace, not war. He engages other nations cooperatively. He seeks unity and world solidarity. He heads the kind of democracy Americans can't even imagine.

His policies are socially progressive. State resources provide vital services. He champions civil and human rights. Ordinary Venezuelans are helped, not denied or persecuted.

No secret prisons exist. He doesn't target neighbors or practice torture. His elections are judged open, free and fair.

The contrast with Washington is stark. Leadership in both countries is mirror opposite. Venezuelans have choice when they vote. Americans get two sides of the same coin. It's corrupted, dysfunctional, tyrannical, and too broken to fix. Bolivarianism shames it.

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