

House Resolution Designates Venezuela a " State Sponsor of Terrorism"

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At a time of growing US poverty, hunger, homelessness, and despair, imperial wars without end, and the Obama administration even worse than its predecessor, Venezuela:

- is a model participatory democracy;
- holds free, fair and open elections;
- respects the rule of law, civil liberties, and human rights;
- doesn't intimidate its neighbors;
- uses its resources responsibly for the people;
- provides essential social services for the needy;
- champions judicial fairness and the rule of law;
- has a model free and open media;
- wages no foreign wars;
- doesn't torture or imprison its adversaries;
- conducts effective operations to halt illicit drugs trafficking;
- promotes global peace, solidarity, equality and social justice; and
- its only threat is its good example that shames its northern neighbor.

In contrast, America:

- is a serial belligerent and world class bully;
- spends more on militarism than the rest of the world combined at a time when it has no enemies;
- backs the world's worst dictators and fake democrats like Colombia's Alvaro Uribe, a man closely linked to the country's paramilitary death squads and drug cartels; and
- through the CIA, has actively engaged in global drugs trafficking since the agency's 1947 founding; it profits hugely from its dealings with local

traffickers; so do major US banks and other powerful business and financial interests.

In addition, Washington

- serves the rich at the public's expense;
- tolerates corruption at the highest levels;
- subverts democracy through electoral fraud;
- has a closed, corrupted dominant media system serving the powerful, not the greater good;
- incarcerates hundreds of political prisoners;
- uses torture as official policy; and
- wages state-sponsored terrorism and global wars.

So consider the hypocrisy. On October 27, Rep. Connie Mack (Rep. FL) introduced [HR 872: Calling for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to be designated a state sponsor of terrorism for its support of Iran, Hezbollah, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia \(FARC-EP\)](#). Its sole co-sponsor was Rep. Ron Klein (Dem. FL).

Connie Mack is a notorious right-wing ideologue. In an accompanying statement he said:

"The evidence linking Venezuela's Hugo Chavez to the FARC and Hezbollah - two of the most dangerous terrorist organizations, responsible for many bombings, kidnappings, killings and drug trafficking - is overwhelming. Naming Venezuela as a state sponsor of terrorism will strengthen the stability of the region. The Administration must not turn a blind eye to Chavez's dangerous aggression and must add Venezuela to the state sponsors of terrorism with delay."

Fact Check

Iran hasn't attacked a neighbor in over 200 years, but has defended itself vigorously when attacked, including during the 1980-88 war with Iraq, a conflict the Carter administration triggered in an attempt to destabilize and weaken both countries.

Noted Latin America expert James Petras calls the FARC-EP the "longest standing, largest peasant-based guerrilla movement in the world (that was) founded in 1964 by two dozen peasant activists (to defend) autonomous rural communities from" Colombian military and paramilitary violence.

Hezbollah is no terrorist organization. It's a legitimate resistance group, and, as a political party, is part of Lebanon's elected government. In addition, it's well respected for providing essential social services, including a network of schools, medical clinics, and organized relief after Israeli South Lebanon bombings in 1993, 1996, and 2006.

Also, according to Aijaz Ahmad writing in the Indian magazine, Frontline:

It's "the only entity which has, through armed resistance, forced the Israelis to relinquish any territory that the Jewish state has ever captured" through decades of regional belligerency.

Mack Attack Round Two

HR 872 is round two for Mack. On March 13, 2008, he and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R. FL) introduced HR 1049 (with eight co-sponsors) "calling for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to be designated a state sponsor of terrorism (and) condemn(ing) the Venezuelan government for its support of terrorist organizations," at that time referring to the FARC-EP. The resolution died in the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Referred there as well, the new one won't fare better. Otherwise the implications are serious as state terrorism designation means halting normal relations, prohibiting US companies from exporting and operating there, and denying America vitally needed Venezuelan oil. It's the nation's fourth largest supplier after Canada, Saudi Arabia and Mexico.

In its "State Sponsors of Terrorism Overview," the US States Department imposes the following sanctions:

1. "A ban on arms-related exports and sales.
2. Controls over exports of dual-use items (that may be anything, including oil), requiring 30-day Congressional notification for goods and services that could significantly enhance the terrorist-list country's military capability or ability to support terrorism.
3. Prohibitions on economic assistance.
4. Imposition of miscellaneous financial and other restrictions, including:
 - Requiring the United States to oppose loans by the World Bank and other international financial institutions;
 - Lifting diplomatic immunity to allow families of terrorist victims to file civil lawsuits in US courts;
 - Denying companies and individuals tax credits for income earned in terrorist-listed countries;
 - Denial of duty-free treatment of goods exported to the United States;
 - Authority to prohibit any US citizen from engaging in a financial transaction with a terrorist-list government without a Treasury Department license; and
 - Prohibition of Defense Department contracts above \$100,000 with companies controlled by terrorist-list states."

In other words, it halts virtually all normal diplomatic, political and business dealings with "terrorist-list states."

Corporate interests won't tolerate it at a time every business opportunity counts. Nor will Venezuela with strong regional support given the political, security and economic implications.

As long as Bolivarianism flourishes, expect new efforts to vilify, isolate, destabilize, and topple Chavez, no more likely to succeed than others, and here's why. According to the Venezuelan Institute of Data Analysis (IVAD), his latest approval rating tops 62% after nearly 11 years as president. Governing responsibly keeps him popular compared to Barack Obama's noticeable slippage from his post inaugural high.

According to the November 3 Rasmussen Reports daily Presidential Tracking Poll, only 28% of voters strongly approve of his performance, 41% strongly disapprove, 46% somewhat approve, 52% somewhat disapprove, and for Congress it's far worse - 15% say its doing a good or excellent job compared to 53% ranking it poor.

Given Washington's inattention to essential needs, watch for even greater erosion compared to Chavez remaining popular by a two-to-one margin - a profile befitting a democrat, not a state-sponsor of terrorism.

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