

US Intelligence Report Classifies Venezuela as “Anti-US Leader”

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As is custom at the beginning of each year, the different US agencies publish their famous annual reports on topics ranging from human rights, trafficking in persons, terrorism, threats, drug-trafficking, and other issues that indicate who will be this year's target of US aggression. Yesterday, it was the intelligence community's turn. Admiral Dennis Blair, National Director of Intelligence, presented the Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

The report details the principle threats to the interests and security of the US worldwide. This year, in addition to mentioning the usual suspects – Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Al Qa'ida and Iraq – the report dedicates significant space to Venezuela.

In the section referring to threats in Latin America, which carries the title “Latin America Stable, but Challenged by Crime and Populism”, a large portion is dedicated to Venezuela. “In...countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua, elected populist leaders are moving toward a more authoritarian and statist political and economic model, and they have banded together to oppose US influence and policies in the region. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has established himself as one of the US's foremost international detractors, denouncing liberal democracy and market capitalism and opposing US policies and interests in the region.”

Classifying President Chavez as “one of the US's foremost international detractors” already gives indication that the US intelligence community considers the Venezuelan president as an enemy. But following that paragraph, further down, a section titled “Venezuela: Leading Anti-US Regional Force”, further confirms the official US vision of Venezuela as a major adversary. “President Chavez continues to impose an authoritarian populist political model in Venezuela that undermines democratic institutions. Since winning a constitutional referendum in early 2009 that removed term limits and will permit his reelection, Chavez has taken further steps to consolidate his political power and weaken the opposition in the run up to the 2010 legislative elections.”

The mention of the congressional elections in Venezuela this year evidences how deeply involved US intelligence agencies are in internal Venezuelan affairs. The US is not always interested in legislative elections in a foreign nation. Such a focus only occurs when the US has some kind of investment in the outcome of the electoral process, as in this case. There is no question that the flow of US dollars will increase this year to fund campaigns of opposition candidates and aid in the execution of strategies to undermine the Chavez government.

In the following paragraph, the intelligence assessment utilizes every claim made by opposition groups and media in Venezuela against Chavez, "The National Assembly passed a law that shifted control of state infrastructure, goods, and services to Caracas in order to deprive opposition states and municipalities of funds. Chavez has curtailed free expression and opposition activities by shutting down independent news outlets, harassing and detaining protestors, and threatening opposition leaders with criminal charges for corruption. Chavez's popularity has dropped significantly in recent polls as a result of his repressive measures, continued high crime, rising inflation, water and power shortages, and a major currency devaluation, raising questions about his longer term political future."

Not only is the US intelligence community demonstrating poor intelligence collecting and analyses here, but also evidencing its clear dependency on opposition sources inside and outside Venezuela. No news outlets have been shut down in Venezuela. Some have been fined and sanctioned for not following legal regulations, but that happens frequently in the US as well. The US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) imposes sanctions on hundreds of media outlets in the US each year. No one classifies those actions as violating freedom of expression, but rather merely enforcing the law.

Furthermore, not only has the Chavez administration not detained protestors that regularly violate all kinds of laws by blocking highways and vital roads throughout the nation, marching without permission from local authorities, calling publicly for the overthrow of the government, throwing molotov cocktails and other deadly objects at state security forces, but President Chavez himself has actually ordered police to refrain from carrying deadly weapons when dealing with public protests and to respect demonstrators' human rights. In the US, protestors are regularly detained and violently repressed by police forces – almost at every demonstration – and constantly denied permission to march or protest near any government building.

Also, Chavez's popularity has not "dropped significantly". It remains well above 60%, as it has been during the past several years.

But the report goes on to accuse Chavez of forming an "anti-US alliance" in Latin America. "On foreign policy, Chavez's regional influence may have peaked, but he is likely to continue to support likeminded political allies and movements in neighboring countries and seek to undermine moderate, pro-US governments. He has formed an alliance of radical leaders in Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and until recently, Honduras." (Note: Honduras was part of the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas "ALBA", until the recent Washington-backed coup d'état. This statement in the intelligence report evidences the US's clear satisfaction with Honduras' withdrawal from the alliance).

In the following phrase, the US intelligence report also relates Chavez and ALBA nations to drug-trafficking and terrorism, "He and his allies are likely to oppose nearly every US policy initiative in the region, including the expansion of free trade, counter drug and counterterrorism cooperation, military training and security initiatives, and even US assistance programs."

"Chavez's relationship with Colombia's President Uribe is particularly troubled. His outspoken opposition to Colombia's Defense Cooperation Agreement with the US has led to an increase in border tensions. Chavez has called the agreement a declaration of war against Venezuela. He has restricted Colombian imports, warned of a potential military

conflict and continued his covert support to the terrorist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)."

In the above statement, the US again accuses the Chavez government of supporting the FARC, yet has never presented any solid evidence to back this claim, which has been repeatedly denied by the Venezuelan government. Cynically, the US is also accusing Chavez of somehow "increasing tensions" with Colombia because he opposes the establishment of seven US military bases in Colombia right across the Venezuelan border. A May 2009 US Air Force official document detailed how one of the Colombian military bases in Palanquero would be used by US armed forces to "combat the constant threat of anti-US governments in the region" and would improve the US's capacity to execute "Expenditary Warfare".

Clearly, as the report classifies Venezuela as the "anti-US leader" in the region, that would indicate, as outlined in the US Air Force document, that the increased US military presence in Colombia is precisely to threaten and/or attack Venezuela.

Finally, the US intelligence report discusses the perceived threat surrounding Chavez's relationship with Iran, Russia and China. "Chavez will continue to cultivate closer political, economic and security ties with Iran, Russia and China. He has developed a close personal relationship with Iranian President Ahmadinejad and they have signed numerous agreements...Most of the agreements Moscow has signed with Chavez relate to arms sales and investments in the Venezuelan energy sector...On paper, Venezuela's acquisitions are impressive, but their armed forces lack the training and logistics capacity to use these to their full capability. Yet, the scale of the purchases has caused concern in neighboring countries, particularly Colombia, and risks fueling a regional arms race."

The report ends by mentioning Venezuela in the section on "Significant State and Non-State Intelligence Threats", claiming that "North Korea and Venezuela possess more limited intelligence capabilities focused primarily on regional threats and supporting the ruling regime...Venezuela's services are working to counter US influence in Latin America by supporting leftist governments and insurgent groups." The other countries mentioned in this section are China, Russia and Cuba, along with non-state actors Al Qa'ida and Hizballah.

Apparently, now the US formally views Venezuela as a threat in the same class as Al Qa'ida.

What this intelligence report really means is that operations against the Chavez government will substantially increase this year. The report will be used to justify a larger budget allocation to intelligence missions against Venezuela. But even more dangerously, the focus in the report on Hugo Chavez, the man, evidences that he has become the principal target of US aggression. Placing such an emphasis on one individual as the cause of major threats to US interests raises the possibilities of an assassination attempt or other tactic to rid Empire of an individual perceived as an "anti-US leader".

See the original report [here](#).

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