

Washington Planning to “Checkmate” Chavez

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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So says Heinz Dieterich Steffan – German sociologist, economist, political analyst and Hugo Chavez consultant who claims he coined the phrase “21st century socialism” in the mid-1990s. He currently teaches at the Autonomous Metropolitan University in Mexico City and writes often on Latin American issues.

In a May 21, 2008 Kaosenlared.net article and follow-up Montevideo, Uruguay debate, Dieterich was blunt. He said “Washington does not want to lose (Latin America) in competition with India, China and Europe.” He called the situation “life or death” and that a military attack against Venezuela from Colombia is possible. Maybe likely, and Ecuador and Bolivia are also targeted.

He laid out a “checkmate” scenario:

- weaken and destroy FARC-EP and ELN resistance; under Clinton in 1999, Plan Colombia was launched to do it; the Uribe government’s March 1 attack against the FARC-EP camp was part of it; all regional aggression has Washington’s stamp on it, especially when Alvaro Uribe is involved; he’s the Bush administration’s closest regional ally and willing co-conspirator;
- neutralize Evo Morales in Bolivia as well, divide the country, and create a parallel state in its resource-rich provinces;
- use these successes to “checkmate” Chavez and Ecuador’s Raphael Correa; take further measures to do it; use Uribe’s military and gunboat diplomacy after the Fourth Fleet becomes active July 1 – after a 60 year hiatus and no regional threat to warrant it;
- since taking office in 2001, the Bush administration targeted Venezuela for regime change; it extended the timeline after its April 2002 coup failed; it made destroying Colombian resistance more urgent so Washington could use the country unimpeded as a launching platform against Chavez much like Honduras in the 1980s against Nicaragua’s Sandinistas; the scheme is vintage Washington; it’s still unfolding; it involves waging a “widespread offensive against Chavez and the Bolivarian forces from 2008 – 2009;”
- regime changes in Bolivia and Ecuador will follow; in Bolivia “through separatism, the Trojan Horse of the Constituent Assembly and the 2006 formation of CONFILAR” – an International Confederation for Regional Freedom and Autonomy; in Ecuador by fostering discontent in the CONAI indigenous movement and weakening the government through destabilization; also by stoking secessionist stirrings in Guayas, the country’s most affluent province.

Dieterich says Washington believes that “FARC and Evo Morales (weakening) are

irreversible." Time will tell if it's so. That reasoning sets the stage for "subversion and paramilitary-military (actions) from Colombia (and) Fourth Fleet (aggression) against Venezuela and Ecuador." In his judgment, an operation may be "close" with the Bush administration's tenure winding down. He calls America a "bestial enemy" and this moment a "dangerous juncture." He hopes Chavez, Correa, Morales and other Latin American leaders are up to the challenge. The threat is that Venezuelan generals will buckle under a US incursion and not sacrifice themselves "in a war against the gringos."

He envisions a scenario much like against Cuba that led to the 1962 missile crisis – a naval blockade and sees "no cohesion" in Venezuela's military as there was in Cuba. The antidote is Latin American unity. The entire region is targeted. "It's time to seek what unites us," he says, and urges a democratic alliance among regional governments and social forces. "There is no other way because the enemy is very powerful and is made up of the alliance between the oligarchies and the gringos, and backed by Europe and Japan."

Dieterich says efforts in this direction have been proposed and rejected. Nonetheless, the need is urgent because failure is unthinkable – the end of participatory democracy and resurgence of neoliberal triumphalism throughout the hemisphere.

There's hope and opportunity to head it off. He calls the Colombian March 1 incursion "a serious political mistake," and that Bogota and Washington "underestimated the cost of this action." It will strengthen calls for negotiation and "will be capitalised on by the forces that (want) a peaceful solution to Colombia's armed conflict." It will also improve chances for "South American integration aims of progressive countries like Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela." Ecuador and Bolivia as well. Uribe came out of this politically weaker. He'll "feel isolated diplomatically (and) will have to tone down his" belligerency. That remains to be seen for a hard right leader firmly in Bush's camp with "billions" in "inducements" to stay there.

The stakes for Washington and the region are huge. A rerun of the 1990s "Golden Age of Pillage" is unthinkable. So is another defeat for the Bush administration. With a scant eight months left, it may try anything to reverse its losses. It makes for very scary prospects:

- saber rattling writ large;
- regional gunboat diplomacy;
- a naval blockade against Venezuela and Ecuador;
- a ground incursion from Colombia;
- three Latin American leaders targeted for removal;
- Cuba also;
- possible assassinations as well; CIA is expert at it; their agents infest the region, and Target One is Chavez; and
- according to an unidentified retired US career diplomat and former assistant secretary of state, a planned air attack against Iran by summer; the idea is long-standing and goes back to the Clinton years; more recently, hawkish commanders replaced more hesitant ones;

Congress is supportive, and, in an election year, major contenders practically preach it, at least in their rhetoric; they're also hostile to Chavez and comfortable with his removal.

He's alerted and revamping his intelligence services accordingly. The Interior and Justice Ministries will oversee a new General Intelligence Office and Counterintelligence Office in place of the current Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services (DISIP). Similar military intelligence and counterintelligence components will replace the Military Intelligence Division (DIM) and will be under the Defense Ministry. Interior Minister Ramon Rodriguez Chacin announced the changes on May 28, and said they're to counter US espionage and destabilization efforts. They're operative under the newly enacted Law on Intelligence and Counterintelligence. It was passed on May 28 by presidential decree under the legislatively-granted enabling law.

They'll be needed and lots more. According to Venezuelan Popular Unity (UPV) leader Lina Ron, the Chavez government is threatened. She cites a coup d'etat scheme called "Choquinaque" to oust it. It involves economic financing, psychological manipulation, and efforts to destabilize Venezuela's economy. Senior military commanders are being enlisted and bribed and opposition candidates promoted. The aim is to influence the outcome of the November 23 regional elections for mayors and governors. Pro-Chavez officials hold most posts, and Washington-backed subversion aims to unseat enough of them to change the balance of power.

Similar schemes back secessionist movements in the most affluent parts of Bolivia, Venezuela and Ecuador in its Guayas province. It has regional leaders alarmed and Chavez outraged and vocal. On his weekly radio and television program, he blamed "oligarchs" and "fascists" for targeting Bolivia after its most resource-rich state (Santa Cruz) supported more autonomy in a (largely symbolic) May 4 referendum. "The CIA and its lackeys (want regional control) but we will defeat that plan through integration, political union and ideological strength."

It's vital because Venezuela is also threatened. It's oil-rich Zulia state has similar secessionist ideas. Big Oil exploits them, and their local allies in the past supported a referendum to choose independence from Caracas. Its governor is Manuel Rosales. He ran against Chavez in 2006 and lost big. He backs the idea, is close to the Bush administration, and signed the infamous "Carmona Decree" after the April 2002 coup. It dissolved the National Assembly and Supreme Court, erased the Constitution, and ended Bolivarianism for the people. For now, more autonomy is enough for Rosales but unthinkable if Chavistas can help it. They condemn the idea and will fight it.

Stay tuned. November approaches in both countries. The Bush administration's tenure is short. But it's got plenty of time left to incinerate two continents and end the republic if that's its plan. An inert public needs arousing. Michel Chossudovsky says we're "at the crossroads of the most serious crisis in modern history." It's part of a "war and globalization" process. The stakes for humanity are incalculable, but rogue states don't weigh them. World communities better while there's time.

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