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Sudoku

Chavez nails US again

25/09/2005 11:30 - (SA)

Washington - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez suggested on Sunday that chickens in Cuba get better treatment from authorities than black residents of the hurricane-ravaged US city of New Orleans.

"In Cuba, when they know a hurricane is coming, chickens, hens and people are all evacuated," Chavez said in an interview with The Washington Post and Newsweek magazine, stepping up his rhetoric against the US government.

"A hurricane recently destroyed many towns in Cuba but not a single person died because no one was there. The government prepared its people and took them to shelters, whereas here (in the United States) they left the poor without protection, especially the blacks."

The US government has faced stark criticism over its response to Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Gulf Coast last month, leaving more than 1 000 dead and levelling whole communities in Louisiana and Mississippi.

About 80% of the majority black city of New Orleans was flooded after several storm-battered levees gave way.

The administration of President George W Bush as well as state and city governments have been accused of failing to implement a comprehensive evacuation plan in advance of the hurricane and to offer affordable transportation to poor New Orleans residents, most of whom do not own cars.

'Horrible'

The Venezuelan president, who had offered the United States assistance in the wake of the storm, called this situation "horrible."

"Be careful with the government you have," he added, pointing out that the United States has "a government with so much power that it can start a war and destabilise a country but doesn't take care of its own people."

Chavez repeated his earlier description of the United States as "an empire" that has "a terrorist administration," which is "a threat to humanity."

He claimed his government had evidence that Washington had a plan to invade Venezuela code-named "Balboa".

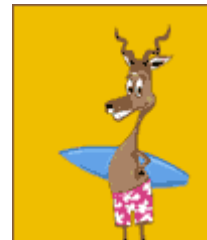
"Our intelligence found this plan, and everything is spelled out there - the target is Venezuela," he said. "They have even calculated how many bombings they should

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do, how many soldiers they will require."

But the Venezuelan leader warned that the Bush administration would regret it, if it ever tried to implement the supposed plan.

"There will be such havoc in the whole hemisphere if this happens," Chavez said. "The United States invaded Iraq, but Venezuela is not Iraq. The price of oil would shoot up and reach what - \$100 a barrel?"

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