



Browse the web faster. Get **Firefox** with **Google Toolbar**.



[Printer friendly](#)



[E-mail this article.](#)

Advertisement



No wonder Chavez makes Bush uneasy

By TED RALL

NEW YORK -- When the hated despots of nations like Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan loot their countries' treasuries, transfer their oil wealth to personal Swiss bank accounts and use the rest to finance (in the House of Saud's case) terrorist extremists, American politicians praise them as trusted friends and allies. But when a democratically elected populist president uses Venezuela's oil profits to lift poor people out of poverty, they accuse him of pandering.

As the United States and Europe continue their shift toward a "Darwinomic" model where rapacious corporations accrue bigger and bigger profits while workers become poorer and poorer, the socialist economic model espoused by President Hugo Chavez has become wildly popular among Latin Americans tired of watching corrupt rightwing leaders enrich themselves at their expense. Left-of-center governments have recently won power in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. Chavez's uncompromising rhetoric matches his politics, but what's really driving the American government and its corporate masters crazy is that he has the cash to back it up.

In their desperate frenzy to destroy Chavez, state-controlled media is resorting to some of the most transparently and hilariously hypocritical talking points ever. In the April 4 New York Times Juan Forero repeated the trope that Chavez's use of oil revenues is unfair--even cheating somehow: "With Venezuela's oil revenues rising 32 percent last year," the paper exclaimed, "Mr. Chavez has been subsidizing samba parades in Brazil... even surgery for

Advertisement

Get targeted ads
on your site with
Google AdSense



Advertisement

poor Mexicans and even heating fuel for poor families from Maine to the Bronx to Philadelphia. By some estimates, the spending now surpasses the nearly \$ 2 billion Washington allocates to pay for development programs and the drug war in western South America."

Chavez, the story continued, is poised to become "the next Fidel Castro, a hero to the masses who is intent on opposing every move the United States makes, but with an important advantage."

Heavens be! A rich country using its wealth to spread influence abroad! What God would permit such an abomination? Notice, by the way, that the U.S. funds "development programs." Oh, and it's a "drug war" -- not a bombing campaign against leftist insurgents who oppose South America's few remaining pro-U.S. rightwing regimes.

Quoted by the Times -- which editorialized in favor of and ran flattering profiles of the rightwing oligarchs who attempted to overthrow Chavez in a 2002 coup attempt -- is "critic" John Negroponte, whose day job happens to be as Bush's director of National Intelligence. Negroponte complained that Chavez is "spending considerable sums involving himself in the political and economic life of other countries in Latin America and elsewhere, this despite the very real economic development and social needs of his own country."

Pot, kettle, please discuss the \$ 1 billion a week we're wasting on Iraq while people die for lack of medical care and schools fall apart right here in America. Maybe Chavez should have found a better use for the money he spent on Rio's Carnival parade. On the other hand, at least it didn't go to bombs and torture camps.

Televangelist Pat Robertson's 2005 call to assassinate Chavez was criticized only mildly by establishment media, and primarily on the basis that murdering heads of state violates a U.S. law. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice accuses Chavez of a "Latin brand of populism that has taken countries down the drain." Which ones? Certainly not Venezuela itself, where a double-digit-GDP boom leads the region, \$ 10 billion per year is banked for future anti-poverty programs, and new houses and schools are sprouting like weeds.

Loaded language unworthy of a junior high school newspaper is the norm in coverage of the Venezuelan president. "Chavez insists his government is democratic and accuses Washington of conspiring against him," the San Jose Mercury-News wrote on April 3rd. Why the "insists"? No international observer doubts that Venezuela, where the man who won the election gets to be president, is at least as democratic as the U.S. The 2002 coup plotters gathered beforehand at the White House. Surely the Merc could grant Chavez's "accusation" as fact. The paper continued: "He says the United States was behind a short-lived 2002 coup, an allegation that U.S. officials reject." He also happens to be right, though it's hard to tell by reading that sentence.

Eighty-two percent of Venezuelans think Chavez is doing a good job. That's

www.japantimes.com/news.html

www.japantimes.com/sports.html

www.japantimes.com/life.html

www.japantimes.com/entertainment.html

www.japantimes.com/opinion.html

The World's Window on J

www.japantimes.com

Subscribe for the latest features from Japan

F

SUBS

Get a 7-day free trial

more than twice the approval rating by Americans of Bush. He roundly defeated an attempt to recall him. So why is Washington lecturing Caracas?

"The [Venezuelan] government is making billions of dollars [from its state oil company] and spending them on houses, education, medical care," notes CNN. And--gasp--people's lives are improving.

What if the rest of us noticed? No wonder Chavez has to go.

Ted Rall is the editor of "Attitude 3: The New Subversive Online Cartoonists," an anthology of Webcartoons that will be published in May.)

Copyright 2006 Ted Rall

The Japan Times: Tuesday, April 18, 2006

(C) All rights reserved

Advertisement

Kon-Tiki Tours & Travel

Customizable Tours, Open Dates.
April Special: Free Hotel Upgrade

Volunteers wanted

Latin America needs your ideas
and your experience. Volunteer
now!

South America Travel

Latin America Travel Specialist
South America Tailor-made travel

South America

Great prices on tr
Fascinating South

[Ads by Goooooogle](#)

Ad



Web japantimes



[CORPORATE PROFILE DATABASE](#) | [JAPAN TIMES CLASSIFIED](#) | [WEEKEND SCENE](#) | [SHUKAN ST ONLINE](#) | [WEEKLY O](#)

[Privacy policy](#)

[Advertise in japantimes.co.jp.](#)

This site is optimized for viewing with Netscape, version 7.1 or Internet Explorer, version 6.0 or above.

The Japan Times Ltd. All rights reserved.