

## Venezuela's Chavez says Bush may try to kill him for 'devil' comments

The Associated Press

Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez said Saturday that U.S. President George W. Bush may be seeking to kill him for calling him "the devil" at the United Nations.

"Some worried friends over there have called me (to say) that because I called him the devil they have condemned me to death," Chavez said without elaborating further on his sources.

"But they won't kill me. I have faith in life," he said. "I know how to take care of myself and the Lord will protect me and you all will protect me," he told a cheering crowd in eastern Venezuela where he was visiting a group of state-funded agricultural cooperatives.

Chavez also said that Noam Chomsky may soon visit Venezuela after he endorsed the Massachusetts-based linguist's book, "Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance," in his U.N. address Wednesday.

"He is a man that loves the truth about the empire in his country. He is an anti-imperialist, a leftist. Noam Chomsky — I think he will come here," Chavez said.

On Wednesday at the U.N., Chavez held up Chomsky's book and urged Americans to read it "instead of watching Superman movies," saying it would teach them the truth about the abuses of the U.S. government.

Minutes later, he referred to Bush, who had spoken at the U.N. the previous day, saying the "devil" had left the odor of sulfur lingering in the chamber. Chavez then made the sign of the cross and brought his hands together as if in prayer.

Continuing in the same vein Saturday, Chavez said that he had had to wash Chomsky's book after placing it on the podium where Bush had stood.

"I had to clean it afterward because it smelled like sulfur. I had to sprinkle it with holy water," he said as the audience laughed.

Chavez told a news conference following his U.N. address that he believed Chomsky had died, and said he was sorry he didn't get a chance to meet him. However, Chomsky, 77, is alive and is a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Chavez did not refer to his earlier blunder but noted that the publicity he brought to Chomsky's book has boosted its sales.

"Now it's among the world's best-sellers. It's sold out," he said.

Following Chavez's speech, the book jumped on Thursday into the top 10 on both Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.com, while Metropolitan Books, an imprint of Henry Holt, has ordered an additional paperback printing of 25,000 copies.

Chavez's incendiary remarks against Bush are not new. He has previously called his long-time foe a "devil," "donkey" and "madman" as ties between the two countries have deteriorated since 2002, when the Bush administration swiftly recognized leaders who briefly ousted Chavez in a coup, before Chavez returned to power amid street protests.

But this week's aggressive verbal attacks made on American soil have elicited a sharp backlash.

Bush's political foes and friends alike have condemned the remarks, newspapers have sharply criticized the Venezuelan leader, while a call has emerged for businesses to boycott Venezuela-owned Citgo Petroleum Corp. One U.S. governor said his state is no longer interested in buying discounted heating oil from Venezuela this winter.

Venezuela is competing against U.S.-backed Guatemala for a seat on the U.N. Security Council and is tied to the United States as its No. 1 buyer of oil.

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