

The New York Times v. Hugo Chavez

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Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

Carly Simon's theme song from the 1977 James Bond film "The Spy Who Loved Me" says it all about The New York Times' agitprop skill - "Nobody Does It Better" nor have others in the media been at it longer. Most important is The Times influence and reach and what media critic Norman Solomon says about its front page. He calls it "the most valuable square inches of media real estate in the USA." It's read by government, business leaders and opinion-makers everywhere and for that reason is hugely important.

Hugo Chavez is its frequent target, and Simon Romero has the assignment as The Times' man in Caracas. His latest March 30 offering is headlined "Files Suggest Venezuela Bid to Aid Columbia Rebels," and it relates to the spurious claim that captured FARC-EP computers contained potentially smoking-gun evidence "t(ying) Venezuela's government to efforts to secure arms for Colombia's largest insurgency" and is aiding its efforts through funding and other means to destabilize the Uribe government.

Romero states: "Officials taking part in Columbia's investigation....provided (NYT) with copies of more than 20 files, some of which also showed contributions from the rebels to the 2006 campaign of Ecuador's leftist president, Rafael Correa." One piece of correspondence from November 21, 2006 "describes a \$100,000 donation to (Correa's) campaign." Alvaro Uribe noted it and others but so far hasn't released them. For his part, Correa vigorously denies the charge and said the files lacked "technical and legal" validity.

Romero stops short of claiming the files are legitimate, but refuses to suggest they're not. He also ignores Chavez's mediating role to secure prisoner releases on both sides. He does, however, quite suggestively accuse Chavez and Correa of links to the FARC-EP "which the United States says is a terrorist group and has fought to overthrow Colombia's government for four decades."

Romero, like his mainstream colleagues, never lets facts interfere with his mission. Here he claims "Colombian officials who provided the computer files adamantly vouched for them (and they) contained touches that suggested authenticity:....revolutionary jargon, passages in numerical code, missives about American policy in Latin America and even brief personal reflections" by FARC-EP commanders. Moreover, "files made public so far only scratched the surface of the captured archives" without a hint from him that they're simple to fake (or invent) and Washington and Bogota have every incentive to do it as a way to vilify FARC-EP and Chavez as part of their imperial project.

Romero quotes Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos saying Colombia retrieved more than 16,000 files from three computers belonging to Luis Edgar Devia Silva, aka FARC-EP commander Raul Reyes who was killed in the Ecuadorean cross-border incursion. In

addition, claims of two other hard drives captured were also made. Santos said “Everything has been accessed and everything is being validated by Interpol (that’s pretty closely tied to western interests and functions to serve them as called on). According to Santos, “a great deal of information” was gotten “that is extremely valuable and important.”

He further claimed (plausible or not) that the computers survived the bombing raid intact “because they were in metal casing” and emphasized that he didn’t regret a thing about Colombia’s aggression against its neighbor.

For his part, Chavez responded and Romero at least quoted him, no doubt because it was from a meeting with foreign journalists who did as well. Chavez mocked the supposed evidence saying: “The main weapon they have now is the computer, the supposed computer of Paul Reyes. This computer is like a la carte service, giving you whatever you want. You want steak? or fried fish? How would you like it prepared? You’ll get it however the empire decides.”

“Desert” may have been a January 25, 2007 letter by Ivan Marquez, a member of the FARC-EP’s seven-member secretariat discussing a meeting with a Venezuelan official named “Carvajal,” apparently referring to General Hugo Carvajal, Venezuela’s military intelligence director. Its contents were claimed to state a “pledge (to bring FARC-EP) an arms dealer from Panama.”

Still another offering was correspondence from January 18, 2007 suggesting Chavez would provide a \$250 million loan to buy arms and would be repaid “when we take power.”

Romero then attacks the FARC-EP with familiar innuendoes that appear throughout the major media to smear it unjustly. He also suggests the possibility of Washington designating Venezuela a state sponsor of terrorism but considers it unlikely because of its importance as a major US oil supplier.

Even so, California Republican Darrell Issa (and 22 co-sponsors) introduced House Resolution (HR) 965 in February condemning Venezuela as a state sponsor of terrorism, and Florida Republicans Connie Mack and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (and 8 co-sponsors) introduced a similar HR 1049 in March that “condemned the Venezuelan government for its support of terrorist organizations” with direct reference to the FARC-EP. These efforts won’t likely get far, and for now at least, view them as politics as usual in a year when all House members are up for reelection and need to rev up their constituencies for support. It makes Chavez a favorite target with a complicit media going along.

In sum, Romero and others like him in the mainstream, keep at their appointed mission – attacking the most model democracy in the region with a clear and purposeful aim – to destabilize, destroy and transform Venezuela into the alternate model Uribe represents: uncompromising hard right; hugely repressive; linked to Colombia’s death squads and drug cartels; a supporter of state terrorism; a government riddled with corruption and scandal; and George Bush’s favorite Latin America leader because of all of the above.

Expect lots more Romero commentaries like this one that are part of what Eva Golinger calls America’s “asymmetric – 4th Generation War – against President Chavez and the Bolivarian Revolution.” The dark forces Romero represents won’t quit so more enlightened ones like Golinger and others must keep exposing their schemes to protect Venezuela’s glorious experiment that’s working.

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