



EMBASSY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA IN AUSTRALIA

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SEASONS GREETINGS AND PEACE TO ALL PEOPLES FOR 2008

**Release of three FARC prisoners tested President Chávez's
leadership in Latin America**



Caracas, Dec. 27th. ABN.- The decision of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to hand over to President Chávez three out of 45 Colombians detained by this rebel organization tested the leadership of the Venezuelan president in Latin America, emphasized the president of the Foreign Policy Committee of the National Assembly, deputy Saul Ortega.

During a phone call made to the State channel Venezolana de Television (VTV), the deputy indicated that besides the leadership of President Chávez on the continent, the handing over of prisoners to the Venezuelan President tests his political capacity, despite the obstacles placed in the way of a mediator role for the swap.

Ortega pointed out that Chávez's decision to continue his mediator role for a humanitarian swap in Colombia, in spite of the refusal of his Colombian counterpart President Alvaro Uribe of continuing with the process, "has definitively been a daring action, and perhaps his adversaries will not recognize it, but there are the facts, they are a proof of their own."

Finally, he stressed that the first freeing of the three FARC prisoners “can only be done by someone with the political authority to get over the complicated Colombian conflict.”

Translated by Felitza Nava

Bolivarian Govt allocates US\$2.59 billion to social missions in 2008

Caracas, Dec 23 (ABN).- The National Government, through its ministries, will fund 5.56 trillion bolivares (2.59 billion dollars) to social missions, according to the last report presented by the Superintendent of Banks and Other Financial Institutions (SUDEBAN- Spanish acronym), Trino Alcides Díaz.

Trino Alcides Díaz pointed out that social missions represent an opportunity to end poverty in the country.

According to 2008 budget for missions, written by the Ministry of the People’s Power for Finances, adding funding for all the missions (Barrio Adentro, Milagro, Robinson, Ribas, Sucre, Mercal, Identidad, Negra Hipólita, and Ché Guevara), they will get a total of 5.56 trillion bolivars (2.59 billion dollars).

The funding to these missions in previous years has been: 1.87 trillion bolivars (870 million dollars) in 2006 and 4.51 trillion bolivars (2.1 billion dollars) in 2007.

In Alcides Díaz’ opinion, the missions have contributed to keep unemployment with a decreasing tendency, which was at 7.2% in October of the present year.

Employment is estimated at 11.8 million people, which represents an increase to 92.8% as a result of incorporating 436 thousand 121 workers between October 2006 and the same month of this year.

Moreover, Díaz emphasized that the success of the missions boosts the evolution of the Human Development Index, represented for example in life expectancy that was 72.8 years in 1998, and 73.4 in 2005.

School attendance increased from 60.12% in 1998 to 75% in 2005, which was achieved strengthening Bolivarian schools and Robinson Mission. Venezuela was also declared a territory free from illiteracy by UNESCO , and the population has higher purchase power parity going from 2 thousand 647 dollars in 1998 to 4 thousand 102 dollars in 2005.

Translated by Ernesto Aguilera

Chávez': Today a new oil geopolitics starts to be consolidated

ABN 21/12/2007

Cienfuegos, Dec 21 (ABN).- Venezuela supplies about 53 thousand oil barrels a day to the Caribbean through the Petrocaribe's solidarity initiative , in addition to the contribution to Cuba in the framework of the Caracas Energy Agreement, that represents about 92 thousand oil barrels, the Minister of Energy and Petroleum of Venezuela, Rafael Ramírez, pointed out.

Petrocaribe is an Energy Cooperation Agreement proposed by the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela in order to solve the world's asymmetries to have access to energy resources, through a new exchange scheme: favorable, equitable, and fair among the countries of the Caribbean region, most of them without State control of these resources' supply.

This institution is conceived like a multilateral organ able to assure the coordination and articulation of energy policies, including oil and its derivatives, gas, power energy, an efficient use of them, technological cooperation, training, and energy infrastructure development, as well as taking advantage of alternative sources, like the solar and wind energy, among others.

Rafael Ramírez stated, this Thursday, after finishing the III Petrocaribe's Ministers Council which was carried out at the Jagua Hotel in Cuba, that evaluations are underway to assess the progress of the approved projects in the framework of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA-Spanish acronym), in which 99 million dollars have been granted for a set of projects aimed to social development.

Petrocaribe's scheme and reach establishes the progress based on complementary, energy and social issues as the main axes of this cooperation initiative, Ramírez emphasized.

In order to contribute to the Caribbean's social and economic development, Petrocaribe utilises the ALBA-Caribbean Fund, constituted with the resources coming from the savings generated by the financing of direct oil and commerce, as well as financial and non financial instruments.

Cienfuegos refinery to supply products to Central America countries

ABN 21/12/2007

Cienfuegos, Dec 21 (ABN).- The reopening of the Camilo Cienfuegos refinery of Cuba will allow the supply of oil derivative products to Central American countries like Belize, Nicaragua, and Honduras.

The statements were made by the Minister of the People's Power for Energy and Petroleum of Venezuela, Rafael Ramírez.

Ramírez said that "this refinery is part of the logistic scheme", regarding the inauguration of the refinery mentioned above that was modernized by the companies Petróleos de Venezuela S.A.

(PDVSA) and Cubapetróleo (Cupet). With this refinery a mega-project will commence, which will consist of the building of a petrochemical complex.

A comprehensive development plan for this zone has started between Venezuela and Cuba, as part of the potential of Cienfuegos to become into an industrial pole in Cuba, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

This modernized plant, with an investment of 166 million of dollars, after being paralyzed for 12 years, represents an example of the economic complementarity between Venezuela and Cuba.

On other hand, the Minister of Energy and Petroleum informed that during the III Petrocaribe's Minister Council carried out this Thursday, there was a revision of all the advances of the energy block in its lines of development.

The Energy Security Treaty signed by the Presidents of Petrocaribe's member countries at the III Petrocaribe's Summit carried out in Caracas in August 2007 is being completely fulfilled, Ramírez assured.

In this line of action, he mentioned that regarding the supplies issue there is a quota of 102 thousand oil barrels and products a day for the Petrocaribe countries. He also reminded that, currently, 53 thousand oil barrels a day are being dispatched.

BOLIVARIAN EMBASSY NEWS

Solidarity Forum Wollongong: Speaking on the themes of democracy and the Referendum results, Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution and Venezuela's International Relations, Charge d'Affaires Nelson Davila addressed an enthusiastic crowd at Wollongong's end of year Venezuela Solidarity meeting on December 15th at the Wollongong Aboriginal Cultural Centre. The gathering warmly thanked the representative of the Bolivarian Revolution in Australia and pledged to increase awareness of the gains being made towards an equitable society in Venezuela.



The Embassy is always delighted to hear from you, please use the contact details here to be in touch directly. Head of Mission Nelson Davila

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