

Round Table discussion on an insidious article published in *U.S. News and World Report* and the role of the U.S. government against Venezuela, held in the studios of Televisión Cubana on October 3, 2003, Year of the Glorious Anniversaries of Martí and the Moncada.

(Translation of the Council of State transcript)

Randy Alonso.- Good afternoon to all our viewers and listeners.

Today's Round Table, broadcast on Cubavisión, the Educational Channel, Radio Rebelde, Radio Habana Cuba and our Internet sites, will address an insidious article recently published in *U.S. News and World Report*, and the role of the U.S. government against Venezuela.

With me on today's panel are Reinaldo Taladrí, a Televisión Cubana journalist; Renato Recio from the newspaper *Trabajadores*; Lázaro Barredo, also from *Trabajadores*; and Rogelio Polanco, editor-in-chief of *Juventud Rebelde*.

Joining us in the studio are workers from the Ministries of Tourism and Culture.

(Video footage is shown.)

Randy Alonso.- The latest issue of the magazine *U.S. News and World Report*, dated October 6, includes an insidious article on the situation in Venezuela, entitled "Terror Close to Home". The article has already been the subject of considerable discussion in Venezuela and elsewhere in the world, and we will be analyzing it on our Round Table here today.

"Terror Close to Home" is a lengthy article by journalist Linda Robinson published in the October 6 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*.

Because of its length, we will not be able to read it in its entirety for our viewers and listeners, but I will read at least the introduction to give you an idea of what we will be discussing in detail today.

Under the title "Terror Close to Home", Linda Robinson writes:

"The oil-rich but politically unstable nation of Venezuela is emerging as a potential hub of terrorism in the Western Hemisphere, providing assistance to Islamic radicals from the Middle East and other terrorists, say senior U.S. military and intelligence officials.

"Bush administration aides see this as an unpredictably dangerous mix and are gathering more information about the intentions of a country that sits 1,000 miles south of Florida.

"One thing that is clear is that Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez is fast becoming America's newest nemesis, U.S. officials say. He has forged close ties with Cuba's Fidel Castro and has befriended some of America's other notorious enemies, traveling to Saddam's Iraq and Qadhafi's Libya.

"Now, after surviving an attempted coup and a nationwide petition demanding his recall, Chávez is flirting with terrorism, and Washington is watching with increasing alarm.

"'We are not disinterested spectators,' says Roger Noriega, the new assistant secretary of state for Latin America. 'Any actions that undermine democratic order or threaten the security and well-being of the region are of legitimate concern to all of Venezuela's neighbors.'

"U.S. officials are monitoring three sets of developments," the article claims.

First, "Middle Eastern terrorist groups are operating support cells in Venezuela and other locations in the Andean region. A two-month review by *U.S. News*, including interviews with dozens of U.S. and Latin American sources, confirms the terrorist activity. In particular, the magazine has learned that thousands of Venezuelan identity documents are being distributed to foreigners from Middle Eastern nations, including Syria, Pakistan, Egypt, and Lebanon.

"Venezuela is supporting armed opposition groups from neighboring Colombia; these groups are on the official U.S. list of terrorist organizations and are also tied to drug trafficking.

"Maps obtained by *U.S. News*, as well as eyewitness accounts, pinpoint the location of training camps used by Colombian rebels, a top rebel leader, and Venezuelan armed groups.

"Cubans are working inside Venezuela's paramilitary and intelligence apparatus. The coordination between Cuba and Venezuela is the latest sign that Venezuelan President Chávez is modeling his government on Castro's Cuba.

"The Venezuelan government denies supporting Middle Eastern terrorist groups and says that no Cubans are operating inside its intelligence agencies. Venezuela has long denied providing aid to the Colombian guerrilla groups."

This is the first part of the lengthy article on Venezuela published by *U.S. News and World Report*, an article that is nothing more than a compendium of lies and distortions regarding the situation in Venezuela today and the danger that Venezuela allegedly poses to the United States.

The title alone is enough to get an idea of the message being communicated to readers: "Terror Close to Home", a title aimed very specifically at the American public.

But in order to understand the importance of the article we are discussing here, I would like to ask Reinaldo Taladrid to tell us more about the magazine itself, and about the potential impact of an article printed in *U.S. News and World Report*.

Reinaldo Taladrid.- With pleasure, Randy.

U.S. News and World Report is a weekly magazine, founded in 1933. It is the third-rated U.S. weekly in terms of circulation and impact. The leading weekly magazine in the United States is *Time*, which has the largest circulation and greatest impact. *Newsweek* follows in second place, while this magazine, *U.S. News and World Report*, comes in a somewhat distant third place.

The magazine is based in Washington but has branch offices in different locations. This particular article was written by Linda Robinson, who works for the Miami bureau and covers Latin American affairs. The magazine's average annual revenues, which tend to fluctuate, are just over 300 million dollars, although their profits were down by 7.3% in the last year; this is an important factor to keep in mind in order to understand a few of the things we are going to see. This is not the only factor, but it is one among several others. It has a staff of 500 workers.

Its three main rivals -- in the United States, competition is fierce, and every publication must determine who its rivals are, in other words, the other publications aimed at the same sector of the market -- are the *Washington Post*, *Time* magazine, of course, and *Dow Jones & Company*, published by Dow Jones. Why is this? Because although this magazine has a circulation of over two million copies as well as an online version, it is fundamentally aimed at three sectors. In other words, the people who read this magazine, who pay attention to what this magazine says, or let themselves be influenced by what it says, fall mainly into three sectors. One is the government. This is a publication widely read throughout the administration of the United States, in all sectors of government. The policy-makers, in other words. This is a very American term,

and it basically encompasses everyone from legislators themselves to those who are not as visible but who also participate in the formulation of policies through think tanks or other groups in society. The magazine is also aimed at the economic and intellectual elites, meaning the universities, think tanks, study centers, those with economic power, big business, etc. These are the three sectors at which the magazine is primarily aimed. This explains why one of its main rivals, in their own estimation, is the *Dow Jones* report, an economic report. That is one example.

The magazine is privately owned, and its owner, who is also the editor-in-chief -- and therefore the person responsible for the content of the magazine -- is Mortimer Zuckerman. Mortimer Zuckerman has also made a considerable amount of money in real estate. In addition to *U.S. News and World Report*, he is the owner of the *New York Daily News*, a highly influential newspaper in the New York area that has an impact outside New York as well. But Mortimer Zuckerman has another important characteristic, in that he is openly, avidly pro-Israeli. And I want to make it very clear that when I say pro-Israeli, I am not saying pro-Jewish. I want to clearly differentiate between the two terms. What is being done by the government of Israel has even been questioned by 27 pilots in its own Air Force, and they are obviously Jewish. I do not want any confusion between the two terms. But the fact is that there are Israeli embassies and consulates around the world that reproduce and distribute articles or editorials by Mortimer Zuckerman. He also appears on a U.S. television program, the *McLaughlin Group*, where he is known for espousing openly pro-Israeli positions that defy the most basic logic and decency. Moreover, after September 11, his stances have taken on a deeply anti-Arab character that goes beyond the war on terrorism and the need for protection against terrorist attacks, and this is also reflected in the article by Linda Robinson that we will be discussing today.

Now I would like to take a look at a sales ad for the magazine, let's get it on the screen. This is an ad selling subscriptions to the magazine.

The first thing I want to highlight is an economic aspect. Remember that I mentioned that the magazine's profits were down by almost 8%, and here they are offering the chance to save 87% off the newsstand price if you buy a subscription. A magazine offering to reduce its price by 87% is obviously in financial trouble, or desperately seeking an audience. Now I am not saying that this is the only factor, because this article is directly connected to the most important power circles in the United States, as we will see. But this desperation to reach those in power, to sell magazines through sensationalism, to overlook checking into sources, etc., etc., could be another factor. We must not forget that this is a private enterprise.

The last thing I want to point out about this ad -- and I want it to be on the screen again, because there are a lot of people here who speak English, and I want them to see for themselves -- is that when they describe the magazine, they claim that it features "important investigative reports" -- and this is supposedly one of them. That is all I am going to say for now. I want everyone to hear what the article itself says, and what it is aimed at achieving, so that they can draw their own conclusions.

Randy Alonso.- I think we should also point out, as you have already mentioned, Taladrid, that even though it has less of an impact than its two main competitors, *U.S. News and World Report* nonetheless has a circulation of two million copies, which is a significant amount.

Reinaldo Taladrid.- Over two million, and not only in the United States, which is also very important.

Randy Alonso.- That's right, not only in the United States, but around the world. It also has an important impact on the power elites and public opinion circles in some of the world's most powerful countries. And analysts have stated that the editorial stance of *U.S. News and World Report* in recent times has been closely aligned with the policies of the Bush administration. It has backed the U.S. policy towards Israel -- and we have already heard about the role played by Mortimer Zuckerman in this regard. It has also supported the Bush administration's international counterterrorism crusade and its aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq.

This is the editorial stance of a magazine with a circulation of over two million copies around the world, which has now published this article attacking the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Thank you, Taladrid.

(Video footage is shown.)

Randy Alonso.- It can be understood, in view of the editorial stance and the goals of this magazine, *U.S. News and World Report*, why an article like the one signed by Linda Robinson has been published in its latest issue, and is now making its way around the world with so many falsehoods about what is happening in Venezuela, and with so many lies that could undoubtedly provoke a serious incident between Venezuela and the United States.

This article in *U.S. News and World Report* has already had an immediate repercussion in the media, and Linda Robinson herself has come out to defend her article and to talk about the numerous U.S. government sources that she used to write it.

I will now ask Lázaro Barredo to tell us a bit more about Linda Robinson and this article.

Lázaro Barredo.- All right, Randy.

Well, I think we have analyzed cases like this on other occasions, with examples like the *New York Times*. We have analyzed how the principle of journalistic objectivity has been lost in the United States, and how a good many journalists in the United States are increasingly becoming agents of a political phenomenon that has been evolving in the United States over roughly the past 20 years, beginning in the Reagan era. We have clearly been able to see the very close links between U.S. political forces and these agents, who use the media to put forward certain political agendas in the United States.

Sometimes this has led to scandal. I have a wire story right here about how CNN denied the accusations made by one of its star reporters against the White House, for intimidating the media during the war. In other words, the use of the Patriot Act to control U.S. society, something we have talked about on previous occasions, has also extended to the U.S. media. If you look at the U.S. media (aside from what has been reported in recent weeks, in the face of the military disaster there), you will see that there are no differences in the media's opinion on Iraq.

It is obvious that there is no such thing as journalistic objectivity when it comes to some countries -- this has always been the case with Cuba, and now it is the case of Venezuela -- because it would not be in the interests of the political leadership of the United States. Mr. Roger Noriega, the new assistant secretary of state for Latin America, is quite right when he says, "We are not disinterested spectators." More specifically, however, he should have said, "We are not disinterested protagonists," because they are not spectators at all, they are protagonists.

Linda Robinson is one of the sacred cows of U.S. journalism today. She has been working for *U.S. News and World Report* since the late 1980s. She previously worked at the magazine put out by the Council on Foreign Relations of New York, a highly influential political think tank that we have analyzed on other occasions. She was the editor of this U.S. think tank's publication until 1989, when she began to work for *U.S. News and World Report*, covering Latin America.

As Taladrid noted, the Latin American desk of the magazine is based in Miami, and Robinson moves around a great deal, she has a lot of contacts in the region. She has visited Cuba numerous times. She has a lot of government contacts, and not only in the government of her own country, but also in many other governments of the region. Her reports tend to be "well informed", thanks to her access to certain sources of information and certain points of view in the U.S. government.

In 1997, for example, she participated in starting up the campaign to distort the development of the biotechnology sector in Cuba. After visiting a Cuban research center and meeting with numerous sources here, she wrote a grossly slanted article in this same magazine, twisting all of the information and evidence she had been provided with here specifically to prove to the American public that Cuba's only interest in biotechnology was for the development of medications and vaccine production. Her report distorted everything she had been shown here, and it helped lay the foundations for the campaign subsequently waged by Bolton and Otto Reich and the anti-Cuban mob and all the others who tried to accuse Cuba of using biotechnology to produce chemical or biological weapons. These false accusations were first put forward in Robinson's 1997 article, which was subsequently reprinted in the Cuban newspaper *Granma* along with an interview with Dr. Julián Álvarez, the director of CIREN, who clarified all of the information that she had been provided with, and then distorted in her report.

Now she is back to the same tricks again, this time with Venezuela. She always refers to "official sources" who are well informed on the matter, and by doing so, she is simply proving that her articles are made to order. In other words, she has been instructed to write a report, because these official U.S. government sources have given her all of the information, and she simply uses this material to create an article, making some truly astonishing claims about Venezuela.

Even now, when the Venezuelan government has invited Robinson and the magazine's editorial staff to come to Venezuela and try to prove these claims, the journalist is insisting that everything she wrote is true, because she spoke with various sources, and extremely reliable ones. Who are these sources? U.S. government sources, obviously, because when she was asked if she knows that there are Venezuelan officers in a FARC training camp because she has been there, she replied that no, she hadn't been there, but she had been informed of everything with a wealth of detail.

She has not been to any of these places, she says, but she has been in Venezuela, and she has spoken with people who have confirmed that Chávez has these links.

Now, really, please! Anyone can go to Venezuela today, and wherever Chávez' followers are gathered, you will also find opponents, full of hatred and resentment, who will tell you just about anything you want to hear against Chávez. Please! And so this is all distortion and lies, based solely on the official point of view, the information provided to her by the U.S. authorities.

Randy Alonso.- In fact, Lázaro, a number of reports have come out following the publication of this article, and I have not seen one of them refer to Linda Robinson as an official government journalist, despite the fact that all of the sources she uses are official U.S. government sources, the State Department, the Pentagon, and yet none of the other reporters consider her to be an official government journalist. This is quite a contrast to the fact that whenever reference is made to a report by a Cuban journalist, they immediately claim that what is being reported is an official government view. Yet this woman uses nothing but official U.S. government sources, and in most cases she does not even reveal who those sources are.

Lázaro Barredo.- And furthermore, Randy, this is all even more striking when you have followed the history of the U.S. government's intent to undermine the Bolivarian Revolution process. This article has come out at a time when the opposition in Venezuela is in crisis. The opposition has been left with no alternative but violence. It had staked its hopes on the recall process, but it turns out that those most likely to be recalled are in fact the emblematic figures of this opposition. And so the opposition and the United States are left with no other choice than to fabricate a pretext to put an end to the process.

In other words, this article has come out at a crucial moment, when there are all of these attempts being made in Venezuela to distort the revolutionary process and to foment international opposition to the Bolivarian Revolution and President Chávez. It is obvious that the U.S. government has a clear intent to manipulate what is happening today in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and I believe that Linda

Robinson has very blatantly lent herself to serving as an instrument or an agent of these sectors of the U.S. government in order to pursue these objectives.

Randy Alonso.- These are lies serving as a political tool of the U.S. government, passed off as journalism, converted into news, and spread around the world. And they are not only spread through the more than two million copies of *U.S. News and World Report* in circulation, because in addition, as soon as the article came out, the most important media in the United States began to report on it. A concrete example of this is the report recently aired by the major U.S. television network CBS.

Reporter.- According to U.S. News and World Report, quoting U.S. government sources, *Margarita Island in Venezuela has become a refuge for the Islamic terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah. According to sources, the terrorists make millions of dollars through money laundering and drug trafficking.*

Randy Alonso.- A well-planned operation: the article comes out in *U.S. News and World Report* and immediately the major U.S. media and their counterparts in the rest of the world begin to cover this article full of lies printed in the U.S. magazine.

Rogelio Polanco can provide us with more details on this.

Rogelio Polanco.- Well, first of all, this is not journalism. If you want to talk about journalism, you would have to say it is yellow journalism, sensationalist journalism. It is yet another example of media lies, media terrorism, something we have all grown accustomed to, and have denounced on many occasions.

It is not enough to lie and to lie with the halo of objectivity surrounding a publication of the political, economic and academic elite of the United States, like this magazine. You also need to find the right moment to lie, and in addition, the lie has to be repeated like an echo throughout the media around the world, and immediately, without even considering the arguments from the other side. This is basically the model for the media terrorism being perpetrated around the world, and this article is just one more example.

Here we also see the fascist, Goebbelian philosophy at work, whereby if a lie is repeated enough times, it will become the truth. You systematically apply this principle and in no time whatsoever you achieve the goal you are after, the link you want to impose: Chávez, terror. We have already seen this on the U.S. television report. And it begins with the very title of the article: "Terror Close to Home". From that first moment, the whole psychological warfare apparatus kicks into gear, and the United States has had many years of experience in implementing this strategy in numerous countries around the world.

You simply have to look at what the media in the United States and other countries immediately started to say. For example, the official slander-sheet of the Miami mob trumpeted this headline: "Chávez linked to terrorists". The same key words are repeated. And then they immediately appear as well in *El Universal*, which is of course the Venezuelan newspaper that has played such a major role in the coup attempts and the lies and slander aimed against the Bolivarian government of Venezuela, something we have studied in depth in one of our Round Table discussions. The opposition media immediately came out with their views on these lies, fully backing what was published in the article, of course. Just look at the headlines. *El Universal*: "Investigation links Venezuela to worldwide terrorist groups". Or Globovisión: "*U.S. News and World Report* journalist: my sources are reliable". *El Universal* once again: "*U.S. News and World Report* journalist defends sources that revealed government links with terrorist groups".

Basically, you just keep hammering away at the same lie, and this is what finally sticks.

Randy Alonso.- The major U.S. media, all the major newspapers, also reported on the article, Polanco, as did the media in Colombia, where there are interests linked to the coup attempts in Venezuela. It should not be forgotten that people like Cisneros have interests in the Colombian media, as do people like the Prisa

Group, of Spain, which is also linked to Aznar. We have only read one short part of the article, but in the newspapers and on television in Colombia, they reprinted or read the entire article. It almost became an editorial piece in the Colombian press over recent days.

Rogelio Polanco.- Well, Chávez himself said that the Colombian and Venezuelan media made a party out of the article, he used those very words at the press conference where he denounced this act of media terrorism perpetrated by the U.S. right wing. He spelled it all out very clearly: this is a plan that was coordinated with the participation of the Venezuelan and Colombian media, as a means of justifying absolutely any action, from a presidential assassination to an invasion to another coup.

Let's not forget that this is an article without verifiable sources; most of the sources are anonymous, and yet it is viewed as having a seal of authenticity. The only quotes with names attached are the ones from high level authorities in the United States, and their statements are simply accepted as being truthful, accurate, authentic. Then she refers to unnamed military and intelligence sources, as well as some sources that are not identified at all.

The article is a mix of old lies recycled with new lies, along with the attempt to exploit the sensitivities of the audience it is aimed at, the U.S. public. And so we see the use of key words: September 11; oil; hostages; Venezuela, hub of terrorism; Chávez is flirting with terrorism; Islamic radicals; drug trafficking. There is talk of danger, increasing alarm, undermining democratic order and threatening the security and well-being of the region. We have heard many of these words over and over again in the lies they tell about Cuba. They are trying to exploit, once again, the panic that gripped U.S. society after the events of September 11, as well as the fear that has been purposely created in the population through the Bush administration's actions, paving the way for the imposition of the ultraconservative agenda of the far right.

Over recent days and months we have seen the unscrupulous use of such actions in the campaign of lies about Iraq, the most recent example of media terrorism. And that is why Chávez described this article, and rightly so, as shameless, dirty, disgusting rubbish.

Randy Alonso.- That is a very accurate description of this article by Linda Robinson, published in *U.S. News and World Report*, an article made to order that has made its way around the world and become a subject of analysis in the major media, in an attempt to link Venezuela with today's hottest topic, terrorism. The title alone, as we have seen, sums up what the goal of this article is: "Terror Close to Home". It is the perfect way to frighten the people in the United States who read this article.

That is why the leadership of the Bolivarian Revolution and President Hugo Chávez immediately stepped forth to challenge this insidious report. Let's take a look at an excerpt from President Hugo Chávez's recent press conference, where he addressed the article.

Hugo Chávez.- *There are so many claims being made about Venezuela around the world. I was reading, with amazement, an article in a U.S. publication -- Where is it? Can somebody help me find it? Here it is -- signed by a journalist named Linda Robinson. If only she would come here! I invite her to come here, along with the whole editorial staff of the magazine! It is really quite astonishing, and it is rubbish, really. It is disgusting, truly disgusting. And we didn't have to wait long, because immediately, last night, Radio Cadena Nacional of Colombia was making a party out of this article. This is all done in close coordination. One of the Venezuelan newspapers I pointed out earlier was involved as well. It is all well coordinated, strategically planned. Just look how Linda Robinson's article in the U.S. News begins:*

"Oil-rich Venezuela is emerging as a potential hub of terrorism in the Western Hemisphere." What is this aimed at achieving? There can be no doubt that the far right in the United States is behind this. This is an attempt to justify anything that could happen: a presidential assassination, a coup, an invasion. This is the kind of thing they used to say about Allende, they same kind of thing, and they have been saying it here for

five years now. But nobody has been able to find any proof.

I challenge the editors of the U.S. News, or the owners, or those who are behind these claims -- they are the ones who use this publication -- to come here and look for a single piece of evidence to prove this pack of lies.

Now then, I think the government of the United States should respond to this, because the article quotes, allegedly, information that was provided, allegedly, by U.S. government officials.

If any publication here in Venezuela published filth like this, quoting high officials from the government here, my government would respond by saying, "No, that's a lie." Somebody should respond for this. But the message has been sown.

Listen to what it says here:

"Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez is fast becoming America's newest nemesis." But I am very much an American! I feel like an American, in fact, I am an American! I feel American from here to here, down to the nail on the big toe of my left foot. I am proud to be an American, from South America, from mestizo, black or Indian America, or Our America, as José Martí called it.

Further on it says, "Now, after surviving an attempted coup and a nationwide petition demanding his recall..." -- what they left out here was, "Now, after surviving an attempted coup, unfortunately..." Right? Yes, they left out the word "unfortunately", which would have more accurately reflected their views -- "Chávez is flirting with terrorism, and Washington is watching with increasing alarm."

You can see where they are going with this, can't you? It's like saying, let's start paving the way, we have to get Chávez out of there, and we have to find a way to justify anything we choose to do. This is not an isolated incident; no, this is part of a strategy.

It is no surprise that last night on the RCN radio network in Colombia they were reading this article, commenting on it, spreading its message: "Given all that is happening in Chávez's Venezuela, some American officials regret that terrorism is seen chiefly as a Middle East problem and that the United States is not looking to protect its southern flank. 'I'm concerned that counterterrorism issues are not being aggressively pursued in this hemisphere,' one U.S. intelligence official said."

Obviously, what they are saying or suggesting here is that we, or Chávez, basically, is a terrorist and should be aggressively pursued. That is what is being openly suggested here.

It continues, "We don't even have flyovers of Venezuela. Another intelligence official complains that terror suspects being held at Guantánamo Bay, the U.S. base in Cuba, are not being interrogated about connections to Latin America. The bottom line, when it comes to terrorism so close to U.S. shores, says the official: 'We don't even know what we don't know.'"

There you go, Ms. Linda Robinson, who was surely instructed to write all of this, no? "Write all of this down, get in all in your computer, all this rubbish."

Randy Alonso.- That was President Hugo Chávez, who demanded a response from the U.S. government -- a response that has yet to come, incidentally. The U.S. government has remained completely silent. But members of the Bolivarian government, the Venezuelan government, in addition to President Hugo Chávez at this press conference, have continued to respond to this insidious article in *U.S. News and World Report* and to demand a response from the government of the United States.

Renato Recio can expand on this for us.

Renato Recio.- Well, Randy, as you have seen, we have shown a rather lengthy excerpt from President Chávez's response to this insidious article, but there have also been important statements made by Venezuelan Vice President José Vicente Rangel, and by the deputy foreign minister, Arévalo Méndez. And I think that it is important to point out that all three spoke very forcefully and used very harsh words to describe this article, which is basically, as has been demonstrated here, an echo of the opinions and information provided by official government figures, and high-ranking figures, according to Linda Robinson.

Nevertheless, the language that has been used to speak about the relations between the United States and Venezuela has been very respectful and moderate. You will see this for yourself in the statements I am going to share here.

For example, Deputy Foreign Minister Arévalo Méndez immediately responded to the article by saying, "We have decided to maintain a respectful tone with regard to the U.S. government, but, at the same time, to demand a statement from them with regard to the allusions made by government officials there, who provided information for the writing of this article. What is certain is that we need to define bilateral relations that go far beyond false, slanderous and unfounded declarations."

I want to emphasize that at all times, this Venezuelan diplomat is striving to maintain a diplomatic tone; and we have seen that when it comes to U.S. diplomats, and their language, attitudes and approach to relations with other countries of the world, not the slightest effort is made to use this kind of courteous, respectful language.

The deputy foreign minister said something that I find very significant: "These are false statements, completely unfounded lies and slander. They refer to places that do not even exist. The article refers to settlements near Machiques, in the state of Zulia, and the spokespeople for these international schemes aimed at muddying relations between the two countries were very unlucky, because it just so happens that I am from Machiques, and never in all the years I have lived have I ever heard of the towns mentioned in the reports. So they were very unlucky when they chose this particular lie."

He also noted, "Once again they bring up the supposed Colombian guerrilla camps, a recurring theme in these denunciations, but no one has ever been able to give our country an exact location. The Venezuelan Armed Forces remain vigilant. The last time there was any contact of this sort was with a group of paramilitaries, and they didn't have a camp of any kind, they simply dared to cross over to this side of the border and received what they had to receive."

Arévalo Méndez also pointed to a fact that others have already emphasized here, how strange it is that all of this is happening precisely at the peak moment in the recall process, which clearly illustrates how intentional this all was.

José Vicente Rangel, the vice president, called this article an example of "garbage journalism", something that is not exclusive to *U.S. News and World Report*. "I do not want to play along with these kinds of publications," Rangel stated, "which are inspired, as the article itself said, by official sources in the United States." Consequently -- and this is also a key aspect of this situation and Venezuela's position -- "it is the U.S. government and the U.S. embassy that are obliged to provide an explanation. It is the responsibility of the U.S. authorities to clarify if officials from that government provided this information, and if they did provide it, then it is up to them to provide the proof."

In his statements on the matter, Chávez said, "If any Venezuelan publication or journalist used a source from the Venezuelan government who spoke in such a dirty, insidious tone, we would immediately demand to know who had said these things, in order to verify if they were factual." This is an ethical way of behaving, something that is not, as we have said, typical of some of the major publications in the United States.

"We want to have the best possible relations with the United States," said Rangel, "but there are some spokespeople for the U.S. government who are constantly voicing critical opinions that do not reflect the truth."

To give an example of the conduct of these spokespeople, just today we received a short press release which says that a State Department spokesperson issued a somewhat sarcastic statement – and we have already noted that it is rare for these people to make a coherent or serious statement. What he said was, "We are taking the allegations about security very seriously, and we have spoken with the highest level of the Venezuelan government about our concerns. Besides, the whole international community has the same concern about terrorism." This is the key phrase. They start out with certain dogmas, certain lies that are planted as truth, and then continue to use them relentlessly. There is no need to demonstrate anything, they just need to keep reiterating their concern.

Randy Alonso.- It should be noted here that in recent days, the major U.S. media, especially those with links to the far right, have stepped up their attacks against Hugo Chávez and against Venezuela.

The major U.S. media have openly reactivated the campaign waged last year at the time of the attempted coup, and this demonstrates the concerted efforts being made, from the top down, to attack the Bolivarian Revolution. That is why all of the members of the Venezuelan government, in one way or another, have come out to respond to these attacks.

Today, in fact, Tarek William Saab, the chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Venezuelan National Assembly, told the VENPRES news agency, "This article is yet another scheme perpetrated by a criminal political class that wants the worst for Venezuela, that is doing everything possible to foment a coup in our country, and that sponsors these kinds of publications as a way of tarnishing our country's international image."

He also noted that the Venezuelan government has requested a statement from the U.S. government on this matter. "We asked them to clarify whether they had encouraged the writing of this article, since it quotes a number of anonymous official sources in the United States."

He reiterated that the article is simply a pack of lies that has collapsed under its own weight and has no credibility. "This is a similar case to the Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*, and its publication of a report allegedly quoting a Venezuelan pilot who made serious accusations against Vice President José Vicente Rangel; that particular case ended with the resignation of the newspaper's top executives."

This is an accurate demonstration of the way this anti-Venezuelan scheme was organized and its use of the power of the media as a weapon against the Bolivarian process.

Thank you, Renato, for your comments.

(Video footage is shown.)

Randy Alonso.- In this insidious article published by *U.S. News and World Report*, there are three elements – as pointed out by the author herself at the beginning of the article – that are central to way in which the United States is aiming this media war against Venezuela and its attempt to link Venezuela to international terrorism, claiming that Venezuela is a base for international terrorists, or that it cooperates or collaborates with international terrorism.

One of the most serious claims or most treacherous accusations made by the article is Linda Robinson's assertion that "Middle Eastern terrorist groups are operating support cells in Venezuela and other locations in the Andean region. A two-month review by *U.S. News*, including interviews with dozens of U.S. and Latin American sources, confirms the terrorist activity. In particular, the magazine has learned that thousands of

Venezuelan identity documents are being distributed to foreigners from Middle Eastern nations, including Syria, Pakistan, Egypt, and Lebanon."

Here we see the raising of the specter of Islamic terrorism, as a means of capitalizing on the fear that has been created in the United States by practically demonizing the Middle East, and now they are clearly trying to link President Hugo Chávez to the United States' crusade against international terrorism. I would now like to ask Reinaldo Taladrid to comment on this.

Reinaldo Taladrid.- The key here is to link the words Chávez's Venezuela and Middle Eastern terrorism as many times as possible in the article. I have a number of examples here of how these two things are linked throughout it.

First we have the claim that Chávez "has befriended some of America's other notorious enemies, traveling to Saddam's Iraq and Qadhafi's Libya."

Well, first of all, Chávez traveled to these countries in his capacity as president of OPEC – not Chávez personally, but rather, Venezuela was serving as president of the organization at the time. These two countries were also members of OPEC, and that is why Chávez traveled there, to carry out an important task on behalf of Venezuela.

But in any event, as Chávez himself stressed, he does not need to justify his sovereign right to travel to any country he wishes to visit. However, if they want to talk about travel, then this is a perfect way to highlight the hypocrisy involved here, because someone who did in fact travel to Saddam Hussein's Iraq was Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld met with Saddam Hussein, and the United States backed him in the war he was waging at the time... Take a look at the footage. (Video footage is shown.) There is Donald Rumsfeld with Saddam Hussein in Iraq, in Saddam Hussein's Iraq, shaking hands with him, and backing him in his war against Iran; pushing him along in this senseless war against Iran. There he is. What's the problem? They gave him chemical weapons, they gave him biological weapons, the United States provided all of these things to Saddam Hussein's Iraq, to use against Iran back at that time. That is the kind of hypocrisy we are dealing with here.

Now according to Linda Robinson, the fact that Chávez traveled to Qadhafi's Libya is yet further proof of these links. Well, José María Aznar was just in Libya. Perhaps we should investigate José María Aznar, because he just visited Libya, and according to the standards of *U.S. News and World Report* and Linda Robinson, the fact that Spain is visiting Libya is cause for great concern.

She then goes on to claim, "Middle Eastern terrorist groups are operating support cells in Venezuela." Randy has already referred to this assertion. She does not say where, or who, or when. She simply adds, further on in the article, that a "Venezuelan analyst" – who could very well be an analyst working for Gustavo Cisneros, really – "who recently visited Margarita Island ... described the Venezuelan-Arab Friendship Association as a 'fortress' with armed guards outside."

Now, anyone who knows anything about Venezuela and the degree of violence that has historically plagued the country knows very well that there are armed guards outside many places in Venezuela, including entire neighborhoods, which are practically trenched in, in Caracas and other places. So this cannot be taken seriously as evidence. No school of journalism would accept this as evidence to say that there is a terrorist training camp there.

Elsewhere she claims that "the magazine has learned" – she does not say from whom – "that thousands of Venezuelan identity documents are being distributed to foreigners from Middle Eastern nations, including Syria, Pakistan, Egypt, and Lebanon." This is what I was saying, and Randy touched on it as well, before going into the theme of terrorism. This is obviously a racial question: all of the countries of the Middle East

are terrorist countries, all Arabs are terrorists, all Moslems are terrorists, all mosques are centers of terrorism. That is clearly what is being said here, because it could very well be that people from Egypt or Lebanon or Syria or Pakistan are residents or even citizens of Venezuela, that they have emigrated to Venezuela. There are immigrants from these countries all over Latin America, in Paraguay, in Brazil, in Argentina, in many places.

Randy Alonso.- Yes, and then you would have to ask what Middle Eastern country Timothy McVeigh was from, the infamous terrorist who planted the bomb in Oklahoma.

Reinaldo Taladrid.- The bomb in Oklahoma. Yes, and then there are the white supremacists, like the ones who were plotting to assassinate Reagan, and it was Cuba that provided the information to the United States, about an assassination plot being organized against Reagan. Where were those Arabs from? They weren't Arabs at all, they were Americans, white, Anglo Saxon, and white supremacists, in fact.

And so this is another aspect involved here, and it is of course linked as well to the general stance of the magazine, which is anti-Arab. So beyond the subject of terrorism and political affairs, there is this racial factor involved as well.

Now, the article goes into more detail further on: "*U.S. News has learned*" – note the word used, "learned", but where, from whom, how? There are seven key questions in journalism that are never answered anywhere in the article – "that Chávez's government has issued thousands of cédulas, the equivalent of social security cards, to people from places such as Cuba" – they could not possibly leave out Cuba; of course, Cuba is one of the seven countries that sponsors terrorism, according to the U.S. government – "Colombia, and Middle Eastern nations that play host to foreign terrorist organizations," and I am going to cut in here. It is even being insinuated here that Venezuelan identity documents are being provided to people from Cuba and Middle Eastern nations that shelter terrorists.

Now, this journalist, Linda Robinson, has come to Cuba a number of times. She has met with numerous people here since the early 1990s.

Now, if a source came to me and told me what I have just read here, and if I were a serious journalist, with even a minimum of respect for the concept of truth, I would say, "Fine, but show me some proof that Cuba plays host to terrorist organizations, because I have been there, I have traveled quite a lot around Cuba" – and she has seen a lot of the country, not only Havana, but other places as well. She knows this is a lie. Including Cuba on this list is a rotten thing to do, and beyond rotten. And just follow the lie, and where will it lead you? To the official position of the government of the United States. Yes, this is the official U.S. government position, and she knows this is a lie. Linda Robinson knows Cuba very, very well. She is perhaps one of the U.S. journalists who has visited Cuba more than any of the others, and knows Cuba best. She knows that this is a lie. To include Cuba on this list is simply to repeat, without question, without a minimum of respect for the truth, what the government wants repeated here.

She then continues, "An American official" – here she says it was an American official – "with firsthand knowledge" – a gratuitous adjective used to lend the official credibility – "of the ID scheme has seen computer spreadsheets with names of people organized by nationality."

Now, first of all, this could very well be the method they use to organize these lists. But, furthermore, an American official has firsthand knowledge of the way lists of names are organized by nationality in the Venezuelan administration? That's troubling. And why am I bringing this up? Because throughout the article she says, "an American official", "an official", etc., etc., but there are two times when she apparently slips up and says "intelligence officials", and that changes everything, because you simply have to recall... If you read the books that have been written by former CIA officials, people who worked in the CIA, you will know that one of their functions was specifically this. Just read the book by Philip Agee.

But in addition to this, remember that the office run by Otto Reich, the office of public diplomacy, was formerly an office within the CIA, and then it was openly and shamelessly made into an office of the U.S. government.

Randy Alonso.- Of the State Department.

Reinaldo Taladrid.- Of the State Department, no less, the office of public diplomacy.

Randy Alonso.- This reminds me a great deal of the specter of Soviet MiGs in Nicaragua and everything else that Otto Reich fabricated back then to attack Nicaragua.

Reinaldo Taladrid.- Now, how does all of this work? It's very simple. An intelligence official – and this is mentioned twice in the article, intelligence official, not American official – simply goes to the journalist and says, "Look, I'm going to give you evidence that there are links with terrorists: 'In Margarita Island, a Venezuelan analyst...'" He gives her the information, and she reprints it just as he gives it to her.

The key here is getting someone to agree to write the article, and then all the rest refer to it. That is the key to the way the game is played. You simply place an article somewhere, in this case, in *U.S. News and World Report*, where Linda Robinson, for whatever reasons, personal, financial, ideological, whatever, agrees to include this whole pack of lies, just as they are provided to her. And here it is, written just as it was all provided to her, because I cannot believe that she would write this about Cuba sheltering terrorist organizations, knowing Cuba as well as she does. And then, quite simply, Dan Rather repeats it on CBS, and then someone else, and someone else, but whom do they quote? *U.S. News and World Report*, which allowed itself to be used in this game. And this is how it is done in intelligence circles. That is why I pointed out that on two occasions she didn't refer to an official, but rather to an intelligence official, and that is highly suspicious.

At another point – and just look at the lack of journalistic seriousness, or investigative seriousness, especially since the magazine's advertising promotes it as an exponent of investigative journalism – it says, "U.S. officials believe." Elsewhere it refers to "exploring whether there is an al Qaeda connection" and "suspicious links". These are things that they cannot even claim to prove, and she reprints them anyway, with no evidence to back them.

And now comes the matter of visas. It says, "U.S. officials believe that the Venezuelan government is issuing the documents to people who should not be getting them and that some of these cédulas were subsequently used to obtain Venezuelan passports and even American visas, which could allow the holder to elude immigration checks and enter the United States."

Here Chávez made a brilliant response, which really says it all. Here is what he said:

"There is evidence of a link between the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela, Charles Shapiro, and terrorism." Everyone will ask, "What? Charles Shapiro linked to terrorism?" And as Chávez pointed out, "The one who grants visas to the United States is Shapiro. Or do they think Hugo Chávez grants visas to go there?"

Suppose that this lie was true, which it isn't, that they had given identity documents to a terrorist, which is a lie, which they haven't been able to prove, and this terrorist goes to the U.S. embassy with this document, and they give him a visa under the new requirements of Homeland Security, an eight-week waiting period and all of that, fingerprints and so on. In any event, it is the U.S. embassy, the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Department of National Security that handle all of this interagency work. It is not the government of Venezuela.

Therefore, they are not even very serious or rigorous when it comes to making up lies, insinuating that

terrorists can get into the United States by using these documents provided by the Venezuelan government.

Now, listen carefully to this here: "The suspicious links between Venezuela and Islamic radicalism are multiplying. American law enforcement and intelligence officials are exploring whether there is an al Qaeda connection." Not a word of proof, just a completely irrelevant story about a man who was deported from the United States to Venezuela in 2002 for immigration violations, and whom they claim may possibly have links to al Qaeda.

Up until now, the U.S. justice system has not been able to conclusively prove a link with the September 11 attacks in the case of a single person. Not Zaccarias Mossaui, who has had all charges dropped by the prosecution in connection with September 11. They have not been able to take a single person to court, no one being held in Guantánamo, no one anywhere. They have not been able to prove that anyone was linked to these incidents, which is really rather suspicious, given the amount of resources they have devoted to this.

And this is the end of the section on Chávez's links with Islamic terrorism. Now just look at how she introduces the next theme, the other big lie, Venezuela's support, military, logistical and so on, for the FARC. Note how she segues from one topic to the other.

She says, "Venezuela's support for terrorist organizations isn't limited to those based in Lebanon or Egypt." And she says this even though there is no proof whatsoever for a single word said about these organizations in Lebanon or Egypt.

This is quite simply a total lack of basic seriousness or rigor, even for an operation carried out by an intelligence agency, if that's what it is. This is not investigative journalism; it is nothing but lies.

Randy Alonso.- Thank you, Taladrid, for your comments.

(Video footage is shown.)

Randy Alonso.- The subject of Colombia, so frequently used by the U.S. authorities, could not possibly have been left out of this war propaganda piece printed by *U.S. News and World Report*.

According to Linda Robinson, "Venezuela is supporting armed opposition groups from neighboring Colombia; these groups are on the official U.S. list of terrorist organizations and are also tied to drug trafficking." This is the assertion made by this journalist, which she will purportedly go on to demonstrate in her article. It is an assertion that has serious consequences for bilateral relations between Venezuela and Colombia, as well as serious implications for the United States' plans for our continent. Renato Recio can tell us more about this.

Renato Recio.- Yes, and I believe the implications go even further beyond Colombian-Venezuelan relations. This is all very much related to the relationship that the United States is seeking with the entire Andean and even South American region, because what we are seeing here is the blatant use of counterterrorism as a political tool.

In other words, this article not only shows us how they are trying to obtain tactical benefits through a media campaign, but it is also related to a strategy that goes far beyond the figures currently in power and the world as it is at this precise moment.

I think that counterterrorism is a phenomenon that will endure beyond the political life of Bush. We were talking here a while ago about how the press is already aiming its guns at the enormous errors Bush has been committing. But it is unlikely that the major U.S. media will question counterterrorism, because counterterrorism will serve as an ideal political tool for all of the leaders of the United States in the future. This is very much related to the relations between Colombia and Venezuela and, above all, with the so-called Plan Colombia. And Plan Colombia is simply the geo-strategic vision that will serve the United States'

interests in the future.

Now they are attempting to blow up this matter as a means of provoking a conflict between Venezuela and Colombia, which would even allow the United States, which is already in Colombia, to directly intervene in this conflict. Just take a look at the quote from Roger Noriega: "We are not disinterested spectators. Any actions that undermine democratic order or threaten the security and well-being of the region are of legitimate concern..." He is generalizing, referring to the entire region, he could be interpreted as saying that everything in the whole region is of concern to him, this region is mine, this region is ours, and so we are concerned by anything that smells of terrorism, in accordance with the United States' definition of terrorism. Because for many people, this conflict in Colombia, this insurgency, cannot simply be classified as terrorism. It dates back a long, long way, and this violence has characterized life in Colombia for decades, long before Bush even aspired to becoming the governor of Texas, long before Chávez became president and began to follow a political program. It dates back a long, long way. Nevertheless, the United States classifies any insurgency movement as terrorism, with no room for discussion, when it suits its interests. And this could happen tomorrow in any other Latin American country, especially in the numerous countries that share borders with Colombia, and some of these are very important countries in the region.

I would like to point out, Randy, that this Plan Colombia is nothing more and nothing less than the implementation of a plan through which the United States hopes to achieve absolute economic, political and military control. The military aspect is the most novel in this case, and also the most important. And of course, the goal of the United States, for several years now, is to dismantle the existing military forces, essentially national, and to create – this is the ultimate objective – a supranational force, a regional force that will be controlled and directed by the United States in every regard. It will be a sort of mini-NATO for the Latin American region, and it is all beginning with Plan Colombia. There is already talk of a Plan Colombia Two, and there have been public proposals for other countries to support the Colombian and U.S. governments in their counterinsurgency efforts.

Therefore, I believe that Plan Colombia, whose military aspect is also related to the FTAA, and to the extension of these free markets, opening these markets to U.S. capital, also has the goal of military domination, of the creation, I repeat, of a supranational organization, which will be a regional organization, controlled by the United States. And in the future they will try to use the argument of counterterrorism as a means of preventing any true Latin American integration efforts, any regional solidarity alliances, among, for example, Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, etc.

In other words, any actions aimed at raising awareness and promoting a Latin Americanist sentiment will undoubtedly be treated as anti-democratic, terrorist movements, and used as a pretext. And so what we are seeing here has an immediate objective, but you can rest assured that this will be a tool used in the future by the United States.

Randy Alonso.- Yes, and it has the serious goal, as you were saying, of aggravating frictions between these two countries. And I think there is another very significant aspect to this article, Renato, in that it attempts to discredit the Venezuelan army. In other words, at a time when there is support from the Venezuelan army, the Venezuelan Armed Forces, for the Bolivarian process, when the armed forces themselves are involved in the social programs being pursued today in Venezuela, we see this attempt to implicate the Venezuelan army as a source of support for the Colombian guerrilla movements and drug trafficking operations, according to the article. It is an attempt to tarnish the image of the Venezuelan army. It is not only a direct attack on President Chávez, and the Bolivarian government, but also an attempt to undermine the credibility of the Venezuelan Armed Forces. And behind all of this, of course, is the United States' efforts to weaken this whole process and to find the pretext for taking radical action when they deem it most convenient.

Renato Recio.- To create a precedent, that is what they are always trying to do, to create a precedent that will allow them to use this same mechanism in the future, to create an even more difficult situation in

Venezuela or to extend this practice to another country, if necessary.

Randy Alonso.- Yes, because the article even refers to "Venezuela and other locations in the Andean region."

Renato Recio.- It also quotes someone as saying, "I'm concerned that counterterrorism issues are not being aggressively pursued in this hemisphere." In other words, we are not paying enough attention to this danger to the south, so close to us, a mere 1000 miles away, according to the article. "Terror Close to Home": the title says it all.

There's the message they want to get through. And in fact, geographically speaking, Venezuela is not that close to the United States, but this is yet another reflection of the feeling of ownership over "America's backyard", so typical of the major U.S. media and the right wing in the United States.

Randy Alonso.- Thank you, Renato, for your comments.

(Video footage is shown.)

Randy Alonso.- The "boogeyman" of Cuba could not possibly be left out of this ghost story posing as an article in *U.S. News and World Report*. According to Linda Robinson and her "well-informed" sources, there are Cubans working inside Venezuela's intelligence and paramilitary apparatus. This is an oft-repeated lie, which has now surfaced again in a major U.S. publication. Rogelio Polanco will tell us more.

Rogelio Polanco.- Well now, we have "Terror Close to Home", the Middle East and Islamic terrorism, Colombia and terrorists, and then, of course, last but not least, Cuba. What we have here are a pile of worn-out lies, shamelessly recycled yet again.

The article regurgitates a slanderous claim that is nothing new for Cubans or the many other people who no longer believe this tale. "Senior American officials" – unidentified, of course, just like in the rest of the article – "are concerned about the growing Cuban presence inside Venezuela.

"All told, some 5,000 Cubans have traveled to the country; in particular, many are turning up inside Venezuela's intelligence and paramilitary apparatus. Says one U.S. official: 'The Cubans are deeply embedded in Venezuela's intelligence agency.'"

Now, this doesn't deserve anything more than a laugh, does it? Just remember that "super spy" Rosabal, who talked about thousands of Cuban spies and then had to go to the media and recant his story, and admit that it was part of a big slander campaign against our country several years ago. Of course, the lying media never brought the subject up again, and now we are seeing a repeat of that hoax, which went down in history as one of the most outrageous fabrications in the Venezuelan press in recent years.

The article continues, "There is ample evidence, officials say" – completely unidentified officials, once again – that 'Cuba provides military training to pro-Chávez organizations' that have been set up to safeguard Chávez from coup attempts like the one he survived last year."

Now, this brings to mind another pack of lies that we also denounced here, the ones published by *EI Universal* in that article called "The Cuban Invasion", the one that talked about Cuban doctors in Venezuela who were not really doctors, sports trainers who were not really trainers, identity documents given to supposed Cuban citizens. This thing with the identity documents has been around for a while now.

Randy Alonso.- At a subsequent press conference, Chávez was laughing with one of his bodyguards, who happens to be black, saying, "Hey, listen to that, they're saying you're Cuban."

Rogelio Polanco.- Yes, one of Chávez's personal security detail.

Randy Alonso.- Because these are the same lies they have been using in this campaign all this time.

Rogelio Polanco.- And back on that occasion, Randy, they talked about an "intelligence report" without ever specifying where it came from, whose intelligence, what kind of report. They talked about supposed infiltrators in the Venezuelan naval fleet, and companies that were fronts for Cuban intelligence. Companies that did not even exist, as was proven, in detail, by our officials here. They were simply fabricated to create the image of Cuban interference in Venezuela's internal affairs. And then there were all those blatant lies about the Cuban doctors' lack of experience and the lack of access to medical and scientific information here.

Randy Alonso.- And they go so far as to say that Cuba provides military training to the pro-Chávez forces.

Rogelio Polanco.- Maybe they're talking about the Cuban solidarity brigades bringing health care and education to so many people in Venezuela who suffered from poverty and discrimination for so many years.

At another point, Linda Robinson quotes yet another anonymous U.S. official, who alleges that Chávez "decided to follow the Cuban model long ago," and the proof for this are the speeches Chávez made in 1994 and 1998.

"He has forged close ties with Cuba's Fidel Castro," it says at another point in the article, which is further "proof" for all the claims made here. "Chávez is sending some 53,000 barrels of oil monthly to help Castro's cash-strapped Cuba." Once again, the huge lie about Venezuela giving Cuba oil for free, when our country pays for that oil, and punctually.

And finally, she claims, "large numbers of Venezuelan military personnel have also been sent to Cuba for training." In other words, it's a whole string of nonsense, of lies repeated over and over and repeated here once again, but we've almost come to expect this kind of thing, both we Cubans and the many other people in the world who know all about how these things are manipulated and who is behind that manipulation.

Cuba has been dealing with these things for 40 years. Yesterday, the assistant secretary of state for Latin America, Roger Noriega, was speaking at a congressional hearing, in the Senate foreign relations committee, and he pulled out a lie that has been hammered away at so much in recent months by the U.S. authorities that all any serious person can do is laugh. When questioned by Senator Christopher Dodd about the blockade against Cuba, he alleged that Cuba maintains limited development of biological weapons, a lie that has been exposed a thousand times already, yet the United States just keeps hammering away at it. So what can we expect from those who are determined to provoke a coup or even find a pretext for an invasion of Venezuela?

But I think that once again, it has been demonstrated that these lies cannot get very far, it is only a matter of time before the truth wins out.

Randy Alonso. And I think that this dissection of the article by Linda Robinson in *U.S. News and World Report* can only lead us, and any serious person, for that matter, as Polanco said, to the organizers, the orchestrators of this media campaign against Venezuela. Linda Robinson herself, in a Colombian television interview, points the way to that path.

Reporter.- *Linda, in this article you make a very strong allegation, you say that "Chávez is flirting with terrorism, and Washington is watching with increasing alarm." How did you reach this conclusion?*

Linda Robinson.- *Well, I just quoted the speeches by General Gil, and also the words of the new assistant secretary of state, Roger Noriega, who gave a speech here in Washington a couple of weeks ago, where he*

said that the United States is not a disinterested spectator; in other words, it is closely watching what's happening there. I don't think there is a well-defined policy yet, but there is certainly concern here in Washington. And I wanted to emphasize the information I was able to gather on the camps. Not only the Resumidero camp, in Asamblea, near Machiques. The information in this article is well-founded, and it concerns the officials I spoke with.

Randy Alonso.- It concerns the U.S. officials, clear evidence of the fact that this article is part of the growing campaign orchestrated by the U.S. government against the Bolivarian process and against President Hugo Chávez. Lázaro Barredo.

Lázaro Barredo.- I think that Chávez made this very clear in the excerpt of his press conference that we saw here: "this is part of a strategy."

The main conclusion that we can reach from this article – it is explicit in the article – is that Chávez is becoming the new enemy of the United States in the region. That is what this article in *U.S. News* is summing up in this message being sent to its readers in the United States, and of course this message uses all the latest buzzwords, like terrorism and drug trafficking.

We have already seen this movie. Almost 45 years ago, when the Cuban Revolution was preparing to implement some of its most important measures, like agrarian reform and so on, *Time* magazine, which was the voice of the most conservative sectors in the United States at the time, published a similar article, in which it claimed that Fidel Castro's neutrality was a challenge to the United States. And this was in the midst of the McCarthy era and the Cold War. It was clearly a way of inspiring fear in the American public, invoking the "boogeyman" by using the taboo themes of the moment, as a means of having a justification on hand for any actions being planned. There cannot be the slightest doubt that when you follow everything that is happening, there is something serious being planned for Venezuela. Chávez said it himself, an assassination, a coup attempt, a military strike, and there is also talk of civil war. In the United States, openly, publicly, right on the Internet, in the Miami media, there is talk of training paramilitary groups, counterrevolutionary groups, armed with AKs, R-15s, all manner of explosives, C-4, all in preparation for a civil war in Venezuela.

There are assassination plots being organized in Santo Domingo. Chávez himself, less than five days ago, denounced the activity of the CIA in Venezuela. In other words, there is a whole campaign underway, because the reactionary forces know that they have lost the battle in Venezuela; there is a major popular offensive that supports the whole social process, the whole process of social justice being carried out. President Chávez has just handed over 300 million dollars for the construction of new housing. Then there are all the educational programs, opening up new opportunities for university studies as well; the decision to hand over ownership of the land; increases in salaries. In other words, the people can feel the effects of these social programs, and the reactionary forces know that the Venezuelan masses, the 90% of the population that was marginalized for 50 years, are fully behind the Bolivarian Revolution, and no recall referendum or opposition measure will change this.

Before ending, I just wanted to comment on the ridiculous new heights that are being reached in this campaign. Today, in the big Miami slander sheet, because they have no idea what to say anymore, they have had to resort to some really stunning things. Today, the mob slander sheet – and now it belongs to two mobs, because the Venezuelan mob is involved in there as well now – they published a commentary under the headline, "Chávez's Imperialism". This shows just what incredible lengths this campaign has reached, and it is quite simply because the Venezuelan right, and the Cuban-American right and the American right, are feeling completely defeated, because they are watching as the process in Venezuela is gaining ever greater momentum, and most importantly, it has reached the point where it is simply irreversible.

Randy Alonso.- And it is all a very well-orchestrated campaign, organized from the highest levels of power

in the United States, using the media as the vehicle to spread this message and create the necessary climate for any actions the U.S. government decides to undertake.

In a recent issue of the Venezuelan weekly *Quinto Día*, a column entitled "Miguel's Truths" reaffirmed all of this – and this is not a publication connected to the Bolivarian process, or the leadership of the Bolivarian process.

In this column, in a box labeled "Top Secret", it says that there is basically a file being put together in Washington, referred to as "Chávez-case", compiling all of the information available on the life of the Venezuelan president. The column notes that there has been a continuous weakening of the moderate position towards Venezuela advocated by various sectors of U.S. politics, including some Republican representatives.

"By the looks of the things, the hawks are gaining ground. Slowly but surely, the State Department is adopting the scenario of removing the Venezuelan president from power, by any means, with or without a referendum. They estimate that he will have stepped down by April of 2004 at the latest.

"The Venezuela desk is preparing a file on the Venezuelan head of state. They take for granted that he will be defeated in the recall referendum, with no room for doubt, and plan for his immediate resignation. To achieve this goal they will use the file as a means of persuasion. Under the threat of imprisonment in a U.S. jail, they will demand that before he leaves the government, he must remove the vice president and designate his successor from a short list prepared by the White House. Only under this condition will the State Department shelve the file; otherwise, it will pursue Chávez through heaven and earth to have him incarcerated in U.S. territory.

"The file against him is made up of information on alleged terrorist activities, which will be revealed to the world in snippets. The goal is to create a state of opinion in which the president appears as an ally of violent activists around the world, meaning terrorists. It is a similar strategy to the one used before the military attack on Iraq."

And so this Venezuelan weekly clearly confirms the real plans, the real intentions of the ultra-right wing currently in power in the United States with regard to Venezuela, the Bolivarian Revolution, and President Hugo Chávez.

And with this we reach the end of today's Round Table.

I would like to thank the panelists who have accompanied me here today and also the guests in our studio audience.

Viewers and listeners:

Frustrated by the incapacity and weakness of the Venezuelan opposition, by the dignified and independent stance of President Hugo Chávez, and by the progress made in the social programs of the Bolivarian Revolution, the U.S. government is stepping up its aggressive and interventionist efforts against the Bolivarian process, using the media for its purposes.

An insidious and treacherous article published in the latest issue of *U.S. News and World Report* is proof of this strategy of using the media in the service of the U.S. government to attack Venezuela and Hugo Chávez, resorting to outrageous allegations of collaboration with international terrorism to create the necessary climate for radical action against the "bothersome" government of this South American nation.

It is truly shameful that a publication supposedly dedicated to serious investigative journalism would lend itself to be used as a vehicle for U.S. war propaganda against another country. It is equally disgraceful that a

journalist would collaborate in such a foul endeavor. "And it is not because it angers us," as Martí once wrote, "but rather because it is a disgrace to human dignity, to see those who wield the pen allow themselves to be used as contemptible henchmen, for a paltry monthly sum."

As always, we will continue to keep our people informed.

Good night.