

Posted on Tue, Apr. 17, 2007

VENEZUELA

## Chávez rips U.S.-Brazil deal

**Hosting an energy summit in Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez assailed an ethanol pact between the United States and Brazil.**

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Associated Press

PORLAMAR, Venezuela --

President Hugo Chávez attempted to derail a U.S.-Brazil ethanol agreement as host of an energy summit on Monday, offering his own development plans for South America using Venezuela's vast reserves of oil and natural gas.

Despite Chávez's clash on ethanol with Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the two leaders smiled and shoveled cement side-by-side for the foundation of a new petrochemical complex in eastern Venezuela before they flew to Margarita Island for the summit.

Chávez has pledged to explain to Lula da Silva his sharp criticisms of last month's U.S.-Brazil ethanol agreement, but neither leader mentioned ethanol right away.

"Only united will we be great," Chávez said in a speech at the Jose petrochemical complex, with Lula da Silva and the presidents of Bolivia and Paraguay at his side. "That great power isn't Venezuela. That great power isn't Brazil. . . . That great power will only be known as South America."

Chávez repeated his accusation of a U.S. plot in a brief 2002 coup against him and warned that if the United States again tries to topple him, "there won't be a single drop of oil for the United States." He said any U.S. invasion of Venezuela could lead to a "100-year war."

Chávez has pledged to offer an alternative proposal to "overthrow" the U.S.-Brazil ethanol agreement, which he calls a "cartel" that would monopolize arable lands and starve the poor -- concerns shared by his ally Fidel Castro.

The United States and Brazil are the world's two biggest producers of ethanol -- the alcohol-based fuel made from crops such as sugar cane or corn. They signed an "alliance" last month to promote its production in the region.

Chávez has not said how he would oppose that plan.

Top leaders of Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador also were attending the two-day energy summit, where Chávez was expected to seek support for projects including a South American natural gas pipeline and a proposed alliance modeled after the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to promote "a fair price" for natural gas.

Brazil will fully join a proposed regional "Bank of the South" proposed by Chávez.

But on ethanol, Brazil's interests appear to lie in its agreement with the United States, despite Chávez's view.

Chávez used to speak warmly about ethanol's future, but he came out harshly against its promotion as a substitute for gasoline after the U.S.-Brazil pact.

Lula da Silva said in a Monday morning radio broadcast that South American countries "have an immense territory" to be able to comfortably produce ethanol and plenty of food.

In a visit to Brazil, meanwhile, former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush criticized Cuba and Venezuela for their leaders' newfound opposition to increased ethanol production.

"Mysteriously, for reasons I can't explain, they did a complete about-face," said Bush, the brother of President George Bush.

Without mentioning Venezuela by name, Jeb Bush said the United States needs to boost ethanol use because much of the oil it consumes comes from "unstable sources of supply that are controlled by enemies of our country."

Associated Press writers Alan Clendenning in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Vivian Sequera, in Brasilia, contributed to this report.