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“The International Exploitation of Drug Wars and What We Can Do About It”

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When the Colombian National Police and military attacked a stationary FARC camp in Ecuador on March 1, 2008, killing Raúl Reyes, a top guerrilla commander, and capturing several hundred gigabytes of data, one thing became amply clear: the designated terrorist organization that produces some 70 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States had multiple active cells inside Mexico, particularly in the national university.

Just before the bombing a delegation of Mexican university students arrived at the FARC and offered a more formal alliance with Mexico's small Marxist-Leninist party, the National Liberation Movement (*Movimiento de Liberación Nacional*).¹

The ties of Mexico to the FARC are not limited to small, violent Marxist parties, although those alliances offer a significant boost for armed revolution in Mexico and the hemisphere.

My further field investigations show that the FARC, particularly the 48th Front operating on the Ecuadoran border, has developed significant ties to the Sinaloa cartel, which now operates with relative impunity inside the Ecuadoran side of the border. The amply documented ties of senior member of the Correa administration to the FARC and their chief intermediaries with the Mexican drug trafficking organizations offer further indications of the transnationalization of the Mexican organizations.²

These ties among Mexican DTOs and a designated terrorist entity that is the world's largest cocaine producer are only one facet of the multiple lines among different groups with declared hostile intent to the U. S. Homeland that both strengthen the Mexican organizations and use the turmoil in Mexico to advance their own separate agendas. These agendas include an overtly declared intent to damage the United States, usually referred to as the "Empire." The ability of disparate groups to move into Mexico greatly enhances their ability to carry out their objectives over time,

¹ The entire cache of FARC documents, by far the most extensive captured in the 47-year-old conflict, was analyzed and catalogued by a respected British national security think tank, including a verbatim copy of every e-mail contained in the Reyes' computers. See: "The FARC Files: Venezuela, Ecuador and the Secret Archive of Raúl Reyes," International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2011. One email (No. II 2759) dated February 19, 2008 from Reyes to another member of the FARC high command stated the "among the people who have come to visit us are the companions (*compañeros*) of Mexico's National Liberation Movement, (a Communist Marxist-Leninist party that is clandestine and operates under this name.) They have some important project in their own country and across the continent...they wish to link to us and are ready to do so under this name as part of the CCB (*Coordinadora Continental Bolivariana*). The CCB is a FARC political front group.

² Douglas Farah and Glenn Simpson, "Ecuador at Risk: Drugs, Thugs, Guerrillas and the Citizens' Revolution," International Assessment and Strategy Center, February 2010.

Among the other cases that indicate the different threats that run through Mexico are those of Jameer Nasr, arrested in Tijuana, Mexico in July 2010 and reportedly charged with setting up a Hezbollah network in Mexico,³ a concern later validated by the Tucson, Arizona police;⁴ and the case of Jamal Youssef, who, according to a July 6, 2009 indictment in the U.S. Southern District of New York, was a former Syrian military officer arrested in Honduras, sought to sell weapons to the FARC – weapons he claimed came from Hezbollah, and were going to be provided by a relative in Mexico.⁵

There is no evidence that I am aware of showing that the Mexican government supports these activities of extra-regional actors or condones them. In the case of Nasr, the Mexican authorities had him under surveillance and arrested him, showing little tolerance for the establishment of a foreign terrorist entity on its soil.

Rather, as the government struggles with a host of intractable problems, these activities and alliances are largely under the radar and, given scarce resources and capabilities, not a priority. Also, given the multiple demands on the law enforcement and intelligence communities in Mexico, directly relating to the violence and drug trafficking, it is in fact an ideal time for other groups to take advantage of the situation and seek to establish a greater presence.

Mexican DTOs, both in the United States and Mexico, are often analyzed as entities operating only in Mexico or in geographically contiguous regions that directly affect their specific cocaine-related endeavors.

Yet these groups, particularly the Sinaloa cartel, are part of a large and expanding web of alliances that now have operational access to Mexico through the DTO and other Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) activities. It includes not only designated terrorist entities and DTOs, but also state actors, including state sponsors of terrorism. Mexican DTOs are key gatekeepers along an extensive network of highly adaptable criminal pipelines, both organizational and geographical in dimension. These pipelines ultimately breach the southern border of the United States thousands of times a day.

The pipelines are a series of recombinant chains whose links can merge and decouple as necessary. It includes not only traditional TOC activity, but potential for trafficking of WMD and precursor materials by regional states where the leadership is deeply involved in criminal activities and have publicly articulated doctrine of

³ Jack Khoury and Haaretz Service, "Mexico thwarts Hezbollah bid to set up South American Network," Haaretz (Israel), July 6, 2010.

⁴ Tucson Police Department, "International Terrorism Situational Awareness: Hezbollah," September 20, 2010.

⁵ United States District Court, Southern District of New York, *The United States of America v Jamal Youssef*, Indictment, July 6, 2009.

asymmetrical warfare against the United States and its allies that explicitly endorses as legitimate the use of weapons of mass destruction.

This rapidly emerging threat from multiple nations acting in concert and combining traditional TOCs, terrorist groups and nation-states that sponsor them should now be viewed as a tier-one security threat for the United States. Mexican DTOs are a crucial nexus in this matrix, not marginal actors or separate from this growing network.

The established presence of Hezbollah in Latin America, a designated terrorist entity that operates as a proxy for Iran, is an important factor, one that raises the possibility of the exchange of knowledge, technology and “lessons learned” with the FARC as well as Mexican DTOs.

Venezuela, under Hugo Chávez, is leading the self-described “Bolivarian” alliance, in which almost every country’s leadership has significant ties to the FARC and other DTOs and foreign terrorist organizations.⁶ While Mexico is not a member of the Alliance, its territory, as noted, is used by different groups that are part of that group. The Alliance, in turn, has developed increasingly close ties to Iran, a state sponsor of terrorism and a primary sponsor of Hezbollah.

China’s growing presence, including control of four key ports in Mexico through which extensive movements of precursor chemicals and significant money laundering operations occur, is another significant factor in the transnational activity in Mexico.⁷

Mexico is a key part of China’s comprehensive strategy to expand its influence throughout Latin America and the Western Hemisphere in direct challenge to America’s vital interests and long held preeminence in the region. This strategy is already unfolding across a multidimensional framework in political, ideological, military economic, transportation, telecommunications, energy, and environmental realms.

For most of the last decade the dominant analysis of China’s “rise” in Latin America has been that China is largely focused on advancing its substantial commercial interests (Chinese imports from Latin America grew from \$2 billion in 2000 to \$91 billion in 2010) in securing energy and other vital natural resources, and markets to

⁶ The Bolivarian alliance, formally known as ALBA, is comprised of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cuba and several smaller Caribbean nations.

⁷ The author has documents showing significant money laundering activities by Mexican DTOs through Chinese banks. Mexican investigators and U.S. officials have noticed a rapid increase in the importation of precursor chemicals for making methamphetamines and cocaine through the port of Lázaro Cárdenas since Hutchison Port Holding, a Hong Kong based company with ties to the PRC’s military, took over operations in 2007. For a look at the Chinese push for Mexican ports see: Will Weissert, “Mexico, top private interests look to revamp Pacific ports south of the border,” Associated Press, March 26, 2006.

sustain its own political-economic stability. For the most part this line of analysis has led to conclusions that any Chinese “threat” in Latin America is either an unrealistic, or at most a distant prospect for the United States.

But a gathering preponderance of evidence suggests these conclusions are themselves unrealistic. China is indeed pursuing a comprehensive program to build economic, political and military influence in Latin America, and the criminal state/TOC nexus aids China’s aims now, with significant implications for the future. By ensuring the survival of the Bolivarian Alliance’s project, China is gaining access to vital sea-lanes, ports and territories on which the security and commerce of the Homeland rely. China is also better able to exploit resources, including rare earth elements, lithium and other vital commodities; control transportation nodes, gain uncomfortably close military and naval proximity to vital U.S. energy and telecommunications nodes; and, secure commercial opportunities – all of which serve China’s strategic goal to checkmating the U.S.

China’s willingness to empower these actors, offer them alternative markets and military supply lines, and help insure their survival past the life spans of the current leadership – and to ally with them for its own military, political and economic ends - - makes this Bolivarian Alliance a significant regional challenge to the United States. This is enhanced by a troublesome new Iranian influence within the Alliance, and Iran’s working relationship with China on nuclear and other vital interests.

These relationships among criminalized states and non-state proxies have real and important consequences, within and beyond drug trafficking. There is growing concern that Hezbollah is providing technology for the increasingly sophisticated narco tunnels now being found along the U.S.-Mexican border, which strongly resemble the types used by Hezbollah in Lebanon. Numerous former intelligence and law enforcement officials have publicly discussed the appearance in recent years of arrested gang members entering the United States with Farsi tattoos and other items that could indicate a Hezbollah influence.⁸

As a senior DEA official recently noted, “There are numerous reports of cocaine proceeds entering the coffers of Islamic Radical Groups (IRG) such as Hezbollah and Hamas in Europe and the Middle East. The danger of DTO’s and IRG’s profiting from the lucrative cocaine trade can lead to an unlimited source of cheap and easy revenue to carry out potential terrorist acts.”⁹

This presence has grown in scope and sophistication over the past years as Iran’s Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has successfully built close alliances with several

⁸ Rep. Sue Myrick, “Myrick calls for Taskforce to Investigate Presence of Hezbollah on the U.S. Southern Border, June 23, 2010, <http://myrick.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=22&itemid=558>

⁹ Statement of Anthony P. Placido, deputy administrator for intelligence, Drug Enforcement Administration, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, March 3, 2010.

governments, particularly those of Chávez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia. These alliances afford Iran and its proxy elements state cover and effective immunity for its covert activities. This includes: unfettered access to global banking facilities, ports and airports; mining of precursor elements for WMD and advanced weapons systems fabrication; and, a regional base for infiltration and contingency operations aimed at undermining the U.S. and its interests, while also abetting corruption and the notable buildup in conventional arms manufacturing.

Within this context it is interesting to note Iran's concerted efforts to push into Mexico and solidify government-to-government ties and trade alliances.¹⁰ Since 2009, several senior level Iranian delegations have visited Mexico, the first such envoys since the Shah was overthrown in 1979.

The most senior delegation was led by deputy foreign minister Ali Reza Salari, who met with senior Mexican officials in February 2009 to discuss ways to broaden "political, economic and cultural" cooperation.¹¹ This was followed by an Iranian trade exposition in Mexico City, largely devoted to touting the virtues of Shi'ite Islam and the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini and promoting the Palestinian cause.¹²

The Iranian ambassador in Mexico has taken an unusually activist role, including being the leading public Iranian voice in accusing the CIA of assassinating Neda Agha-Soltan, the pro-democracy activist gunned down by Iranian security forces during anti-regime demonstrations.¹³ Mexican officials in recent months have arrested several Iranian nationals seeking to enter the United States illegally, and handed them over to the Iranian embassy, after which their whereabouts are unknown.¹⁴

Given these indicators, the threat therefore is neither remote, discontinuous nor contained, nor is it as well understood as it should be. This – and the overall criminal/terrorist/compromised state challenge of which it is a part -- requires more integrated analytical, intelligence, diplomatic and security approaches driven by a strategic assessment of the threat.

As a joint DHS and State Department symposium concluded:

The confluence of illicit networks and corruption in an enabling environment could facilitate not only the movement of drugs, arms, stolen or pirated goods, and trafficked persons, but also smuggling of terrorists, weapons of mass

¹⁰ Todd Bensman, "Iran Reaches Out to Mexico," GlobalPost, May 30, 2010.

¹¹ Mexican ministry of foreign affairs, "Se Reúne subsecretaria de relaciones exteriores con el viceministro de asuntos para las Américas de Iran," Comunicado 048, February 29, 2009.

¹² For the website dedicated to this event see: <http://iran hoy.wordpress.com/>

¹³ Andrew Malcolm, "Iran Ambassador suggests CIA could have killed Ned Agha-Soltan," Lost Angeles Times, June 25, 2009.

¹⁴ Author interviews with Mexican intelligence officials.

destruction (WMDs), WMD materials, and other dangerous weapons and technologies that threaten global security. This trend is particularly powerful when taken in concert with the increasingly blurred line between certain terror groups and the criminal activities that fund them. For instance, organizations such as Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Taliban, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), have been known to engage in criminal enterprises for profit or to advance a terror agenda.¹⁵

Mexican DTOs are a crucial link – financially, in terms of geographic control and control of key access points across the U.S. border – in the “increasingly blurred line between certain terror groups and the criminal activities that fund them.”

Concurrently we see the further empowerment, training and technological support of the oppressive security apparatuses in the increasingly undemocratic Bolivarian states being provided by the Iran-Hezbollah-ICRG/Qods forces combine. Other outside powers, notably China and Russia further compound these problems (as might, in the future, the still-nascent presence of radical Sunni groups related to the Muslim Brotherhood). However Iran, Hezbollah and the ICRG/Qods forces are the sharpest edge of this sword at present, and the one most openly aimed at the U.S., and least tractable to diplomacy.

All of this comes at the expense of U.S. influence, security and trade -- including energy security and hence economic and infrastructure security (Venezuela is the 4th largest supplier of U.S. petroleum imports, just behind Mexico; indeed Latin America is our 2nd largest source of supply overall, only slightly behind the Middle East). This hearing focuses on external threats to Mexico, so one cannot ignore Hezbollah, the ‘non-state’, armed branch of radical Shi’ite Islamists, and the direct relationship of this organization to state sponsors. As the DIA noted last year:

The Qods Force stations operatives in foreign embassies, charities, and religious/cultural institutions to foster relationships with people, often building on existing socio-economic ties with the well established Shia diaspora. At the same time, it engages in paramilitary operations to support extremists and destabilize unfriendly regimes. The IRGC and Qods Force are behind some of the deadliest terrorist attacks of the past three decades, including the 1983 and 1984 bombings of the U.S. Embassy and annex in Beirut, the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the 1994 attack on the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia, and many of the insurgent attacks on Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces in Iraq since 2003. Generally, it directs and supports groups actually executing the attacks, thereby maintaining plausible deniability within the international community.

¹⁵ “Chair’s Report: Transpacific Symposium on Dismantling Transnational Illicit Networks,” Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and Department of Homeland Security U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, February 2010, p. 3.

Support for these extremists takes the form of providing arms, funding, and paramilitary training. In this, Qods Force is not constrained by ideology; many of the groups it supports do not share, and sometimes openly oppose, Iranian revolutionary principles, but Iran supports them because of common interests or enemies.

*The Qods Force maintains operational capabilities around the world. It is well established in the Middle East and North Africa, **and recent years have witnessed an increased presence in Latin America, particularly in Venezuela** [author emphasis]. As U.S. involvement in global conflicts deepens, contact with the Qods Force, directly or through extremist groups it supports, will be more frequent and consequential.¹⁶*

Given their expanding territorial control in Central America (with the Sinaloa cartel making significant pushes in Honduras and El Salvador, while the *Zetas* organization now controls significant parts of Guatemala's national territory), the Mexican DTOs now occupy key routes that the Qods Force-Hezbollah-FARC grouping need to function. As the DIA noted, the Qods Force is not constrained by ideology, but rather a pragmatic willingness to collaborate with those who share its minimum interests against a common enemy.

The relationship between these 'Bolivarian states' and Iran is crucial to understanding the threat that Hezbollah in Latin America poses. This relationship -- among groups espousing and actively pursuing seemingly irreconcilable world views (theocratic Shiite Muslim fundamentalism and Socialism for the 21st Century) -- is bound by a common aim of the asymmetric defeat of the U.S. and the explicit acceptance of the use of weapons of mass destruction to achieve that goal. Both sides also envision an authoritarian state that tolerates little dissent and encroaches on all aspects of a citizen's life.

Hezbollah's influence in Latin America extends to the nature of aggression and diplomacy employed by Chavez and his Bolivarian comrades. Iran and Hezbollah are among the foremost practitioners today of the franchising model of a state sponsor allocating certain elements of statecraft to non-state armed actors involved in transnational organized crime and terrorist activities.

The nature of the threat to the United States, then, is not merely the drugs in the criminal pipelines and multiple transnational criminal activities that directly affect us every day, with Mexico being the primary entrance point and Mexican DTOs the primary gatekeepers. Rather, it is the establishment of political and financial influence and military presence by Hezbollah, a terrorist organization that enjoys

¹⁶ Lt. Gen. Ronald L. Burgess, Jr., Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, "Iran's Military Power," Statement before the United States Senate Committee on Armed Services, April 14, 2010.

the state sponsorship of Iran and, to a lesser degree, Syria, in concert with states that are hospitable to its movements and that are replicating its model, particularly south of our border.

Another central common element between Iran and its Bolivarian allies is the willingness to use non-state allies participating in criminal and terrorist activities as instruments of statecraft. As the DIA noted, the Qods Force supports proxy forces while retaining plausible deniability, and the primary force is Hezbollah. Venezuela, in turn, also hosts not only the FARC, but the ETA Basque separatist terrorist organization, the Bolivarian Continental Movement (*Movimiento Continental Bolivariano*-MCB).

The MCB is a FARC-founded political umbrella group made up of remnants of Latin America's violent Marxist movements and its allies in Europe, the United States and Latin America. A great deal of its activities, fundraising and publishing are carried out in Mexico, particularly through the various front organizations that operate out of the National University. This relationship gives the FARC, Hezbollah and ETA a significant pipeline into Mexico, and therefore access to the Homeland through pragmatic alliances with different Mexican TCOs that control that access.

The core mission of the MCB is to legitimize the FARC's internal and international image as a revolutionary army driven by ideology rather than a criminal organization fuelled by the drug trade. It also is a staunch defender of Chávez and his Bolivarian allies and a favorite forum for calling for armed action against the United States and for armed revolution against the democratically elected government of Colombia.

The FARC and Hezbollah also share a doctrine of asymmetrical warfare against the United States that embraces the use of weapons of mass destruction, massive civilian casualties as acceptable collateral damage and the underlying belief that the acquisition of nuclear weapons to destroy the United States is a moral or religious imperative. This is not a statement of capacity, but a clear statement of intention.

The first does not necessarily imply the ability to accomplish the latter, but it is an indication that these intentions need to be taken seriously, particularly given the level of resources available to them. Hezbollah, viewed by many in our intelligence community as the most effective, well-structured and militarily proficient terrorist group in existence, brings a host of skills and abilities to bear in this regard. While these capabilities had been deployed in our hemisphere before with lethal effect (the 1994 AMIA bombing), they have not been previously deployed under the protection of a network of friendly governments, with access to diplomatic status and immunity and operational freedom.

Earlier this year a senior Venezuelan official publicly endorsed the Iranian position that the United States "arms international terrorists and finances their activities." He added, "discrimination and humiliation of nations is the primary cause of

terrorism...the type of terrorism implemented by imperial powers attacks the sovereignty of nations and the laws that regulate armed conflicts.”¹⁷

One need only look at how rapidly Iran has increased its diplomatic, economic and intelligence presence in Latin America to see the priority it places on this emerging axis, given that it is an area where it has virtually no trade, no historic or cultural ties and no obvious strategic interests. In Bolivia recently the Iranian embassy reportedly asked for more than two dozen spaces for in the international school for children of their newly arrived diplomats there. This is an indication of how rapidly the diplomatic mission is expanding despite having very few overt operations under way.

The gains -- in financial institutions, bilateral trade agreements, state to state shipping by land and sea that undergo no outside review, security forces and intelligence training, and state visits for Latin America (eight state visits between Chávez and Ahmadinejad alone since 2006) -- are almost entirely within the Bolivarian orbit (although there are signs of involvement elsewhere in both Central and Latin America, particularly efforts with mixed results to establish broad new ties with Brazil).

Before going into the origins of this seemingly paradoxical alliance, it is important to note that the relationships Hezbollah has developed with criminal and terrorist groups in Latin America have escalated from one of mutual accommodation and benefit in the spheres of money laundering, contraband and financing to more direct and deadly forms of collaboration.

There has been significant and well documented reporting on Hezbollah’s financial ties to the contraband center of the Tri-Border region of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil, the contributions of the Lebanese diaspora communities on Isla Margarita and elsewhere, and the significant profits Hezbollah has derived for some time by taxing a range of illicit activities among the Lebanese diaspora communities.

This type of activity, in many ways, was little different from that of many other transnational criminal networks, and was largely financial. However, the 1994 Iranian government-sponsored bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires, Argentina, using Hezbollah operatives in the Tri-Border region, is a powerful reminder that these groups can and do operate militarily in Latin America.

Currently there are cases being prosecuted in the United States that shed new light on direct cocaine-for-weapons deals between Hezbollah operatives and the FARC.

¹⁷ Frank López Ballesteros, “Venezuela e Irán unen su vision sobre terrorismo,” El Universal, June 27, 2011, accessed at: <http://internacional.eluniversal.com/2011/06/27/venezuela-e-iran-unen-su-vision-sobre-terrorismo.shtml>

One case that illustrates the breadth of the emerging alliances between criminal and terrorist groups is Operation Titan, executed by Colombian and U.S. officials in 2008 and still ongoing. Colombian and U.S. officials, after a 2-year investigation, dismantled a drug trafficking organization that stretched from Colombia to Panama, Mexico, the United States, Europe and the Middle East. Most of the drugs originated with the FARC in Colombia, and some of the proceeds were traced through a Lebanese expatriate network, to the funding Hezbollah.¹⁸

Colombian and U.S. officials allege that one of the key money launderers in the structure, Chekry Harb, AKA "Taliban", acted as the central go-between among Latin American drug trafficking organizations and Middle Eastern radical groups, primarily Hezbollah. Among the groups participating together in Harb's operation in Colombia were members of the Northern Valley Cartel, right-wing paramilitary groups and the FARC, demonstrating the ecumenical adaptive nature of Hezbollah's criminal associations and of the 'recombinant networks' system.

Other recent case is the 2008 OFAC designated senior Venezuelan diplomats for facilitating the funding of Hezbollah.

One of those designated, Ghazi Nasr al Din, served as the charge d'affaires of the Venezuelan embassy in Damascus, and then served in the Venezuelan embassy in London. According to the OFAC statement in late January 2008, al Din facilitated the travel of two Hezbollah representatives of the Lebanese parliament to solicit donations and announce the opening of a Hezbollah-sponsored community center and office in Venezuela.

The second individual, Fawzi Kan'an, is described as a Venezuela-based Hezbollah supporter and a "significant provider of financial support to Hezbollah." He met with senior Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss operational issues, including possible kidnappings and terrorist attacks.¹⁹

In a separate case, in April 2009 police on the island of Curacao arrested 17 people for alleged involvement in cocaine trafficking with some of the proceeds then funneled through Middle Eastern banks to Hezbollah.²⁰

Among the first to articulate the possible merging of radical Shi'ite Islamic thought with Marxist aspirations of destroying capitalism and U.S. hegemony was Illich

¹⁸ While much of Operation Titan remains classified, there has been significant open source reporting, in part because the Colombian government announced the most important arrests. See: Chris Kraul and Sebastian Rotella, "Colombian Cocaine Ring Linked to Hezbollah," Los Angeles Times, Oct. 22, 2008; and "Por Lavar Activos de Narcos y Paramilitares, Capturados Integrantes de Organización Internacional," Fiscalía General de la Republica (Colombia), Oct. 21, 2008.

¹⁹ "Treasury Targets Hizbullah in Venezuela," United States Department of Treasury Press Center, June 18, 2008, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/hp1036.aspx>

²⁰ Orlando Cuales, "17 arrested in Curacao on suspicion of drug trafficking links with Hezbollah," Associated Press, April 29, 2009

Sánchez Ramirez, better known as the terrorist leader Carlos the Jackal -- a Venezuelan citizen who was, until his arrest in 1994, one of the world's most wanted terrorists. In his writings, Sánchez Ramirez espouses Marxism tied to revolutionary, violent Palestinian uprisings, and, in the early 2000s after becoming a Muslim, militant Islamism.

In his 2003 book, *Revolutionary Islam*, written from prison where he is serving a life sentence for killing two French policemen, Sánchez Ramirez praises Osama bin Laden and the 9-11 attacks on the United States as a "lofty feat of arms" and part of a justified "armed struggle" of Islam against the West. "From now on terrorism is going to be more or less a daily part of the landscape of your rotting democracies," he wrote.²¹

In this context, the repeated, public praise of Chávez for Sánchez Ramirez can be seen as a crucial marker of the Bolivarian ideology, and an embracing of terrorist tactics to achieve justifiable ends. Chávez ordered his ambassador to France to seek the release of Sánchez Ramirez and on multiple occasions, including many times after 9/11, referred to the convicted terrorist as a "friend" and "true revolutionary."²² In a 1999 letter to Sánchez Ramirez, Chávez greeted the terrorist as a "Distinguished Compatriot" and wrote that

Swimming in the depths of your letter of solidarity I could hear the pulse of our shared insight that everything has its due time: time to pile up stones or hurl them, to ignite revolution or to ignore it; to pursue dialectically a unity between our warring classes or to stir the conflict between them—a time when you can fight outright for principles and a time when you must choose the proper fight, lying in wait with a keen sense for the moment of truth, in the same way that Ariadne, invested with these same principles, lays the thread that leads her out of the labyrinth. ...

I feel that my spirit's own strength will always rise to the magnitude of the dangers that threaten it. My doctor has told me that my spirit must nourish itself on danger to preserve my sanity, in the manner that God intended, with this stormy revolution to guide me in my great destiny.

*With profound faith in our cause and our mission, now and forever!*²³

In fact, the Bolivarian fascination with the militant Islamist thought and Marxism did not end with the friendship between Chávez and the jailed terrorist. Acolytes of

²¹ "'Jackal' book praises bin Laden," BBC News, June 26, 2003.

²² See, for example: Associated Press, "Chavez: 'Carlos the Jackal' a 'Good Friend'" June 3, 2006.

²³ Paul Reyes (translator) and Hugo Chávez, "My Struggle," from a March 23, 1999 letter to Illich Ramirez Sánchez, the Venezuelan terrorist known as Carlos the Jackal, from Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez in response to a previous letter from Ramirez, who is serving a life sentence in France for murder. Harper's, October 1999, <http://harpers.org/archive/1999/10/0060674>

Sánchez Ramirez continued to develop his ideology of Marxism and radical Islamism rooted in their interpretation of the Iranian revolution.

Since 2005, Chávez has rewritten Venezuela's security doctrine to scrub it of all outside (meaning U.S.), "imperialist" influences. To replace the old doctrine, Chávez and the Venezuelan military leadership have focused on developing a doctrine centered on asymmetrical warfare, in the belief that the primary threat to Venezuelan security is a U.S. invasion.

The main book Chávez has adopted as his military doctrine is Peripheral Warfare and Revolutionary Islam: Origins, Rules and Ethics of Asymmetrical Warfare (*Guerra Periférica y el Islam Revolucionario: Orígenes, Reglas y Ética de la Guerra Asimétrica*) by the Spanish politician and ideologue Jorge Verstryngge.²⁴ The tract is a continuation of and exploration of Sánchez Ramirez's thoughts, incorporating an explicit endorsement of the use of weapons of mass destruction to destroy the United States.

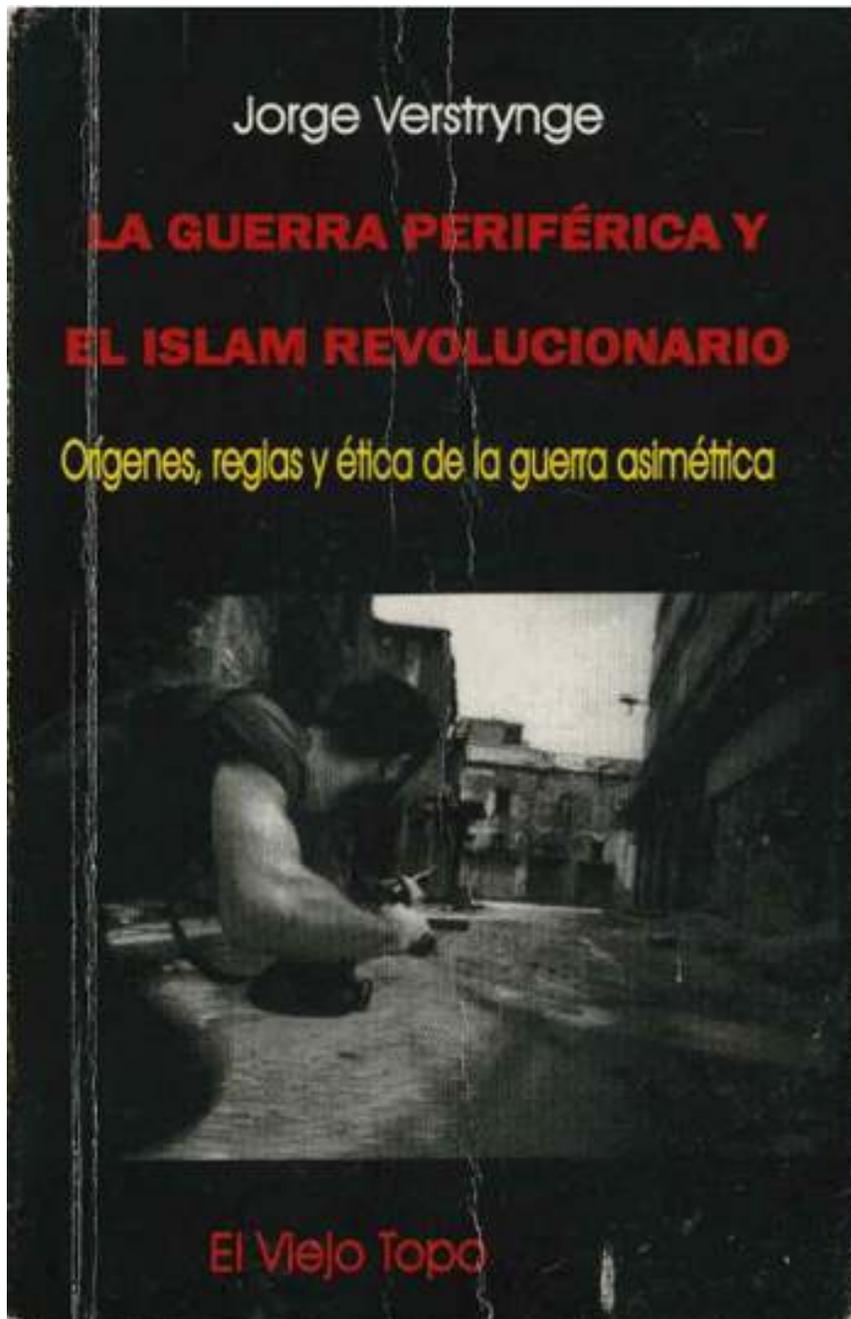
Although he is not a Muslim, and the book was not written directly in relation to the Venezuelan experience, Verstryngge lauds radical Islam for helping to expand the parameters of what irregular warfare should encompass, including the use of biological and nuclear weapons, along with the correlated civilian casualties among the enemy.

Central to Verstryngge's idealized view of terrorists is the belief in the sacredness of the willingness of the fighters to sacrifice their lives in pursuit of their goals. Before writing extensively on how to make chemical weapons and listing helpful places to find information on the manufacture of rudimentary nuclear bombs that "someone with a high school education could make," Verstryngge writes:

*We already know it is incorrect to limit asymmetrical warfare to guerrilla warfare, although it is important. However, it is not a mistake to also use things that are classified as terrorism and use them in asymmetrical warfare. And we have super terrorism, divided into chemical terrorism, bioterrorism (which uses biological and bacteriological methods), and nuclear terrorism, which means "the type of terrorism uses the threat of nuclear attack to achieve its goals."*²⁵

²⁴ Verstryngge, born in Morocco to Belgian and Spanish parents, began his political career on the far right of the Spanish political spectrum as a disciple of Manuel Fraga, and served in several senior party posts with the Alianza Popular. By his own admission he then migrated to the Socialist Party, but never rose through the ranks. He is widely associated with radical anti-globalization views and anti-U.S. rhetoric, repeatedly stating that the United States is creating a new global empire and must be defeated. Although he has no military training or experience, he has written extensively on asymmetrical warfare.

²⁵ Verstryngge, op cit., pp. 56-57.



In a December 12, 2008 interview with Venezuelan state television, Verstrynge lauded Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda for creating a new type of warfare that is "de-territorialized, de-stateized and de-nationalized," a war where suicide bombers act as "atomic bombs for the poor."²⁶

²⁶ Bartolomé, op cit. See also: John Sweeny, "Jorge Verstrynge: The Guru of Bolivarian Asymmetric Warfare," www.vcrisis.com, Sept. 9, 2005; and "Troops Get Provocative Book," Miami Herald, Nov. 11, 2005.

Based on this book, Verstryngge was invited by Chávez to give the keynote address to military leaders in a 2005 conference titled "First Military Forum on Fourth Generation Warfare and Asymmetric Conflict" held at the Venezuelan military academy. Following the conference Gen. Raúl Baduel, the army commander and Chávez confidant, ordered a special pocket-size edition of the book to be printed up and distributed throughout the officer corps with explicit orders that it be studied cover to cover.²⁷

This ideological framework of Marxism and radical Islamic methodology for successfully attacking the United States is an important, though little examined, underpinning for the greatly enhanced relationships among the Bolivarian states and Iran and their respective non-state proxies, most prominently Hezbollah. And there are clear indications the doctrine is spreading to the FARC. According to Colombian intelligence officials, copies of Verstryngge's book have now been found in FARC camps that were raided by the Colombian military.

In the rapidly changing world where terrorist groups engage in extensive criminal activities and pragmatic alliances to achieve their goals and criminal groups facilitate the movement of multiple types of illicit goods through clandestine transnational transportation networks, the Mexican DTOs have a special role to play due to their control of extensive, key geographic space.

This places these well-armed, violent structures already at war with the state at the nexus of a variety of threats, from facilitating the possible transportation of WMD components to alliances with terrorist groups and hostile nation states who wish to harm the Homeland. The reason is obvious. If harming the United States is the ultimate goal, then positioning hostile actors and structures as close as possible is imperative.

While Mexican DTOs pose a significant threat in and of themselves, they are part of a larger network of entities that raise that threat level exponentially.

²⁷ For a more complete discussion of how Verstryngge's concepts fit into Chávez's concept of the Bolivarian revolution see: Mariáno César Bartolomé, "Las Guerras Asimétricas y de Cuarta Generación Dentro Del Pensamiento Venezolano en Materia de Seguridad y Defensa, (Asymmetrical and Fourth Generation Warfare In Venezuelan Security and Defense Thinking), Military Review, January-February 2008, pp. 51-62.

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs**

“TRUTH IN TESTIMONY” DISCLOSURE FORM

Clause 2(g) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives and the Rules of the Committee require the disclosure of the following information. A copy of this form should be attached to your written testimony and will be made publicly available in electronic format, per House Rules.

1. Name: Douglas Farah	2. Organization or organizations you are representing: International Assessment and Strategy Cen <div style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">+</div>
3. Date of Committee hearing: Oct. 12, 2011	
4. Have <u>you</u> received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	5. Have any of the <u>organizations you are representing</u> received any Federal grants or contracts (including any subgrants and subcontracts) since October 1, 2008 related to the subject on which you have been invited to testify? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. If you answered yes to either item 4 or 5, please list the source and amount of each grant or contract, and indicate whether the recipient of such grant was you or the organization(s) you are representing. You may list additional grants or contracts on additional sheets. USG contract for research and analysis	
7. Signature:	

Please attach a copy of this form to your written testimony.