

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
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From: OpsNewsTicker@state.gov [mailto:OpsNewsTicker@state.gov]
Sent: Friday, August 10, 2012 12:05 AM
To: NEWS-CA; NEWS-Mahogany; NEWS-WHA
Subject: Chavez says U.S. citizen arrested for entering Venezuela illegally (Reuters)

Embassy Caracas reports they contacted the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry to request consular access to the American citizen reportedly in custody.

CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuelan security forces have arrested an American citizen who entered the nation illegally with geographical coordinates in a notebook, President Hugo Chavez said on Thursday.

In the tense run-up to an Oct. 7 presidential election, the socialist leader has frequently mentioned the possibility of violence by opponents with U.S. backing.

Foes say that is typical grandstanding nonsense from Chavez, intended to curry support with the masses for his re-election bid by presenting himself as a victim of "imperial" plots.

At a campaign rally in the coastal town of Catia La Mar, Chavez said the man, of Latin American origin, was arrested four or five days ago crossing into Venezuela from Colombia.

"He has the look of a mercenary. We are interrogating him," Chavez said, adding that the man had stamps in his passport from visits to Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya.

When he was detained, the man tried to destroy a notebook full of coordinates, Chavez said in the middle of a speech carried live on state TV, implying a plot was afoot.

"We have reconstructed the pages," he said. "He says he was fleeing from someone ... It's a powerful sign. This citizen wanted to enter the country illegally, for who knows what reason. He cannot say where he was going, or who was waiting for him."

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