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Venezuela and Cuba Sign New Cooperation Agreements

Caracas, Thursday, Dec 16, 2004

By Sarah Wagner - Venezuelanalysis.com

Relations between Cuba and Venezuela, already close, were deepened with the signing of a new trade agreement. This agreement will eliminate tariffs and import duties and promote investment as well as technical and educational cooperation between the two countries.

Also, Chavez and Castro signed an agreement that would commit their two countries to apply the principles of the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas (ALBA) in all future agreements. The ALBA is a project that Venezuela has proposed as an alternative to the US-sponsored Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Instead of pursuing free trade, this agreement's main principles are solidarity, reciprocity, respect for differences, and full integration.

Chávez's visit reaffirmed the close bonds of friendship and solidarity between the two nations. Venezuela and Cuba have been close trading partners since a cooperative agreement was signed between them on October 30, 2000. The new agreement extended their commercial relationship, agreeing that Cuban goods and services will be paid for with Venezuela products and currency.

Chávez arrived in Cuba late Monday night with a large delegation of Venezuelan Ministers, including Foreign Minister Alí Rodríguez Araque, Minister of Communications Andrés Izarra, and Finance Minister Nelson Merentes. It was decided that Venezuela will transfer technology, finance development projects in the agriculture, service, energy and infrastructures sectors. Cuba, in addition to providing over 15,000 medical professionals who participate in Barrio Adentro, a social program which provides medical treatment to Venezuelans and trains doctors and

specialists, will grant 2,000 annual scholarships to Venezuelan students. Also, the agreement commits the two countries to work together with other Latin American countries to fight illiteracy.

The agreement assures that Cuba will continue to receive 53,000 barrels of oil per day, but fixes the price of oil at international prices and guarantees a \$27 per barrel minimum price, in the event that international prices fall.

During a special ceremony held in the Karl Marx Theater, Chávez gave a speech in which he acknowledged that the Venezuelan Revolution has had the good fortune of following in the footsteps of an older brother, the Cuban Revolution, "a brother that has come to strengthen and reinforce the fight and the achievements that we have modestly accomplished over the past few years."

Chavez stated that, "the Cuban Revolution and the Bolivarian Revolution have demonstrated that a better world is not only possible but also is perfectly attainable -- a different world is essential in order to save life and the planet."

He went on to explain that cooperation between the two nations would help to promote the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, (ALBA) an agreement that he referred to as the only option to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), "the neoliberal project that the United States wanted to impose upon our nations for so many years."

Since Chávez assumed the presidency in 1998, Venezuela has become Cuba's closest ally in the region. Cuba has been in desperate need of economic assistance since food and oil subsidies were eliminated when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989. In the past 10 years, Chávez has visited Cuba 11 times and he promised that he would always continue visiting Cuba.

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U. S. Intensified Moves for Preemptive Nuclear Strike at DPRK Under Fire

Pyongyang, December 18 (Korean Central News Agency)

The U.S. imperialist aggressors have frantically intensified aerial espionage against the DPRK and massively deployed ultra-modern military hardware in and around south Korea this year. According to information available, the U.S. imperialists committed at least 2,100 cases of aerial espionage against the DPRK for the last 11 months of the year by mobilizing strategic and tactical reconnaissance planes with different missions.

Most of the espionage committed this year was carried out by U-2 and overseas-based RC-135, E-3 and EP-3. They shipped into south Korea dozens of high-tech M1-A1 Abrams tanks and deployed them in the area near the Military Demarcation Line from the outset of the year. They additionally deployed ultra-modern long-distance striking means including B-52 in their bases for aggression around south Korea.

In the wake of their deployment of more than 10 F-117 Stealth fighter-bombers in an air force base in Kunsan, south

Korea after their participation in the "reception, staging, onward-movement and integration exercise" they brought two battalions of "PAC-3" to Kwangju, south Korea, from Texas State and B-52 and B-1 long-distance strategic bombers to Guam.

They transferred a squadron of F-15E of the U.S. air force to south Korea from Alaska in the middle of September and deployed Aegis destroyers equipped with an ultra-modern missile system belonging to their 7th Fleet in the East Sea of Korea from October 1 to be ready to go into action. This is just a few examples of their massing of ultra-modern military hardware in south Korea and the areas around it.

All these facts go to clearly prove that the U.S. loud-mouthed "six-party talks" and "negotiated settlement of the nuclear issue" are nothing but a window-dressing to cover up its bellicose nature and it is, in actuality, stepping up its preparations for a nuclear war against the DPRK.

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"Within 10 years, by 2014, we will be here remembering what we said in 1994 and in 2004, looking back on what we have done and criticizing the consequences of our actions. We will also be here in 2024. We will be here forever, even when we are not able to be here physically."

Chávez is scheduled to fly to Brazil on Wednesday in order to meet with MEROSUR nations Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil.

US State Department expresses concern Richard Boucher, the spokesperson for the US State Department, reacted to the agreements signed between Cuba and Venezuela by saying, "Any attempt to emulate a Cuban model at a time of increasing global expansion, regional integration and opportunity for individuals would be a step backward for the people of Venezuela."

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