United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 25, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We are deeply concerned about Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez' growing ties with U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations and state sponsors of terrorism. This letter is to present you with a number of questions that we believe should be thoroughly addressed within the Department of State's 2009 Country Report on Terrorism which was due to Congress on April 30, 2010. We realize that thorough answers to some of these questions may require a classified annex.

PRESIDENT CHÁVEZ' SUPPORT OF FARC

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is South America's oldest and best armed terrorist group. As pointed out in the 2008 Country Report on Terrorism, the FARC is notorious for carrying out a full range of terrorist activities to include kidnappings, murders, mortar attacks, hijackings, and bombings against Colombian political, military, and economic targets.

On March 1, 2008, a Colombian military strike against a FARC camp in Ecuadorian territory successfully killed senior FARC members, including Luis Édgar Devia Silva (aka Rául Reyes). Silva was a known terrorist responsible for numerous atrocities within Colombia, and his death and the subsequent capture of his computer laptop provided a treasure trove of intelligence. Chávez mourned the loss of Reyes and eulogized this terrorist as a "good revolutionary" while amassing troops on the Colombian border in an attempt to intimidate his Latin American neighbor.

In light of what the U.S. government has discovered from the "Reyes" documents and other sources, we ask that the annual terrorism report provide attention to the following questions:

What does the information found on Reyes' computer reveal with regard to the depth of the relationship and support that the FARC receives from high-ranking officials in the Chávez government? Based on information gleaned from the laptop, what type of surface-to-air missiles or man-portable air defense systems (MANPADs) has Venezuela provided to the FARC or enabled the FARC to obtain, and what threat do those systems pose to Colombia and U.S. counterdrug efforts in the region?

In September 2008, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control designated two senior Venezuelan Intelligence officials, Hugo Armando Carvajal Barrios and Henry de Jesus Rangel Silva, and one former senior security official, Ramon Rodriguez Chacin, for materially assisting the FARC's illicit activities.

What types of weapons have these three senior Venezuelan government officials enabled the FARC to acquire? To what extent does the FARC use proceeds from illicit drug trafficking to acquire weapons from the Venezuelan government?

In late July 2009, the government of Sweden requested an explanation from Venezuela about how the FARC obtained Swedish-made anti-tank rocket launchers that had been sold to Venezuela in the 1980s. Three of the launchers, matched by their serial numbers, were recovered from a captured FARC arms cache in October 2008.

Do we have the intelligence resources in place to properly monitor the flow of guns and money from Venezuela to the FARC? Are known FARC officials, such as Rodrigo Granda, Marin Arango (aka Ivan Marquez), and Rodrigo London Echeverry (aka Timochenko or Timoleon Jiminez) able to operate and move freely within Venezuela?

Do you agree with Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Dennis Blair's March 2009 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in which he stated that despite setbacks brought about by the Colombian government's tireless efforts "the FARC leadership has shown no signs it seeks to end hostilities or participate in serious peace talks" and further, that the FARC benefits from cross-border sanctuaries in Venezuela?

It is well known that cocaine trafficking funds FARC operations. The United Nations World Drug Report for 2009 revealed that nearly one-third of all cocaine produced in the Andean region passes through Venezuela. To what extent does the Venezuelan government's involvement in the international drug trade allow for millions of dollars to flow into the coffers of narco-terrorists?

Recently, the Treasury Department, in an unprecedented move, labeled an active foreign military official as an international drug "kingpin" for enabling massive shipments of cocaine from Venezuela into West Africa. Americans are now banned from doing business with Ibraima Pap Camara, the Air Force Chief of Staff in Guinea Bissau and the former head of Guinea-Bissau's Navy and Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto, and any assets the two might have had in the United States are now frozen.

To what extent are drugs from Venezuela flowing into West Africa, and what impact does that have on political corruption, drug smuggling, and terrorist operations in the region? Should President Chávez be held accountable under the Kingpin Act for his role in the flow of drugs to the rest of the world?

How much do terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) profit from trafficking drugs that originate in or flow through Venezuela? What specific steps is the United States taking to cooperate effectively with countries in South America, North Africa, and the Sahel to blunt the trafficking of drugs across the Atlantic and into West Africa?

HEZBOLLAH'S ACTIVITIES IN VENEZUELA

Prior to September 11, 2001, no terrorist group had killed more Americans than Lebanon-based Hezbollah. On June 18, 2008, the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control announced that it was freezing the U.S. assets of two Venezuelan based supporters of Hezbollah—Ghazi Nasr al Din (a Chávez employed "diplomat") and Fawzi Kan'an for providing direct support to Hezbollah. According to the Department of Treasury, these two individuals were involved in the planning of Hezbollah operations, including terrorist attacks and kidnappings.

What is your assessment of the presence and activities of Hezbollah inside Venezuela? What is your assessment of the purpose and implications of a meeting in Beirut on or about February 1, 2010, between Adel El Zabayar and Imad Saab, deputies of the Venezuelan National Assembly, and Nawaf Musawi, director of international relations of Hezbollah?

On November 3, 2009, our Israeli allies stopped the cargo ship MV Francop before it could reach its destination in Syria, which is a state sponsor of terrorism. The Francop was loaded with 36 shipping containers holding 500 tons of Katyusha rockets, mortars, grenades, and a half-million rounds of small-arms ammunition suspected to be bound for Hezbollah.

Is there information confirming that the Francop had stopped in the Venezuelan port of Guanta before sailing for Syria and at the same time that Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro was in Damascus visiting with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad? Are there any indications of a substantial Iranian security presence in Guanta?

PRESIDENT CHÁVEZ SUPPORT FOR STATE SPONSORS OF TERRORISM

In addition to his documented support for Hezbollah and the FARC, President Chávez has closely aligned himself with Cuba and Iran, both of which are already on the State Sponsors of Terrorism List.

Venezuela's financial support for state sponsors of terrorism is evident by Chavez's extensive support of the Castro regime in Cuba, which is calculated to amount to $1 billion a year.
To what extent does Venezuelan assistance to the Cuban regime facilitate the regime's ongoing repression of the pro-democracy movement and forestall a transition to democracy in Cuba? How deeply are Cuban advisors involved in the intelligence and security apparatus of the Venezuelan government?

What is your assessment of the role of long-term Castro confidant Ramiro Valdez as a special advisor to the government of Venezuela and the impact it will have on pro-democracy leaders and movements in Venezuela? What role, if any, did Valdez play in the recent purge of over 100 Venezuelan military officers?

With respect to Iran, President Chávez has repeatedly expressed support for that country's covert nuclear program and announced in September 2009 a plan for the construction of a "nuclear village" in Venezuela with Iranian assistance.

In your judgment, to what extent is Venezuela supporting Iran's covert nuclear enrichment program development? What is the current state of Venezuela's nuclear program, and to what extent is Iran providing nuclear knowhow to Venezuela? Under the present conditions, does Venezuelan-Iranian nuclear cooperation violate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency protocols?

We have seen reports of suspicious Venezuelan-Iranian companies sprouting in remote areas of Venezuela, including the *VenIran* "tractor factory." In December 2008, Turkish customs inspectors intercepted 22 shipping containers bound for *VenIran* that were labeled "tractor parts" but instead contained an "explosives lab" and chemicals that could be used to manufacture explosives. What is your assessment of the activities carried out by *VenIran*? Is it possible that its facilities are a front for illicit, possibly even nuclear, technology-related activities?

Congress is close to authorizing a comprehensive set of sanctions aimed at restricting Iranian access to refined fuels in a bid to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. At the same time, Iran has a growing financial presence in Venezuela, and President Chávez has pledged to provide Iran with 20,000 barrels of gasoline per day.

To what extent are Venezuela's financial institutions assisting the Iranian nuclear enrichment program? Are you concerned about the activities of the Venezuelan Banco Internacional de Desarrollo

and the Banco Binacional Irani-Venezolano? To what extent could Venezuela's financial institutions and energy resources help Iran undermine bilateral or international sanctions designed to stop its covert nuclear program?

The 2008 Country Report on Terrorism confirmed that Iran and Venezuela continued weekly flights connecting Tehran, Syria, and Caracas and that passengers on these flights were only subject to "cursory immigration and customs controls." What is the U.S. government's understanding of the number of passengers and nature of their travel as well as the type of cargo transported on these flights? Is the Administration concerned that these flights are being used for nefarious purposes?

On April 21, the Secretary of Defense issued a report regarding the current and future military strategy of Iran. The report states that Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force maintains world-wide operational capabilities and that "recent years have witnessed an increased presence in Latin America, particularly Venezuela."

What threat does the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force presence in Venezuela pose to the United States and our interests in Latin America? What if any measures is the Administration taking to verify the extent of terrorism activities in Venezuelan territory? How is the Administration ensuring that all appropriate branches of the U.S. government are aware of these key findings?

IMPLICATIONS OF ADDING VENEZUELA TO THE STATE SPONSORS OF TERRORISM LIST

The State Department currently designates four nations—Syria, Cuba, Sudan, and Iran—as state sponsors of terrorism. These countries provide ideological support and material assistance to terrorist groups. Once you consider the evidence behind Venezuela's substantial ties with U.S.-designated terrorist organizations and state sponsors of terrorism, we would like to know the strategic implications of designating Venezuela a state sponsor of terrorism. We would also like to know the implications for the integrity of this list if Venezuela continues to evade designation.

Looking into the future – and short of designating Venezuela a 'State Sponsor of Terrorism'- what other concrete measures are available to curb President Chávez' threatening ties with terrorist groups and state sponsors of terrorism? Under what conditions would the Administration apply such measures? Does the U.S. government have a contingency plan to respond to a sudden and prolonged unavailability of Venezuelan oil exports to the United States?

Given that Chávez is expected to receive a $20 billion loan from the Chinese Government and his government has just signed yet another multi-billion dollar arms deal with Russia for weapons that far exceed any rational analysis of Venezuela's national defense requirements - it is clear that this is the time to revisit our polices within the region. We encourage you to work with all appropriate federal agencies in obtaining thorough answers to these questions. We look forward to further discussions about what steps the Administration plans to take in order to address these disturbing developments within our hemisphere.

Sincerely,