

## Venezuela Slips in Voting for U.N. Seat

The New York Times  
October 17, 2006

[UNITED NATIONS](#), Oct. 16 — [Venezuela](#)'s campaign to gain Latin America's open seat on the Security Council next year suffered a setback on Monday when [Guatemala](#), backed by the [United States](#), established a wide lead and maintained it after 10 ballots.

Neither country obtained the necessary 125 votes — two-thirds of those voting — to win the seat outright, but Guatemala ended the day with a lead of 110 to 77.

The balloting, which at one point had the countries tied with 93 votes each, resumes Tuesday and could last days, until one prevails or the Latin American group decides to bring forth a compromise candidate.

The initial outcome was a distinct blow to the ambitions of [Hugo Chávez](#), the fiery populist leader of Venezuela, who has turned the contest into a focus of his campaign against Washington, and traveled widely and spent his country's oil largess liberally to promote its candidacy.

Francisco Arias Cárdenas, Venezuela's ambassador, said his country was not battling Guatemala, which he called "a brother country," but "fighting against the owners of the universe."

A Venezuelan victory, he said, would give small and impoverished nations "an independent voice needed on the Security Council to fight against the power of money."

A Security Council seat would also give Mr. Chávez a global platform to vent his grievances against Washington, a reason why the United States has conducted its own vigorous lobbying against the idea.

Mr. Chávez gave a histrionic preview of what could be expected when he addressed the opening of the [General Assembly](#) last month and called President Bush "the devil," adding that he could still smell sulfur on the podium where Mr. Bush had spoken the day before.

While the real power on the 15-nation Security Council is exercised by the five permanent members with vetoes — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — Venezuela could be a spoiler in the Council's efforts at consensus and its ability to draft its frequent policy statements, a process that requires unanimity.

While potentially disruptive, Venezuela's presence would have little real effect on resolutions, which need only nine votes (and no vetoes) to pass.

Monday's vote was held to fill the seat being vacated by Argentina, one of the five elected members of the panel finishing their two-year terms at the end of the year.

In uncontested races on Monday, South Africa was named to replace Tanzania, and Belgium and Italy were endorsed to replace Denmark and Greece. Indonesia defeated Nepal for the seat held by Japan.

United Nations rules permit marathon ballots, and a battle between Cuba and Colombia in 1979 continued for two months and 155 rounds until the election of a third candidate, Mexico.

"In the year 2000, I was in Florida for 31 days," said [John R. Bolton](#), the American ambassador, recalling the post-election fight of President Bush to win the presidency that year. "This has just begun."