

# Venezuela bids U.S. envoy angry farewell

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CARACAS, Venezuela --

Venezuela's foreign minister accused the outgoing U.S. ambassador Thursday of spending his term trying to undermine President Hugo Chavez and said the government hopes his replacement will show more respect.

Ambassador William Brownfield's three-year term was marked by growing hostility between the two governments. The U.S. has called leftist Chavez a negative influence on Latin America, while the Venezuelan leader has often accused Washington of seeking his overthrow.

On at least two occasions, Chavez threatened to expel Brownfield, accusing him of meddling in Venezuela's affairs.

Brownfield left for the United States on Thursday and will soon take over the diplomatic mission in Colombia. He is being replaced by Patrick Duddy, a senior official in the State Department's Latin America bureau.

"William Brownfield came to Venezuela with one mission: to destabilize the government of President Chavez, to help topple him. And his mission has failed," Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro told reporters.

Maduro said "there is little to hope" for any appointee of President Bush.

"We hope the new ambassador who is coming is at least serious" and respects Venezuela's sovereignty, he said.

The U.S. Embassy declined to comment on Thursday.

Brownfield said in a televised interview Wednesday night that he feels he made some limited achievements in lessening tensions with Venezuela but that he regrets being unable to establish a pragmatic relationship.

He also poked fun at Chavez's anti-U.S. rhetoric, referring to the U.S. "empire" and saying Americans would likely do "very conspiratorial things" this week during the Independence Day holiday, such as attending baseball games.

A career diplomat from Texas with a penchant for wry humor, Brownfield has drawn Chavez's ire by voicing Washington's concerns and handing out donations to youth baseball leagues and charities in pro-Chavez slums.