

# Castro Speaks by Telephone With Chávez on TV

The New York Times  
October 15, 2007

CARACAS, [Venezuela](#), Oct. 14 — [Fidel Castro](#) of [Cuba](#) chatted by telephone with Venezuela's president, [Hugo Chávez](#), during a live television broadcast on Sunday, with the two leaders going over plans to strengthen economic and political ties.

Mr. Chávez's weekly television program was broadcast from Santa Clara in central Cuba, where the remains of Che Guevara are kept, to mark the death 40 years ago this month of the iconic guerrilla leader. While Mr. Castro, who is 81, did not appear on the program, it was the first time Cubans were given broad access to a live broadcast of the Cuban leader since he went into seclusion for health reasons last year. The program was shown in Cuba and Venezuela.

With Mr. Castro's appearances in the Cuban news media closely controlled, his inclusion in a Venezuelan program points to Mr. Chávez's prominence in guiding the economic destiny of Cuba, which relies on subsidized imports of Venezuelan oil.

Mr. Chávez also showed a short video of a meeting held a day earlier in Havana, in which Mr. Castro, looking frail and speaking with a gravelly voice, accepted as a gift a painting done by Mr. Chávez in prison after the Venezuelan leader's failed coup attempt in 1992.

In the telephone discussion on Sunday, the voice sounded clearer. "The conditions are more favorable than ever to spring forth the ideas and revolution of which Che spoke," Mr. Castro said.

The audience in Santa Clara included Cuba's vice president, Carlos Lage, dressed in a red polo shirt decorated with a Che logo, and Venezuela's foreign minister, Nicolás Maduro. Notably absent was Cuba's acting president and Mr. Castro's brother, [Raúl Castro](#).

Mr. Chávez did most of the talking, highlighting his plans to expand energy subsidies to Cuba to include natural gas exports.