

Venezuelan Envoy: Ties With Spain Are OK

The Washington Post
November 26, 2007

MADRID, Spain -- [Venezuela's](#) ambassador to Madrid on Monday sought to play down President Hugo Chavez's statement that he was "freezing" bilateral relations until King Juan Carlos of Spain apologized for telling him to shut up at an international meeting.

"The two countries have a common future beyond ups and downs," Ambassador Alfredo Toro said after a half-hour meeting with the Spanish Foreign Ministry's top official for Latin America, Trinidad Jimenez.

Jimenez said Toro assured her there was no change in the countries' relations.

Deputy Foreign Minister Bernardino Leon said Spain would contact Venezuelan officials in Caracas, but added that the Venezuelan leader's remarks "are not very far removed from what he has been saying these days."

In an interview with Antena 3 television, Leon avoided comment on whether the king or the Spanish government was considering an apology.

On Nov. 10, Juan Carlos told Chavez to "shut up" during an Ibero-American summit in Chile after the Venezuelan leader called Spain's former premier, Jose Maria Aznar, a fascist.

The incident has been followed by periodic sniping from Chavez, who said Sunday: "Until the king of Spain apologizes, I'm freezing relations with Spain."

Chavez has said he will review Spanish business operations in Venezuela.