

Angry Crowds Rally Against President in Brazil

The Washington Post
March 9, 2007

SAO PAULO, [Brazil](#), March 8 -- Thousands of students, workers and environmentalists protesting President Bush's arrival here Thursday shut down a road in a central business district, and some clashed with helmet-wearing riot police who fired tear gas and beat demonstrators.

The boisterous rally and the sharp police response presaged a potentially volatile visit for the president, who landed here in the evening for a six-day tour through Latin America, his longest since taking office. Protesters also gathered Thursday in Colombia and [Mexico](#), two later stops on Bush's itinerary, and organizers expect tens of thousands at a demonstration in Buenos Aires on Friday.

"There are a lot of things we want to say to Bush," said Rafael Giovavelli, 20, a student at Sao Paulo University who protested here. "The poor countries don't get enough money to do things and people are dying. There are more people dying here than in [Iraq](#)."

His friend, Clarice Marcon, 18, mocked Bush's attempt to win favor here by sending a U.S. Navy hospital ship to treat patients during a dozen port calls. "It won't work," she said. "There are 200 million people here. A hospital boat? It's shameful."

The anger at Bush was palpable at the rally, which closed part of Avenue Paulista, a major thoroughfare lined by tall office buildings in this teeming city of 18 million. "Bush Murderer, We Hate You," read one banner held aloft. Many in the crowd hoisted signs or wore stickers featuring pictures of Bush with an Adolf Hitler-style mustache and the phrase "Fora Bush," or "Get Out Bush," with the "s" in his name replaced by a swastika. Some threw objects at police.

Protesters included a mix of students, leftists waving hammer-and-sickle flags, trade unionists, political parties and agrarians, among others. Environmentalists joined the demonstration to oppose an ethanol deal to be sealed between Bush and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Friday, which they fear will result in even further deforestation of the Amazon.

The demonstration Friday in Buenos Aires could dwarf the estimated 6,000 who turned out here. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, who has called Bush "the devil," is headlining the evening rally in a soccer stadium in the Argentine capital across the Rio de la Plata from Uruguay, where the president arrives Friday night.

In an interview with the Spanish-language broadcaster Univision before leaving Washington, Bush said he was neither surprised nor angry about protests. "It happens quite frequently when I travel around the world," he said. "I understand people's concern about war. Nobody likes war. But I've had to make the decisions I made in order to not only secure our people but to deal with threats and to help people be free."