

In Brazil, Bush Announces Ethanol Deal

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SÃO PAULO, Brazil, March 8 — With President [Hugo Chávez](#) of oil-rich Venezuela planning a major rally against President Bush in Buenos Aires later this afternoon, Mr. Bush announced a deal with Brazil here today to greatly increase the development of ethanol.

The White House hopes the deal will have a side benefit of diminishing Mr. Chávez's influence in the hemisphere.

President Bush and President [Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva](#) of Brazil appeared at a heavily guarded biodiesel fuel depot on the industrial outskirts of this sprawling city, the largest in South America, to announce the deal late this morning.

In remarks to reporters and to officials from both governments who were gathered under a large tent, Mr. da Silva claimed some credit for President Bush's acute focus in recent years on the development of alternative fuels. He described a 2005 meeting in Brasilia, where he said he "wouldn't stop talking" to Mr. Bush about Brazil's successes in developing ethanol from sugar cane.

"But I think that's important," Mr. da Silva said, "because the world is not always ready and prepared for major changes, unless we have untiring debates and people are convinced that Planet Earth needs to be de-polluted."

In discussing the deal, Mr. da Silva used a term that Mr. Bush tends to avoid, even when he talks about the environmental benefits of ethanol use.

"We are very pleased with the growing awareness of the international community," Mr. da Silva said, "that we need to overcome dependency on fossil fuels at a time when we are called upon to act urgently to confront [global warming](#)."

Echoing his theme that the development of alternative fuels will diminish the influence of rogue regimes in countries rich with oil,

Mr. Bush said: “If you’re dependent upon oil from overseas, you have a national security issue. In other words, dependency upon energy from somewhere else means that you’re dependent upon the decisions from somewhere else.”

But, in a region where leftist politicians are enjoying great popularity and influence, Mr. Bush added: “When you’re growing your way out of dependence on oil, you’re dependent upon people who work the land. And the distribution of wealth, the distribution of opportunity to farmers, particularly the smaller farmers in our respective countries, will enable the economy to be more on firm foundation.”

While administration aides have argued that Mr. Chávez’s reported popularity in the region is exaggerated, Mr. Bush’s motorcade took him through the regional constituency that Mr. Chávez has been trying to court: those living in crushing poverty beside the thriving upper classes that benefit from increased trade with the United States.

On the way to the fuel depot — where Mr. Bush and Mr. da Silva heard a short presentation on the science of biofuel development, complete with props that included sugar cane stalks and sunflower seeds — the huge presidential motorcade wended through the narrow streets of a ghetto and passed several wooden shantytowns scattered between mansions and luxury car dealerships.

At one point, the president’s limousine had only a few feet separating it on either side from the cement-walled, tin-roofed huts that line the road leading to the depot. Bare-chested children and their parents gathered in doorways, on roofs and in windows as he passed, watched warily by Brazilian troops carrying submachine guns.

Along the route Mr. Bush’s motorcade also passed graffiti that read “Fora Bush, Condoleezza Assassinos” and, at one point, a large floating balloon that also read “Fora Bush” — Bush, Out! — with a swastika standing in for the “s” in Bush.

For his part, Mr. Chávez arrived in Buenos Aires late Thursday night and immediately began mocking Mr. Bush and attacking the motives

for his trip to Latin America. The Venezuelan leader was especially disparaging about what he characterized as Mr. Bush's belated and "hypocritical" focus on issues of economic and social injustice in the region.

"He seems like Columbus — he's discovering poverty," Mr. Chávez said.

He also said, referring to the United States by a pejorative term that he habitually employs, "the fundamental blame belongs to the Empire, to the economic models and coups d'état. And now he comes to us to talk of democracy — with what right?"

Mr. Chávez added, "If I had him face to face, I'd tell him, 'Gringo go home.' "

Mr. Chávez seemed to take particular umbrage at Mr. Bush's remarks earlier this week comparing Simón Bolívar, the hero of Venezuelan independence and Mr. Chavez's idol, with George Washington. Mr. Bush had said that Bolívar, like Washington, "belongs to all of us who love freedom," but Mr. Chávez made it clear that he did not agree.

The comparison was "crude, a slap to the dignity of our people," Mr. Chávez said before leaving Venezuela, and then elaborated on the idea at a news conference in Buenos Aires, where he is staying in a hotel that is part of an American chain.

Washington was born poor and died a rich slaveholder, Mr. Chávez argued, while Bolívar was born rich and died poor, because of his devotion to the cause of Latin American independence from Spain.

On Friday, Mr. Chávez began his busy day with an appearance on a popular Argentine morning television program, where he raised the prospect of further loosening his country's economic ties with the United States. He noted that Venezuela's exports of oil to the American market have been declining in percentage terms, and said that the trend would continue because Venezuela wants to diversify its export markets.