

**Briefing for the Hispanic Caucus on  
Venezuela Coup & Aftermath**  
8 May 02, 1330

**Background:**

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus (bipartisan, principally Democratic) seeks CIA, State Dept./INL, and OSD policy participation in an informal briefing on the U.S. role, if any, in the abortive coup against the Chavez Government in Venezuela.

- Rep. Nancy Pelosi, who is hosting the session, specifically requests participation by OSD/ISA.
- Anticipate five-minute informal statement by each agency, followed by Q&A.
- ASD/Legislative Affairs strongly supports participation, recommends DASD/WHA attend.
- First opportunity to respond to unfounded press allegations of DoD support/encouragement for/participation in the failed coup.
- Failure to appear sends strongly negative signal; appears to lend credence to press allegations of a DoD role.

**Key DoD Talking Points:**

- As conditions in Venezuela have deteriorated over the past year, DoD officials have used normal exchanges with senior Venezuelan military—up to and including the Commander of Venezuelan Armed Forces and Commander of the Venezuelan Army—to stress the point that the U.S. would not support and could not condone any move to replace President Chavez by unconstitutional means.
- Allegations that senior DoD civilians or military officers encouraged or expressed sympathy for a Venezuelan military role as the coup unfolded are entirely false. Review of all contacts by DoD civilians, Joint Staff, and US Southern Command confirm that no such contacts/discussions occurred.
- Press allegations that DoD had military vessels or aircraft in the vicinity of Venezuelan, including international waters in the Gulf of Venezuela, to support the coup are false. No DoD assets were in the area. Most proximate US presence consisted of routine US Coast Guard counterdrug operations in the vicinity of Aruba.
- DoD maintains a strong, continuing, and apolitical relationship with the Venezuelan military aimed at professionalization, training, and cooperation on mutual security concerns, including illegal arms and drug trafficking.