

## Tough and Smart on Latin America

### Who Lost Latin America?

*A Third Way Message Memo by Sharon Burke and Harlan Geer*

#### **The Message:**

George Bush has talked tough, saying “freedom is on the march,” but he hasn’t been smart about democracy in our own hemisphere. As a result, anti-democratic forces and criminal gangs are on the rise in Latin America and our relations with key partners in the region are at an all time low. I will fight for a tough *and* smart new strategy that meets the challenges in Latin America and restores a spirit of partnership with our neighbors.

#### **Offering a New Plan**

*George Bush talked tough, saying the United States would “lead the cause of freedom,” but he hasn’t been smart about protecting the cause of freedom in our own region. The Bush Administration has allowed our relationships in Latin America and the Caribbean to deteriorate and has stoked anti-US sentiment with his arrogant, go-it-alone foreign policy. For the security and prosperity of the region, I believe the US must promote mutually beneficial partnerships, grounded in respect, open markets, and democracy.*

*When elected to Congress, I will:*

#### **1. Stand Against the Demagogues:**

##### **Problem:**

Bush talks tough about promoting democracy, but he hasn’t been smart about promoting and protecting democracies in our own region. When it comes to Latin America, the Bush Administration still has a Cold War mentality. Instead of building mutually beneficial partnerships, Bush talks tough about punishing Castro and Chavez – without actually doing much at all. This indifference comes at a cost. Chavez, for example, has tried to form anti-American coalitions and threatened our partners in the region -- he’s even vowed to sell US F-16 fighter jets to Iran. And all the Bush Administration does about it is trade insults with Chavez.

##### **Solution:**

What happens in Latin America directly affects the security of the United States, and we can no longer take it for granted that freedom will thrive there. This

Administration has been indifferent to our neighbors, and that's not good enough. It's time for the United States to stand behind our partners in this hemisphere as they seek to deliver the benefits of democracy to more people of the region. Countries such as Chile have demonstrated that this can be done – and it can be done better when the United States plays a positive, supporting role in the region. It's also time to abandon Bush's empty gestures and adopt a sensible policy toward Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, and other anti-democratic demagogues who try to drag the region down. America should refuse to engage in a war of words and instead politically isolate these throwbacks by building stronger, mutually beneficial relationships across the region. America's best tools for fighting these regimes are our openness and our economic strength.

**Policy:**

*Cultivate and strengthen strategic, diplomatic and economic ties across the region, especially with Brazil and Mexico. Work with Colombia to increase border security in order to stop paramilitaries and drug cartels from smuggling weapons and drugs across the Venezuelan border. Compensate for any punitive measures from Cuba or Venezuela, such as Chavez's departure from the Andean Community of Nations, by increasing economic engagement with affected states. Lift restrictions and sanctions on private US travel to, investment in and trade with Cuba.*

**2. Crack Down on Cross Border Crime****Problem:**

The Bush Administration has talked tough about a war on drugs, but they have failed to develop a coherent plan to fight drug trafficking. That wasn't smart, and now cocaine production in Bolivia and Peru is on the rise, with political leadership that is friendly to the drug trade in Bolivia. This failure is a tragedy for the US – Latin America is the single largest source of illegal drugs in the US – and a tragedy for the nations of the region, which have some of the highest crime and income inequality rates in the world.

**Solution:**

We have to continue to take tough measures, such as crop eradication, to put a stop to drug trafficking. But we also must be smart about helping the nations of the region prevail against criminal gangs. The United States needs a coherent, regional plan to stop the drug trade, one that balances law enforcement and military operations with trade promotion and alternative development assistance, which the Bush Administration has cut.

**Policy:**

*Work with Peru and Bolivia to resume coca crop eradication and reverse cuts in US aid for alternative development programs. Increase resources available for interdiction of drug trafficking and for domestic anti-drug programs. Establish a comprehensive*

*Andean anti-trafficking strategy that sets measurable objectives over the next decade to reduce domestic demand and to neutralize the foreign supply.*

### 3. Help Our Partners and Allies

#### **Problem:**

The Clinton Administration's high-level focus helped bring the nations of the hemisphere together – from the Summit of the Americas to the Washington Consensus. Bush has not only squandered that remarkable progress and good will, anti-US sentiment has hit an all-time high in the area. One result is an increasing level of regional discord, such as the recent seizure of natural gas facilities in Bolivia, which will hurt Brazil and Argentina far more than it helps Bolivia. Bush's failures are also killing the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), increasing the allure of China, endangering our access to oil and natural gas in the region and contributing to a rise in illegal immigration to the US.

#### **Solution:**

We have to be tough about securing our interests with the nations of the region, which vary tremendously in size, culture, history, and relative economic and political strength. We also need to be smart and get behind our partners in Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen regional economies and deal with the threats they face, including border security.

#### **Policy:**

*Work with Brazil, our co-chair in the FTAA negotiations, to deal with the region as a whole on intellectual property issues and agricultural market access in order to remove roadblocks to the agreement. In the meantime, deepen bilateral investment, commerce, and trade, especially with Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, and other strategically and economically significant nations. Expand the focus of and funding for public diplomacy initiatives to include the Western Hemisphere. Accelerate infrastructure development efforts, especially in Mexican ports, and continue to promote US-Mexican law enforcement cooperation.*

## **Criticizing Bush and the Congressional Majority**

The Bush Administration has talked tough about Latin America – but that talk has been empty. Because of Bush's neglect, we are losing stature in our own neighborhood.

### **The Bush Administration has failed to adopt a coherent strategy for Latin America**

- As a result of Bush's indifference to the region and arrogant, unilateral foreign policy, anti-US sentiment in Latin America has grown to new heights.

- The Bush Administration has failed to take political changes in the region seriously, and as a result anti-American leaders are on the rise across the region.
- Bush is ceding our leadership in the region to China, which has pledged \$100 billion in foreign direct investment in Latin America over the next decade and made critical energy deals with the Brazil and Venezuela.
- Bush has failed to advance the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas.
- Bush has set back long-term efforts to counter drug trafficking from the region by doing nothing to deal with increases in coca crop production in Peru and Bolivia.

## Responding to Attacks

### Attack:

*Liberals just want to solve our problems by throwing taxpayer's money away on foreign aid.*

### Response:

Bush and his allies in Congress have failed to understand that the welfare of Latin America directly affects our economic and national security -- we can't afford to let anti-American sentiment to grow. That means taking tough and smart steps to strengthen our ties to democratic leaders, stop drug trafficking, and ensure our economic security.

### Attack:

*Bush has paid plenty of attention to Latin America. We reached an important trade agreement, CAFTA, and Colombia has cut cocaine production.*

### Response:

Bush has created more ill-will from Latin America than any American president since James Monroe. And while CAFTA was a step forward, Bush's bad policies have left the far more important FTAA dead in the water. Now our neighbors look to either make regional agreements excluding the US or to forge deals with China. Unfortunately, progress in Colombia is being undermined by setbacks in Peru and Bolivia -- this Administration needed a plan to deal with the whole problem.

### Attack:

*Venezuela provides us with a lot of oil, and Chavez has already threatened to stop exporting to the US. How can we isolate the country in the middle of an oil shortage?*

### Response:

Even Hugo Chavez is going to want to get as much money as he can for most of Venezuela's oil, which means selling it on the international markets. As long as the

market continues to set the price of oil, there is not all that much Chavez can do to affect the actual oil supply to the United States. The Bush Administration has spent too much time engaging with Chavez on his terms. We need to pay more attention to Chavez's neighbors and build strong economic links with the Venezuelan people and neighbors. Election results in Peru and Mexico have made it clear that a contained Chavez, whose threats are ignored, will soon find his influence diminished.