

Mr. Reyes appears to have met representatives of many governments. According to one e-mail, he met Gustavo Larrea, Mr. Correa's security minister last month. Mr. Larrea is alleged to have proposed a formal meeting in Quito to discuss securing the border and negotiating the release of some of the FARC's 700-odd hostages. Mr. Larrea said that Colombian officials knew of his meeting, which was purely to talk about the hostages.

Ecuadorian officials having swapped complaints with their Colombian counterparts about their mutual inability to prevent the FARC from crossing the border. Ecuador claims to spend \$160m a year containing the spillover. It is also angry about Colombia spraying coca fields on the border with weed-killer, which it says drifts south on to other crops.

Nevertheless, Ecuador has given some help to Colombia. Mr. Correa claimed that last year his forces dismantled 47 FARC camps inside Ecuador and on three occasions carried out joint operations with Colombian troops. American surveillance aircraft still patrol over Colombia from an air base in Ecuador, although Mr. Correa has promised not to renew the lease for this when it expires in 2009.

By contrast, Mr. Chavez has recently been unambiguous in his support for the FARC. He fell out with Mr. Uribe last year over his attempt to act as a mediator for the hostages. Since then he has cast aside his previous stance as an honest broker seeking a peaceful solution to Colombia's internal conflict. When the FARC turned over two hostages to him in January, Mr. Chavez hailed the guerrillas as a "true army" whose status as belligerents should be recognised. No other government in the region, not even Cuba's, echoed this call. On "ALO PRESIDENTE" Mr. Chavez held a minute's silence in honor of Mr. Reyes, whom he said he had met three times over the years. He declared that Colombia needed to be "liberated" from its "subservience" to the United States.

Another document allegedly on Mr. Reyes's computer showed that Mr. Chavez paid (or planned to pay) the FARC \$300m. An (unrelated) e-mail to Mr. Reyes suggested that the FARC were trying to obtain uranium for a "dirty bomb". All this prompted some far-fetched exchanges. Mr. Uribe said that he would denounce Mr. Chavez for "financing genocide"; in return, Venezuela accused Colombia's police chief, who revealed the contents of Mr. Reyes's laptop, of being a "drug trafficker".

"This is \* \* \* a microphone war," said General Raul Salazar, a former defense minister. Like many other Venezuelans, he doubts that it will become a real one. That is not least because many army officers do not want war with Colombia and find Mr. Chavez's actions an "embarrassment", said another former defense minister, General Raul Baduel, who is now a prominent opponent of the president.

So what is Mr. Chavez's game? One possible answer is his obsessive search for an external enemy to shore up his waning popularity at home. In December, his political blueprint for a socialist Venezuela, with indefinite presidential re-election, was defeated in a referendum. This came only a year after he won a second six-year term with 63 percent of the vote, and was the first time he had lost a national vote.

In November Venezuelans are due to vote for mayors and state governors. They are increasingly discontented about crime, an inflation rate that has surged to 25 percent and shortages of basic goods, including food and cooking gas. Because of Mr. Chavez's mismanagement of agriculture, Venezuela imports much of its food from Colombia. Any

lasting interruption of trade would hurt both countries. Reputable pollsters say that Mr. Chavez's popularity has fallen well below 50 percent. Visible faction fights have broken out in his newly formed Unified Socialist Party of Venezuela.

Picking a fight with Colombia and supporting the FARC are unlikely to win him friends. One poll, by Hinterlaces, showed 89 percent opposed to a war and 87 percent opposed to the FARC. So the reason for his military mobilization may be to deter Colombia from moving against the FARC camps in Venezuela where some Colombian officials believe that Mr. Marulanda is based. A more worrying, though improbable, hypothesis is that Mr. Chavez, a former army officer, is throwing off all pretence at being a civilian democrat and, fearing that he may not remain in power for long, wants to launch an assault on what he sees as American imperialism and its regional stooge, Mr. Uribe.

Although George Bush gave public support to Mr. Uribe, other governments in the region, led by Brazil, tried to drive a wedge between Mr. Correa and Mr. Chavez. There were signs that this might work. On March 5th Ecuador agreed to an OAS resolution criticizing, but not formally condemning, Colombia. The OAS also agreed to investigate the bombing. Once the region's diplomats have patched things up between these two countries, they face another, more intractable problem: Mr. Chavez, still with oil money but politically on the defensive, may have thrown in his lot with an outlaw army of drug-traffickers.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS MESSAGE HOUR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that Members would have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, it's befitting that you are in the Speaker's chair today as we discuss this very important hour.

I have the pleasure to manage this hour on behalf of the Congressional

Black Caucus. And we're going to be talking about black history and women's history, a combination of last month and this month's themes.

I want to begin by saying that we will have an opportunity to discuss the state of black women in America and pay tribute to African American women in our communities. We felt it befitting, as we recently celebrated Black History Month in February and currently are in the midst of Women's History Month.

Tonight we will begin by highlighting some of the findings from the recent study of "The State of Black America," released by the Urban League, and discussing some of the wonderful women from our own congressional districts.

I would like to begin now by yielding time to my colleague and good friend from the great State of California, DIANE WATSON.

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker and my honorable colleague, STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, thank you for this opportunity to salute our women over a period of time.

I would like now to introduce you to a woman by the name of Mayme Clayton.

Mayme Clayton, a renowned librarian, worked her entire life to assemble a priceless collection of historical artifacts. The collection was assembled over a 40-year period by Mayme A. Clayton, 1923 to 2006, a career librarian at the University of Southern California in my district, and University of California, Los Angeles, my alma mater. And Dr. Clayton's singular commitment to preserve African American culture and history was inspired by her desire to ensure that children would know the richness and diversity of African American contributions to the world.

The Mayme A. Clayton Collection of African American History and Culture is comprised of seven main components. They are as follows: rare and out-of-print books, manuscripts, documents, films, music, photographs, and memorabilia. The collection is a remarkable cultural treasure, with a vast ability to educate and to delight. It is our hope that this particular collection will be explored on the Web site to learn more about the collection and why Dr. Mayme Clayton assembled it, and the goals of the Western States Black Research and Educational Center.

It's a research center, and it's scheduled to receive a Federal grant to refurbish its facilities that are located in my district, Culver City, California. The center will be known as the Mayme Clayton Library, and it has housed the largest collection of rare books, films, recordings, and other documents on black Americans outside of the Schomburg Library.