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The late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez cause of death.

The late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was warned by Fidel Castro to be careful of a very specific attack, namely a quick jab from an infected needle. Such a warning coming from a leader who has reportedly been the target of CIA assassination plots more than 600 times in over 50 years, was sure to be heeded.

Was the illness of Hugo Chavez a completely deniable assassination by the CIA? William Blum spoke with the VOR's John Robles and discussed this issue and more.

Robles: I've read your Anti-Empire report regarding Hugo Chavez. Can you give us your comments on speculation that he was assassinated by the CIA?

Blum: I cannot prove it of course, but I believe he was. It would be totally in keeping with the entire history of the CIA and its attitude towards people like Hugo Chavez.

The CIA has attempted to assassinate more than 50 foreign leaders and successfully at least half the time. And very few of them were as despised by the US government as Chavez was, I would say. So, there would be no reason at all to expect that the CIA would not at least plan on killing, and the nature of his ailment is very odd.

He went from a cancer, which would not go away despite several sessions of chemotherapy and what have you. Then it went to serious lung infections, which would not go away no matter what they did. And then it went to, suddenly, a massive heart attack. All in the same man with no apparent cause, he was only 58-years-old, and as far as we know he was a very healthy until this happened, it is all very odd.

And given the great motivation that the US Government and the persons in the CIA has put for killing a man like Hugo Chavez, I'm pretty sure that the CIA played a role in this.

Robles: Do you know or have you heard of any credible new technology or new programs that could deliver such a cancer?

Blum: The means would be a needle with a quick, sharp jab and what you need is getting one person close enough to Chavez to do that.

Chavez was always in the public eye, he was always embracing people. There must have been countless occasions in the past few years when he was vulnerable to a quick jab by a needle that would be the method of transmitting the ailments.

Robles: Did he ever complain that he had been poked by something in public? Were there any reports of anything like that happening that you had heard about?

Blum: He did mention that Fidel Castro warned him about just that. He said: "A quick jab with a needle, and they'll do...I don't know what!" Actually he was told by Fidel.

Robles: A quick jab with a needle. Do you think that happened with Fidel because he had become very ill?

Blum: Well, Fidel...According to Cuban intelligence, there were more than 600 attempts on the life of Fidel Castro by the CIA. There is an entire book on that subject by Cuban intelligence.

And many of the methods were pretty bizarre, including an exploding cigar, but over the course of 50 years the Cubans claim there were more than 600 attempts on his life and it may have taken just one with Chavez.

Robles: Have you heard anything from your sources or from where you get some of your information? Have you heard anything detailing any connection between these two US Air Force attaches that were expelled from the country and the death of Hugo Chavez?

Blum: No. I would assume that there is a connection but I don't know if the Venezuelan government has actually said so.

Getting back to Chavez's case, we have to keep in mind that four other South American leaders, prominent people on the left, all came down with cancer within the past year or two.

Robles: I think it was seven, wasn't it, altogether?

Blum: The four that I named in my report...You can add the ones that you know just for my information... were Cristina Fernandez...

Robles: De Kirchner, right...

Blum: of Argentina, Dilma Rousseff of Brazil, Fernando Lugo of Paraguay, the former Brazilian head of state Lula da Silva. Who would you add into that list?

Robles: Well, and then of course Hugo Chavez himself...

Blum: Castro is one of them...

Robles: I would add Castro to the list and Kirchner's husband who died of a mysterious heart attack as well.

Blum: Right.

Robles: We might add that as a mysterious illness, not exactly a cancer but...

Blum: Right! If the CIA was involved it doesn't have to be cancer necessarily of course.

Robles: Oh, sure, it could be anything. Have you heard anything about cancer strains or any kind of killing weapons like this, any kind of biological weapons that would give maybe cancer-like symptoms, not exactly a certain type of cancer?

Blum: I very well may have read of such over the years. I have read so much about the CIA, but at the moment I can't think of anything to supply you with that information. Although we do know, it is well known, that for decades the CIA was looking for a method of killing somebody which would not leave a trace. The CIA itself has used those words. For the entire period of the Cold War that was a major stated project of the CIA. But where that stands today, I have no idea.

Robles: Yes, of course that is all very secret and no one is going to talk about it, but perhaps there are some echoes or some whispers? Maybe somebody has come out and said something? What other reasons would you give to back up the argument that he was assassinated?

Blum: I will mention there is no one in the entire universe who, was more hated, no leader more hated than Chavez was by the US government. In the eyes of the US power that be, Chavez was worse than Fidel Castro and Salvador Allende.

Robles: Why was he so hated?

Blum: Because he was the most outspoken leader in the world when it came to criticizing US foreign policy. He never pulled his punches for a moment, he made a claim that it was all crimes against humanity and the US leaders were war criminals, and he said so explicitly. It is unusual for a head of state to be talking that way. And at the UN he attacked Bush in front of the whole world.

Robles: Oh yes, I remember he said that the Devil had been there the day before or something, and it still smelled like sulfur.

Blum: Yes, Bush had spoken to the UN before Chavez from the same platform. And Chavez said there was a smell of sulfur in the air because of that.

Robles: That's usually the domain of the United States, I mean... Isn't it? I mean Bush was calling everybody the axis of evil, and all this stuff, branding everyone evil. Wasn't that kind of a shock to see the same thing done to an American leader?

Blum: Yeah, it is a shock for anyone under any circumstances to be so outspoken in the criticism of the US foreign policy. It is a point in Chavez's favor that he could have the honesty and the courage to say such things, which very much needed to be said.

Robles: So, you supported the way he stood up?

Blum: Well, in general yes. I think there certainly were times when he may have overdone it, even for me. I mean, he felt obliged to comment on everything under the sun, and I thought several times that he could have held off on saying certain things, they were not serving any good purpose. But that's a minor criticism of his overall marvelous record.

Robles: You say he had a marvelous record. What do you think were his major achievements in your opinion?

Blum: What he's brought to the poor people of Venezuela in the way of education and healthcare, and housing, and what have you. And what he brought to the rest of the South America, he formed various anti-US empire blocs which stood in the way of expansion of the US influence.

He and others formed a new...A counter to the OAS, the Organization of American States, which for decades has been dominated and corrupted by the US and Canada. And they formed a new organization in South America excluding the US and Canada. So it was that simple.

Robles: Do you think his achievements will continue or do you think the US will be successful in rolling back everything he did? Which, of course I assume they would want to.

Blum: Yes, they would want to. But if Maduro, who was chosen and backed by Chavez, wins, and he is expected to win in the election next month, then most of it will continue, I assume.