



Media Reality ✓ Check

QUICK TAKE

Tuesday, August 23, 2005 ☪ www.mrc.org ☪ MEDIA CONTACT: Tim Scheiderer (703) 683-5004

DICTATOR HUGO CHAVEZ IS WRECKING DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA & ALLYING HIMSELF WITH AMERICA-HATING TERROR STATES LIKE IRAN

OUTRAGED BY PAT ROBERTSON, BUT SILENT ON ANTI-AMERICAN CHAVEZ

Tuesday's morning shows, especially NBC's *Today*, trumpeted as scandalous Monday's comment by Pat Robertson that "the time has come" for the United States to think about assassinating the communist and virulently anti-American Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez, saying the option was better than "another \$200 billion war."

"We fine broadcasters for using four-letter words, we say that's offensive. So is it offensive to call for the assassination of a world leader?" NBC's Matt Lauer castigated. *Today* began its show by showing Robertson, with the words "Thou Shalt Not Kill?" at the bottom of the screen. In spite of the top-of-the-broadcast hype, *Today's* coverage consisted of two brief stories read by news anchor Natalie Morales during the 7am and 9am updates.

ABC's *Good Morning America* also pushed the Robertson story as one of the day's top headlines, but co-host Charles Gibson used less judgmental language: "Fighting words: the Reverend Pat Robertson calls for the assassination of the President of Venezuela, saying he's a danger to the United States. What's going on here?"

CBS's *Early Show* also showed the clip from Monday's *The 700 Club*, but not until 7:30. Co-host Julie Chen noted that "President Hugo Chavez is a fierce critic of President Bush and a close friend of Fidel Castro."

Since Chavez squashed a coup attempt in April 2002, the network morning shows have aired only three stories mentioning Chavez, none of which suggested he posed any kind of danger to the United States. But as Thor Halvorsen, president of the Human Rights Foundation, wrote in the August 8 *Weekly Standard*, Chavez is a committed enemy of the United States, made all the more dangerous because of Venezuela's huge oil revenues.

The antidote to the Castro crony's despotism, he suggested "is persistent public exposure of Chavez's increasing militarism, assaults on democracy, human rights abuses, and free speech violations, as well as his involvement with terrorist groups in South America and terror sponsors in the Middle East." Such public exposure has been absent from network morning shows, which save their ire for religious conservatives like Pat Robertson.