

**“IRAN'S TIGHTENING HOLD ON LATIN AMERICA”
WITH JOSEPH HUMIRE**



SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR



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OVERVIEW

A forthcoming visit to Iran by Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro will soon bring a critical partnership into the spotlight, especially in light of Tehran's support for the Venezuelan regime which has helped helped Maduro remain in power.

Also, the recent visit by Iran's Vice President for Economic Affairs Mohsen Rezae (former IRGC Commander) to Nicaragua despite having an international arrest warrant for his role in the 1994 terrorist (AMIA) attack in Buenos Aires, has once again placed Iran's brazen disregard for international justice in full view.

A webinar sponsored by the Middle East Forum, examined the history and motives behind the Islamic Republic of Iran's (IRI) involvements in Latin America which was begun more than 40 rears ago.

KEY POINTS MADE BY JOSEPH HUMIRE

- The IRI has had a long term vision for Latin America that dates back to more than 40 years, Hence, it had not started with the accession of Hugo Chaves to power in the early 2000s but a period way before.
- Understanding that the USA was its biggest obstacle to the promotion of its various ambitions, the IRI tried to overcome its undeniable disadvantages (military power and geography) by building up an asymmetric capacity and capability (both military and intelligence) that goes back as far as 1981.
- This ambition has been assisted by the fact that there was already in Latin America a huge number of people with Syrian and Lebanese (as

well as other Arab) origins, some of whom were responsive partners to their rhetoric and motives.

- The only good news about this is the fact that a huge number of data has been compiled regarding the IRI's various nefarious activities (as produced by the speaker in his book entitled, *"Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America"*).
- Important to note that the IRI's entry into Latin America had very little religious/theocratic content attached to it. Instead, it focused mainly on the social aspects of the Iranian revolution and the fight to try and protect one's natural resources.
- As a result, the IRI has also been able to enter the economic lifeline of some of these nations such as Venezuela where Iran has sold some 5 million barrels of gas, having also set up a chain of supermarkets.
- Like in Argentina, the IRI has used its initial commercial dealings (e.g., purchase of beef) to expand its terrorist/intel capabilities under the guise of cultural exchange.
- Hezbollah has also been a key factor for the expansion of IRI activities in Latin America, especially in financially lucrative areas related to organized transnational crime (including drug trafficking) as well as money laundering. This has earned them the title of "Western Union of drug cartels".
- The period 2000-2010 saw the peak of IRI involvements in Latin America especially with the accession to power of leftist/socialist governments in places like Venezuela, El Salvador, Brazil along with the so-called 'Bolivarian states/alliance' composed of Cuba, Nicaragua and Bolivia. The death of Soleimani has also afforded them the luxury of portraying him as some kind of 'Che Guevara' to people in these places (paraphrasing Khamenei's comment that "this martyr is more dangerous than the General!").

