



STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON



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### **Governor Meets with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Discusses Efforts to Release Three Americans Held Hostage by FARC**

SANTA FE –Governor Bill Richardson returned today from Venezuela on a humanitarian mission having met President Hugo Chavez to discuss the plight of the three Americans who have been held hostage in Colombia by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) since 2003. The families of the three Americans asked Governor Richardson to assist in securing the release of the hostages. Earlier this year, the FARC released six Colombian hostages to President Chavez.

"President Chavez and I had a productive meeting and I believe there is a little daylight in the process," said Governor Richardson. "President Chavez agreed to re-engage to try to help release the American hostages and accepted my role as an intermediary. Now I'm going to try to engage---the best I can---to secure the release of these hostages and move forward the humanitarian accord."

In addition to his meeting with the President, Governor Richardson met with US Ambassador to Venezuela Patrick Duddy, former President of OPEC Alí Rodríguez Araque, and the Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolás Maduro.

"It is critically important that we do not lose sight of the plight of the hostages and their families," said Governor Richardson.

While his mission was a humanitarian in nature and focused on the hostage situation, Governor Richardson asked President Chavez to meet with the US Ambassador to try to improve ties between the U.S. and Venezuelan governments, which President Chavez agreed to do.

In March, Governor Richardson went to Bogota and met with President Álvaro Uribe, U.S. Ambassador William R. Brownfield, the Colombian High Commissioner for Peace Luis Carlos Restrepo, Senator Piedad Córdoba, and religious leaders involved in the humanitarian accord, among others.

Governor Richardson has previously negotiated the release of hostages, and political prisoners in Sudan, Iraq, North Korea and Cuba.

OAS Secretary General Insulza is supportive of Governor Richardson's effort to further the Acuerdo Humanitario, although the Governor is not acting as an envoy of the OAS. While the the trip was coordinated with the Department of State, Governor Richardson was not serving as an official envoy.