



## Humiliation From Washington

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In the end, Washington vetoed the sale of CN-235 planes to Venezuela that Spanish Defense Minister Jose Bono had arranged during his last visit to Caracas. The veto, once again, has made socialist diplomacy look ridiculous. Nevertheless, the Zapatero administration seems willing to fulfill its political commitment to rearming Colonel Chavez's regime in Bolivia, resorting to European, Chinese or Russian technology if necessary.

The danger of trying to ride two horses at the same time is the rider usually ends up on the ground, no matter how good his balance might be, even Jose Bono. The Defense Minister wanted to be a profoundly anti-American government's man in Washington and at the same time best friend to the Bolivian revolution, causing jealousy in the Foreign Affairs Ministry. To try to achieve both goals, he did not think twice about sending a Spanish frigate to fight in Iraq, something not even Aznar allowed, or about acting like a traveling salesman to Chavez for every kind of imaginable weapon just to be able to say how neither Spain nor Venezuela bow to Yankee imperialism. In the end, Jose Bono managed to seriously annoy US Defense Secretary Rums-

Rumsfeld. For the moment, he does not have the planes he planned on selling to Chavez.

Washington had no mercy with Zapatero. The Spanish government has been thrown out the diplomatic window and the US doesn't appear up to making any kind of effort to repair relations. The Bush administration could have kept silent, refusing to answer the Spanish request, delaying and delaying, which is a diplomatic way of saying "no". But it did just the opposite. The US embassy in Madrid went beyond announcing the veto and roundly denied the Spanish Foreign Affairs Ministry's desperate attempt to attribute the veto to a business decision by the American supplier. According to the Ambassador, the veto is political, no commercial.

With his typical arrogance, Bono announced that same night the operation would continue, making it more and more obvious that this sale is coming from the Spanish government and not any private company. We shall see if our Defense Minister can hold on to his standing in Washington. It is not just technical difficulties or questions about the economic viability of substituting

suppliers from other countries for the lost American ones. The problem is that EADS has many interests in the United States, including a huge contract to build planes for the US Air Force; something could prove far more important than the Spanish Defense Minister's silliness. This could lead

someone in Paris or Berlin to decide that Spain has gone too far. Moreover, if we might offer a bit of advice: there is nothing more intelligent than a well-timed retreat.

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