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## U.S. Continues to Block Venezuelan Defense Development

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Caracas, October 24, 2005—The United States stopped Israel from repairing Venezuela's group of F16 fighter planes as it sees the Government of Hugo Chavez as a "destabilizing force" in Latin America. It is also blocking the sale of ten transport aircraft by the Spanish Government to Venezuela.

Channel 1, an Israeli TV station, reported on October 19 that the US government forced the Israeli Ministry of Defense to cancel the repair of Venezuela's F16s. These US-made aircraft are now barely functioning because of lack of replacement parts. The Israeli arms industry has been eager not to upset its largest backer after a recent high-profile disagreement over arms sales to China.



F-16

Speaking about the Venezuelan deal, the U.S. defense ministry said on October 21, "Israel asked for Washington's green light over the contract," to which Washington said no. The arms sale to China that upset the Americans so much had been for a sophisticated early-warning aircraft system called *Phalcon*. The repair of the relatively old Venezuelan F16 fighters is quite simple by comparison.

The U.S. government has also confirmed that it will veto the sale of ten C-295 Spanish transport planes to Venezuela. This sale was agreed as part of a naval technology deal at the recent Ibero-American conference in Salamanca. According to a U.S. State Department official, the unarmed planes use radar and other electronic equipment that comes from U.S. technology. This allows the U.S. government to block the sale of the planes. The Venezuelan government has said the planes will be used to support its coastguard.

The U.S. government's efforts to stop Venezuela purchasing arms come against a background of massive sales to Venezuela's neighbor Columbia. The U.S. has provided the Colombians with over \$700 million worth of weapons in the past several years free of charge. These have included helicopter attack ships, assault rifles, and other advanced weapons.

The U.S. also did not stop Israel from selling the *Phalcon* aircraft early warning system to India in 2003, despite Pakistan protesting that it would harm regional stability. At that time the U.S. claimed that it could not prevent Israel making the sale. This happened not long after Pakistan and India had been seen as coming close to war with each other.

Hugo Chavez has claimed for the past year that the U.S. plans to invade his country and to assassinate him. His most recent public claim was made on a BBC interview while he was in France last week.