

# BUSH: LET COLOMBIA KILL UNION ORGANIZERS-OR HUGO CHAVEZ WINS

Oh, this should be fun. Bush chose today to send the Colombia Free Trade pact to Congress today, just one day after Mark Penn's former contract with Colombia led to his firing resignation forfeiture of his Chief Strategist title with the Clinton campaign. I especially like this bit:

The president also has said that failing to approve a free-trade deal with Colombia would have the effect of encouraging Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez's anti-American regime and casting the United States as untrustworthy and impotent across South America.

You see, I'm not convinced that Penn ~~was fired~~ ~~resigned~~ gave up his title because he mis-stated Clinton's stance on the Colombia Trade pact. If he had gone that far off the reservation, after all, you'd think he'd have been fired outright. So this may be just cover-to prevent unions from balking at Penn's comment. Or a slap on the wrist, to ensure that Penn doesn't speak out again in the remaining time of the campaign. Or, it could be that Penn doesn't want responsibility for what's going to happen in the next several weeks of the campaign. Or, it could be an attempt on Penn's part to regain the business with Colombia.

But one thing's clear. Anything short of a full end of the relationship between Penn and Clinton suggests only lukewarm disapproval that his meeting with the Colombians was reported in the press. Take that to mean what you will.

So now, after Democrats had hoped that Bush

wouldn't make the Senate vote on the pact, he's doing just that.

Moreover, Democratic leaders balked at forcing the matter to a vote.

I can see why, when the economy is tanking and the country is being devastated by foreclosures and Wall Street is getting addicted to public financing, Bush would think the most important way to spend the Senate's time is to consider sending more jobs to places where environmental regulations and pesky unions won't trouble the captains of capitalism.

But I'm particularly intrigued that Bush is turning the US-Colombia pact into an issue of Chavez. Bush would love to start war-mongering against Chavez, along with Iran, and you could argue the Administration and its Colombian allies have already started doing just that. Of course, the US could make no credible military threat against Venezuela right now—we've squandered that ability in Iraq.

So instead, Bush is now going to push a Trade Pact with Colombia that we can't afford and we don't want (though Mark Penn does, which should be all the proof you need of its senselessness), all so he can try to prove he's more manly than a Latina American caudillo who doesn't want to share his oil.