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U.S. preacher says “take out” Chavez

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Today’s contents

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| The Article | 2 |
| Warm-ups | 3 |
| Before Reading / Listening | 4 |
| While Reading / Listening | 5 |
| After Reading | 6 |
| Discussion | 7 |
| Speaking | 8 |
| Listening Gap Fill | 9 |
| Homework | 10 |
| Answers | 11 |

25 August, 2005

THE ARTICLE

U.S. preacher says "take out" Chavez

BNE: In an outrageous and inexplicable outburst on US television, a Republican religious broadcaster has stated the assassination of Venezuela's democratically elected president, Hugo Chavez, would be sound foreign policy. Pat Robertson, a TV evangelist and staunch supporter and ally of George W. Bush, said killing Chavez would be cheaper than starting a war to oust him. He added that getting rid of Chavez would stop Venezuela from becoming a "launching pad for communist influence and Muslim extremism". He also said: "We have the ability to take him out, and I think the time has come that we exercise that ability. We don't need another \$200 billion war to get rid of one strong-arm dictator."

Robertson's comments would be deemed as inciting violence and terrorism in many of the world's democratic countries. The Bush administration was quick to distance itself from its influential backer. State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack called Robertson's remarks "inappropriate", but stopped short of condemning them. This perhaps indicates a pervasive but unspoken White House sentiment that Mr. Chavez is a rogue leader. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also failed to denounce Robertson's remarks, saying: "Private citizens say all kinds of things all the time." Mr. Rumsfeld added America neither takes part in nor condones political assassination because it is "against the law".

WARM-UPS

1. FREE SPEECH: Can a religious leader urge the assassination of the democratically elected leader of another country? Is this free speech or inciting terrorism? Discuss this with your partner(s). What things should a religious leader not say?

2. US FOREIGN POLICY: In pairs / groups, talk about the following areas of US foreign policy. What is the policy? Is it good or bad? What would you change?

- Venezuela
- China
- Israel and Palestine
- Iraq
- Cuba
- North Korea
- Iran
- Russia

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Outrageous comments / US television / political assassinations / Hugo Chavez / TV evangelism / communism / Muslim extremism / dictators / inciting violence

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. ASSASSINATION: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "assassination". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. OPINIONS: How far do you agree with the following opinions on Pat Robertson's comments?

- a. Pat Robertson should be tried and convicted for inciting hate and terrorism.
- b. Religious leaders should not recommend the death of other people.
- c. Free speech is a basic right in America. People can say what they want.
- d. George W. Bush should publicly condemn Mr. Robertson's remarks.
- e. Communism and Muslim extremism are more dangerous than US foreign policy.
- f. Pat Robertson is right. Hugo Chavez is a dangerous man.
- g. Robertson's comments are typical of the arrogance of conservative Americans.
- h. Mr. Chavez is democratically elected. Mr. Robertson is a hypocrite.
- i. Mr. Chavez has different views and American leaders don't like that.
- j. If Mr. Robertson is so worried about Muslim extremism, he should join the US Army and go to Iraq, rather than say unhelpful comments on television.

6. QUICK DEBATE: Students A think Pat Robertson should go to prison for his comments. Students B think Pat Robertson can say anything he wants. Change partners often.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A US preacher suggested the US should assassinate Hugo Chavez. | T / F |
| b. The religious leader is a staunch ally of George W. Bush. | T / F |
| c. The preacher said Venezuela was a hotbed for extremism. | T / F |
| d. The preacher wants \$200 billion set aside for war against Venezuela. | T / F |
| e. The Bush administration has remained silent over the remarks. | T / F |
| f. It is possible the White House secretly agrees with the preacher. | T / F |
| g. Donald Rumsfeld strongly condemned the preacher. | T / F |
| h. Political assassination is against the law in the USA. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. inexplicable | regarded |
| b. sound | remove |
| c. staunch | condemn |
| d. oust | wise |
| e. dictator | widespread |
| f. deemed | encouraging |
| g. inciting | baffling |
| h. pervasive | autocrat |
| i. denounce | allows |
| j. condones | dependable |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. an outrageous and | foreign policy |
| b. sound | and terrorism |
| c. staunch supporter | of condemning them |
| d. a launching | inexplicable outburst |
| e. strong-arm | quick to distance itself |
| f. inciting violence | and ally of George W. Bush |
| g. The Bush administration was | condones political assassination |
| h. stopped short | dictator |
| i. a pervasive but unspoken | pad for communist influence |
| j. neither takes part in nor | White House sentiment |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

U.S. preacher says "take out" Chavez

BNE: In an outrageous and inexplicable _____ on US television, a Republican religious broadcaster has stated the assassination of Venezuela's democratically elected president, Hugo Chavez, would be _____ foreign policy. Pat Robertson, a TV evangelist and _____ supporter and ally of George W. Bush, said killing Chavez would be cheaper than starting a war to _____ him. He added that getting rid of Chavez would stop Venezuela from becoming a "launching _____ for communist influence and Muslim extremism". He also said: "We have the ability to _____ him out, and I think the time has come that we _____ that ability. We don't need another \$200 billion war to get _____ of one strong-arm dictator."

Robertson's comments would be _____ as inciting violence and terrorism in many of the world's democratic countries. The Bush administration was _____ to distance itself from its influential _____. State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack called Robertson's remarks "inappropriate", but stopped _____ of condemning them. This perhaps indicates a pervasive but unspoken White House _____ that Mr. Chavez is a _____ leader. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also _____ to denounce Robertson's remarks, saying: "Private citizens say all kinds of things all the time." Mr. Rumsfeld added America neither takes part in nor _____ political assassination because it is "against the law".

pad
exercise
sound
take
oust
outburst
rid
staunch

rogue
sentiment
quick
condones
deemed
short
failed
backer

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**strong**' and '**arm**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "US FOREIGN POLICY" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about Mr. Robertson's remarks and U.S. foreign policy.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| • outburst | • deemed |
| • sound | • distance |
| • ally | • short |
| • oust | • rogue |
| • pad | • denounce |
| • exercise | • citizens |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What do you think of Mr. Robertson's comments?
- d. What do you think of Hugo Chavez?
- e. Hugo Chavez calls George W. Bush by the nickname "Danger Man". What do you think about this nickname?
- f. Do you think Pat Robertson should be arrested under America's anti-terrorism laws?
- g. What do you think Venezuelans would think of his comments?
- h. Do you think George W. Bush should condemn Mr. Robertson's comments and distance himself from such thinking?
- i. Do you think Mr. Bush should telephone Mr. Chavez and apologize for Mr. Robertson's shocking and inflammatory comments?
- j. Do you think Venezuela will become a "launching pad for communist influence and Muslim extremism"?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think many Americans share Mr. Robinson's comments?
- d. Are his comments acceptable under the laws of free speech?
- e. How will the rest of the world view Mr. Robertson's comments?
- f. Do you think the comments reflect American foreign policy?
- g. Do you think Latin American leaders are "strong-arm dictators"?
- h. What question would you like to ask Mr. Robertson?
- i. What do you think his answer would be?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: This role play is to discuss whether or not Mr. Robertson should be arrested and charged under anti-terrorism charges. Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role as you. Develop your roles and discuss ideas and "strategies" before the role play begins.

Introduce yourself to the other role players.

Role A – Pat Robertson

You have said nothing wrong. You are a free citizen. You have the right to speak your mind and express your opinions. America is fighting a war. You believe Hugo Chavez is helping to fund that war. You hate the fact Mr. Chavez always criticizes the USA. Mr. Bush is a great man of peace.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY GEORGE W. BUSH IS A MAN OF PEACE.

Role B – Hugo Chavez

You are shocked and angry at Mr. Robertson's comments. You are a democratically elected leader. You think the preacher should go to prison. You want George W. Bush to guarantee your safety when you go to the UN. You may cut off oil supplies to the USA if Bush doesn't apologize.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY GEORGE W. BUSH IS "DANGER MAN".

Role C – Venezuelan citizen

You think Mr. Robertson's comments are shared by most Americans. It is another example of how America hates governments that are different. You are proud that Hugo Chavez is your leader. You think any world leader should be able to criticize the USA without fearing assassination.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY US FOREIGN POLICY IS BAD.

Role D – George W. Bush

You think Mr. Robertson is free to say whatever he wants. He's a good man. He believes in God and he values human life. There is no need to arrest him under anti-terrorism laws. His comments were just his opinion. You believe Mr. Chavez is not helping the war on terror.

THINK OF MORE REASONS WHY MR. ROBERTSON IS A GOOD MAN.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

In pairs / groups, discuss whether you really believe in what you said while you were in your roles.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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Robertson's comments would be _____ as inciting violence and terrorism in many of the world's democratic countries. The Bush administration was quick to _____ itself from its _____ backer. State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack called Robertson's remarks "inappropriate", but stopped _____ of condemning them. This perhaps indicates a _____ but unspoken White House _____ that Mr. Chavez is a rogue leader. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also failed to _____ Robertson's remarks, saying: "Private citizens say all kinds of things all the time." Mr. Rumsfeld added America neither takes part in nor _____ political assassination because it is "against the law".

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the TV evangelist Pat Robertson and his highly controversial views. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. LETTER: Write a letter to Pat Robertson. Tell him what you think of his comments. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

4. US FOREIGN POLICY: Write a short essay on American foreign policy. Write about the good points and the bad points and the biggest changes that need to be made. Tell your classmates the main points of your essay in your next lesson. Did you all have similar views?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. T c. T d. F e. F f. T g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| a. inexplicable | baffling |
| b. sound | wise |
| c. staunch | dependable |
| d. oust | remove |
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PHRASE MATCH:

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| g. The Bush administration was | quick to distance itself |
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GAP FILL:

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Robertson's comments would be **deemed** as inciting violence and terrorism in many of the world's democratic countries. The Bush administration was **quick** to distance itself from its influential **backer**. State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack called Robertson's remarks "inappropriate", but stopped **short** of condemning them. This perhaps indicates a pervasive but unspoken White House **sentiment** that Mr. Chavez is a **rogue** leader. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also **failed** to denounce Robertson's remarks, saying: "Private citizens say all kinds of things all the time." Mr. Rumsfeld added America neither takes part in nor **condones** political assassination because it is "against the law".