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InsiderOnline Blog: May 2009[RSS](#)**Chavistas Tell Free Market Think Tanks to Shut Up**

The Cato Institute must be doing something right. It's definitely gotten under the skin of Venezuelan caudillo Hugo Chavez.

For years Cato has hosted seminars, which it calls Cato University, throughout Latin America. The events aim to promote the classical liberal principles of limited government, individual liberty, free markets, and peace.

Earlier this week, Cato held another Cato University, this time in Caucagua, Venezuela, and the Venezuelan think tank [Centro de Divulgación del Conocimiento Económico por la Libertad \(CEDICE\)](#) was a co-host. [Cato reports:](#)

During the course of the event on Monday, the National Guard, state television and a state representative from a ministry of higher education interrupted the seminar, demanding that the seminar be shut down on the grounds that the event organizers did not have permission to establish a university in Venezuela. When the authorities were told that neither Cato nor CEDICE was establishing a university and that the Cato Institute has long sponsored student seminars called Cato Universities, the authorities then insisted that the seminar was in violation of Venezuelan law for false advertising.

After two hours of groundless accusations, the Chavez representatives left but their harassment has continued. One of the speakers at the seminar, Peruvian intellectual Alvaro Vargas Llosa, was detained by airport authorities Monday afternoon for three hours for no apparent reason. He was released and told that he could stay in the country as long as he did not express political opinions in Venezuela.

Later, Chavez supporters organized a protest rally in front of the conference hotel.

Apparently, Chavez believes that Cato's programs are part of a U.S. government conspiracy to overthrow his government. Freedom is just another word for CIA plot, he thinks! Ultimately, of course, freedom is a plot against socialism.

This isn't the first time Cato has been a stick in the eye for Chavez. Cato awarded its [2008 Milton Friedman Prize](#) to Yon Goicoechea, the student leader who led the opposition to Chavez's effort in 2007 to amend the Venezuelan constitution to give himself more power.

For more on the goings on in Venezuela this week, see [Iain Vasquez's report](#) at [Cato@Liberty](#).

Posted on 05/29/09 04:56 PM by [Alex Adrianson](#) | [Blog Archive](#)

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214 Massachusetts Avenue NE | Washington DC 20002-4999
ph 202.546.4400 | fax 202.546.8328
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