

## Interview With Enrique Gratas of Univision March 7, 2007

### *Verdict in the Trial of I. Lewis Libby*

*Mr. Gratas.* Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this opportunity to talk about the trip and other issues. Yesterday somebody very familiar to the administration, Lewis “Scooter” Libby, was found guilty of the charges of perjury, lying, obstruction of justice. What is the impact of your administration of this verdict, or your personal feelings?

*The President.* First, this was a very serious matter. A jury of his peers analyzed the data very seriously and rendered a verdict that must be respected. Secondly, I personally am sad. I’m sad for Mr. Libby and his family. There was a sense of sadness to hear the verdict read for me. And finally, this is an ongoing legal matter, there is more to be done in the courts, and therefore, at this time, it’s inappropriate for the administration to be commenting beyond just what you asked me.

*Mr. Gratas.* Thank you. Some Senators, one in particular, Mr. Kennedy, is suggesting that you would pardon him. What’s your idea?

*The President.* Oh, I think—as I say, there’s an ongoing legal matter. There’s a lot of—if you listen carefully, the lawyers are talking about different avenues to approach this particular case. And so I’m pretty much going to stay out of it until the course—the case has finally run its final—the course it’s going to take.

### *President’s Upcoming Visit to Central and South America*

*Mr. Gratas.* Thank you. About your trip to Latin America: Some critics think that the administration, your administration has neglected—or prior administrations have neglected our Latin American neighbors. This is your fourth trip to Latin America.

*The President.* Yes, sir.

*Mr. Gratas.* What do you plan to accomplish?

*The President.* Well, first of all, I think I plan to accomplish, one—the main thing is to kind of disabuse people of the notion that America doesn’t care about the neighborhood. And it troubles me to think that some people in our neighborhood believe we don’t care. We do—I care deeply, personally, about Latin America, and our country does. And what I’m going to do is remind people, when I go down, that the American people have been very generous on bilateral aid. We’ve increased the aid since I’ve been President from \$800 million a year to \$1.6 billion. And there’s ongoing projects. And the important thing for people to understand is that the aid primarily goes for social justice programs—for education programs or health programs.

And the second thing I want to talk to people about is that—the importance of trade. The United States is a big market, and if you’re a poor farmer in parts of Central or South America, it seems like it makes sense to be able to sell your product into this market. Why? Because you may get a better price, and it means you can make a better living. And so trade, in my judgment, is positive, and it’s a way to help people be lifted out of poverty.

To summarize, a prosperous and peaceful Latin America is in the interest of the United States.

### *War Protests*

*Mr. Gratas.* Thank you. I’m sure you’re aware of some protests in the countries that you will visit, mainly because of the war in Iraq. Are you concerned about those demonstrations?

*The President.* I am proud to be going to a part of the world where people can demonstrate, where people can express their minds. It happens quite frequently

when I travel around the world. I understand people's concern about war. Nobody likes war. But I've had to make the decisions I made in order to not only secure our people but to deal with threats and to help people be free.

And so I'm not surprised; nor am I angry. It's a part of life when you're the President of the United States.

#### *Democracy in the Americas*

*Mr. Gratas.* Mr. President, in the last 15 months, leftist governments have been elected in many countries—I'll mention three, for example—last ones, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua. Are you worried about this tendency in Latin America?

*The President.* You know, the thing—first of all, I like the fact that the countries in our neighborhood are free and people get to decide who the governments—who is in the government. I like that. I think it's great. I would be worried if there are policies which ruin economies. That would worry me—in other words, if these governments make decisions that end up making it very difficult for people to make a living and/or for there to be more wealth throughout the society. I would be worried if there's no free press—in other words, if institutions that are necessary for a free society were undermined. I would be worried, of course, if just the basic needs of the people weren't met.

And so I applaud elections. I look forward to these governments responding to the real needs of the people.

#### *U.S. Foreign Policy*

*Mr. Gratas.* President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela has—on many occasions, has called you names; for example, liar, devil, terrorist—things like that. What is your opinion about him? And how do you respond to those insults?

*The President.* Well, I think it's really important for the people who are observing U.S. reactions and U.S. policy to understand that our policies are not aimed at

creating tensions, but our policies are aimed at improving people's lives. And that's really my message down there. There is a lot of anticipation about what my trip means, and it's nothing more than to say, we want to be your friends, and we've got a very strong policy of improving the lives of others.

I've been in politics a long time; there's a lot of name calling in politics. I've always found the best thing to do is to do what you think is right and move beyond the name calling.

#### *Immigration Reform*

*Mr. Gratas.* Mr. President, the United States—and this concerns Latin America in general, because most immigrants come from that continent—never before in this country have so many raids against immigrants. Are you planning before you leave office support a plan to legalize so many millions of undocumented workers?

*The President.* A better way to describe this is—in the Oval Office, I gave a speech about comprehensive immigration reform. And comprehensive immigration reform says that we ought to have a temporary-worker program that recognizes the fact that people are coming to do jobs that Americans aren't doing so they can do so on a legal basis, but not forever.

Secondly, we got an issue with 12 million people that are here—that are here illegally. Now, we are a country of law, and we should expect people to recognize our laws. But I do not think there ought to be instant legalization—that's called amnesty. I think that would be a mistake. But I also recognize, we can't kick people out of the country. And so I'm going to work with Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, and devise a way that is rational and fair.

The current immigration system is not working. It needs to be changed. It needs to be changed for the good of our country, and it needs to be changed for the good of the people that are in our country.

*Border Security/Mexico-U.S. Relations*

*Mr. Gratas.* Mr. President, I have to ask this question. You're going to meet with President Calderon of Mexico. How are you going to resolve the difference between the construction of the wall on the border?

*The President.* Yes. I will explain to him that our Congress was very worried that not enough was being done on both sides of the border about preventing people from sneaking in. I will explain to him that the border is going to be secured two ways—one, by modernization—but it's more than fence. This is a long border. We're going to have Border Patrol agents, but instead of having a system that encourages people to sneak in, we ought to have a system that says, you're welcome to come in on a legal basis to do work America is not doing. I mean, it makes no sense to have a system that doesn't recognize reality.

Now, that doesn't mean automatic citizenship. There ought to be a different way to become a citizen. But it does say, there are people who are hungry in our neighbor-

hood who want to do work that Americans aren't doing, and there ought to be a legal process to do it so they don't have to sneak across the border. So the best way to secure the border is to have a comprehensive immigration plan.

And it's controversial here in America. But I firmly believe my position is a rational position and the right position, and I'm going to work hard with both Republicans and Democrats in Congress to get the bill this year.

*Mr. Gratas.* I have 14 more questions in Spanish, but I have no time. [Laughter] Thank you very much.

*The President.* *Gracias, señor.* [Laughter]

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:55 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, former Chief of Staff to the Vice President. Mr. Gratas referred to President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Juan Carlos Lopez of CNN En Espanol  
March 7, 2007

*President's Upcoming Visit to Central and South America*

*Mr. Lopez.* Thank you for speaking with us. And my first question is about your trip. You're going to Latin America, the longest trip an American President has taken to the region. Why now? Why at this moment when Democrats control the Congress and there are issues that might be in their hands?

*The President.* Well, thank you for asking that question. This is not my first trip since I've been the President. I have been in—traveling the neighborhood, I think, maybe three other times. But this is a long trip, and the reason why is, I want to remind

people throughout our neighborhood that America cares about them. And I bring a message of hope, a message that says, we care about the human condition and a message of accomplishment.

I don't know if you know this or not, but since I've been the President, our bilateral aid to Latin America has increased from 800 million to 1.6 billion. And the reason I say that is, the American taxpayer has been very generous about providing aid in our neighborhood, and most of that aid is social justice money; in other words, it's money for education and health.

And yet we don't get much credit for it. And I want the taxpayers—I want the