

WORLD

'Half of Venezuela is speechless'

Chávez foes are stunned leader wins re-election

Girish Gupta
Special for USA TODAY

CARACAS, VENEZUELA Lining up Monday for the bank in a wealthier district of Caracas, Alejandro Colmenarez, 32, an engineer, was ready to pack his bags.

"Half of Venezuela is speechless," he said of the re-election of Hugo Chávez, 58, to a fourth term as president. "We were looking for something better after 14 years."

"With all the insecurity, all the problems, I'm going to leave the country," he said. "I'm thinking Spain."

Chávez won Sunday's election by 11 percentage points over challenger Henrique Capriles Radonski. It was Chávez's smallest margin of victory ever and less than half of his lead in the last election in 2006. With 97% of the ballots counted, the opposition gained about 2.2 million more votes than it did in 2006, compared to about 735,000 more votes that Chavez won.

In a Twitter message on Monday, Chávez said he had a pleasant phone conversation with Capriles. Chávez's message also said, "I call for National



Henrique Capriles Radonski is embraced by his mother, Monica.

Unity, respecting our differences!" Armando Briquet, Capriles' campaign manager, confirmed Chávez had called the opposition leader.

Capriles earlier asked his supporters to accept the results but lashed out at Chávez's use of the country's oil wealth to slush money at his backers in the form of new social spending that he called "vote buying."

Capriles' supporters on Monday also groused about Chávez's monopolizing of the state television system leading up to the election. TV broadcasters covered hours of Chávez's campaign appearances daily and de-



President Hugo Chávez waves a Venezuelan flag at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas on Sunday.

voted little if any coverage to Capriles.

Capriles said he would continue to work for Venezuela despite the loss. "I gave it my all, and I'm proud of what we built," he said.

White House spokesman Jay Carney congratulated the Venezuelan

people for peaceful elections and for high voter participation while noting that the U.S. has differences with Chávez. "We congratulate the Venezuelan people on the high level of participation, as well as on what was a relatively peaceful election process," he said.

Capriles had campaigned on ending corruption and crime he blamed on Chávez's policies. He said Chávez's state control of the economy was causing high food prices and poor production in the largest oil reserves in the world in Venezuela.

Chávez, who has been receiving treatments for cancer, indicated in victory that he would take his socialist policies even deeper. "Venezuela will continue along the path of democratic... socialism for the 21st century," he said at the Miraflores presidential palace to the tens of thousands who had gathered there.

Chávez supporters were ecstatic. They lit fireworks outside Miraflores on Sunday night and Monday.

Chávez's re-election was welcome news to the Castro regime in Cuba, which has received billions of dollars worth of free oil from Venezuela.

Cuba sends doctors to Venezuela in return, an arrangement that Capriles criticized as lopsided. Chávez is a great admirer of former Cuban communist dictator Fidel Castro, who turned over power to his brother, Raúl, in 2008. Chávez has received cancer treatments in Havana.

Cuban television read out a congratulatory note from Raúl Castro: "Your decisive victory ensures the continuity of the struggle for genuine integration in our America," he said.

Contributing: The Associated Press

IN BRIEF

JAILED VAN DER SLOOT CLAIMS HE'S AN EXPECTANT DAD

Joran van der Sloot, a Dutch man who is serving a 28-year sentence in Peru for murdering a young Peruvian woman, says he is going to be a father, a newspaper reported Monday.

His attorney said the inmate does have a conjugal visitor, though he could not confirm she was pregnant.

The Dutch newspaper *De Telegraaf* said Van der Sloot, a suspect in the 2005 disappearance of U.S. teenager Natalee Holloway, himself told it in a telephone call on Saturday that "a test has proved" the pregnancy.

Van der Sloot's attorney Maximo Altez, told the Associated Press that a woman "is registered as a conjugal visitor of Joran" at the prison in Lima.

Whale of an obstacle



Workers measure a Southern right whale carcass that washed up on Muizenberg beach outside Cape Town, South Africa, on Monday. Beaches remained closed amid increasing shark activity.

Altez denied telling the newspaper he could confirm the pregnancy: "I didn't know anything in that respect."

EGYPTIAN LEADER PARDONS THOSE CHARGED IN UPRISING

Egypt's new president issued a decree pardoning all those charged with or convicted of acts "in support of the revolution" since the beginning of the popular uprising that forced his predecessor, Hosni Mubarak, from power.

The move by Mohamed Morsi was long demanded by Egypt's youth groups behind the uprising. It could potentially benefit more than 1,000 protesters currently on trial following their arrests during demonstrations since the uprising against Mubarak erupted on Jan. 25, 2011, and until Morsi was sworn in on June 30.

Those already convicted for their role in the protests may also be pardoned.

TURKEY STRIKES SYRIA FOR 6TH DAY AS TENSIONS RISE

The Turkish military retaliated with artillery fire for a sixth straight day Monday after a Syrian shell hit its territory, and Turkey's president warned that "the worst-case scenario we have all been dreading" is unfolding in Syria and along its borders.

Turkish President Abdullah Gul called on the international community to do more to try to end Syria's nearly 19-month-old conflict.

Meanwhile, the main Syrian opposition group, the Syrian National Council, signaled it is softening its position on possible talks to arrange a political transition.

The Associated Press

U.S. death toll

As of Friday, 2,005 U.S. servicemembers and three Defense Department civilians had been reported killed in the Afghanistan War.

The latest deaths identified: *Two soldiers with the Army's 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) died Saturday in Chak district, Wardak province, of gunshot wounds suffered while on foot patrol.*

► **Staff Sgt. Justin C. Marquez**, 25, of Aberdeen, N.C.

► **Warrant Officer Joseph L. Schiro**, 27, of Coral Springs, Fla.

Source: Defense Department

SEARCH ONLINE
USATODAY.COM

For a full list of U.S. military deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq, go to casualties.usatoday.com

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