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TAGS: ECON, MARR, MASS, PGOV, PHUM, PINR, PREL, PTER, VE, IR, CI

**SUBJECT: DEMARCHE IN THE GROWING IRAN-VENEZUELA RELATIONSHIP:
CHILE SHARES USG CONCERN**

REF: STATE 061378

Classified By: Ambassador Craig Kelly for reasons 1.5 (b and d).

1. (S) E/Pol Counselor delivered reftel demarche on May 15 to Ambassador Juan Pablo Lira March, head of the MFA's Division for South America, stressing following points: 1) Growing diplomatic links between Caracas and Tehran undermined international efforts to find a solution to Iran's nuclear efforts 2) Increasing economic ties, especially those linked to pushing higher energy prices, was prejudicial to world economic growth, including Chile, which is highly dependent on energy imports 3) Chavez was backing Iran's nuclear programs, in defiance of unanimous UN resolutions and, 4) Enhanced Venezuela-Iran links could facilitate Iran's terrorist support efforts in the region.

2. (S) Lira replied that he very much appreciated the information and that Chile shared USG concerns. He noted that Iran had approached Chile about reopening its embassy in Santiago. The

GOC had ""promised only to study"" the proposal but, Lira said, had no intention of responding positively. Lira did note that were Iran to reopen its embassy in Buenos Aires, the GOC would likely accept accreditation of Iran's ambassador there to Santiago as well, on a non-resident basis. Chile was alarmed at the January 2007 visit of Iranian president Ahmedinejad to Quito for the Correa inauguration. It did not auger well for where Correa might steer Ecuador, which Chile considers an important partner. Chile was also concerned about potential Iranian presence and activities in the Tri-Border Area. Chilean intelligence agencies monitor Iranians there - and those passing through Chile - closely, They worry these Iranians would facilitate both narco-trafficking and terrorism.

3. (S) Lira appreciated the offer to continue working together closely on this issue and to share information when possible.

KELLY



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