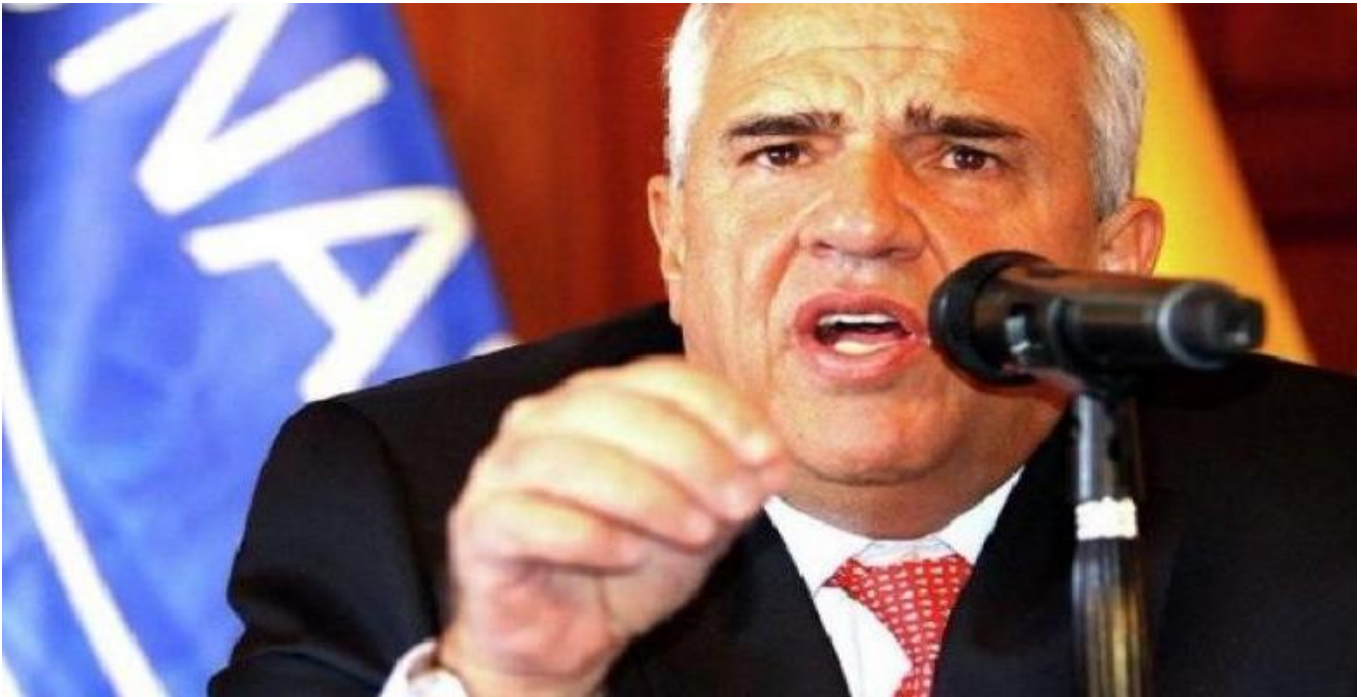

Ernesto Samper says Colombia's policy towards Venezuela is aggressive

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Colombia's former President Ernesto Samper said that his country has deployed an erroneous and aggressive foreign policy towards Venezuela. "Colombia has had ill-advised handling of its relationship with Venezuela. Colombian policy has been very aggressive towards Venezuela. We share over 2,500 kilometers of a border through which people transit," Samper said in an interview with Sputnik.

"In the border area, three million Colombians and Venezuelans live. Over there, our exports reached US\$8 billion but now they are down to \$300 million," he added. During his criticism of President Ivan Duque's policy, Samper noted that Colombia has been involved in the U.S. destabilization attempts against Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro.

"Colombia... supported the alleged coup, which ended in a folk episode. On this occasion, it supported the frustrated mercenary operation," the former President said regarding the failed "Operation Gideon," which

was led by Jordan Goudreau, the SilverCorp CEO who was hired by Venezuelan opposition lawmaker Juan Guaido, and promised \$221 million for carrying it out.

Samper also commented that the U.S. President Donald Trump and Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro are using the COVID-19 pandemic to gain short-term political benefits. "Trump's handling of the virus is depressing, ignoring the deaths his country has registered. It is also depressing the challenging statements of Bolsonaro who does not seem to realize that Brazil is becoming the epicenter of the pandemic."

"Trump uses the pandemic for his reelection and Bolsonaro uses it to consolidate his oligarchic political project in an absolutely inhuman and cruel way," he added. The political use of the health emergency, however, is not limited to these countries. Samper also recalled that Bolivia's coup-born regime led by Jeanine Añez has used the COVID-19 outbreak as a pretext to postpone the elections and continue in power.

Something similar happened in Chile where President Sebastian Piñera changed the date of the plebiscite that would seek to transform the economic and political structures inherited by the Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship, from 1973 to 1990.?????
