

## A.C. Frieden Meets Members of Venezuela's Political, Diplomatic, and Academic Communities

**CARACAS, Venezuela (July 12, 2007)** – Novelist A.C. Frieden arrived in Caracas to continue his research for his upcoming political thriller, *Where Spies Go To Die*. In hopes of better understanding the complex political environment in Venezuela, which is an important part of his book, Frieden interviewed key personalities from the country's political, diplomatic, academic, business and literary communities. “This is an opportunity of a lifetime, to meet people whose political and social experiences have contributed to Venezuela's contemporary political landscape,” said Frieden, who is driven by an attention to detail and accuracy that forces him to travel extensively on-site for his research, no matter how far the location.

One such interview was with Herma Marksman, a historian of Spanish and German descent who spent nearly ten years as “the other woman” at the side of President Hugo Chávez Frías during his rise to power in the late 1980s and through his imprisonment in the early 1990s. Herma once shared Hugo Chavez's passion for a new Bolivarian revolution, having helped Chavez organize his political movement and the 1992 coup. But now she considers herself part of the opposition, disillusioned by Chavez's empty promises and what she characterizes as his ever-growing hunger for power. In 2002, she and noted political analyst Alberto Garrido co-authored the book *El Otro Chavez*, a portrayal of Hugo Chavez through her eyes.



Above: Author A.C. Frieden meets Herma Marksman, author and former mistress of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez Frías, at the Gran Melia Hotel in downtown Caracas.

Frieden also interviewed various local and foreign government officials and representatives, including Benedict Gubler, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of Switzerland in Venezuela, as well as members of academia, including Professor Romelia Hurtado de Vivas, a Caracas native and professor at Eastern New Mexico University who arranged several of Frieden's interviews; Professor Aida Bexama Farias, University of Chili in Santiago; and Dr. Carmen Sweeting, Principal, Colegio Internacional de Caracas. Frieden also had extensive discussions with several *chavistas*,

including attorneys, sociologists, a government ombudsman, state engineers and a medical doctor, all of whom are senior activists who help maintain popular support for Hugo Chavez



Above: A.C. Frieden (*right*) debating various topics with several *chavista* political leaders in Caracas, many of whom are highly influential intellectuals working for President Hugo Chavez.



Above: The *barrio* of Petare, a crime-infested neighborhood on the east side of Caracas where shoddy, unlicensed building of homes continues. Petare will be featured in several scenes in Frieden's upcoming book *Where Spies Go To Die*.

Frieden also spent time scouting venues throughout downtown Caracas, including La Plaza Bolívar the Casa Natal El Libertador (house where Simón Bolívar was); the 17th-century La Casa Amarilla (now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs); the El Capitolio Nacional (the seat of the legislative council); the Miraflores Palace (the presidential palace) and the Palacio Blanco. He also visited the neighboring colonial town of El Hatillo and the mountainside village of Galipán, for venues that could be added into interesting scenes of his new book.



*Above:* Frieden traveled by cable car and jeep to El Avila mountaintop to research new scenes for his book, given its dramatic landscapes. The area includes the famous Humboldt Hotel tower with spectacular views of the capital, the village of Galipán, and the Caribbean Sea.

**About the author:** A.C. Frieden is a Swiss-Brazilian mystery novelist and lawyer living in Chicago. His diverse background as an attorney, molecular biologist, martial artist, professor, pilot and army marksman, as well as his experiences abroad, comes together in his political and espionage novels, including his latest, *Tranquility Denied*, set in Moscow and New Orleans. He is currently working on two political thrillers, including one set in Latin America. For more information about A.C. Frieden, visit the official website at [www.acfrieden.com](http://www.acfrieden.com) and his literary travel blog.

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