

Briefly noted

News in the [November 15, 2005](#) issue

A Christian missionary group being expelled from Venezuela vehemently denounced charges by President Hugo Chavez that it is involved with the CIA. Chavez announced in a nationally televised address on October 12 that he wants to oust New Tribes Mission, a U.S.-based group specializing in evangelism among indigenous people. The move is an attempt to purge Venezuela of U.S. “imperialist infiltration” and was based on intelligence that some of the missionaries are undercover CIA agents, Vice President José Vicente Rangel told reporters. In a statement, New Tribes denied the allegations, saying the group, which has 160 personnel in the country, has had no governmental ties in its 59 years of service there. “We have the highest regard and respect for the people, laws and country of Venezuela.” However, noting rising tensions between Chavez and church groups, the Mormon Church said October 25 that it was removing all 220 of its American missionaries there.

A bishop ordained in China’s state-sanctioned church has received tacit approval from the Vatican despite rising tensions between the pope and the Chinese government, a Vatican-affiliated Web site reported last month. According to [AsiaNews.it](#), the Holy See appointed Paul He Zeqing to the post of auxiliary bishop at the diocese of Wanxian in central China, and the Chinese government endorsed the move. Bishop Joseph Xu Zhixuan reportedly told clergy present at the ordination ceremony that the Holy See had given its nod to He, making him the third bishop ordained under such terms. An estimated 5 million Chinese Catholics belong to the state-controlled church, which severed ties with the Vatican in 1951 after China’s Communist Party took control of the government. The underground Catholic Church is believed to have at least 8 million faithful.