



Written by on July 20, 2009

Honduran Dispute Continues

Outside forces continued to put pressure on the new Honduran government headed by President Roberto Micheletti on July 20, as Costa Rican President Oscar Arias continued in his role to "negotiate" a settlement between Micheletti and ousted president Manuel Zelaya.

However, given that the plan proposed by Arias would begin with the immediate return of Zelaya to power, the Costa Rican president can hardly be termed an impartial arbitrator.

According to a report from *Bloomberg* news service, Arias has proposed "an amnesty for all parties, Zelaya's return to power in a government that includes all political groups, presidential elections in October, an end to attempts to modify the constitution, and the creation of an international commission to oversee implementation of the agreement."

President Micheletti's foreign minister, Carlos Lopez, said that Arias' proposals were "unacceptable," noting: "The mediation has been unable to understand that the intention to reinstate Zelaya goes against Honduran law." Lopez added that such a move "constitutes an open interference in the internal affairs of Honduras."

In return, speaking from Managua, Nicaragua, Zelaya commented: "[The Micheletti government is] an intransigent group that chose to take up arms against its people. There have been no negotiations. Everything their government has done is null. They're isolated."

Contrary to Zelaya's statement, the Honduran military did not use force against the country's civilian population but on June 28, acting on the orders of the Honduran Supreme Court, detained Zelaya, and took him to an air force base, where he was taken by plane into exile to San Jose, Costa Rica. Later that day, in accordance with Honduran law, the congress voted to replace Zelaya with Micheletti, the president of congress.

The *Bloomberg* article cited Zelaya's statement on July 19 that his supporters are preparing an "internal insurrection" to restore him to power after the talks in Costa Rica stalled. He ominously predicted violence if the talks leading to his return to power were not continued: "What is the alternative to dialogue? We could face a civil war and bloodshed that the people of Honduras do not deserve."

The *Miami Herald* quoted Patricia Rodas, the foreign minister under Zelaya, who told a crowd that had gathered in Managua to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the communist Sandinista revolution against Nicaragua's conservative president, Anastasio Somoza: "Their time is up. It's over for the coup leaders."





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We'll open up the borders of Honduras to conquer our homeland."

The *Herald* reported on July 20: "For the last three days Zelaya has been in Nicaragua, where he has found a steadfast ally in leftist President Daniel Ortega." Ortega first took the reins of power in Nicaragua following the Sandinista revolution in 1985, ruling until 1990. After adopting a somewhat less militant image, he was elected president again in 2006. After the election, Ortega was congratulated by Marxist President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and communist dictator Fidel Castro of Cuba. Chávez, speaking by telephone, told Ortega, "Long live the [communist] Sandinista revolution!"

Articles about Arias' role in negotiating a plan that would restore Zelaya to power in Honduras often mention that he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987 for helping to negotiate the end of conflicts in Central America. What is rarely mentioned, however, is that the "peace plan" for which he was awarded that prize (the "Procedure for the Establishment of a Strong and Lasting Peace in Central America") called for an end to U.S. support for the anti-communist Contras, but neglected to counter the massive Soviet aid that propped up the communist Sandinista regime of Daniel Ortega.

The plan was typical of Arias — who had done his best to undermine Contra efforts against the Sandinista forces from the beginning. Immediately after taking office in 1986, he had moved against the Contras by arresting those found in his country, as well as Costa Rican citizens suspected of helping them. He also closed the secret airstrip that had been a crucial relay station for arms to the Contras, dealing them a lethal blow. He established a joint border inspection force with Nicaragua to prohibit Contras from using Costa Rican territory as a base for attacks, thus stymieing Contra efforts to establish a southern front. And he publicly criticizing U.S. Contra support, pushing for what he called a "negotiated" settlement.

Writing in the *Wall Street Journal* for July 20, Mary Anastasia O'Grady penned a brilliant opinion piece entitled "[The U.S. Steers Left on Honduras](#)."

In her commentary, O'Grady commented on Marxist strongman Hugo Chávez's strong support for Manuel Zelaya and his efforts to sway other leaders throughout the region to work to return Zelaya to power.

After observing that sending Zelaya into exile was the most sensible option for the Honduran Congress and courts, because "jailing him would make him a lightning rod for violence," O'Grady noted that Micheletti's commitment to allow the presidential election to be held in November as scheduled very likely would have allowed for a smooth transition.

And, notes O'Grady: "That might have been the end of it if the U.S. had supported the Honduran rule of law, or simply refrained from meddling. Instead President Obama and the State Department joined Mr. Chávez and his allies in demanding that Mr. Zelaya be restored to power. This has emboldened Venezuela."

Though O'Grady did not specifically say so, *emboldening* Venezuela is most likely our state department's deliberate intention. She correctly concludes: "Yet the U.S. continues exerting enormous pressure for the return of Mr. Zelaya. If it prevails, it is unlikely that Mr. Zelaya's mobs or Mr. Chávez will suddenly be tamed."

Those who have observed U.S. policy in Latin America for years could not be less surprised. Recall that when President Somoza's remaining ally, Israel, attempted to send a shipload of arms to his nation so he could defend his government against Daniel Ortega's communist Sandinista rebels, it was U.S. President Jimmy Carter who pressured Israel to turn its ship around.



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If the Micheletti government is smart, it will reject any settlement negotiated by Oscar Arias. Unless, that is, Hondurans are eager to join Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba in trading a republican form of government for a Marxist one.

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