



Written by on September 22, 2009

Zelaya's Return to Honduras Incites Protests

Former Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, who was forcibly exiled to Costa Rica on June 28 by military forces acting on the orders of the Honduran Supreme Court after he made plans to hold a referendum in defiance of the Court and Congress, has secretly returned to Honduras.



After being smuggled back into Honduras in the trunk of a car and aboard a tractor, Zelaya took sanctuary at the Brazilian embassy in the capital city of Tegucigalpa, where he appeared publicly on September 21. AP reported that Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said he spoke with Zelaya by phone the next morning. The leftist Silva — who along with Venezuela's Marxist leader Hugo Chávez has been one of Zelaya's most strident supporters — said that by allowing Zelaya into its embassy, Brazil only did what any democratic country would do.

Soon after Zelaya's presence in the embassy became known to his Honduran supporters, they gathered around the embassy to stage a protest in support of him and against the new government. In response the government imposed a curfew, which was ignored by many protesters. Police at times used tear gas to disperse the crowds. BBC News reported on September 22 that police had surrounded the embassy and the area had been described as calm. Speaking to the Venezuelan broadcasting network Telesur from inside the embassy, Zelaya accused police of preparing an attack, stating: "The embassy is surrounded by police and the military.... I foresee bigger acts of aggression and violence, that they could be capable of even invading the Brazilian embassy."

But a police spokesman told BBC that force had to be used to disperse the protesters, and that the curfew remained in effect until the evening of the 22nd.

The British *Guardian* newspaper reported that interim President Roberto Micheletti — who has promised to step down as soon as presidential elections are held in November and a new President is inaugurated in January — said in a televised address that Brazil would be held responsible for any violence prompted by Zelaya's return: "A call to the government of Brazil: respect the judicial order against Mr. Zelaya and turn him into Honduran authorities. The eyes of the world are on Brazil and Honduras."

The *Guardian* quoted Venezuela's Marxist President, Hugo Chávez, who gleefully celebrated his leftist ally's return in a televised phone call from Zelaya, stating: "It was a well-planned operation and it worked. Zelaya deceived the coup mongers and went in the trunk of a car and even in a tractor." Chávez added: "The coup mongers should surrender power peacefully! I congratulate you for your



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heroic act and the Latin American people admire you!"

In an article in *Capitalism Magazine* for April 7, 2005, entitled "Venezuelan Dictator Hugo Chávez: Castro's Mini-Me," Peter Brookes, a senior fellow for National Security Affairs at the Heritage Foundation, wrote:

Chávez idolizes Cuba's Fidel Castro, is chummy with Libya's Moammar Khadafy and was a Saddam Hussein pal.... According to Gerver Torres, a former Venezuelan government minister, Chavez's "main motivation now is to do everything he possibly can to negatively affect the United States, [President George W.] Bush in particular ... trying to bring together all the enemies of the United States."

Furthermore, wrote Brookes, Chávez has not only threatened to cut off oil exports to the United States (which amount to 15 percent of U.S. oil needs), but he has amassed a stock of weaponry far out of proportion to his country's needs, including a purchase from Russia of 50 advanced MiG-29 fighters, 40 helicopter gunships, and 100,000 AK-47 assault rifles. He has also provided sanctuary for the Colombian FARC narcoterrorists seeking to overthrow the government of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, has mentored Bolivian revolutionary Evo Morales, and — some intelligence sources have alleged — has funded a rogue army officer who tried to incite a December 2004 rebellion against Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo.

As Brookes sums up his article: "Many Americans will find it hard to take Chávez seriously, but his capacity for regional troublemaking shouldn't be discounted, especially as oil prices rocket."

In view of Chávez' background and his unabashed support for Zelaya, there is little wonder why members of all three branches of Honduras' government were wary about the latter's backdoor attempt to extend his term of office by floating a national referendum to eliminate term limits on the presidency. And why they took preemptive action to head off such a move while they still had the power to do so and forcibly exiled him.

As Zelaya surreptitiously returned to Honduras, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Costa Rican President Oscar Arias appealed for calm and dialogue in Honduras. VOA News reported that Clinton met in New York with Arias, who has been trying to broker a peaceful resolution of the Honduran crisis.

VOA (which is an official organ of the U.S. government) reported: "Although officials in Tegucigalpa contend that Mr. Zelaya's ouster and replacement with interim President Roberto Micheletti was legal, the United States and other Organization of American States member countries say it was a *coup d'état*, and the Obama administration has suspended most aid to Honduras." The report also noted: "Earlier this month, the United States revoked travel visas for members of the interim government and warned that it might not recognize the results of the country's upcoming presidential election planned for November 29."

So much for "democracy."

There is an eerie familiarity to this scenario, considering that Zelaya is a protégé of Chávez, who is a protégé of Fidel Castro. When the young communist revolutionary, Castro, posing as a champion of oppressed peasants, was in the process of fomenting his revolution against the relatively benign dictator Fulgencio Batista, the United States imposed an embargo on weapons sales to Cuba on March 14, 1958, making it more vulnerable to the communist assault. Castro, in the meantime, was clandestinely supplied with arms from the United States, an activity ignored by U.S. officials.



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Furthermore, noted William P. Hoar, in his essay "Fidel Castro's Climb to Power": "Except largely for the ambassadors (Smith, and before him Arthur Gardner), the U.S. embassy in Havana was as pro-Castro as the State Department. *New York Times* correspondent Ruby Hart Phillips, who was presented with an orchid by Castro as he rolled into Havana, wrote that at the time of the revolution, "one man laughingly asked me if I knew of the 'Castro cell' in the U.S. Embassy. It was no secret that several of the officials there favored the overthrow of Batista and the assumption of power by Castro."

U.S. State Department support of the communist side in a Latin American power struggle was by no means an aberration, which helps the astute observer read between the lines in reports such as this one released by CNN on September 22:

While the United States has called Zelaya's ouster a coup, it has not formally designated it a "military coup," which, under U.S. law, would have triggered a cutoff of all nonhumanitarian aid. Senior State Department officials said the Obama administration was reluctant to make the formal designation to preserve its flexibility for a diplomatic solution.

A presidential campaign in Honduras kicked off this month. However, the United States said it would not support the outcome of the elections unless Zelaya was restored to power.

Photo of Manuel Zelaya: AP Images



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