

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Valenzuela, Arturo A <ValenzuelaAA@state.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, November 10, 2010 7:22 PM
To: H; Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma
Subject: Mackled Case

Madame Secretary:

I wanted to make you current on our pending extradition request for Walid Makled, a Venezuelan national now in custody in Colombia.

Makled is a major narcotrafficker; he was arrested in Colombia in August based on DEA information. Shortly thereafter, both Venezuela and the US requested his extradition. Starting in mid-October, Makled, speaking to the media from jail, alleged that senior Venezuelan government officials, including many generals, were complicit in his narcotrafficking enterprise. Makled has repeated these allegations over the past few days, and made clear he would prefer to be extradited to the United States.

Following Colombian President Santos' visit to Venezuela last week, Venezuelan President Chavez publicly claimed that Santos had agreed to give Makled to Venezuela. Chavez claimed that the US and Makled were conspiring to get Makled to the United States so that he would have a platform to make further allegations about Venezuelan government involvement in narcotics smuggling.

Worried about Chavez' comments, DOJ and DEA reached out to the Department to request that we raise the issue with the GOC. DOJ and DEA focused on Makled's importance as a narcotrafficker and on the possibility that he could provide useful information on Venezuelan government involvement in drug smuggling. Ambassador McKinley spoke face to face with Santos on Nov 8, underlining our interest in Makled's extradition and in ensuring that our request was properly reviewed. Santos signaled that the decision had gone in the other direction, and that he felt he'd gone "too far down that path to reverse course."

On Nov 8 and Nov 9, we became aware of the interest of Rep Mack in the case. I spoke with Mack on Nov 9, saying we were aware of the matter and have engaged with the GOC on it. I told him that I would get back to him after further inquiries.

On Nov 10, Amb McKinley spoke with Santos' chief of staff, Juan Pinzon, repeating our strong interest in Makled and our insistence that our request be properly reviewed. Pinzon confirmed that Santos has made the decision and feels he cannot reverse course. He further indicated that Santos was aware of the DOJ and Hill concerns, and that he had directed Colombian Amb Silva to speak with Mack.

Pinzon affirmed that the extradition processes would be respected, and that there would be no precipitous deportation or removal to Venezuela. As a practical matter this means Makled would remain for several months in Colombia, and that the US would have full access to Makled throughout that period.

There is some relevant political analysis that I would prefer to share in a different channel; I would be happy to meet with you to lay out these additional facts. I am flying back to Washington tonight after meetings w President Lugo in Paraguay and Mujica in Uruguay.

Best Regards,

Arturo