

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Sunday, July 12, 2009 6:19 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: OpEd | A Dose of Realism in Honsuras By Edward Schumacher-Matos

From: Sullivan, Jacob J
To: Shannon, Thomas A; Abedin, Huma; Llorens, Hugo; Mills, Cheryl D
Sent: Sat Jul 11 14:54:29 2009
Subject: RE: OpEd | A Dose of Realism in Honsuras By Edward Schumacher-Matos

Very interesting.

From: Shannon, Thomas A
Sent: Saturday, July 11, 2009 2:46 PM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma; Llorens, Hugo; Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: Fw: OpEd | A Dose of Realism in Honsuras By Edward Schumacher-Matos

This will appear in tomorrow's Post.

From: pburellik [REDACTED]
Sent: Sat Jul 11 08:05:33 2009
Subject: OpEd | A Dose of Realism in Honsuras By Edward Schumacher-Matos

Washington Post | A Dose of Realism in Honduras

By Edward Schumacher-Matos
 Sunday, July 12, 2009

Sometimes you have to give political leaders credit.

President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are on the verge of achieving their own coup in Honduras and advancing American interests with a deftness not seen from Washington in many years.

The president's reference to Honduras during his trip to Moscow reflects how the small Central American country is but a pawn as the administration pushes the reset button globally and in the hemisphere.

Justice may not be totally served in Honduras, but the country is likely to end up better off anyway.

"America cannot and should not seek to impose any system of government on any other country," Obama said in Russia, "nor would we presume to choose which party or individual should run a country. . . . Even as we meet here today, America supports now the restoration of the democratically elected president of Honduras, even though he has strongly opposed American policies. We do so not because we agree with him. We do so because we respect the universal principle that people should choose their own leaders."

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The immediate lesson was to teach Russia to stay out of Georgia and Ukraine. The message, however, also resonated throughout Latin America, undercutting the polarization efforts of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.

That the administration has joined with the Organization of American States in condemning the ouster of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya has left Chávez puffing a lot of hot air with no one to fight against.

When three Chávez allies -- the presidents of Argentina, Ecuador and Paraguay -- sought unsuccessfully to escort Zelaya back to Honduras on Venezuelan planes, they looked irresponsible for setting off violence that resulted in one death. Clinton, meanwhile, working quietly with Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Chile and other moderate countries, has brought the two opposing Honduran camps together in a mediation with one of the grand old men of Latin America, Costa Rican Oscar Arias, a Nobel Peace laureate.

There is now genuine movement toward a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

The United States, long seen as a bully in the region, is suddenly being seen as respectful and wise. The flummoxed Chávez could only come up with a patently hilarious formula in which the "Yankee empire" was still the villain in Honduras but Obama may not be responsible because he is "more like a prisoner of the empire."

More fundamentally, Obama and Clinton, perhaps because neither is particularly experienced in Latin America, have approached the region with fresh eyes and wonder what all the fuss is about. The Moscow speech and their actions in Honduras underline that the Cold War really is over.

Chávez is a nuisance, but Washington has no enemies in Latin America. Our major interests are immigration, crime and trade, not ideologies, as much as the extremists on the right and the left there and here might want to make it so.

So, are we sacrificing Honduras? No. Zelaya is the main culprit in this crisis, but what counts is the rule of law. His hand has been slapped very hard. Allowing him to serve out the last six months of his term while not holding the referendum that would have opened the way to succession has a better chance of bringing peace and stability to the country than the current standoff.

The bigger question will be: What have the rest of us learned? We have all been pushing Latin Americans to uphold the rule of law, but beyond simply insisting that Zelaya was elected, few in the OAS, the European Union or other critics have been willing to give much credence to Hondurans for trying to do just that.

The Honduran Supreme Court, as it is empowered to do under the constitution, ordered the army to arrest Zelaya after he began to carry out a referendum for a constitutional convention that the court, Congress and his own attorney general said was illegal. Yet, many Latin American and European governments still call it a "military coup" or, as the Associated Press called it several days afterward, a "military power grab." Clinton and Obama dropped calling it a coup.

There are gray areas having to do with presidential powers and the fact that the Honduran constitution prohibits extradition of citizens. The army exiled Zelaya in consultation with civilian leaders to avoid precisely the sort of violence seen when Zelaya tried to return. He forced the country and its institutions against the wall, and for that he should take his medicine.

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