

## **ALERT #4 - Military Coup in Honduras**

June 29, 2009

**Below: Article by Kristen Bricker, Narco News**, about the political process in Honduras that resulted in the coup and the extensive links the military coup leaders have to the United States military establishment, including the School of the Americas

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### **RIGHTS ACTION Commentary:**

As this terrible, typical story unfolds, keep in mind:

- the fear of the Honduran oligarchy and military is real participatory democracy
- the oligarchy and military that have orchestrated the coup are the same people that have long had and continue to have extensive military ties to the USA, and extensive business and financial ties with the USA and Canada
- for decades, they have tightly controlled an effectively non-democratic, two-party state that defends their interests, on the backs of and at the expense of the human rights and well-being of their own population, Honduras being one of the most impoverished and exploited countries in the Americas
- their fear is not the non-binding June 28 opinion poll, that President Mel Zelaya was enabling, but the ground-swell movement of Honduran people and community based organizations that were pushing for and participating in this process
- since Hurricane Mitch devastated Honduras, Nicaragua and parts of Guatemala in 1998, Rights Action has supported a number of amazing grassroots campesino and indigenous organizations that continue to work tirelessly for real democracy in Honduras. Leaders of these groups, like COPINH, are now in hiding and being targeted for repression
- this struggle for real democracy in Honduras is not over by a long shot

**WHAT TO DO:** see below

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## **COUP IN HONDURAS**

<http://mywordismyweapon.blogspot.com/>

Posted by Kristin Bricker, Sunday, June 28, 2009

The following is an article I wrote for Narco News. For up-to-the-minute information on the coup in Honduras, go to [narconews.com](http://narconews.com)

## **SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS-TRAINED MILITARY DETAINS AND EXPELS DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED PRESIDENT ZELAYA**

Early this morning approximately 200 Honduran soldiers arrived at President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya's residence, reportedly fired four shots, and detained the President. Zelaya told TeleSUR that the soldiers took him to an air force base and put him on a plane to Costa Rica.

Zelaya told TeleSUR from San Jose, Costa Rica, "They threatened to shoot me." Honduras' ambassador to the Organization of American States, Carlos Sosa Coello, reports that the president has been beaten up.

Zelaya told TeleSUR that he doesn't believe it was regular soldiers who kidnapped him. "I have been the victim of a kidnapping carried out by a group of Honduran soldiers. I don't think the Army is supporting this sort of action. I think this is a vicious plot planned by elites. Elite who only want to keep the country isolated and in extreme poverty."

Zelaya fears for the safety of his family, who remains in Honduras. He pleaded with TeleSUR viewers to seek a way to "have a dialogue with these soldiers so that they don't harm my family, so that they don't shoot anybody. We can settle our differences through dialogue."

The anti-Zelaya President of Congress, Roberto Micheletti, has declared himself interim president of Honduras. On the Friday before the coup, Zelaya called Micheletti "a pathetic, second-class congressman who got that job because of me, because I gave you space within my political current."

Zelaya informed TeleSUR that he has not requested asylum in Costa Rica, and that he will return to Honduras as its president to complete his term, which expires in 2010.

#### HONDURAN MEDIA SHUT DOWN

Radio Es Lo De Menos, an independent radio station reporting from Honduras, issued a press release before its power was cut. The press release states that several cabinet members have been detained, and there are arrest warrants out for other cabinet members as well as leaders of social organizations. It calls on the international community to hold protests outside Honduran embassies and consulates.

TeleSUR reports that the soldiers have also arrested the Cuban, Venezuelan, and Nicaraguan ambassadors to Honduras, as well as Chancellor Patricia Rodas. The Venezuelan ambassador told TeleSUR that the soldiers beat him during the kidnapping. La Prensa reports that soldiers have detained at least one pro-Zelaya mayor, San Pedro Sula's Rodolfo Padilla Sunseri.

Cell phones are reportedly no longer working in Honduras. The power has been cut in at least some parts of the country, disabling independent media and state television stations for the time being. Before the state televisions went off the air, Channel 8 managed to communicate to its viewers, "It appears as though the soldiers are coming here." Seconds before it went off the air, Channel 8 told citizens to gather in the Plaza de la Libertad. Channel 8 appears to have been taken over by the military, but it is still not transmitting.

Honduras' privately owned Channel 12 and Channel 11 are showing classic soccer clips.

#### SOLDIERS BLOCK OPINION POLL

Soldiers have also moved to block the opinion poll that sparked the coup. Today Hondurans were supposed to register their opinion in a non-binding poll that asked them, "Do you think that the November 2009 general elections should include a fourth ballot box in order to make a decision about the creation of a National Constitutional Assembly that would approve a new Constitution?" The poll would have had no legal weight.

In the town of Trujillo, soldiers have taken the streets and are not allowing citizens to vote in the opinion poll. In Santa Rosa, soldiers reportedly under the orders of the Federal Prosecutors Office have seized ballot boxes from

schools and public places. Soldiers seized ballot boxes in Dulce Nombre Copan as well, but citizens have gone to the military base to take them back again. In Santa Barbara, La Prensa reports that the opinion poll is going on as planned, with no interference thus far from the military.

Soldiers are also carrying out operations on the country's major highways, according to La Prensa. The situation could get ugly on the highways, as La Prensa reports that peasants from the Guadalupe Carney community have taken over some highways.

## SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS CONNECTION

The crisis in Honduras began when the military refused to distribute ballot boxes for the opinion poll in a new Constitution. President Zelaya fired the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Romeo Orlando Vasquez Velasquez, who refused to step down. The heads of all branches of the Honduran armed forces quit in solidarity with Vasquez. Vasquez, however, refused to step down, bolstered by support in Congress and a Supreme Court ruling that reinstated him. Vasquez remains in control of the armed forces.

Vasquez, along with other military leaders, graduated from the United States' infamous School of the Americas (SOA). According to a School of the Americas Watch database compiled from information obtained from the US government, Vasquez studied in the SOA at least twice: once in 1976 and again in 1984.

The head of the Air Force, Gen. Luis Javier Prince Suazo, studied in the School of the Americas in 1996. The Air Force has been a central protagonist in the Honduran crisis. When the military refused to distribute the ballot boxes for the opinion poll, the ballot boxes were stored on an Air Force base until citizens accompanied by Zelaya rescued them. Zelaya reports that after soldiers kidnapped him, they took him to an Air Force base, where he was put on a plane and sent to Costa Rica.

Congressman Joseph Kennedy has stated, "The U.S. Army School of the Americas...is a school that has run more dictators than any other school in the history of the world."

The School of the Americas has a long, tortured history in Honduras. According to School of the Americas Watch, "In 1975, SOA Graduate General Juan Melgar Castro became the military dictator of Honduras. From 1980-1982 the dictatorial Honduran regime was headed by yet another SOA graduate, Policarpo Paz Garcia, who intensified repression and murder by Battalion 3-16, one of the most feared death squads in all

of Latin America (founded by Honduran SOA graduates with the help of Argentine SOA graduates)."

Honduran Gen. Humberto Regalado Hernandez was inducted into the SOA's Hall of Fame. School of the Americas Watch notes that he was a four-time graduate. As head of the armed forces, he refused to take action against soldiers involved in the Battalion 3-16 death squad.

School of the Americas Watch points out that this is not the first time the SOA has been involved in Latin American coups. "In April 2002, the democratically elected Chavez government of Venezuela was briefly overthrown, and the School of the Americas-trained Efraim Vasquez Velasco, ex-army commander, and Gen. Ramirez Poveda, were key players in the coup attempt."

According to School of the Americas Watch, "Over its 58 years, the SOA has trained over 60,000 Latin American soldiers in counter-insurgency techniques, sniper skills, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics. Colombia, with over 10,000 troops trained at the school, is the SOA's largest customer. Colombia currently has the worst human rights record in Latin America."

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UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887  
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**CONTACT YOUR OWN MEDIA, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, SENATORS, MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, TO DEMAND:**

- a return of the constitutional government
- no recognition, whatsoever, of this military coup and the Congressional appointed 'de facto' government of Roberto Michelletti
- respect for safety and human rights of all Hondurans
- justice and reparations for the illegal actions and rights violations committed during this illegal coup