

Honduras Coup Alert #10 –

Response to CNN - There is no "two-president" crisis

By Rights Action, July 3, 2009

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Below, a CNN article about the position of the US government in lead up to the visit of the Organization of American States to Honduras. CNN begins its article saying Honduras is "grapple with its two-president crisis."

There is no "two-president" crisis. Honduras has one President, Mel Zelaya, who was forced at gun point out of the country.

Honduras has a military regime, the country is militarized, and the regime is quickly creating a "civilian" government that is ousting the elected government and taking over all institutions of the State.

Americans and Canadians need to keep strong pressure on our governments so that there is no slide-back to this position of "two presidents".

WHAT TO DO: see below.

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U.S. 'hits the pause button' on aid to Honduras

- President Manuel Zelaya forced out of Honduras last weekend
- Provisional President Roberto Micheletti apparently in power
- U.S. State Department says its stopping some aid programs temporarily
- U.S. gave Honduras more than \$40 million in assistance last year

July 2, 2009 -- Updated 2136 GMT (0536 HKT)

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The United States put some teeth in its diplomatic signals to Honduras Thursday, stopping some aid programs temporarily to the Latin American country as it grapples with its two-president crisis.

Ousted Honduran President Jose Manuel Zelaya appears Tuesday at the U.N. General Assembly.

State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said the United States already "hit the pause button" on some aid programs, even before State Department lawyers make a final ruling on whether to halt assistance.

The United States continues to hope the Organization of American States quickly will hammer out a compromise between ousted President Jose Manuel Zelaya, forced out of Honduras last weekend, and the man who took his job, provisional President Roberto Micheletti.

Zelaya earlier said he would defy the new government and return to the Honduras capital of Tegucigalpa on Thursday. He later postponed that to Saturday, to allow the OAS negotiations to proceed.

The United States Thursday warned that Zelaya could become "an obstacle" to resolving the crisis if he returned too early, and some observers said the crisis could slide into next week. This would allow OAS leaders to go to Honduras, and return for consultations at OAS headquarters in Washington after the July Fourth weekend.

"Our goal is the restoration of constitutional order in Tegucigalpa, which means the restoration of President Zelaya. There is a process led by the OAS which is in place," Kelly said at the State Department at his afternoon briefing. "We think that this process should be allowed to play out, and we would discourage any actions that would prove to be an obstacle to this process reaching its desired outcome -- which is of course the restoration of Manuel Zelaya in power."

Asked if a premature return of Zelaya could be an obstacle, Kelly said, "It could be. What everybody needs to focus on now is the OAS mission, mandated by the OAS special assembly."

Zelaya appeared to signal his willingness to compromise when he told the United Nations General Assembly earlier in the week that he would agree to step aside when his term ends in November.

His interest in overturning a one-term limit under Honduran law had led to the present crisis and his ouster, despite efforts by the United States and others to avoid a showdown.

And Kelly said despite the U.S. government holiday Friday, and the closure of State Department offices in Washington, that U.S. officials would be monitoring the Honduras crisis. "Absolutely, very much so," Kelly said.

Kelly said State Department lawyers were evaluating events in Sunday's coup in Honduras to see if they trigger a formal halt to aid, under the Foreign Assistance Act. "The legal review is ongoing," Kelly said.

Although the Honduran military seized President Zelaya and sent him to neighboring Costa Rica there is difficulty in determining whether civilian political leaders were in charge and whether to define this as a military or political coup.

"In the meantime we have taken some actions to hit the pause button, let's say, on assistance programs that we would be legally required to terminate," if the events were determined to be a military coup, Kelly said.

It is unclear how much aid could formally be suspended or ended outright. Earlier the State Department said the United States gave Honduras more than \$40 million in assistance last year, for a variety of purposes, including development, health assistance, anti-drug work and global peacekeeping operations.

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FUNDS ARE NEEDED FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN HONDURAS

Rights Action staff are in Honduras working with the pro-democracy and rule of law sectors. Funds are being sent to Honduras and used by community development and human rights organizations for: food and shelter, transportation and communication costs, urgent action outreach and human rights accompaniment work.

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AMERICANS AND CANADIANS SHOULD CONTACT YOUR OWN MEDIA, MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, SENATORS & MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, TO DEMAND:

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