

Report

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Haiti: Bushwhacked in the Caribbean

By Randall Robinson, founder of Trans Africa Forum

BASSETERRE, St. Kitts — On Feb. 29 the legally elected government of Haiti was driven from power by armed force. Its president, after being taken against his will to the Central African Republic, was given refuge in Jamaica. The Bush administration's response has been to demand that the democratic countries of the Caribbean (1) drop their call for an investigation into the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, (2) push the Aristide family out of Jamaica and the region, and (3) abandon their policy of admitting only democratically elected governments into the councils of Caricom (a multilateral organization established by the English-speaking Caribbean countries 31 years ago to promote regional cooperation).

In addition, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice has warned Caricom leaders that if one U.S. soldier is killed in Haiti, Caribbean governments will be held responsible because the Aristide family was granted sanctuary in the region. In short, the Bush administration is strong-arming the Caribbean to confer on Haiti's new "government," headed by Gerard Latortue, a legitimacy it has not earned and does not deserve. Indeed, 33 of the 39 members of the Congressional Black Caucus stayed away from a recent Washington meeting arranged by two congressmen for Latortue.

The United States' demand that Caricom abandon its long-held insistence on democratic principles is psychic poison to the re-

gion. When Eastern Europe was going through its totalitarian nightmare, when coups and despotic rule were "normal" in Central and South America, and when civil strife and dictatorship wracked much of Af-

St. Kitts-Nevis to the economist Prime Minister Owen Arthur in Barbados, Caribbean heads of government understand the lessons of history. They recognize the supremacy of the ballot. And they know that only democratic values will keep the Caribbean a zone of peace. Reinhold Niebuhr warned that man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but that man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary. Yet the United States has unleashed its venom on Caribbean governments because they have proclaimed Caricom's democratic principles to be inviolable.

Haiti was welcomed as a full member of Caricom because its people had established a democratic form of government. After the recent shattering of that democracy, Caribbean heads of government decided to maintain support for the people of Haiti but allow democratic elections to determine who will represent Haiti in the councils of Caricom. "We are the children of slaves," one Caribbean national explained. "And so, we stay away from the tyranny of the unelected. . . . If

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rica and Asia, the Caribbean steadfastly upheld its democratic traditions — and it continues to do so today. This is because of the region's well-educated populace and the caliber of its leaders; no military thugs in business suits here. From Rhodes Scholar-Prime Minister Percival J. Patterson of Jamaica in the north, to professor-lawyer Prime Minister Ralph Gonslaves in the south (St. Vincent-Grenadines), and from the physician Prime Minister Denzil Douglas in tiny

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America thinks that an unelected government is fine for Haiti, when will they say that an unelected government is best for my country?"

The Bush administration, however, has been implacable. Its officials were to have come to the Caribbean in April and May to discuss, among other things, terrorism, but the administration presented Caribbean governments with an ultimatum: no recognition of Latortue, no meetings between the United States and the Caribbean leaders. Caricom reminded U.S. officials that Latortue was not elected by anyone. And so the meetings are off. Why is the unelected Latortue more important to the Bush administration than the Caribbean's 14 democratically elected governments? Americans must speak out against their government's behavior abroad. And they must recognize that the atrocities inflicted by U.S. soldiers on Iraqi prisoners grow out of a hubris and contempt that far too many U.S. officials display when dealing with much of the rest of the world. If stable Caribbean democracies are being slapped around by America because they uphold democratic values, who is safe in this unipolar world? Certainly not the American people, who are being made targets of global rage because of these tactics.

Randall Robinson (rr@rosro.com), foreign policy advocate and author of "Quitting America" and other works, lives in St. Kitts. The article was first published in the Washington Post.

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SPECIAL THANK YOU

MITF wishes to express our deep appreciation to all those who attended the Dr. Paul Farmer, Partners in Health benefit for Haiti in April. Your generous contributions made the event incredibly successful. For those who were unable to attend or want to do more, here are some suggestions:

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Educate your self, read the enclosed; "Haiti After the Coup: The Final Chapter Has Yet to be Written." Hopefully, that chapter will read; "US citizens did not let the Bush Administration get away with overthrowing a democratically elected constitutional government. The people of Venezuela, Cuba and other countries no longer need to live in fear of US intervention."
2. Act by sending the enclosed postcard or better yet write a letter demanding an immediate investigation of the US role in the Coup as called for by Rep. Barbara Lee's "TRUTH Act", H.R. 3919.
3. Donate funds to support MITFs' Haiti Relief projects. We are fiscally sponsoring three projects: the SOPUDEP school, Haiti Information project and Victim's Assistance.
4. Participate in the Haiti Accompaniment project being organized by the Bay Area Haiti Action Committee (HAC) in coalition with other solidarity groups across the U.S. to ensure the safety of Aristide's Lavalas grassroots supporters. An initial \$3500 is necessary to help launch this critical project by the end of June. Please mark your tax-deductible donation to MITF/Haiti Accompaniment. For more information, contact Dale Sorensen, MITF or Leslie Fleming HAC, 510/558-0371.

CUBA: Shaping Up Like Iraq

By Wayne S. Smith, Center for International Policy

Ed. Note: *Bush's crackdown on travel to Cuba was evident even before the May announcement. In April, Cuba travel guides told our delegation that they were very concerned because the number of US citizens traveling to Cuba had dropped off significantly since the first of the year. Our MITF delegation in May reported that, following the announcement, Cubans are now fearful about a possible US intervention in Cuba and were preparing for the worst, like cleaning out their neighborhood bomb shelters*

The path by which the Bush administration led us into the nightmarish Iraqi quag-

mire is strewn with arrogance, flawed assumptions, faulty intelligence and downright lies. It seems determined to make the same mistakes all over again with Cuba.

The administration listened all too trustingly to a small group of Iraqi exiles. We see the result. A disaster.

Now the administration is listening to another tiny knot of hard-line exiles in Miami. Just a little more economic pressure and Fidel Castro will be gone, the latter are saying. The Bush administration will then have a great victory. As Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega assured Congress on Oct. 2 of last year: "The president is determined to see the end of the Castro regime and the dismantling of the apparatus that has kept him in office for so long."

On May 6, President Bush announced

new measures to achieve that goal and supposedly assist the Cuban people after the Castro regime is no more. As one reads over the recommendations (all 500 pages of them), one has the sense that in the minds of the authors at least, the U.S. occupation of Cuba has already begun.

A U.S. "Transition Coordinator" is to be appointed to run the show, as Paul Bremer has run it in Iraq. He'll oversee economic reconstruction, setting up the right kind of schools, making sure the trains run on time and all such matters. We can be sure that contracts for Bechtel and Halliburton are already planned.

Just as the administration ignored the United Nations Security Council and trampled international conventions (such as the Geneva Convention) in pursuing its misadventure in Iraq, so too is it following that pattern in Cuba. One of its principal instruments for putting an end to the Castro regime, it says, is aid to the internal dissidents. When one government assists organized groups in another country in efforts to oust their government, that is blatant intervention in the second country's internal affairs, and in this case a clear violation of the Charter of the Organization of American States, even if the means remain peaceful.

And who can be sure they will? Already, U.S. Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.), one of the exiles from whom the administration is taking its cues, is urging that consideration be given to assassinating Castro, and other Florida politicians are calling for use of force.

What do the dissidents inside Cuba, those the new measures are supposed to assist, think of this? Well, their principal leaders have denounced the new measures and made it clear they want nothing to do with them.

Oswaldo Paya, the chairman of the Varela Project, a free speech/human rights initiative, says they are "unhelpful and unwelcome." Elizardo Sanchez, head of the National Commission for Human Rights, describes them as "counterproductive meddling." And Manuel

Cuesta Morua, leader of a coalition of social democratic forces, insists: "The United States has absolutely no right to define the how, what or when, or the pace and timing of the democratic transition in Cuba."

When measures are denounced by those they are supposed to support, it is a sure sign that they aren't likely to work. And what has been the reaction of other Cubans - those who aren't dissidents? More than a million demonstrated against the new measures a few days ago.

Perhaps the demonstrations weren't spontaneous. Few things in Cuba are. But on the other hand, put yourself in the place of the average Cuban looking at those pictures of the Iraqi prisoners being abused by American soldiers. Would you be enthusiastic over the idea of a Bush-appointed "transition coordinator" for Cuba? Probably not, Cubans want change, yes, but not an American-run transition. Our reputation for nation-building isn't very high at the moment.

It is also clear that the great majority of the Cuban-American community also oppose the measures. No wonder. They are the ones who will suffer most. Now they will only be able to visit their families in Cuba every three years, rather than once a year. The range of relatives to whom they

can send money is also reduced. And for what? Does anyone think such restrictions will bring down the Castro government? Not likely.

Finally, the administration is going to have military aircraft transmit radio and television programming to Cuba from international airspace. That will be expensive and also violates the International Communications Convention. Nor will it have any significant effect. Radio Marti has been broadcasting for some 20 years with only occasional jamming. It has not changed Cuban public opinion one iota in all that time.

For all its bluster, the administration's revamped Cuba policy is even more clearly foredoomed than the Iraqi policy. The latter is fast losing support across the United States. The Cuba policy retains only that of a tiny group of hard-line exiles in Florida. The will of the majority at some point soon will prevail.

Wayne S. Smith is a senior fellow at the Center for International Policy in Washington and an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University.

Source: Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 5/27/04



On May 14, in Havana, 1,200,000 Cubans led by Fidel & Raul Castro marched against the anti-Cuban measures of the Bush administration.
Photo: Cuban news service

VENEZUELA: Will The Third Coup Be a Charm?

By *Christene DeJong, Venezuela Solidarity Group*

Ed. Note: The author, who lived in Venezuela, helped coordinate MITF's delegation there in February. Our group observed firsthand the social and political conditions existing in Venezuela today. The group delivered more than \$3500 worth of medical equipment, including nebulizers, stethoscopes, and otoscopes, to the Cuban doctors working in the barrios of Caracas. They also participated in discussions of current issues with the following: Venezuela's Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel; Vice President of the National Assembly and a representative of Venezuela's indigenous community, Noeli Pocatererra; Minister of Health, Roger Capella; and President of Banmujer, Nora Castaneda and others. A video of the trip is in progress and will be screened in August.

You can hear the singing and chanting from two blocks away. "Oo! Ah! Chávez *no se va* (don't leave). Oo! Ah! Chávez *no se va*." Today, like everyday in Caracas' Plaza Bolívar, Chávez supporters have gathered under the blazing sun to wave flags, to hand out pamphlets and sing. The energy is infectious and the tension palpable. They want everyone who passes to know that the opposition's latest attack on Chávez will fail; Chávez will not be removed.

In Venezuela today, the political stakes are high. For most of the poor, Chávez represents political opportunity and access to healthcare, education, and economic stabil-

ity. Through the Bolivarian process, or *el proceso*, the poor have been incorporated as active participants in Venezuelan political life. The constitution, community groups called Bolivarian Circles, social programs improving health care, education, and economic opportunity, and land reform initiatives all require community participation. The poor also identify with Chávez's physical and social characteristics: his indigenous and African features and his popular way of speaking. To lose Chávez would mean to lose the programs and promise for the future. For most of the wealthy, Chávez represents economic decline, dictatorial style rule, and a dissolution of Venezuelan democracy. With Chávez in power, they remain out of power and economic influence. Neither the poor who support Chávez nor the wealthy orchestrating his overthrow can risk losing, leaving Venezuela extremely polarized into two entrenched camps.

Like the Venezuelan elite, the United States also has a stake in Chávez's removal. Chávez maintains a firm stance against neoliberal policies and the Washington Consensus model for development. In world conferences and at the negotiating table, he opposes the current FTAA proposals (ALCA in Spanish) and calls for a Bolivarian alternative model or the ALBA that would place economic justice and poverty alleviation at its core. Chávez retains controls on the state-run oil company, PDVSA. Venezuela is the fifth largest oil supplier in the world and supplies more oil to the United States than Saudi Arabia. Chávez has streamlined

PDVSA's bloated bureaucracy to channel more money into social programs. He has also increased Venezuela's participation in OPEC, hosting the OPEC nations heads of state in 2000 and forming relationships with United States foes such as Saddam Hussein. Finally, Chávez's close relationship with Fidel Castro and the exchange of resources between Venezuela and Cuba, such as the 10,000 Cuban doctors working in poor *barrios* or the new literacy program based on the successful Cuban model, challenge the long held United States' position with Cuba. The United State's animosity towards Chávez and his policies have added fuel to the fire raging between Chávez supporters and the opposition.

When Chávez came to power in 1998, however, most Venezuelans supported him and his program for change. Chávez swept the election with 56% of the vote. The electorate, weary from over 40 years of oligarchic rule masquerading as a bipartisan democracy, wanted change. And, that's just what Chávez and his MVR party promised – revolutionary change to create a Venezuela that uses its oil wealth to attack the poverty that ravages 80% of its people.

In 1999, Venezuelans cast ballots three more times and each time reaffirmed their support for Chávez and their desire for sweeping change. In April of that year, Chávez, embarking on the first political phase of the revolution, called for a vote on whether to convene a Constituent Assembly to draft a new Venezuelan constitution. Ninety-two percent of voters responded with a resounding "yes." The assembly gathered and after months of deliberation and input from previously excluded sections of society, particularly women and indigenous, Chávez went back to the people to approve the new constitution, which passed with 71% of the vote. In the final step of the political revolution, the government called for a new presidential election in accordance with the new constitution. Chávez rose to the presidency a second time, now with 60% of the vote. A majority of Venezuelans had spoken, giving Chávez and his Bolivarian Revolution the fuel to begin the real work of transforming Venezuelan economic and social structures.

Until 2001, Chávez's opposition, mostly members of the old oligarchy, did little to quell the strength of his support or the newly enacted political reforms. In fact, many who now oppose Chávez, agreed that the old system had stalemated. Political reform, they



Cuban doctors working in one of the barrios of Caracas talk with Venezuela's minister of Health
Photo: George Friemoth

believed, would not necessarily threaten the old oligarchy. But, a new wave of social and economic reforms would and that is exactly what the Bolivarian Revolution had set out to do. In 2001, Chávez began to show his true colors. In December, he approved a "land law," passed under a special powers decree that would distribute unused hectares to poor families. For the old oligarchy, previously unorganized and cautious, this new land law tipped the scales and set a disjointed opposition movement in motion.

The opposition's goal was now clear – get Chávez out. And, as the events of the next two and half years have shown, the goal has been to get him out at all costs. Chávez was beginning to attack the old foundation of the power: land. His actions signaled the intentions of his populist administration – restructuring society towards greater economic and social equity. If the opposition waited until their next chance at power, a new wave of reforms could completely destabilize their power base. A decision was made; action must be taken.

In April 2002, Venezuelan business and media leaders now believed that with the help of recruited top-level military officers they could orchestrate a coup, with support from the US. The *golpe de estado* at first appeared successful as the opposition took control of the presidential palace, whisked away Chávez in a US owned airplane, declared a new government, and dissolved the bodies of government. But Chávez never resigned. As hundreds of thousands of Chavistas learned this truth, they took to the streets demanding his return. Lower ranked military officers, who largely support Chávez, felt betrayed and realigned themselves with the Chávez government. Within 48 hours of his kidnapping, the unprecedented occurred; the occupying government resigned and Chávez retook power.

The opposition had miscalculated the power of Chávez's supporters and the military coup failed. But the opposition, determined to restore their previous political and economic power, would not be so easily dissuaded.

In December 2003, after months of escalating tension on both sides, the opposition called for a general economic shutdown until Chávez resigned. The upper management of the state run oil company, PDVSA, answered the call by locking out workers and shutting down the country's largest industry. Two months later, Chávez had not resigned, remained in power, and had brought oil production back to pre-shutdown levels. Coup

attempt number two – the economic coup – had also failed.

The opposition, hoping the third time really is a charm, has moved their coup attempt to the political arena. This political attempt differs greatly from the first military coup and second economic coup because it utilizes constitutional channels to call for a referendum on Chávez. On June 3, The National Electoral Council (CNE) announced that the opposition had gathered the necessary 2.4 million signatures (20% of the electorate) to call for a referendum. For new elections to be held the referendum must take place before August 19th; otherwise the Vice President will complete the remainder of Chávez's term. While the referendum process is democratic and transparent in theory, it can be easily corrupted through electoral fraud. Yet, it provides an opportunity for a democratic and constitutional solution if all parties play by the rules.

The referendum process is under intense scrutiny, especially from the US Secretary of State Colin Powell and former emissary on Latin America to the Bush Administration Otto Reich have each issued statements questioning Venezuela's democracy and Chávez's legitimacy if the referendum does not go through. Some in Venezuela believe that if the referendum process does not remove Chávez, either because there is no ref-

erendum or the people do not recall him on a referendum that military action will be taken against the Chávez administration, with help from the US. At this point, it is difficult to prove or disprove these claims, but they are worth considering, given the US track record in Haiti, Colombia, El Salvador, Chile, Guatemala and Nicaragua. It has been uncovered, however, that the US has been channeling money through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to support opposition groups. As uncovered on website www.venezuelafoia.com, the NED's donations totaled \$1,046,323 last year and \$922,000 this year. Through words, money, and suspected military action, it is clear that the United States wants Chávez removed, one way or another. Yet, no matter the outcome of the referendum, Chávez will not lose the loyalty of the poor or their determination to fight for their Bolivarian Revolution. "Chávez no se va."

Breaking news, on June 3, President Chavez vowed to accept a recall referendum on his presidency and predicted he would defeat the opposition in a "decisive battle".

The Venezuela Solidarity Group is sponsoring a delegation to Venezuela in late August, contact them at: VenezuelaSolidarity@hotmail.com



Venezuela's Vice President Jose Rangel meets with MITF delegation.

Photo: Ralph Stein

GUATEMALA: Suffering and Hope in the Ixil Triangle

By *Meridith Druse, Guatemala Accompaniment Project*

Ed. Note: MITF helped support Meredith Kruse, a genocide case accompanier for Ixil and Xix from Nov. 2003 to the end of April. The charge of genocide against Lucas Garcia, military dictator 1981-1982, involves massacres in 10 communities, including Xix and Ixil, with massacres on February 15 and March 23 in 1982. These witnesses are the first to bring former dictators to trial in the same country where the massacres occurred. The following is an excerpt from her letter to friends and family.

The semi-annual meeting of the Association for Justice and Reconciliation (AJR), the group of witnesses bringing the genocide cases to trial took place in Huehuetenango at the end March. Since this event occurred after NISGUA's bimonthly meeting, Brad (my partner) and I traveled from capital to join witnesses who arrived on buses from their communities. The event drew together witnesses from over 22 communities, spanned 3 days, and was filled with much activity. To begin, CALDH (Center for Human Rights Legal Action) gave updates on the progress of the legal cases and facilitated a discussion on indigenous rights. Later, witnesses had the opportunity to view several large quilts, which were composed of hundreds of

squares, each bearing the personal information of individuals who had died during the war. The quilts had recently been carried through the streets of Guatemala City during the "Day of the Victims" on February 25th, ironically, my birthday.

Along with the witnesses, I took a lot of time to examine the quilts. The squares had been carefully stitched by family members and included names, dates, and the manner in which a loved one had perished. Like many of you, I was familiar with the UN statistic, stating that over 200,000 civilians had died during the 36-year war, but never before had the magnitude of this number hit me as hard as it did that day. Written in shaky handwriting phrases like "died of hunger", "was shot by the army", or "disappeared" caused tears to come to my eyes. The enormous personal loss and suffering behind each name was reinforced even more several days later when, sitting in Don Fernando's wooden house in Xix, I was asked to help his family create squares to commemorate their own deceased family members.

Don Fernando's wife, Maria, was eleven years old when the Guatemalan army killed both of her parents. Her mother was pregnant at the time. Not knowing how to read or write, Maria asked me to put her parents' names on the cloth, record the approximate date they had died (the exact day was unknown), and included the manner by which

they had been killed. Although her parents died over 20 years ago, talking with her about their deaths instantly brought tears to her eyes.

After I finished with the squares for Maria's parents, other members of the family began to approach Brad and me with other requests. Don Fernando's first wife and two young sons had died of hunger after fleeing an army attack. Could we help him write out their names? Soon another relative appeared at the doorstep, "Are you working on the quilt?" she asked. Yes, "Could you help me make a square for my father and my first husband?" By this point the cloth was running out, but no worries! Don Fernando took up a pair of scissors and started chopping away at the families' plain white tablecloth! "Yo soy puro raton," he joked with a smile, as he, like a rat, began to cut holes in the fabric.

It was an amazing afternoon, full of grief, hope, and jokes all wrapped up in one. Don Fernando continued cutting, chattering away, and later even sewing (unheard of for a man of the countryside). Brad and I continued to listen, writing names and other details on the bits of cloth while Maria and her daughters embroidered over our lettering with brightly colored thread. With our actions we marked the horrors of the past. These events were true! This suffering did happen! ●

EL SALVADOR: Fear Won the Election

By *Chris Ney and Kelly Creedon, CRISPAZ*

"Fear won the election." That was the assessment of many observers including MITFs Sue Severin, who monitored El Salvador's presidential elections held Sunday March 21. The ruling right-wing party, ARENA, represented by Tony Saca, faced off against the party of the ex-guerrillas, the FMLN, headed by Shafik Handal. (Two other candidates, representing smaller parties or coalitions, also participated, but attention was focused on the ARENA-FMLN contest.) After last March's surprisingly strong showing by the left-wing FMLN in legislative elections, many saw this election—the third presidential contest since peace

accords ended a civil war in 1992—as the opposition's best chance to capture the presidency.

Pre-election opinion polls offered contradictory views of the Salvadoran public's mood: many showed the rival candidates in a statistical tie until the final weeks of the campaign. As election day—and the prospect of an FMLN win—drew closer, the ARENA fear campaign grew more extreme. Campaign ads featured individuals who lost family members to FMLN violence during the war. An ARENA-related women's organization published photos of burning U.S. flags; the ARENA campaign asserted that the FMLN would lead El Sal-

vador toward totalitarianism, abolishing private property and future elections. The rhetoric and tactics mirror those employed by other Latin American right-wing parties, including those of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

But the Salvadoran right was not the only peddler of scare tactics. Representatives of the US government added their voices to the fear campaign. In a widely reported interview conducted by telephone from ARENA campaign headquarters, President Bush's Special Envoy for Western Hemisphere Initiatives, Otto Reich, said that the US and FMLN did

Fear Won, continued on page 9

HONDURAS

The Unmasking of a Banana Republic

MITF and Global Exchange team up to co-sponsor a delegation, September 2-11, 2004.

Profound change is taking place in Honduras. Indigenous peoples, women, workers and *campesinos* are rising up and confronting globalization, militarization and environmental devastation despite incredible repression by an entrenched government.

You won't believe it unless you go to Honduras and see for yourself; that's why Global Exchange and MITF have joined together to co-sponsor this delegation to Honduras. We have a fantastic leader, Andres Conteris of Nonviolence International who has lived in Honduras and has been there since late May making all the arrangements for what promises to be an eye-opening trip.

The delegation will meet with leaders of the Women's Human Rights Center that educates workers on their rights, visit *maquilas*, and talk with the workers. We will visit indigenous and Afro-Honduran Garifuna peoples struggling for cultural survival and land rights. We'll meet with coordinators of the regional and national popular resistance movements that have formed unprecedented alliances between *campesinos*, indigenous peoples, labor unions, agricultural federations, and the Catholic Church. We'll talk with human rights leaders regarding prison abuses. Delegates will learn about strong resistance to free trade and CAFTA, how the threat to Honduras' environment and biodiversity is being challenged with occupation of government buildings, blockades of major highways and large marches and demonstrations.

The land cost of the trip is \$850: it includes accommodations, two meals per day, transportation, guide and translation of all program activities and reading materials. Airfare and a possible trip extension to Olancho (Sept. 11-15) are not included in the fee.

For information and applications, contact Tanya Cole: Tanya@globalexchange.org or call 1-800-497-1994 ext. 226 or Dale at MITF: mitf@igc.org or 415.924-3227. Apply now or by July 1 to insure your space.



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WWW.ElPorvenir.org

US-Mexico Border: More Deaths in Desert

Undocumented immigrants are dying in record numbers as they try to cross from Mexico into the US through the Sonora Desert in the wake of a new Bush Administration amnesty proposal that is being perceived by migrants as a magnet to cross. Robert Bonner, Commissioner of the US Border Patrol reported that, according to the Mexican Interior Ministry, 61 people have died in the Arizona border region since last October—triple the pace of the previous year and the hot months have just begun. The Border patrol has found 43 of these bodies and expects that last year’s record of 154 deaths in the Tucson and Yuma sectors will spike higher this year. Border agents, in interviews with arrested migrants say that the migrants have heard that the new Bush immigration plan, which would grant work visas to all illegal immigrants inside the US and to others who can prove they have a job—meant amnesty for them.

Source: New York Times, “Border Desert Proves Deadly for Mexicans”, May 23, 2004

CHILE: Pinochet Stripped of Immunity

On May 28, a Chilean Appeals Court ruled 14-9 in favor of removing Ex-dictator Augusto Pinochet’s (ruled from 1973-1990) immunity from prosecution. Although the Supreme Court ruled in July 2002 that he suffered from dementia and was mentally unfit to stand trial, it is doubtful it will overturn the Appeals Court ruling that was based on new evidence. The evidence was contained in videotape last November on Miami’s Spanish language Channel 22, in which Pinochet spoke defiantly and at length about events that happened in the 1970’s. Prosecution attorneys argued, “If he can answer a journalist’s questions for almost an hour, coherently and reasoning in a logical manner, remembering events that happened more than 30 years ago, then he can certainly respond to questions from a judge.” Prosecution lawyer Francisco Bravo said, “This ruling makes the relatives of the victims and the whole Chilean society again trust Chile’s justice.”

Source: BBC News, May 28, 2004

COLOMBIA: Some Good and Bad News

Good News: On May 26, the United Union of Workers (USO) ended a 35-day strike against the state-run oil company Ecopetrol after the Colombian government signed an agreement to cancel its plan to privatize and preserve it as a fiscally autonomous state-run company. On May 29, after seizing and occupying the tower offices of the city services company in Cali (EMCALI) for five days, the workers reached a seven-point agreement with the city and department officials. These are the same workers who occupied the 16-story tower on January 22, 2002 and reached an agreement then, not to privatize the company.

Mixed News: On May 18, police attacked more than 20,000 marchers who came to Cartagena to protest the “free trade” (FTAA) talks, taking place with representative of the US, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Riot police units backed by armored vehicles and a helicopter lobbed tear gas at protesters and used clubs to beat a number of marchers, including a Senator and several members of the House. Of the 19 arrested, 18 were later released without charges. Only one of the arrested, a dairy farmer and members of the Association of Milk Producers from Antioquia remained detained without charges as of May 27. Opposition to FTAA remains strong in Colombia.

Mixed News: On May 29, the US House of Representatives approved a bill to raise the cap on US military personnel in Colombia from 400 to 500 and to maintain the cap on US contractors operating there at the 400-person cap. The Bush administration wanted to double the cap to 800 for military and 600 for contractors. The Senate Armed Services Committee approved the administrations proposal so depending on how the Senate votes the difference in caps will have to be reconciled in the joint committee.

Bad News: According to a recently released report from the RAND National Defense Research Institute on arms trafficking, Colombia has the highest murder rate in the world—77.5 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants per year. RAND reports that armed groups in Colombia have a ready supply of small arms to con-

tinue the war and that small arms trafficking has contributed to the escalation of violence in Colombia, revealing an important dynamic between weapons trafficking and political violence.” Ready access to weapons has helped to both entrench and empower guerilla and paramilitary forces. RAND states that a large portion of the arms being shipped into Colombia is coming from “Cold War-era weapons stockpiles in Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador.” The RAND report states that a large portion of these weapons, including 20 to 75 thousand pounds of small arms and ammunition, were provided to various Central American governments illegally by the US government through what is now known as the “Iran-Contra Affair”. In short, as RAND reports, these illegal and secret guns, money, and drug schemes carried out by high-ranking officials of the Reagan administration are being felt today throughout Latin America, particularly in Colombia, in tragic ways. Colombia is now the third largest recipient of US military aid in the world, receiving \$2.5 billion in military aid since the year 2000.

Sources: www.znet.org April 21, 2004

**ALL TOGETHER FOR CHIAPAS:
A Benefit for Emergency Relief**

All proceeds will go to Polho Refugees and Jungle Clinics

Join Us for an evening of Video, Live Dance Music, Spoken Word from Arnoldo Garcia Tamales and Drinks, Arts & Crafts/Artesania Requested

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7:30 to Midnight
Capoeira Angola Center
2513 Magnolia St. - West Oakland
510-654-9587**

**Sponsored by: Chiapas Support Committee.
Co-Sponsors: MITF, IDEX, Mexico Solidarity Network (MSN) and Global Exchange.**

Note: MITF will be reporting back from their June trip to Chiapas

Fear Won, continued from page 6

“not share values and principles such as democracy...” He suggested “radical change” in US-Salvador relations if the FMLN won. In the US Congress, Tom Tancredo (R-CO) threatened to place limits on the remittances sent to El Salvador by family members living abroad. These remittances—totaling more than \$2 billion in 2003—are El Salvador’s largest source of national income. Many economists predict economic collapse if their flow should be interrupted even briefly. Tancredo, who chairs the Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus, also suggested that the immigration status of 300,000 Salvadorans living in the United States might be threatened by an FMLN victory, and Representatives Dan Burton (R-IN) and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) echoed his opinions. Last year, former US Ambassador Rose Likens made similar threats if the FMLN were to win.

The fear tactics—domestic and international—worked. Salvadorans turned out in record numbers (some observers

estimated more than 60% participation) and the ARENA candidate Tony Saca beat the FMLN’s Shafik Handal by a 3-2 margin. (The FMLN retains control of the largest municipal governments and has the largest number of votes in congress.)

The United States has a long and tragic history of intervention in the Americas. From the declaration of the Monroe doctrine in the 1823 through the era of gun-boat diplomacy to support for military dictatorships during the Cold War Era, the US has sought hegemony over the people of the Western Hemisphere. Support for the Salvadoran military during the 1980’s is one of the bloodiest and most controversial chapters of that history as the civil war claimed more than 75,000 lives and Salvadoran soldiers trained in the United States committed grievous human rights violations.

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States has pledged itself anew to promoting democracy and combating poverty and ig-

norance, yet the old patterns of domination remain unchanged. As Congressional committees investigate US actions during the recent overthrow of Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide and questions circulate about the US role in Venezuela’s unrest, Salvadoran voting results suggest a new intervention tactic. The Bush administration’s doctrine of preemptive intervention extends to the electoral field through the manipulation of fear and public insecurity in order to tip an election outcome.

The targeted use of fear is a powerful motivator, especially for a people who have been traumatized by war, state terrorism, or economic insecurity. The implications for democratic government—whether newly formed or well established—are deeply disturbing.

Chris Ney is US Coordinator and Kelly Creedon is Communications Coordinator of Christians for Peace in El Salvador, www.crispaz.org or 617-445-5115 in Boston MA.

CAFTA: Bush Backs Down

On May 28, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick signed the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Zoellick said the administration plans to delay presenting it to Congress until after the election. Why, one may ask? The answer is simple. Bush knows he doesn’t have the votes in Congress for it to pass. Thanks to the pressure on Congress from a hard working coalition of labor, environmental and Central America solidarity groups (like CISPES, Nicaragua Network, NISGUA, Witness for Peace, Quixote Center), Bush did not want to risk a no vote before the election. House Minority leader Nancy Pelosi, D- San Francisco stated that CAFTA was “totally unacceptable”. She said, “the Bush administration lost a major opportunity by negotiating an agreement that both Democrats and Republicans are avoiding.” Presidential candidate John Kerry said he opposes the agreement in its present form without enforceable labor and environmental safeguards, among other things. In addition there is continuing opposition

from grassroots peasant and organized labor groups in the five Central American countries so that passage there is not assured either. This is a victory for all those who actively worked to defeat the agreement but all recognize that contin-

ued pressure is still needed until the final vote is cast.

Source: San Francisco Chronicle, May 28, 2004



EARLY CENTRAL AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

JOIN the Historic 15th US-Cuba Friendshipment Caravan!

June 26, Sat. 6-9 pm the Bay Area Send-off, Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarians, 1924 Cedar @ Bonita. Writer and well known Cuba activist Walter Lippmann will speak for Pastors for Peace and the 2004 video documentary, "Free to Fly" will screen at 7:30. Light refreshments at 6pm with music by Ernie Noyes. \$5-10 donation, Info. 510-527-2522.

July 4-8: Orientation in Texas and border crossing. The Venceremos Brigade will cross the Canadian border in a solidarity action at the same time

July 9-18: Program in Cuba

July 19: Reverse Challenge crossing back into US.

Information or to join the caravan: 650-367-9183 or caravan22@hotmail.com
Pastors for Peace: 212-926-5757 taleigh@igc.org

IFCO/Pastors for Peace invites you to take back your rights! While intensifying threats against Cuba, the Bush administration has also tried to shut down travel to and from the island, including educational and cultural exchanges. Cuban-Americans are limited to travel every three years to see their families. And for the first time some travelers are being taken to Court. It is time to stand up and challenge these immoral and unjust policies that keep us from our friends in Cuba



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