

Report

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HONDURAS IS BURNING

By Karen Spring, Rights Action

Ed. Note: On March 18, Ilse Velasquez Rodriquez, a 59 year old teacher was fatally shot in the face with a tear gas canister, fell to the ground and was run over by a news vehicle. She had family in the San Francisco Bay Area and we wish to express our condolences to them.

The following is an edited eye witness report from the streets of Tegucigalpa.

On March 30, a National Strike was called in Honduras by the public school teachers and the National Front of Popular Resistance to protest the last two weeks of brutal repression, the eighteen political prisoners on trial for sedition, the slashing of teachers salaries, confiscation of their retirement funds by the government, and firing of 300 teachers; all part of an all-out effort by the post-coup regime and international financial institutions to privatize Honduras' public education.

In key locations throughout the country, thousands of Hondurans occupied major roads, bridges, and universities. Most protests were repressed and unconfirmed reports say at least 46 people were illegally detained, many injured, and one killed during violent evictions.

In Tegucigalpa I experienced the repression as the police, military and post-coup Pepe Lobo regime evicted, illegally detained, beat and shot tear gas and live bullets at public school teachers and pro-democracy people's movement.

In the morning I arrived at the road occupation in front of the STIBYS (National Drink & Bottling Union) headquarters just as a large line of police in riot gear, batons drawn, marched towards the people and began firing tear gas.

I walked in the opposite direction and into the rows of transport trucks and cars with impatient drivers in the traffic jam that built up since the beginning of the occupation earlier

on the crowded floor, crying, with a large bruise on her left arm where police had hit her with a baton.

At midday I headed for the Supreme Court, 10 minutes down the road. Eighteen teachers were arrested Friday, March 25, and held at the National Penitentiary in Tegucigalpa. They were on trial for sedition and illicit protest, two charges often applied in Honduras to criminalize protesters. A large crowd of public school teachers and members of various social organizations awaited the results. We were told that results would not be known until later in the afternoon.

When Radio Globo announced the potential eviction of the road occupation in front of the National Autonomous University (UNAH), I headed there. At the UNAH I spent two hours behind a line of heavily-armed police in full riot gear. They shot tear gas, threw rocks, and sprayed high-pressure water from tanks at student protesters. I arrived as the police began to evict the road



Police truck spraying water mixed with toxic chemicals on peaceful protesters. Photo: Karen Spring

that morning. I ran away from the clouds of gas while being pushed by panicked people as police continued lobbing tear gas canisters.

After the repression subsided, I went back to the STIBYS building and saw men throwing buckets of water on dried bushes, grass, and trees that had caught fire only 50 meters from a gas station and a large propane tank. The fire was contained but smoke still rose from the bushes.

When I arrived at the STIBYS entrance, I found out that many people had been stuck inside the building (30 meters from the road) during the eviction and police had shot approximately 30 tear gas canisters inside the building. Many were suffering severe breathing problems. A 16 year old girl was sitting

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COSTA RICA: US Undermines Arias' Decision

By Lisa Sullivan, Latin America
Coordinator for SOA Watch

Ed. Note: *WikiLeaks, the whistle-blower website that has published thousands of diplomatic cables, has posted two cables from the US embassy in Costa Rica offering insight into the US pressure tactics to keep the SOA/WHINSEC in business*

When we join together as small grassroots groups from around the Americas to resist militarization and promote a culture of peace, we are, quite simply, very powerful. So much so, that the world's largest military giant not only takes notice, but sometimes has to scramble to keep up as we take the lead.

Just days ago, Wikileaks revealed cables from the US embassy in Costa Rica that unveil an all-out six-month campaign by the embassy, in conjunction with the Pentagon's Southcom and SOA/WHINSEC, to subvert one of SOA Watch's major strategies: the appeal to governments to withdraw their troops and police from SOA/WHINSEC.

Specifically, the target was the government of Costa Rica and President Arias' decision to withdraw from the SOA in 2007. Coming on the heels of similar announcements by the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Uruguay and Venezuela, this announcement by Arias, a Nobel Peace Laureate, was too much for the Pentagon to ignore.

Arias' announcement was the result of a meeting with Fr. Roy Bourgeois and me, along with members of the Costa Rican Quaker Peace Center who had arranged the meeting. The cable describes our meeting as "the Problem." Arias' decision stunned offi-

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cials, as the cable indicates.

These three entities worked together for six months, along with Costa Rica's Security Minister Fernando Berrocal, who they lobbied with ample resources, to find what they called "the Solution." US ambassador Langdale was tasked with informing Arias that his decision would result in a loss of \$1.2 million in cooperation agreements. Not wanting his image as international peacemaker to be tarnished, Arias finally bowed to six months of pressure from the US and agreed to allow Costa Rican police to return to SOA/WHINSEC, but under the condition that Berrocal take responsibility for the decision and that no public announcements by Arias be made. The cable made it clear that they feared a major SOA Watch-led pressure campaign against Arias if the overturn of his decision were made public.

I will always remember how Arias' eyes watered when I spontaneously jumped up to hug him – breaking protocol – upon hearing his consent to our proposal to withdraw from the SOA. I thanked him "in the name of the tens of thousands who had lost their lives

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occupation in front of the University and stood behind the police line observing the battle between heavily armed state forces and protesters.

A male student that strayed from the protesters was pointed out and chased down by another young man, who was later identified as a police officer dressed in civilian clothes. The student was tackled by the infiltrator, and seconds later four to six officers dressed in riot gear appeared with their batons drawn. A fight had broken out between two officers near the injured student, who was lying on the ground.

Apparently, one of the officers had drawn his pistol and was pointing it at the student. The other officer screamed at him, pushed him and ordered him to put his gun away. It was a very intense moment, particularly as many more police arrived, surrounded the student, and kicked and struck him with batons. The student was dragged and pushed to the police post. I witnessed five students being arrested and taken to the police post in the neighborhood.

Although it is required by law that state forces respect the autonomy of the UNAH and have no jurisdiction on university property, po-

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Source: <http://213.251.145.96/cable/2007/11/07SANJOSE1999.html>

<http://213.251.145.96/cable/2007/12/07SANJOSE2073.html>

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Source: *Rights Action, March 30, 2011; April 13, 2011*

HAITI: Joyous Victory in a Bitter Time

By Robert Roth, co-founder of the
Haiti Action Committee

Ed Note: *the article was edited for length*

On April 4th, Haiti's electoral council announced that, according to preliminary results, Michel Martelly had been selected Haiti's new president. A kompa singer and long-time proponent of Jean-Claude Duvalier, Martelly worked with the dreaded FRAPH death squads that killed over 5000 people in Haiti after the first coup against President Jean Bertrand Aristide in 1991. Martelly supporters had announced they would "burn down the country" if he were not selected. Only a small number of Haitians – around 20% by most estimates – voted in the elections, the smallest percentage in 60 years to participate in any presidential elections in the Americas. Fanmi Lavalas, the party of Aristide and by far the most popular in Haiti, was banned from participation. Why should people vote? It was a "selection," not an "election," we were told over and over again. By the second round on March 20th, Haitians had to choose between Martelly or Mirlande Manigat, a right-wing member of Haiti's tiny elite. One Haitian friend told us, "This is a choice between cholera and typhoid. You cannot make such a choice."

Yet the bitter taste of the dismal elections could not diminish the joy of "the return." As the plane carrying President Aristide and his family back from a 7-year forced exile in South Africa approached the Port-au-Prince airport on March 18th, there were about 50 of us in the inner courtyard of his home. A day before we had watched quietly as dozens of Haitians methodically painted walls, swept the same floors over and over again to make sure they were spotless, and fixed any last remnant of the destruction that took place at this house after the coup on February 29, 2004.

We had heard that President Aristide (called Titid throughout Haiti) would arrive at the airport around noon, but we had gone to the house earlier to avoid the crush. I had come with a dear friend, Pierre Labossiere, of the Haiti Action Committee. We were both honored and overwhelmed to be there.

Rumors spread via cell phone: "He's at the airport, making a speech." "The car is coming." We heard a roar. "Lavalas" means

"flash flood": the flood of the poor, who can accomplish wonders when they feel their strength. Thousands were climbing over two sets of walls, rushing past security, engulfing the courtyard. Within minutes, the roofs and trees were filled. There was no room to move. Yet in the midst of total chaos, there was discipline and restraint. "Get off the roof," someone shouted. "It's Titid's roof." "Don't damage the trees." Then the singing and the chanting began. "We will not vote in the election. We have no candidate. Welcome back Titid. Welcome back schools. Welcome back hope. Lavalas – we bend, but we do not break."

I was standing next to a Haitian grass roots organizer and school director. Her school had been under attack since the coup, but she had persevered and kept up the work. She has been the heart of earthquake relief in her community. She had tears in her eyes. "I've been working in the movement since I was 15. I am so happy. So happy."

We saw a friend, who had been imprisoned during the last terrible years of Duvalier and now lives in one of the internal refugee camps, we asked her, "Are you going into the house?" She said, "No, I can always see the President. It's more important to hand out water to the people. They are so thirsty."

I could only imagine the reaction of the US State Department, which tried so hard to stop this moment. President Barack Obama had made a last-minute call to President Zuma of South Africa demanding that he prevent the return until after the new round of presidential elections. What did he think of this scene? Was he even watching?

Finally, it was possible for some of us to get in the house. The people outside stayed and stayed, pressed against the windows – and then left, but not until cleaning the courtyard, picking up what had been dropped.

Mildred Aristide greeted us at the door.



President Aristide, speaking from Toussaint Louverture Airport on his arrival to Haiti, March 18, 2011.

"Isn't it beautiful out there?" she asked.

So many, in and outside of Haiti, had worked for this moment. Not because Aristide is a savior or can solve all the problems in Haiti. Not because his return will end cholera, or bring the 1.5 million people out of those terrible earthquake camps. This was a basic issue of justice and self-determination. A democratically elected president had been illegally removed from office and banished from his homeland – and the majority of Haitians never accepted his removal. They wanted him home.

Now Aristide *has* returned, in defiance of the United States; brought home by his people and a determined international campaign. The task is daunting. Barred from elections, Lavalas has no representatives in the legislature, and will have no official power within the state. Partnering with the Haitian elite, the US is setting up sweatshops in the Port-au-Prince area and preparing to dig up the country's mineral wealth. Bill Clinton co-chairs an on-going Interim Haiti Recovery Commission, sitting on over \$10 billion. USAID pours money into US-based NGOs that pay more for staff than for projects. Thirteen thousand UN soldiers and police maintain a seemingly permanent foreign occupation. Cholera – introduced to Haiti by UN forces from Nepal – has spread. A Harvard/UCSF study now predicts

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TEXAS: Posada Carriles not Guilty

By Al Anaya, Task Force on the Americas; article was excerpted

Luis Posada Carriles has been acquitted by a federal jury in El Paso Texas, on all charges relating to his illegal entry into the United States in 2005.

If champagne corks are popping in some quarters in Miami, faces are glistening with tears in households from Havana to Montreal. It is in those cities where many of the victims and survivors of his terrorist activities live, where hopes for America's justice system, despite decades of bitter experience, continue to be expressed.

The evidence seemed incontrovertible especially against someone so brazen. He had confessed on audio tape to the bombings in Havana that took the life of Fabio Di Celmo. He had sneaked into the United States and

then called a press conference to announce that he arrived. He had, after all, denied these things to federal agents, with the hope of remaining here in America.

We cannot imagine how crushing this news is to Livio Di Celmo whose brother was killed in 1997. He was outraged that Posada was being prosecuted for perjury and obstruction rather than the violent act that had taken the life of his brother who, as Posada is heard to say on tapes played in court without a hint of remorse, "was in the wrong place at the wrong time." Now the Di Celmo family must see Posada, prosecuted only for immigration violations, go free.

The verdict puts our country in a terrible position. As Peter Kornbluh of the National Security Archive observed this afternoon, "This is a disaster for the US legal system,

the credibility of the US campaign to fight international terrorism, and for US-Cuba relations. Most of all it is an insult to the families of Posada's many victims who hoped this trial would afford them a small modicum of justice for the loved ones lost to his acts of terrorism."

Kornbluh, who has documented evidence against Posada over the last decade, said, "Having presented a comprehensive case that Posada was involved in acts of international terrorism the US government must now exercise the post 9/11 laws it has to deal with situations like these."

This would be a good step. We can only hope that the Department of Justice is listening.

Source: www.Cubacentral.com, 4/08/11

ARIZONA: Economic Impact of SB1070

By Colleen Rose, Task Force on the Americas

As the one year anniversary of the passage of Arizona's SB 1070 nears, the Immigration Policy Center and Center for American Progress released a new report, "A Rising Tide or a Shrinking Pie: The Economic Impact of Legalization Versus Deportation in Arizona," which examines two very different futures for Arizona's economy.

In the first scenario, the proponents of SB 1070 achieve their goals and all current unauthorized immigrants leave the state, taking their labor, spending power, and tax dollars with them. In the second scenario, unauthorized immigrants are offered a pathway to legal status, enabling them to earn higher wages, spend more, and pay more taxes. Deporting all of Arizona's unauthorized workers, consumers, and taxpayers would eliminate 581,000 jobs and reduce state tax revenues by \$4.2 billion. Conversely, legalizing the state's unauthorized immigrants would create 261,000 jobs and increase tax revenues by \$1.7 billion.

According to Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda, the report's author and founding director of the North American Integration and Development Center at UCLA: "The key issue is that

bills like SB 1070 that seek to eliminate the undocumented population, if successful, would represent a severe shock to the Arizona economy and create a deep hole that the state would have to claw out of."

According to Benjamin Johnson, Executive Director of the American Immigration Council, "More than 60% of the current unauthorized population has been in the United States for more than 10 years. As a result, proposals to deport them or drive them away will come with a huge cost...States can either impose a huge deportation tax on their economy in a quest to enforce their way out of our broken immigration system, or they can harness the economic potential of immigration for the good of their states."

According to Nan Walden, Arizona Businesswoman and Vice President and Counsel at Farmers Investment Co.: "People are leaving, along with their tax and consumer dollars and visitors aren't coming because they are unsure of the climate. It is clear that SB 1070 is not good for Arizona business."

Source: *Immigration Policy Center*, Mar. 24, 2011

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800,000 cases. Martelly plans to reestablish the military and sharpen the attack on Lavalas. And his compatriot, Duvalier, is there – a specter haunting the country anew.

Still, the return means *so* much. The fundamental goal of coups and counter-insurgency is to sever the connection between a popular movement and the people, to destroy even the belief that transformative social change is possible. At Aristide's house, in the streets of Port-au-Prince, it was clear that the coup and occupation have not been able to do this. Fueled by a hard-won victory, grass roots organizers - who have never stopped their work - have already taken heart. There will be powerful initiatives in education and health care, and the steady incorporation of a new generation into a movement that has bent but not broken. And a trusted voice of the poor is now back, whatever may come. In his speech at the airport, as he and his family re-touched Haitian soil, Aristide commented on the undemocratic and exclusionary elections. He focused on the need to include everyone in the life of the country: "Every Haitian without exception, because every person is a human being, so the vote of every person counts."

Source: *For the complete article see: Counterpunch, April 11, 2011*

VENEZUELA: Bolivarian Revolution at Twelve Years

By Gregory Wilpert, author and founder of *Venezuela Analysis*

Ed. Note: *article was excerpted and edited for length by Camilla Schneider, Task Force on the Americas*

After twelve years of the Chavez presidency the international media gives the impression that Venezuela is in a terminal spiral towards a state socialist dictatorship with a failing economy, presidential authoritarianism, rampant crime and corruption, arbitrary nationalizations and persecution of private media and opposition leaders. If true, then why does President Chavez continue to have widespread support? Opinion polls regularly show that Venezuelans say their political system is more democratic and their economy is functioning better than the economies of most other countries in the region.

Venezuela is far from a failed leftist experiment and there is substantial evidence of significant progress towards a more egalitarian, inclusive and participatory society and that these advances explain the government's ongoing popularity. To explain the high level of support I will present some important advances and shortcomings and the factors or obstacles that might explain these shortcomings.

In the political realm the changes involve an increase in political inclusion of previously excluded sectors. Voter registration rose from 51% to 69% with most new voters from poor

backgrounds. The new 1999 constitution passed under Chavez instituted one of the most fraud-proof electoral systems in the world with dual electronic and paper ballots. It gave many rights to indigenous populations, explicitly included women with housework to be considered as wage-earning work in calculating pension benefits (not yet implemented) and gave affirmative action opportunities to women and indigenous peoples for loans, land reform, and access to social programs. People have more opportunity to participate in the political process including the right to initiate referenda to recall any elected official and to approve or repeal laws. An important new form of participation is community self-organization, via over 30,000 communal councils where 150-400 families receive funding to work on community improvement projects. Citizens participate in hundreds of new, independent community radio and television stations with training and start-up equipment provided by the government.

This greater inclusion and participation has led to more Venezuelans believing in democracy than citizens of any other Latin American country according to the Latinobarometro opinion polls.

In the economic realm the administration has increased state control over the economy and begun dismantling neo-liberalism. Oil industry private sub-contractors were nationalized giving workers full benefits and better pay. Nationalized transnational oil companies

now control less than 40% of any site and royalties from oil production have risen from as low as 1% to a minimum of 33%.

Over 100,000 government-supported cooperatives with low-interest loans, free training and market access promote work place democratization. The results of these policies is a 50% drop in the poverty rate with extreme poverty dropping two-thirds and a dramatic drop in unemployment from 14.5% to 7%. University attendance has almost tripled with a 50% increase in primary enrollment. Inequality is one of the lowest in Latin America.

Health advances include: universal health coverage with community doctors in most neighborhoods; a drop in infant mortality from 19 to 13.9 per 1,000-births; a 1.5 year increase in life expectancy. The Latinobarometro reports an 84% satisfaction with life, the second highest in Latin America. Socially, these programs led to a variety of improvements in people's lives with more equal distribution of wealth.

In international relations the Chavez government prioritizes a 'multipolar' world with no superpowers dominating global politics; a better balance of national and regional interests; and creation of a more level playing field in international affairs. It focuses on regional Latin American and Caribbean integration with recognition that Third World countries have a better chance for development if they integrate regionally instead of competing individually. Chavez embeds these objectives within an anti-imperialist framework that challenges US hegemony.

These objectives are advanced through creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), a new economic and political project, and the Bolivarian Alliance for our Americas (ALBA) which establishes trade relations based on solidarity and fair exchange instead of free trade. PetroCaribe, provides oil and technical support to Caribbean nations so they are less dependent on transnational oil companies and the ups and downs of world oil prices. People-to-people diplomacy based on solidarity provides free eye operations to the poor, including in the US. A US Heating Oil Program provided heavily discounted heating oil to poor communities including Native American communities.

The government has not been able to ad-

Venezuela: US Funding the Opposition

The US foreign Operations Budget (State Department) details direct funding of at least \$5 million to anti-Chavez groups in Venezuela. The budget justification document states, "Funding will enhance citizens' access to objective information, facilitate peaceful debate on key issues, provide support to democratic institutions and processes, promote citizen participations and encourage democratic leadership."

This type of funding by US taxpayers dollars has been a principal source of promoting subversion and destabilization in Venezuela for eight years. From 2008 to 2011, the US State Department channeled \$40 million to the Venezuelan opposition, primarily directed against President Chavez.

Obama's 2012 budget request from the State Department's "Economic Support fund" is used to fund NGOs and other groups: An additional multimillion dollar financing for political campaigns, media propaganda and other destabilization activities is channeled through the National Endowment for Democracy.

In December 2010, the Venezuelan National Assembly passed the Law in Defense of Political Sovereignty and National Self-Determination prohibiting foreign funding for political activities. How does Washington propose to channel those \$5 million to Venezuelan groups, when such financing constitutes a violation of Venezuelan law?

Source: www.chavezcode.com/2011/02/

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dress some political, economic, social and international shortcomings. Politically the judiciary system continues to be politicized despite efforts to reform it. This has led to questionable prosecutions of opposition spokespeople and has led to accusations of human rights violations. The persistence of an inefficient bureaucratic public administration has given rise to opportunities for low-level corruption and stifles the government's efforts to create a participatory democracy.

Economically the main shortcoming is the government's failure to avoid a two-year recession, unlike most countries in the region. Some analysts feel the 2009-2010 recession was avoidable had the government saved more revenues during high oil prices. Longer-term is the extreme dependency on oil exports despite many efforts to diversify. About 90% of export earnings come from oil. Massive oil revenues stifle domestic production because imports are cheaper. Subsidized gasoline costs the state billions and contributes to waste, pollution, and massive traffic congestion in Caracas. Finally, to keep inflation down, the government fixed currency exchange rate so as to keep imports artificially cheap and inflation lower making non-oil exports expensive.

Most ordinary Venezuelans report crime has surged making it the most serious problem in spite of data showing crime to be about 5 points lower than the Latin American average. Another shortcoming is the persistent housing shortage. Inefficiency contributes to the ongoing shortage even though the government has dedicated resources to housing including nationalizing the cement industry and producing cheap PVC plastic housing materials.

Four main obstacles make internal criticism and course-correction difficult. First, there is President Chavez himself. His tremendous leadership and ability to unite a fragmented left and mobilize a demoralized, disenfranchised mostly poor population has created a dependency which makes it difficult for supporters to criticize because it reflects negatively on the one individual on whom the revolution depends - making it quite fragile due to its strong dependence on a single charismatic leader.

Second; the clientelistic political culture has not changed much. Loyalty to an individual or sub-group is more important than to political principals. This creates a breeding ground for corruption and criticism threatens unity, indicates disloyalty, or causes job loss.

Third, the demands for unity and loyalty

plus Chavez's military hierarchical, top-down management system clashes with the efforts to create a participatory democracy. Chavez supporters in the communities empowered by communal councils and worker-managed workplaces, end up in conflicts with state functionaries trying to implement top-down directives.

Fourth, is the uncertainty as to exactly where the Bolivarian Revolution intends to go. How far is it willing to take the impulse to democratize society? What about private enterprises? The capitalist marketplace? Will it overcome the market through central state planning, democratic planning or a socialist market economy? A positive aspect is that the lack of a detailed blueprint opens up space for debate and collective decision-making.

The Bolivarian Revolution faces outside

obstacles including: an opposition willing to use unconstitutional means for opposing the government; a superpower, the US, which uses all of its political and economic might to undermine the Chavez government; and a global capitalist economy that makes it practically impossible to create an alternative within the existing economic system. If the Bolivarian Movement finds ways to overcome its extreme dependency on Chavez, its legacy of a clientelistic political culture and its top-down management style, then the movement will be in a better position to debate the issues of the day, to identify problems, to find solutions, and to develop a coherent vision of where it wants to go as it heads towards 21st century socialism.

Source: *UpsideDownWorld.org, Feb 2, 2011*

COLOMBIA: Displacement Reaches 5 Million

Ed. Note: *The article was excerpted from "News from Colombia" by Alistair Lizaranzu Task Force on the Americas*

CODHES, the Colombian human rights NGO has released its latest report on internal displacement, the armed conflict and human rights. This report looks specifically at the so-called Centers for the Coordination of Integrated Action (CCAI), regions of the country which the Colombian government has designated as focal points for coordinated military and political efforts, ostensibly to "overcome forced displacement, protect human rights and reconciliation, overcome extreme poverty and consolidate conditions for development and peace." Most shockingly, the report states that in the last 25 years at least 5,195,620 people have been forcibly displaced, a figure that encompasses 11.4% of the entire population and means that on average 778 people are displaced every day.

There are 14 CCAI spread across the country, encompassing 86 municipalities. These zones link in to Colombian government efforts to portray the conflict in the country as stemming from a lack of state presence in some areas of the country. According to this interpretation the power 'vacuum' is then filled by guerrillas and paramilitaries who are to blame for the violence that besets the nation.

However the CODHES report shows that this interpretation is false. Forty-four of the 100 municipalities with the highest levels of displacement are in the CCAI, areas where the army is in control. Violence is the main cause

of displacement in these zones and at least eight paramilitary groups operate in 62 of 86 CCAI municipalities. The Integrated Action Zones, have witnessed 176 assassinations, 87 civilians killed in military actions, 81 injured by mines and 15 people kidnapped.

According to the report, from 1980 to 2010, land clearance—the forced displacement of peasants in order to allow free access for mining and intensive agriculture—has resulted in the violent clearing of 6,638,195 hectares of land. Where the military then takes control, land is often sold to wealthy families, which entrenches the displacement of peasant families. Mining occurs in a third of the CCAI municipalities and the report states that "Mining zones are militarized and paramilitarized: the armed forces protect big private investments, the paramilitaries prevent social protest and pressure people to displace." A similar process happens around the palm oil plantations which exist in nearly a fifth of the CCAI municipalities. In May 2010 the human rights prosecutor ordered the arrest of 24 palm oil businessmen for forced displacement and the invasion of areas of special ecological interest in alliance with paramilitaries.

Furthermore, despite official claims that the CCAI will target drug production, illegal crops continued to be cultivated in nearly three quarters of Integrated Action zones, making up 48% of the national total of illegal crop production. These figures have cast into doubt the effectiveness of the Integrated Action zones in

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MEXICO: Unwinnable War on Drugs

By Laura Carlsen Director of Americas
Program of the Center for International Policy

In Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, a student peace protester is gunned down by the Federal Police. Pictures of the intestines bursting from his ruptured gut make the rounds on the Internet, shocking even the world's bloodiest city.

In Matamoros, Tamaulipas, schools close down after officials receive bomb threats. Newspapers timidly report that the threats "could be related to" Gulf Cartel retaliation for the killing of one of their leaders, Tony Tormenta, in a military operation days earlier. President Obama calls President Calderon to congratulate him on taking down the drug lord. Mexican authorities predict a new wave of violence in the state, as the Zetas move in to wrest control from the weakened Gulf Cartel.

Whether measured by increased public safety, reduced supply of illegal drugs on the US market, or the dismantling of drug trafficking organizations, the war on drugs is failing. It has been four years since President Felipe Calderon announced the offensive and sent tens of thousands of soldiers into the streets. The results are a record 37,000 drug-war related homicides so far and thousands of complaints of human rights abuses by police and armed forces. Arrests of drug kingpins and lesser figures have set off violent turf wars, with no discernible effect on illicit flows. The murder of politicians, threats to civilians and disruption of daily life have furthered the downward spiral.

None of this should come as a surprise. Although Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has held up Plan Colombia as a model for Mexico, the drug war didn't work there either. A full decade and \$7 billion dollars after Plan Colombia began, regional drug production remains stable and smaller paramilitary groups have replaced the large cartels as traffickers.

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achieving the purported goal of creating "an environment of stability and peace that allows the strengthening of democratic institutions to the benefit of citizen's rights and the creation of the conditions for citizen's human development." Moreover, the continuance of forced displacement from these zones of government control demonstrates a questionable concept of social cohesion.

According to CODHES, official and NGO

Some violent crimes, such as kidnappings, have gone down but corruption has deepened with scores of Congressional representatives under investigation, prosecution or sentencing for ties to paramilitaries.

Militarization with the combined rationale of the war on drugs and counterinsurgency has left Colombia with one of the worst human rights record in the hemisphere. Diplomatic relations have been affected as many neighboring nations view US military presence and involvement in Colombia's drug war as a threat to regional self-determination.

Despite these results, the Obama administration has announced plans to extend indefinitely the Merida Initiative, designed by the Bush administration to last three years and cost \$1.3 billion dollars. The administration has requested \$282 million for Mexico under the initiative in the 2012 budget.

The problem is, the drug war is not underfunded; it's unwinnable. As long as a lucrative market exists, the cartels will find a way to serve it. Eliminating operatives, even high-level leaders, merely diversifies and redistributes the business. Cartels have years of experience building flexible structures, with new leaders or rival gangs replacing displaced or weakened ones. At the lower levels, they draw from an inexhaustible pool of young men with few prospects in life, who have adopted the slogan, "Better to die young and rich than old and poor."

If the war on drugs is unwinnable, does that mean we have to resign ourselves to the unbridled power of the drug cartels? No. The other tragedy of the war on drugs is that it precludes potentially more effective strategies by posing as the only option. As the US government spends millions of taxpayer dollars to pay US private security and defense firms to "fix" Mexico, it has done little to nothing to address the parts of transnational organized

data coincide in that the zones of most forced displacement are the zones of the heaviest military and police presence. These zones are also those where paramilitaries are strong and where new paramilitary groups have been created. It is now also clear that these same areas of forced displacement are those of heavy foreign and Colombian investment in mining and biofuel agriculture.

Source: justiceforcolombia.org, March 10, 2011

crime that exist within its borders – demand, transport and distribution, corrupt officials, gun-running and money laundering.

Rethinking the drug war is not tantamount to surrender. Here are a few key elements of an alternative strategy:

Follow the money. Instead of shoot-outs in the streets, far more could be done in both countries to attack the financial structures of criminal organizations. Billions of dollars are laundered in mainstream financial institutions and businesses. If we're serious about weakening organized crime, it's time to crack down on illicit financial flows, even when it affects powerful interests.

Increase funding for drug abuse prevention and treatment. Approaching illegal drug use as a health issue is a win-win strategy. Education teaches young people the costs of addiction and abuse, and treatment and harm reduction programs can improve lives and reduce costs to society, as well as cutting demand for illicit substances.

End prohibition, beginning with marijuana. Without the billions of dollars in revenue that pot provides, drug cartels have fewer resources to recruit youth, buy arms and corrupt politicians.

Give communities a role besides "victim". As Mexican funds and US aid have been diverted to the drug war, social programs in Mexico have been severely cut back. This is exactly backward. Strong communities – ones with jobs, ample educational opportunities and coverage of basic needs and services—are better able to resist the infiltration of organized crime.

The war on drugs strategy lacks benchmarks or any real analysis of the root causes of the violence. Each day it digs itself deeper into a hole. That hole has become a mass grave for thousands of Mexicans, mostly youth.

The Obama administration has announced plans to intensify the drug war in Mexico and extend the model to Central American and Caribbean nations. Congress appears willing to follow suit. This would usher in a new era of military-led relations with our Latin American neighbors and unleash violent conflict in those countries as it has in Mexico. If that happens, horror stories like the ones from Ciudad Juarez and Matamoros will sadly become the norm rather than the exception.

Source: www.cipamericas.org, March 31, 2011

Mexico-to-Colombia Security Corridor Advances

By Greg Grandin, author and professor of history, NYU

Last January, I wrote an essay for *The Nation* on Washington’s integration of Mexico, Central America and Colombia into a “security corridor.” I called it a “rump Monroe Doctrine,” an explosive mix of militarism and neoliberal economics. Militarily, assorted bilateral and regional treaties are fusing the region’s military, intelligence and judicial systems into a unified, supra-national counterinsurgent infrastructure. Economically, there’s been an intensification of socially and environmentally disruptive resource extraction % mines, biofuel plantations, hydroelectric dams; tying it all together are loans and other funding from the World Bank, the IMF, the UN and the Inter-American Development Bank, capitalizing projects aimed to synchronize the region’s highway, communication and energy networks, blending the North American and Central American Free Trade treaties and, eventually, the pending Colombian Free Trade Agreement into a seamless whole.

In other words, as the rest of *South America* pulls out of the US orbit (which I would argue ranks as a world historical event as consequential as the fall of the Berlin Wall, though less noticed since it has taken place over a decade rather than all on one night), Washington is retrenching in what’s left of its backyard. Today in the *New York Times*, Geoffrey Wheatcroft has an interesting opinion piece that reads events in Egypt as part of a broader recession of US power in the world. Certainly another sign of this recession is this retrenchment running from Mexico through Colombia: unable to secure its interests and project its power in all of Latin America through a mix of hard and soft power, Washington has, by default if not conscious design, returned to some pre-modern “secure the flank” conception of security. Washington is building a moat around a besieged fortress America.

In the year since I wrote that essay, a number of events have taken place that have advanced the construction of this security corridor. These include: a new proposal for a “Plan Central America,” that would bolt together Plan Mexico and Plan Colombia, creating “synergies,” as a US official called it; a program by which Colombia trains Mexican



Google Map from Fellowship of Reconciliation

police to fight gangs, instruction that may soon be extended to Central American countries; a deepening commitment to the El Salvador-based and Washington-funded International Law Enforcement Academy, which critics have described as a new School of the Americas; the use of airbases in Panama and (post-coup) Honduras to launch US drones; and the construction of even more US military bases. To get a graphic image of this “security corridor,” check out this map where Central America seems to have been turned into one big landing strip.

The origin of this security corridor is Plan Colombia – Bill Clinton’s multibillion-dollar aid program to one of the worst human-rights violators in the world. The main effect of Plan Colombia has been to diversify the violence and corruption endemic to the cocaine trade, with Central American and Mexican cartels and military factions taking over export of the drug to the United States. This, along with the economic disruptions caused by NAFTA and the CAFTA, kicked off the cycle of criminal and gang violence that today engulfs the region. This violence, in turn, has been accelerated by the rapid spread of mining, hydroelectric, biofuel and

petroleum operations, which wreak havoc on local ecosystems, poisoning land and water, and by the opening of national markets to US agroindustry, which destroys local economies. The ensuing displacement either creates assorted criminal threats that justify harsher counterinsurgent measures, or provokes protest, which is dealt with by new-style death squads.

As during the cold war, the uniting of regional security and intelligence forces under the banner of a broader, international crusade creates the “hostile environment” in which death squads flourish. But in a way, today’s death squads have gone legit: they are now called “private security companies,” some of them staffed with ex-Colombian paramilitaries. The Canadian group Rights Action has documented a clear pattern of increased repression throughout the region, much of it linked to biofuel production and mining, which includes a rise in death-squad killing of peasants in Honduras.

It’s best to think of the Mexico-to-Colombia “security corridor” as less a defense initiative and more a blueprint for how to build a perfect machine of perpetual war.

Source: www.thenation.com, Feb. 11, 2011

EL SALVADOR: Obama's Visit

By Fr. Dean Brackley, University of Central America in El Salvador

San Salvador — President Obama and his family spent a packed overnight March 22-23 here and took the place by storm. Reactions in this polarized society couldn't help but be mixed, but many were positive. Obama surprised and pleased most people by his historic visit to the tomb of Archbishop Romero, the 31st anniversary of whose martyrdom we celebrate today.

But, Obama arrived under two clouds. His administration had been decisively instrumental in allowing an illegal coup to stand in Honduras a year-and-a-half ago and for the elections organized by the coup-masters to go unchallenged. And, of course, he arrived as US cruise missiles were raining down on one more Arab country.

Many probably sensed that Obama, like Salvadoran President Mauricio Funes, has mounted a horse he cannot fully control. He said as much when asked about helping "legalize" undocumented Salvadoran immigrants in the United States: The US Congress is tying his hands. (Few drew attention to the 50-odd immigrants that the US has been deporting by air to El Salvador each day for the last three years.)

The most dramatic moment of Obama's stay was his visit to Romero's tomb in the cathedral crypt. He listened to the current archbishop, José Luis Escobar, in silence, closed his eyes, ostensibly in prayer. Before leaving the cathedral, the president lit a candle at the rack near Romero's tomb.

The press, dominated by the right, spilled barrels of ink about Romero, about his life and ministry. Now there was the scramble to insist that the memory of this great spiritual leader be "de-politicized." One columnist felt the need to point out how he had denounced the Jesuits in 1973 (four years before becoming archbishop) for spreading "red" literature. Nowhere, among all the main stream media was it breathed who had actually killed Romero: the founder of the main right-wing party which governed from 1989 to 2009.

Obama's visit says something about Romero, increasingly a man for all seasons and for all peoples. Jesus said, "If I am lifted up, I will draw all to myself." In Romero we see what that means. His courageous defense of the poor, in the name of the gospel and unto death, is drawing everyone to him. The beauty of his life, his preaching and his self-gift, seduces. This is the way forward for all of us, especially, of course, for the Church.

Obama's visit also says something about

that it can collaborate with the Funes Administration, in the fight against narco-trafficking and the street crime and endemic poverty killing thousands and fueling massive emigration. There is a convergence of interests between the US government, on one hand, and, on the other, the FMLN, the party of the former guerrillas who brought Funes to power in an alliance with business groups fed up with the corruption of right-wing parties with personnel on the take with the cartels.

On this visit Obama announced funding of \$200 million for combating crime in the region. Guns and crime control open government spigots. But in June there will be more credit ready to flow for local development. This will go mostly to the usual subjects for the usual kinds of projects, that is, to the construction companies (of course, through the banks) for expanding the airport, for a port, for highway and other infrastructure development. Apparently a smaller component will go to re-activating agriculture and to medium and small enterprises. It's not how you and I would do it, but that is how politics works, both here and there.

If a future FMLN government wishes to turn south and ally more closely with the social-democratic left in South America, if it wishes to trade broadly with China, it will have to think twice. Re-negotiating these big debts will come with thick strings attached.

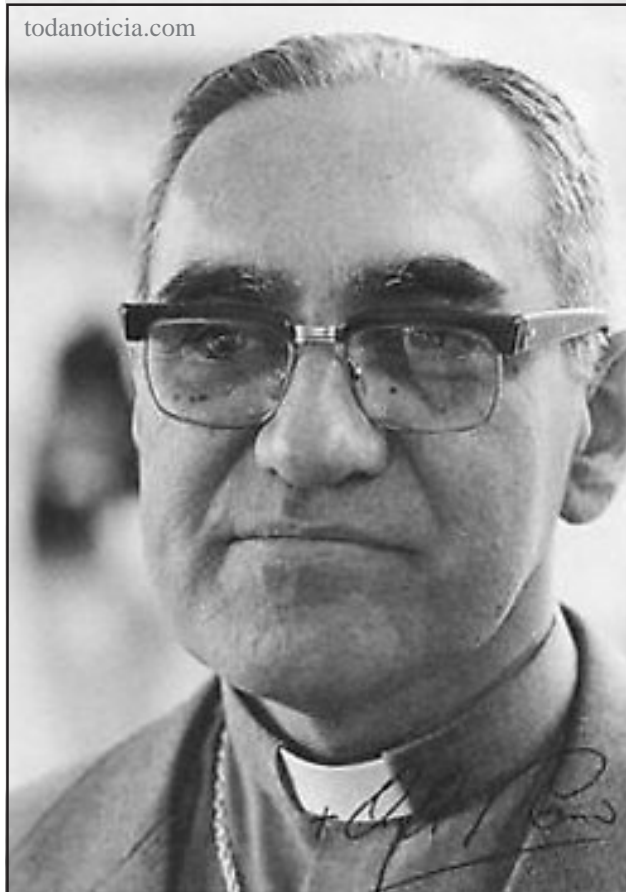
I confess: I was hoping, unrealistically, that before Romero's tomb Obama would silently ask pardon for all that US governments have done

this past century to sustain privileged oligarchies and their militaries in Central America.

Shortly before his death, Archbishop Romero wrote to President Jimmy Carter begging him in no uncertain terms not to send military aid to the Salvadoran government that was murdering hundreds of civilians each month.

I am left wondering, what kind of letter would Romero write to President Obama today?

Source: *National Catholic Reporter*, March 24, 2011



the president. Surely, it burnishes his image, but gives him credit. Even as he exercises US power, with its militarism and imperial sway, he detours to acknowledge a champion of the poor and a martyr for the truth.

I imagine the president saying to himself, "Even if I'm not quite there, I want to acknowledge this greatness." Last year, recalling Romero, the UN General Assembly declared the anniversary of his death, March 24, the International Day of the Right to the Truth, especially for victims of human rights abuses.

The Obama Administration recognizes

Bishop Samuel Ruiz, Dies

By *Julia Preston, journalist*

Bishop Samuel Ruiz García, an impassioned defender of the Mayans in southern Mexico and a mediator in peace talks between Indian rebels and the government, died on Monday in Mexico City. He was 86. The cause was respiratory failure and complications of high blood pressure and diabetes, said Bishop Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel, Bishop Ruiz's successor.

During his 40 years of presiding over a Roman Catholic diocese in Chiapas State, Bishop Ruiz cast light on abuses suffered by the Indians and sought to bring them into the church as equals with other Mexicans, challenging the rigidly stratified social order.

His advocacy and egalitarian views, which were tinged with socialism, brought him into conflict with the Mexican government, which accused him of fomenting a violent uprising in Chiapas in 1994. He also rankled the Vatican, which said he had strayed from ecclesiastical principles to create a politicized ethnic church, and in 1993 publicly invited him to step down. Mexican clerics rallied to his defense, however, and he remained as bishop until he retired in 2000.

Bishop Ruiz attracted a fervent following among Indians in Chiapas, who called him "Tatic," which means "father" in a Mayan language. On Tuesday, Indian parishioners filled the cathedral in San Cristóbal de las Casas, a colonial town in the Chiapas high-

lands, for a memorial Mass that also commemorated the 51st anniversary of Bishop Ruiz's ordination there.

Samuel Ruiz was born on Nov. 3, 1924, in Irapuato, in Guanajuato State in central Mexico, the conservative Catholic heart of the country. The federal government waged bloody anticlerical battles against Catholics as he was growing up. When he arrived in Chiapas in 1960, his beliefs were staunchly traditional. But Bishop Ruiz was influenced by the Second Vatican Council, which in the 1960s called for bringing the Catholic faith to people in a way that reflected their own cultures.

"He became a representative of the poor and aggrieved in his diocese and also a protector of priests and nuns and lay brothers and sisters who were working with the poor," said John Womack, a professor emeritus of Mexican history at Harvard. Ruiz was committed to liberation theology and indigenous rights.

Starting in 1970, Bishop Ruiz ordered translations of the Bible and other religious texts in the indigenous languages of Chiapas. He trained Indian catechists, or instructors, to organize village assemblies throughout the mountains and jungles of the diocese. By the end of his tenure, there were more than 20,000 Indian catechists in Chiapas, said Pablo Romo, a former Dominican priest who worked with the bishop. "He made the word of God accessible to the people," Mr. Romo said.

San Cristóbal is named for Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, a 16th-century Dominican missionary from Spain who was one of the first bishops of Chiapas and an early protector of the Indians. Bishop Ruiz said he knew he was following that legacy.

As economic changes in the 1980s deepened the poverty and isolation of the Indians, many Catholics joined an uprising that erupted when the Zapatista National Liberation Army, a group of armed Indian rebels, occupied several Chiapas towns in January 1994.

Bishop Ruiz openly supported the Zapatistas' goal of fighting injustice but he did not condone violence. For four years, beginning in 1994, Bishop Ruiz mediated peace talks between the government and the Zapatistas. Accords were signed in February 1995 in the Chiapas village of San Andrés Larráinzar. (The accords were never ratified into law.)

Bishop Ruiz's Zapatista sympathies also earned him enemies among the landed class in Chiapas and some Indians who opposed the rebels. In November 1997, he was ambushed by gunmen on a mountain road but escaped without injury.

Obedying Vatican rules, Bishop Ruiz retired, reluctantly, when he turned 75. In 2002, the Vatican ordered a halt to a program he had initiated that had ordained more than 300 married Indian deacons.

Source: *New York Times*, January 20, 2011

Rebel Journalist John Ross Is Dead

By *John Nichols, journalist*

Ed. Note: *article excerpted by Colleen Rose*

When the brave and brilliant journalist John Ross was offered official honors by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 2009 – for telling "stories nobody else could or would tell" – he refused the recognition. He then recalled having run unsuccessfully for the board in the "Summer of Love" year of 1967 – with a perfect think globally, act locally slogan: "Rent Control Now! Out of Vietnam!"

Ross died in Mexico on January 18, 2011, at age 72 after a last battle with liver cancer.

In addition to the 1995 American Book Award for *Rebellion from the Roots: Zapatista Uprising in Chiapas*, Ross collected the Upton Sinclair Award in 2005 for his epic

tome *Murdered By Capitalism: 150 Years of Life and Death on the American Left*. His 2009 book, *El Monstruo: Dread and Redemption in Mexico City*, is part people's history, part love letter to the city where Ross lived on and off for decades.

Ross was a wordsmith. Let's give him the last word. Here is his statement from 2009 to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors:

Forty years ago when I would appear before this honorable board as an organizer for the Mission Tenants Union to protest the devastation of working class housing in our neighborhood, certain disgruntled board members would signal San Francisco County deputies to throw a hammerlock on me, drag me out of the chambers, and book

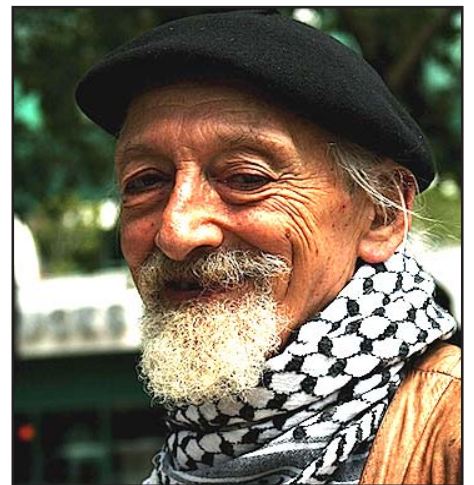


Photo: Marcia Perskie, Nation Books

me at the so-called Hall of Justice on charges of disturbing the peace.

continued from page 11

John Ross, continued from page 10

To prevent a repeat of these painful events, I ask my companeros and companeras to join me at the podium today and watch my back.

Punishment for the commission of the crime of independent journalism can be harsh. I have danced with death throughout my checkered career – May 1st 1986, the 100th anniversary of International Workers Day on the streets of Santiago Chile when I inadvertently walked into one of Pinochet’s machine guns; climbing into a guerrilla camp in the Cauca Valley of Colombia; at the end of a road to a Waste Management toxic incinerator above Playas de Tijuana where some company goon took 13 potshots at my person – when I called the Examiner for whom I then slaved, I was told to forget all about it.

Life like reporting is a kind of death sentence. Pardon me for having lived it so fully.

I have mulled too long about whether or not to accept an honor from a city that has become nothing less than a sanctuary for the rich. This was once a sanctuary city for the refugees of U.S. wars in Latin America – now the indocumentados are being rousted, jailed, and sent back to their devastated home coun-

tries from right here in Sanctuary City. I have debated receiving an honor from a city where greedy landlords bleed their tenants dry, a city that pushes the poor into the street and treats the homeless like so many cockroaches, a city where the police continue to run riot in neighborhoods of color – few weeks ago, recuperating from liver cancer chemotherapy I was slammed twice in the chest and threatened with being sent back to hospital by a Mission District cop while I witnessed a rough arrest on Valencia and 24th – you can read all about it in my citizens’ complaint recently reprinted in the Bay Guardian.

How can I accept an honor from a city that cloaks itself in rampant hypocrisy and the fake green of filthy lucre?

The truth is I cannot. Thanks anyway. Hell, I don’t even live here anymore. For the past 25 years, I have been an expat holed up in the Centro Historico of Mexico City, an exile from the racist social and economic policies of the United States of North America. Instead of drawing up hollow proclamations “honoring” derelict beat poets and wild parrots, the Board of Supervisors would do well to honor the poor and working class citizens

of this city who struggle daily to survive here in this lap of luxury by making San Francisco a place where they can still live. One place to start is by nullifying the outrageous Muni fare hikes that will soon come before you.

There is one more thing you can do for me today. In 1967, I ran for the Board of Supervisors under the banner of “Rent Control Now! Out of Vietnam!” We paid our registration fee and five days later I was attacked by the SFPD after an anti-police brutality rally at the old Mission station – I eventually lost my left eye as a result of this attack. The notoriety attracted the interest of a candidate with a similar name – Tom Ross – who had me barred from the ballot after he discovered that I was an ex-felon – I was the first U.S. citizen to be sent to federal prison for refusing induction in the Vietnam-era military. When we demanded our filing fee returned the county registrar refused. On election day, people who voted for me were arrested for tampering with the voting machines.”

***“I want my filing fee back.”
“With interest.”***

Source: *thenation*, January.18, 2011

N E W B R I E F S

BOLIVIA: Stands Alone at Cancún

During the December UN Climate Change Conference in Cancún, Mexico, Bolivia was the only country that did not sign the final agreement. Evo Morales described the document as a “bad result for the people of the world which would result in increasing and worse natural disasters.”

The agreement, signed by the other 193 United Nations member states, includes plans to limit global warming to a 2°C rise and to create a Green Fund to help those affected by climate change. However, critics point out, that the agreement does not establish binding targets for emissions reductions, and that this could lead to much higher rise in global temperature with catastrophic consequences for weather systems and the environment.

The Bolivian delegation, led by UN Ambassador Pablo Solón, had lobbied for a 1°C permitted increase and the creation of a Tribunal for Climate Justice. Solón raised serious questions about the agree-

ment and queried exactly where the money for the Green Fund would come from. He also expressed his unhappiness that it would be administered by the World Bank, which he said did not balance the interests of developed and developing countries.

The government of Evo Morales has taken a strong ethical stance on the issue of climate change, and has argued that it will be those in poverty who will suffer most from its effects. Solón says he plans to challenge the Cancún agreement at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Source: *BIF News Briefing*, Dec. 2010 - Jan.2011; boliviainfoforum.org.uk

CUBA: Jimmy Carter’s Visit

Former President and statesman Jimmy Carter completed a visit to Cuba during March 2011. The three-day visit, conducted within the framework of the humanitarian, non-profit Carter Center, in-

cluded interviews with President Raul Castro, former President Fidel Castro, as well as 12 former Cuban political prisoners and detained USAID contractor Alan Gross. Carter appeared pleased at the end of the visit and asserted:

“I think one of the serious mistakes that my country continues to make is the trade embargo which is very damaging to the well-being of every citizen in Cuba, and I believe it impedes rather than assists in seeing further reforms made.”

Along with calling for the end of the US Trade Embargo, President Carter expressed concern regarding other unresolved issues affecting diplomatic relations. He called for immediate action on the following key issues: An immediate release for the “Cuban Five”; an end to travel restrictions which prevent US citizens from visiting Cuba; and that Cuba be removed from the US list of “countries which sponsor state terrorism.”

Source: *Miami press conference*, March. 20, 2011

continued on page 12

COLOMBIA: US Moves Ahead with Bases

Disregarding Colombia's Constitutional Court decision in August 2010 which struck down the agreement that would give the US military use of seven bases in Colombia, the Pentagon initiated unprecedented amounts of new construction there.

One month later, in September 2010 US military agencies signed contracts for construction at Tolomaida, Larandia and Málaga bases in Colombia worth nearly \$5 million. The military contracts for Tolomaida were larger than the previous four years. There were also military contracts for \$2.5 million construction at unnamed locations in Colombia. In 2009 another contract in the amount of \$5.5 million for Tolomaida Aviation was signed.

In fiscal Year 2011 the US Corps of Engineers plans to spend \$14 million to build integrated logistic centers in various locations in Colombia. In addition to Co-

lombia, the Army Corp of Engineers plans for military construction in 2011, funded by South Com Counter-Narco-Terrorism, account for facilities in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama and Belize, as well as a \$10 million upgrade at the Soto Cano (Palmerola) base in Honduras. The total amount of US military funding for construction, more than doubled in 2010 compared to 2009.

Source: *Fellowship of Reconciliation*, Jan 27, 2011

ECUADOR: US Ambassador Repudiated

Late Tuesday afternoon, the Ecuadorian government of Rafael Correa declared United States Ambassador Heather Hodges to be persona non grata. A WikiLeaks cable, published in the Spanish newspaper *El País*, supplied the principle motivation provoking Correa to take this grave action. This marks the second time in

the past month that a US ambassador has been forced to relinquish their post in a Latin American country because of a leaked diplomatic cable. Drafted by Hodges, the cable condemned Correa's appointment of Police Commander Jaime Hurtado. It cited investigations dating back to 2006 and 2007 that had found Hurtado guilty of embezzlement. The leaked document mentioned that President Correa knew about the investigations and its findings regarding Hurtado, but nevertheless selected him for the position because he could be more easily manipulated due to his compromised status. When given the opportunity to explain or defend this cable, Hodges declined to do so because the cable was obtained illegally. This situation arose at a time when the relationship between both states was already tenuous, and it could be months before a new ambassador is approved by the Senate.

Source: *Press Release from Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, 4/14/2011



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