

Honduran Dictatorship “Made in the USA”

Sunday 24 December 2017, by [SHEPPARD Barry](#) (Date first published: 24 December 2017).

The U.S. State Department has endorsed the outcome of the November election in Honduras that is the most farcical electoral farce in recent history.

In the November election, staged by the U.S.-backed dictator Juan Hernández in hopes of polishing his image, he ran against Salvador Nasralla, candidate of the Alliance to Oppose the Dictatorship.

As initial returns started to come in, the Supreme Election Tribunal (TSE) reported that Nasralla was ahead by five percentage points with over half the vote counted. Then it suddenly stopped reporting, saying its computer had a malfunction. Thirty-six hours later, it said the computer was back and the total vote showed Hernández won by 1.6 percent. The TSE was appointed by the dictator.

An electoral observer mission from the Organization of American States (OAS), an organization that usually backs Washington, stated that the vote count showed so many irregularities, including the statistically improbable late swing in the vote, that the vote could not be verified. The OAS called for new elections.

Immediately, there were large protest across Honduras, in every city and in the countryside. In response to the huge mass marches and road blockades, the government declared a state of emergency and a curfew. Protests continued, and were attacked by troops with truncheons, tear gas and live ammunition.

Police units refused to join the attack, saying they didn't want to oppress the people. So the attacks are being carries out by the military police, notorious for being the most repressive part of the armed forces. Their leaders were trained in the U.S. at Fort Benning, Georgia.

This turmoil was the situation for a few weeks, while the TSE said it was reviewing the election. At a point when the protests seemed to be dying down, the TSE announced December 17 that Hernández was indeed the winner, which provoked renewed demonstrations and more violence by the regime.

As of December 19, human rights groups say that at least 22 protesters have been shot and killed, and 1,200 arrested since the election. The repression continues, as do the protests.

The immediate background for these current events was the 2009 military coup in Honduras that ousted democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya, organized by the Obama administration with then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as point person. (Zeyala was later allowed back into Honduras, where he organized a left party that became part of the Alliance.)

Before reviewing that coup, there is a longer history of violence and repression carried out by the Honduran ruling class and their backers in the U.S.

“For much of the 20th century,” writes Arturo Rivera in the U.S. *Socialist Worker* [1], “Honduras was governed through a pact between the oligarchs and the United Fruit Company - an American

corporation with deep ties to the U.S. state. It was from Honduras that the CIA launched the operation to overthrow the democratically elected government of Jacobo Árbenz in Guatemala in 1954

“Despite the fact that Honduras officially does not allow formal foreign military bases on its soil, the U.S. effectively maintains such facilities, such as Palmerola and Caratasca.

“From Palmarola, the U.S. government supplied, trained and directed the paramilitary forces that attacked the left-wing Sandinista government in Nicaragua throughout the 1980s. A very similar military operation in Tegucigalpa, the country’s capital, was the site from which Zelaya was escorted out of the country in 2009.”

The forces behind the 2009 military coup were the Honduran oligarchy and Washington. The Obama administration opposed Zelaya because he was getting too close to the left-wing governments of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador which came to power in the 2000s.

For the Honduran ruling class the coup was a reaction to a popular movement led by Zayala, who promised to call for a constituent assembly to rewrite the constitution to give more rights to workers and peasants.

Clinton made a trip to Honduras just weeks before the coup, which was likely organized with the help of the U.S. military bases in the country. It was too well organized to have been carried out by the Honduran military alone.

A cable from the U.S. Embassy to Clinton exposed by Wikileaks showed that Clinton knew of the coup immediately. She initially backed the military’s claim that Zeyala “fled in the middle of the night to avoid justice for his crimes.” It soon came out that the military had seized him and took him to the U.S. base called “SOUTHCOM Joint Task Force Bravo” for instructions from their imperial master on what to do with him, and then sent him into exile.

The coup was condemned by the OAS and the UN, both of which called for the immediate restoration of Zeyala as president. The demand was ignored by the Obama administration.

“After Zeyala’s removal from power, the Honduran ruling class established an authoritarian regime, using U.S.-supplied and trained military police to crack down on the popular movement from below that was Zeyala’s social base,” wrote Rivera.

“The repression has been especially violent against the campesino movement, which led the resistance by recovering land from the landowners in a country with a predominantly agricultural economy.

“The most famous victim of this wave of repression was Berta Cáceras, leader of the Indigenous resistance coalition COPINH. Berta was a political prisoner after the coup [later released] and was assassinated in a plot involving the government and paramilitary forces, which work hand-in-hand. Political assassination of campesino and social movement leaders has been a matter of everyday life.”

Clinton remained Secretary of State until 2013. During this time she continued her role for Obama as point person regarding Honduras. In 2011, she allowed Zeyala to return to Honduras. She orchestrated the holding of “free and fair elections [held in 2013] ... which would render the question of Zeyala moot,” she wrote in her book *Hard Choices*.

“Free and fair elections” under a military dictatorship established in a violent coup, to give a fig leaf

cover for the coup. Not much of a fig leaf since no one was fooled, much like the recent election.

Also in 2013 Marine General John Kelly visited Honduras, as the newly-appointed head of the U.S. Southern Command in charge of U.S. military operations and bases in Central and South America. He made many subsequent visit to the country, and became buddies with Hernández. Now he is in the White House as Trump's Chief of Staff.

Clinton continues to praise Honduras as a shining example of democracy, and blames the country's problems on drug traffickers. It is true that under the dictatorship, in addition to the repression and butchery, the military has been involved financially to turn Honduras into a narco-state, with gang terror so bad it has forced many young people to take the desperate choice to make the arduous and dangerous trip to try to seek asylum in the U.S.

Echoing Clinton is U.S. chargé d' affaires to Honduras Heidi Fulton (Trump has yet to appoint an ambassador) appeared publicly beside the head of the TSE during the so-called vote recount, giving it de facto endorsement.

Honduras today is the murder capital of the world. An article in the *New York Times* called Honduras "a mess made in the U.S. Descending deeper into a human rights and security abyss."

Barry Sheppard

Footnotes

[1] ESSF (article 42707), [Honduras' rebellion against a fixed election - Democracy and U.S. imperialism in Central America](#).