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The Forgotten Coup: Hillary Clinton's "Dirty Hands" in the 2009 Honduran Coup

Par Timothy Alexander Guzman
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On June 28th 2009, Honduran soldiers marched into the bedroom of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya while he was in his pajamas and forced him at gunpoint to walk into a waiting jet and exiled him to Costa Rica. Then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton condemned the ouster of the Honduran President as a coup as she called for "the full restoration of democratic order in Honduras." The "democratic order" Clinton was suggesting was not to restore Zelaya as the legitimate president but a president (or more like a U.S. Puppet) that Washington finds suitable for its interests. Roberto Micheletti replaced Zelaya as an interim president. Micheletti lived in the U.S. (Florida) early in his life.

Hillary Clinton's involvement in the overthrow of the democratically elected president of Honduras Manual Zelaya is clear while most of the main-stream media ignores Clinton's involvement in destroying yet another democracy in Central America by the U.S. government. Central America has experienced U.S. orchestrated coups and civil wars in the past including Guatemala (1954), Costa Rica (mid 1950''s and 1970-71) and civil wars in Nicaragua (1981-90) and El Salvador (1981-92).

Journalist and author Juan Gonzalez of *The New York Daily News* and co-host of *Democracy Now* brought up the issue this past April when Clinton, the democratic presidential frontrunner at the time met with the editorial board of *The Daily News*. Here is the exchange between Gonzalez and Clinton:

> JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Secretary Clinton, I'd like to ask you, if I can, about Latin America—
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> HILLARY CLINTON: Yes, Juan, yes.
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> JUAN GONZÁLEZ: —and a policy specifically that you were directly involved in: the coup in Honduras.
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> HILLARY CLINTON: Mm-hmm.
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> JUAN GONZÁLEZ: As you know, in 2009, the military overthrew President Zelaya.
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> HILLARY CLINTON: Right.
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> JUAN GONZÁLEZ: There was a period there where the OAS was trying to isolate

that regime. But the—apparently, some of the emails that have come out as a result of State Department releases show that some of your top aides were urging you to declare it a military coup, cut off U.S. aid. You didn't do that.

HILLARY CLINTON: Mm-hmm.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: You ended up negotiating with Óscar Arias a deal for new elections.

HILLARY CLINTON: Mm-hmm, right.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: But the situation in Honduras has continued to deteriorate.

HILLARY CLINTON: Right.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: There's been a few hundred people killed by government forces. There's been all these children fleeing, and mothers, from Honduras over the border into the United States. And just a few weeks ago, one of the leading environmental activists, Berta Cáceres, was assassinated in her home.

HILLARY CLINTON: Right, right.

JUAN GONZÁLEZ: Do you have any concerns about the role that you played in that particular situation, not necessarily being in agreement with your top aides in the State Department?

HILLARY CLINTON: Well, let me again try to put this in context. The Legislature—or the national Legislature in Honduras and the national judiciary actually followed the law in removing President Zelaya. Now, I didn't like the way it looked or the way they did it, but they had a very strong argument that they had followed the Constitution and the legal precedents. And as you know, they really undercut their argument by spiriting him out of the country in his pajamas, where they sent, you know, the military to, you know, take him out of his bed and get him out of the country. So this was—this began as a very mixed and difficult situation.

If the United States government declares a coup, you immediately have to shut off all aid, including humanitarian aid, the Agency for International Development aid, the support that we were providing at that time for a lot of very poor people. And that triggers a legal necessity. There's no way to get around it. So, our assessment was, we will just make the situation worse by punishing the Honduran people if we declare a coup and we immediately have to stop all aid for the people, but we should slow walk and try to stop anything that the government could take advantage of, without calling it a coup.

So, you're right. I worked very hard with leaders in the region and got Óscar Arias, the Nobel Prize winner, to take the lead on trying to broker a resolution without bloodshed. And that was very important to us, that, you know, Zelaya had friends and allies, not just in Honduras, but in some of the neighboring countries, like Nicaragua, and that we could have had a terrible civil war that would have been just terrifying in its loss of life. So I think we came out with a solution that did hold new elections, but it did not in any way address the structural, systemic problems in that society. And I share your concern that it's not just government actions; drug gangs, traffickers of all kinds are preying on the people of Honduras.

So I think we need to do more of a Colombian plan for Central America, because remember what was going on in Colombia when first my husband and then followed by President Bush had Plan Colombia, which was to try to use our leverage to rein in the government in their actions against the FARC and

> the guerrillas, but also to help the government stop the advance of the FARC and guerrillas, and now we're in the middle of peace talks. It didn't happen overnight; it took a number of years. But I want to see a much more comprehensive approach toward Central America, because it's not just Honduras. The highest murder rate is in El Salvador, and we've got Guatemala with all the problems you know so well.
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> So, I think, in retrospect, we managed a very difficult situation, without bloodshed, without a civil war, that led to a new election. And I think that was better for the Honduran people. But we have a lot of work to do to try to help stabilize that and deal with corruption, deal with the violence and the gangs and so much else

Honduras faced a constitutional crisis as Zelaya planned to rewrite the Constitution of Honduras by holding a poll on a referendum for a constitutional assembly to essentially reform the constitution that would allow the people of Honduras a *"legitimate voice"* for a future political process. Government officials, the Supreme Court and members of his own party declared such plans as unconstitutional including Hillary Clinton. An important note to consider is that Zelaya was also was becoming closely aligned with leftist governments in Latin America including Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador. Washington was and still is concerned that its imperial power was becoming obsolete in their backyard so they decided to remove an easy target, President Zelaya.

Honduras was an easier target for regime change since it is a smaller and weaker country militarily, besides Washington has armed and trained the Honduran military (who are loyal to Washington) for decades. Coups and civil wars in Central America were carried out by military officers and soldiers (several became U.S. approved dictators) who were trained by the *U.S. Army School of the Americas* (SOA) located in the state of Georgia which is now called the *Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation* (WHINSEC).

One of the military leaders in the 2009 coup was an Army General Romeo Vasquez, a former student who attended the SOA in 1976 and 1984 and Air Force Gen. Luis Javier Prince Suazo who also attended the school in 1996 according to the *School of the Americas Watch*. Washington wanted to turn the tide of leftist governments that was sweeping the continent so Hillary Clinton did what every past U.S. administration has always done, orchestrate a coup and replace the president with someone that will *"obey"* Washington.

'Clinton & the Coup' Video by Democracy Now!

Hillary Clinton's emails released in 2015 confirmed how that the State Department under the Obama administration sought the permanent removal of Zelaya from the start. The emails titled *'Notes from the Peanut Gallery'* where Cheryl D. Mills, Counselor and Chief of Staff to Clinton wrote an email to Thomas A. Shannon, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs about the removal of both Honduran presidents as a success for the Honduran voters because they will take back their *"democracy":*

> If our early assessment of today's election in Honduras holds, we will have just been witness to a remarkable thing. Honduras voters have taken back their democracy from two failed leaders – Zelaya and Micheletti – who had driven Honduras to isolation and despair

Let's take a closer look at who is driving *"Honduras to isolation and despair".*

The aftermath of the coup allowed Honduras to become one of the most dangerous countries in the world with one of the highest murder rates per capita. The coup installed a repressive government that has contributed to a high-rate of immigration (especially children) to the United States. According to an article written by *'The Nation'* this past April titled *'How Hillary Clinton Militarized US Policy in Honduras'* explained how Hillary Clinton's state department financed ($26 million) a program by the *United States Agency for International Development* (USAID) called*'Honduras Convive'* in an effort *"to reduce violent crimes."* But in all honesty *Honduras Convive* was to *"cover-up"* the orchestrated coup by Washington that allowed the Honduran security forces to continue its human rights abuses including murder:

> It was part of a larger US program to support the conservative government of Pepe Lobo, who came to power in 2009 after the Honduran military ousted the elected president, José Manuel Zelaya, in a coup that was widely condemned in Central America. In reality, critics say, the program was an attempt by the State Department to scrub the image of a country where security forces have a record of domestic repression that continues to the present day.
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> "This was all about erasing memories of the coup and the structural causes of violence." —Adrienne Pine, American University "This was all about erasing memories of the coup and the structural causes of violence," says Adrienne Pine, an assistant professor of anthropology at American University who spent the 2013-14 school year teaching at the National Autonomous University of Honduras. "It's related to the complete absence of participatory democracy in Honduras, in which the United States is deeply complicit"

The interesting part of The Nation's article is that *'Honduras Convive'* or *'Honduras Coexists'* was created under the*Office of Transition Initiatives* (OTI) (which really means supporting a new government approved by Washington after a successful coup) a unit of USAID:

> Honduras Convive ("Honduras Coexists") was the brainchild of the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), a controversial unit of USAID that operates overseas much like the CIA did during the Cold War.
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> Sanctioned by Congress in 1994, OTI intervenes under the direction of the State Department, the Pentagon, and other security agencies in places like Afghanistan, Haiti, and Colombia to boost support for local governments backed by the United States. Sometimes, as it has in Cuba and Venezuela, its programs are directed at stirring opposition to leftist regimes. Clinton gave the office a major boost after she became Secretary of State; its programs are overseen by an undersecretary of state as well as the top administrator of USAID

OTI is to influence political and economic outcomes that favor Washington not the Honduran people who are currently under a U.S. sponsored dictatorship.

On March 3rd, 2016 Indigenous rights and environmental activist Bertha Caceres who won the *Goldman Environmental Prize* in 2015 for stopping one of the world's largest dam builders from completing the Agua Zarca Dam at the Río Gualcarque was murdered in her home by an assassin. Caceres received numerous threats over the years for her activism.

She was also the co-founder of the *Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras* (COPINH). Caceres's murder is not the first one of its kind in Honduras as many activists for various causes have been murdered, tortured and imprisoned over the years by U.S. sponsored government forces and private security hired by corporations. According to a *'Democracy Now'* article on March 11th, 2016 titled *'Before Her Assassination, Berta Cáceres Singled Out Hillary Clinton for Backing Honduran Coup'* documented what Caceres said about Hillary Clinton's involvement in the coup that removed Zelaya:

> Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is facing a new round of questions about her handling of the 2009 coup in Honduras that ousted democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya. Since the coup, Honduras has become one of the most violent places in the world. Last week, indigenous environmental activist Berta Cáceres was assassinated in her home. In an interview two years ago, Cáceres singled out Clinton for her role supporting the coup. "We're coming out of a coup that we can't put behind us. We can't reverse it," Cáceres said. "It just kept going. And after, there was the issue of the elections. The same Hillary Clinton, in her book, 'Hard Choices,' practically said what was going to happen in Honduras. This demonstrates the meddling of North Americans in our country

The Latino community in Los Angeles knows the truth about Hillary Clinton as *The Institute for Public Accuracy* (IPA) published an article titled *"Hillary Clinton Killed Berta!"* this past May reported that protesters in a *'Cinco de Mayo LA rally'* confronted Hillary Clinton with one of them declaring *"She killed Berta!":*

> ABC News reports in "Hillary Clinton's Cinco de Mayo LA Rally Anything but Festive Due to Protesters," that: "Clinton was confronted on the rope line by a protester who was quickly surrounded by police and taken out. And during her remarks, one woman, who appeared to be protesting Clinton's role in the 2009 coup in Honduras, shouted loudly, 'She killed Berta! She killed Berta!' — referring to Berta Cáceres, a Honduran environmental activist and indigenous leader, who called out Clinton for her role in the coup, before being assassinated in March. As this was happening, Clinton supporters countered with chants of 'Hillary! Hillary!'

Hillary Clinton's involvement in Honduras shows what she is capable of. The assassination of activists who fight U.S. backed corporate powers that exploit land and natural resources or remove democratically elected leaders will be the norm with another Clinton administration.

Governments and activists throughout Latin America know what to expect if Hillary Clinton is elected to the White House. Clinton will focus on Venezuela since they are in a U.S. orchestrated economic collapse and declare that the Maduro government is violating human rights and plan a coup similar to the 2009 coup in Honduras. Clinton will support the Venezuelan oligarchy that wants to regain the power they had before the late Hugo Chavez was elected president with the majority of votes. Ecuador has upcoming elections in 2017 which also makes it a dangerous situation for its current president Rafael Correa with a Clinton presidency.

Latin American governments and people know that Washington wants to keep the continent as its "backyard". Clinton will attempt to expand corporate powers who are vested in Latin America, besides they funded her campaign and it will be payback time. Clinton promised the corporate and banking sectors that donated vast sums of money to her political

campaign and to the Clinton Foundation *"profits"* in U.S. dominated countries throughout Latin America. Another Clinton presidency will attempt to subjugate Latin America once again. Brazil and Argentina who took a stand against Washington's interests are out of the picture for now. Now Clinton wants to end Latin America's resistance to Washington's demands, with Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Nicaragua in the crosshairs. The resistance will continue in Latin America and criminals like Hillary Clinton will continue Washington's Imperial agenda.

The good news is that at least Latin American governments and the people understand what a Hillary Clinton presidency (if she is elected) will mean and that is more coup attempts and possibly even assassinations against democratically elected leaders who defy Washington's interests in the region.

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Articles Par : Timothy Alexander Guzman

A propos :

Timothy Alexander Guzman is an independent researcher and writer with a focus on political, economic, media and historical spheres. He has been published in Global Research, The Progressive Mind, European Union Examiner, News Beacon Ireland, WhatReallyHappened.com, EIN News and a number of other alternative news sites. He is a graduate of Hunter College in New York City.

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