

Bolivia Coup Led by Christian Fascist Paramilitary Leader and Millionaire - with Foreign Support

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*Bolivian coup leader **Luis Fernando Camacho** is a far-right multi-millionaire who arose from fascist movements in the Santa Cruz region, where the US has encouraged separatism. He has courted support from Colombia, Brazil, and the Venezuelan opposition.*

When Luis Fernando Camacho stormed into Bolivia's abandoned presidential palace in the hours after **President Evo Morales**'s sudden November 10 resignation, he revealed to the world a side of the country that stood at stark odds with the plurinational spirit its deposed socialist and Indigenous leader had put forward.

With a Bible in one hand and a national flag in the other, Camacho bowed his head in prayer above the presidential seal, fulfilling his vow to purge his country's Native heritage from government and "return God to the burned palace."

"Pachamama will never return to the palace," he said, referring to the Andean Mother Earth spirit. "Bolivia belongs to Christ."



Far-right Bolivian opposition leader Luis Fernando Camacho in Bolivia's presidential palace with a Bible, after the coup

Bolivia's extreme right-wing opposition had overthrown leftist President Evo Morales that day, following demands by the country's military leadership that he step down.

Virtually unknown outside his country, where he had never won a democratic election, Camacho stepped into the void. He is a powerful multi-millionaire named in the Panama Papers, and an ultra-conservative Christian fundamentalist groomed by a fascist paramilitary notorious for its racist violence, with a base in Bolivia's wealthy separatist region of Santa Cruz.

Camacho hails from a family of corporate elites who have long profited from Bolivia's plentiful natural gas reserves. And his family lost part of its wealth when Morales nationalized the country's resources, in order to fund his vast social programs — which [cut poverty](#) by 42 percent and extreme poverty by 60 percent.

In the lead-up to the coup, Camacho met with leaders from right-wing governments in the region to discuss their plans to destabilize Morales. Two months before the putsch, he [tweeted](#) gratitude: "Thank you Colombia! Thank you Venezuela!" he exclaimed, tipping his hat to [Juan Guaido's coup operation](#). He also recognized the far-right government of Jair Bolsonaro, declaring, "Thank you Brazil!"

Camacho had spent years leading an overtly fascist separatist organization called the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista. The Grayzone edited the following clips from a promotional historical documentary that the group posted on its own [social media accounts](#):

The rich oligarch leader of Bolivia's right-wing coup, Luis Fernando Camacho, was the leader of an explicitly fascist paramilitary group.

Here are some clips from a promotional historical documentary it published: <https://t.co/gFMyfjsi2p> pic.twitter.com/XXNQfhD7ii

— The Grayzone (@GrayzoneProject) [November 12, 2019](#)

While Camacho and his far-right forces served as the muscle behind the coup, their political allies waited to reap the benefits.

The presidential candidate Bolivia's opposition had fielded in the October election, Carlos Mesa, is a "pro-business" privatizer with extensive ties to Washington. US government cables published by WikiLeaks reveal that he regularly corresponded with American officials in their efforts to destabilize Morales.

Mesa is currently listed as an expert at the Inter-American Dialogue, a DC-based think tank funded by the US government's soft-power arm [USAID](#), various oil giants, and a host of multi-national corporations active in Latin America.

Evo Morales, a former farmer who rose to prominence in social movements before becoming the leader of the powerful grassroots political party Movement Toward Socialism (MAS), was Bolivia's first Indigenous leader. Wildly popular in the country's substantial Native and peasant communities, he won numerous elections and democratic referenda over a 13-year period, often in landslides.

On October 20, Morales won re-election by more than 600,000 votes, giving him just above

the 10 percent margin needed to defeat opposition presidential candidate Mesa in the first round.

Experts who did a statistical analysis of Bolivia's publicly available voting data found [no evidence of irregularities or fraud](#). But the opposition claimed otherwise, and took to the streets in weeks of protests and riots.

The events that precipitated the resignation of Morales were indisputably violent. Right-wing opposition gangs attacked numerous elected politicians from the ruling leftist MAS party. They then ransacked the home of President Morales, while burning down the houses of several other top officials. The family members of some politicians were kidnapped and held hostage until they resigned. A female socialist mayor was [publicly tortured](#) by a mob.

The squalid US-backed fanatics of the Bolivian right ransack the house of the country's elected president, Evo Morales. And the havoc is just beginning. Let no one call them "pro-democracy." pic.twitter.com/rwwvOSAEaA

— Max Blumenthal (@MaxBlumenthal) [November 11, 2019](#)

Following the forced departure of Morales, coup leaders arrested the president and vice president of the government's electoral body, and forced the organization's other officials to resign. Camacho's followers proceeded to [burn Wiphala flags](#) that symbolized the country's Indigenous population and the plurinational vision of Morales.

The Organization of American States, a pro-US organization [founded by Washington during the Cold War](#) as an alliance of right-wing anti-communist countries in Latin America, helped rubber stamp the Bolivian coup. It called for new elections, claiming there were numerous irregularities in the October 20 vote, without citing any evidence. Then the OAS remained silent as Morales was overthrown by his military and his party's officials were attacked and violently forced to resign.

The day after, the Donald Trump [White House](#) enthusiastically praised the coup, trumpeting it as a "significant moment for democracy," and a "strong signal to the illegitimate regimes in Venezuela and Nicaragua."

Emerging from the shadows to lead a violent far-right putsch

While Carlos Mesa timidly condemned the opposition's violence, Camacho egged it on, ignoring calls for an international audit of the election and emphasizing his maximalist demand to purge all supporters of Morales from government. He was the true face of the opposition, concealed for months behind the moderate figure of Mesa.

A 40-year-old multi-millionaire businessman from the separatist stronghold of Santa Cruz, Camacho has never run for office. Like Venezuelan coup leader Juan Guaidó, whom more than 80 percent of Venezuelans had never heard of until the US government anointed him as supposed "president," Camacho was an obscure figure until the coup attempt in Bolivia hit its stride.

He first created his Twitter account on [May 27](#), 2019. For months, his [tweets](#) went ignored, generating no more than three or four retweets and likes. Before the election, Camacho did

not have a Wikipedia article, and there were few media profiles on him in Spanish- or English-language media.

Camacho issued a call for a strike on July 9, posting [videos](#) on Twitter that got just over [20 views](#). The goal of the strike was to try to force the resignation of Bolivian government's electoral organ the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE). In other words, Camacho was pressuring the government's electoral authorities to step down more than three months before the presidential election.

It was not until after the election that Camacho was thrust into the limelight and transformed into a celebrity by corporate media conglomerates like the local right-wing network Unitel, [Telemundo](#), and [CNN en Español](#).

All of a sudden, Camacho's tweets calling for Morales to resign were lighting up with [thousands of retweets](#). The coup machinery had been activated.

Mainstream outlets like the New York Times and Reuters followed by anointing the unelected Camacho as the "[leader](#)" of Bolivia's opposition. But even as he lapped up international attention, key portions of the far-right activist's background were omitted.

Left unmentioned were Camacho's deep and well-established connections to Christian extremist paramilitaries notorious for racist violence and local business cartels, as well as the right-wing governments across the region.

It was in the fascist paramilitaries and separatist atmosphere of Santa Cruz where Camacho's politics were formed, and where the ideological contours of the coup had been defined.



Cadres from the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista (UJC), the Bolivian fascist youth group that Luis Fernando Camacho got his start in

Cadre of a Francoist-style fascist paramilitary

Luis Fernando Camacho was groomed by the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista, or Santa Cruz Youth Union (UJC), a fascist paramilitary organization that has been linked to assassination plots against Morales. The group is notorious for assaulting leftists, Indigenous peasants, and journalists, all while espousing a deeply racist, homophobic ideology.

Since Morales entered office in 2006, the UJC has campaigned to separate from a country its members believed had been overtaken by a Satanic Indigenous mass.

The UJC is the Bolivian equivalent of Spain's Falange, [India's Hindu supremacist RSS](#), and [Ukraine's neo-Nazi Azov battalion](#). Its symbol is a green cross that bears strong similarities to logos of fascist movements across the West.

And its members are known to launch into [Nazi-style sieg heil salutes](#).

Here is another video posted by Bolivia's fascist opposition Santa Cruz Youth Union.

Coup leader Luis Fernando Camacho [@LuisFerCamachoV](#) previously helped lead this sieg-heiling group.

These are the people who overthrew elected President Evo Morales. <https://t.co/gFMyfjsi2p> pic.twitter.com/GvvMfL21UZ

— The Grayzone (@GrayzoneProject) [November 12, 2019](#)

Even the US embassy in Bolivia has [described](#) UJC members as “racist” and “militant,” noting that they “have frequently attacked pro-MAS/government people and installations.”

¶10. (C) Members of the Youth Union have frequently attacked pro-MAS/government people and installations (including the government TV channel). Their actions frequently appear more racist than politically motivated. Several months ago, a group of mainly white Youth Union members attacked an altiplano migrant who they alleged was pro-MAS (anti-autonomy). The attack was televised. (Note: The government is certainly looking to capture on video an attack by a light-skinned pro-autonomy supporter on an indigenous person or persons on or around referendum day, as a means to discredit the entire referendum process. End Note). Such events provide fodder for the government's arguments that the Santa Cruz leadership is anti-indigenous and seeks to separate the country. The Youth Union and other pro-autonomy groups state they are forming a "guardia civil" (civil protection brigade) to guard polling places and prefecture installations. The Youth Union has boasted to the press that it has signed up 7000 members to participate in the guardia civil)- the number is likely inflated but many of those who have signed-on are militant.

After journalist Benjamin Dangl [visited with UJC members](#) in 2007, he described them as the “brass knuckles” of the Santa Cruz separatist movement. “The Unión Juvenil has been known to beat and whip campesinos marching for gas nationalization, throw rocks at students organizing against autonomy, toss molotov cocktails at the state television station, and brutally assault members of the landless movement struggling against land monopolies,” Dangl wrote.

“When we have to defend our culture by force, we will,” a UJC leader told Dangl. “The defense of liberty is more important than life.”



Armed members of the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista

Camacho was elected as vice president of the UJC in 2002, when he was just 23 years old. He left the organization two years later to build his family’s business empire and rise through the ranks of the Pro-Santa Cruz Committee. It was in that organization that he was taken under the wing of one of the separatist movement’s most powerful figures, a Bolivian-Croatian oligarch named Branko Marinkovic.

In August, Camacho tweeted a photo with his “great friend,” Marinkovic. This friendship was crucial to establishing the rightist activist’s credentials and forging the basis of the coup that would take form three months later.

Hoy cumple años un gran líder cruceño y expresidente del Comité pro Santa Cruz pero todo un gran amigo, Branko Marinkovic, quien entregó todo, su libertad y su vida, por su pueblo. pic.twitter.com/uVzNrgH2pl

— Luis Fernando Camacho (@LuisFerCamachoV) [August 21, 2019](#)

Camacho’s Croatian godfather and separatist powerbroker

Branko Marinkovic is a major landowner who ramped up his support for the right-wing opposition after some of his land was nationalized by the Evo Morales government. As chairman of the Pro-Santa Cruz Committee, he oversaw the operations of the main engine of separatism in Bolivia.

In a 2008 letter to Marinkovic, the International Federation for Human Rights [denounced](#) the committee as an “actor and promoter of racism and violence in Bolivia.”

The human rights group added that it “condemn[ed] the attitude and secessionist, unionist and racist discourses as well as the calls for military disobedience of which the Pro-Santa Cruz Civic Committee for is one of the main promoters.”

In 2013, journalist Matt Kennard [reported](#) that the US government was working closely with the Pro-Santa Cruz Committee to encourage the balkanization of Bolivia and to undermine Morales. “What they [the US] put across was how they could strengthen channels of communication,” the vice president of the committee told Kennard. “The embassy said that they would help us in our communication work and they have a series of publications where they were putting forward their ideas.”

In a 2008 profile on Marinkovic, the [New York Times](#) acknowledged the extremist undercurrents of the Santa Cruz separatist movement the oligarch presided over. It described the area as “a bastion of openly xenophobic groups like the Bolivian Socialist Falange, whose hand-in-air salute draws inspiration from the fascist Falange of the former Spanish dictator Franco.”

The Bolivian Socialist Falange was a fascist group that provided safe haven to Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie during the Cold War. A former Gestapo torture expert, Barbie was repurposed by the CIA through its Operation Condor program to help exterminate communism across the continent. (Despite its antiquated name, like the German National Socialists, this far-right extremist group was violently anti-leftist, committed to killing socialists.)

The Bolivian Falange came into power in 1971 when its leader, Gen. Hugo Banzer Suarez, [ousted](#) the leftist government of Gen. Juan Jose Torres Gonzales. The government of Gonzales had infuriated business leaders by nationalizing industries and antagonized Washington by ousting the Peace Corps, which it viewed as an instrument of CIA penetration. The Nixon administration immediately welcomed Banzer with open arms and courted him as a key bulwark against the spread of socialism in the region. (An especially ironic [1973 dispatch](#) appears on Wikileaks showing Secretary of State Henry Kissinger thanking Banzer for congratulating him on his Nobel Peace Prize).

The movement’s putschist legacy persevered during the Morales era through organizations like the UJC and figures such as Marinkovic and Camacho.

The Times noted that Marinkovic also supported the activities of the UJC, describing the fascist group as “a quasi-independent arm of the committee led by Mr. Marinkovic.” A member of the UJC board told the US newspaper of record in an interview, “We will protect Branko with our own lives.”

Marinkovic has espoused the kind of Christian nationalist rhetoric familiar to the far-right organizations of Santa Cruz, calling, for instance, for a “[crusade for the truth](#)” and insisting that [God is on his side](#).

The oligarch’s family hails from Croatia, where he has dual citizenship. Marinkovic has long been dogged by rumors that his family members were involved in the country’s powerful fascist Ustashe movement.

The Ustashe collaborated openly with Nazi German occupiers during World War Two. Their successors returned to power after Croatia declared independence from the former Yugoslavia – a former socialist country that was intentionally [balkanized in a NATO war](#), much in the same way that Marinkovic hoped Bolivia would be.



German Führer Adolph Hitler meets Ustashe founder Ante Pavelić in 1941

Marinkovic denies that his family was part of the Ustashe. He claimed in an interview with the New York Times that his father fought against the Nazis.

But even some of his sympathizers are skeptical. A Balkan analyst from the private intelligence firm Stratfor, which works closely with the US government and is popularly known as the "[shadow CIA](#)," produced a rough [background profile](#) on Marinkovic, speculating, "Still don't know his full story, but I would bet a lot of \$\$\$ that this dude's parents are 1st gen (his name is too Slavic) and that they were Ustashe (read: Nazi) sympathizers fleeing Tito's Communists after WWI."

The Stratfor analyst excerpted a [2006 article](#) by journalist Christian Parenti, who had visited Marinkovic at his ranch in Santa Cruz. Evo Morales' "land reform could lead to civil war," Marinkovic warned Parenti in the Texas-accented English he picked up while studying at the University of Texas.

Today, Marinkovic is an ardent supporter of Brazil's far-right leader [Jair Bolsonaro](#), whose only complaint about Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet was that he "[didn't kill enough](#)."

Marinkovic is also a public admirer of Venezuela's far-right opposition. "[Todos somos Leopoldo](#)" — "we are all Leopoldo," he tweeted in support of Leopoldo López, who has been involved in numerous coup attempts against Venezuela's elected leftist government.

While Marinkovic denied any role in armed militant activity in his interview with Parenti, he was accused in 2008 of playing a central role in an attempt to assassinate Morales and his Movement Toward Socialism party allies.

He told the New York Times less than two years before the plot developed, "If there is no legitimate international mediation in our crisis, there is going to be confrontation. And unfortunately, it is going to be bloody and painful for all Bolivians."

An assassination plot links Bolivia's right to international fascists

In April 2009, a special unit of the Bolivian security services barged into a luxury hotel room and cut down three men who were said to be involved in a plot to kill Evo Morales. Two others remained on the loose. Four of the alleged conspirators had Hungarian or Croatian roots and ties to rightist politics in eastern Europe, while another was a right-wing Irishman, [Michael Dwyer](#), who had only arrived in Santa Cruz six months before.

Image on the right: Alleged assassination plotter Michael Dwyer with his weapons



The ringleader of the group was said to be a former leftist journalist named Eduardo Rosza-Flores who had turned to fascism and belonged to Opus Dei, the traditionalist Catholic cult that emerged under the dictatorship of Spain's Francisco Franco. In fact, the [codename](#) Rosza-Flores assumed in the assassination plot was "Franco," after the late Generalissimo.

During the 1990s, Rosza fought on behalf of the Croatian First International Platoon, or the PIV, in the war to separate from Yugoslavia. A Croatian journalist told Time that the "PIV was a notorious group: 95% of them had criminal histories, many were part of [Nazi and fascist groups](#), from Germany to Ireland."

By 2009, Rosza returned home to Bolivia to crusade on behalf of another separatist movement in Santa Cruz. And it was there that he was killed in a luxury hotel with no apparent source of income and a massive stockpile of guns.

The government later released photos of Rosza and a co-conspirator posing with their weapons. Publication of emails between the ringleader and [Istvan Belovai](#), a former Hungarian military intelligence officer who served as a double agent for the CIA, cemented the perception that Washington had a hand in the operation.

Marinkovic was subsequently [charged](#) with providing \$200,000 to the plotters. The Bolivian-Croatian oligarch initially fled to the United States, where he was given asylum, then relocated to [Brazil](#), where he lives today. He denied any involvement in the plan to kill Morales.

Image below: Rosza and Dwyer with their arms cache in Bolivia



As journalist Matt Kennard reported, there was another thread that tied the plot to the US: the alleged participation of an NGO leader named Hugo Achá Melgar.

“Rozsa didn’t come here by himself, they brought him,” the Bolivian government’s lead investigator told Kennard. “Hugo Achá Melgar brought him.”

The Human Rights Foundation destabilizes Bolivia

Achá was not just the head of any run-of-the-mill NGO. He had founded the Bolivian subsidiary of the Human Rights Foundation (HRF), an international right-wing outfit that is known for hosting a “school for revolution” for activists seeking regime change in states targeted by the US government.

HRF is run by [Thor Halvorsen Jr.](#), the son of the late Venezuelan oligarch and CIA asset Thor Halvorsen Hellum. The first cousin of the veteran Venezuelan coup plotter Leopoldo Lopez, Halvorsen was a former college Republican activist who crusaded against political correctness and other familiar right-wing hobgoblins.

After a brief career as a firebrand right-wing film producer, in which he oversaw a scandalous [“anti-environmentalist” documentary](#) financed by a mining corporation, Halvorsen rebranded as a promoter of liberalism and the enemy of global authoritarianism. He launched the HRF with [grants](#) from right-wing billionaires like Peter Thiel, conservative foundations, and NGOs including Amnesty International. The group has since been at the forefront of training activists for insurrectionary activity from Hong Kong to the Middle East to Latin America.

Though Achá was granted asylum in the US, the HRF has continued pushing regime change in Bolivia. As Wyatt Reed [reported for The Grayzone](#), HRF “freedom fellow” Jhanisse Vaca Daza helped trigger the initial stage of the coup by blaming Morales for the Amazon fires that consumed parts of Bolivia in August, mobilizing international protests against him.

At the time, Daza posed as an “environmental activist” and student of non-violence who articulated her concerns in moderate-seeming calls for more international aid to Bolivia. Through her NGO, Rios de Pie, she helped launch the #SOSBolivia hashtag, which signaled the imminent foreign-backed regime-change operation.

Courting the regional right, prepping the coup

While HRF's Daza rallied protests outside Bolivian embassies in Europe and the US, Fernando Camacho remained behind the scenes, lobbying right-wing governments in the region to bless the coming coup.

In May, [Camacho met with Colombia's far-right President Ivan Duque](#). Camacho was helping to spearhead regional efforts at undermining the legitimacy of Evo Morales' presidency at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, seeking to block his candidacy in the October election.



Camacho with Colombian President Ivan Duque in May

That same month, the rightist Bolivian agitator also [met with Ernesto Araújo](#), the chancellor of Jair Bolsonaro's ultra-conservative administration in Brazil. Through the meeting, Camacho successfully secured Bolsonaro's backing for regime change in Bolivia.

This November 10, [Araújo](#) enthusiastically endorsed the ouster of Morales, declaring that "Brazil will support the democratic and constitutional transition" in the country.

Then in August, two months before Bolivia's presidential election, Camacho held court with officials from Venezuela's US-appointed coup regime. These included [Gustavo Tarre](#), Guaidó's faux Venezuelan OAS ambassador, who formerly worked at the right-wing [Center for Strategic and International Studies \(CSIS\)](#) think tank in Washington.

After the meeting, Camacho tweeted gratitude to the Venezuelan coup-mongers, as well as to [Colombia and Brazil](#).

No vamos a parar hasta tener una democracia real! Seguimos avanzando!

Vamos sumando apoyo... ahora lo hace Venezuela...Gracias a Dios.. hay esperanza!

Gracias Colombia!
Gracias Venezuela!
Gracias Brasil! pic.twitter.com/v9TQ2Fi2Sa

— Luis Fernando Camacho (@LuisFerCamachoV) [August 27, 2019](#)

Mesa and Camacho: a marriage of capitalist convenience

Back in Bolivia, Carlos Mesa occupied the spotlight as the opposition's presidential candidate.

His erudite image and centrist policy proposals put him in a seemingly alternate political universe from fire-breathing rightists like Camacho and Marinkovic. For them, he was a convenient front man and acceptable candidate who promised to defend their economic interests.

"It might be that he is not my favorite, but I'm going to vote for him, because I don't want Evo," Marinkovic told a right-wing [Argentine newspaper](#) five days before the election.

Indeed, it was Camacho's practical financial interests that appeared to have necessitated his support for Mesa.

The Camacho family has formed a natural gas cartel in Santa Cruz. As the Bolivian outlet [Primera Linea reported](#), Luis Fernando Camacho's father, Jose Luis, was the owner of a company called Sergas that distributed gas in the city; his uncle, Enrique, controlled Socre, the company that ran the local gas production facilities; and his cousin, Cristian, controls another local gas distributor called Controgas.

According to Primera Linea, the Camacho family was using the Pro-Santa Cruz Committee as a political weapon to install Carlos Mesa into power and ensure the restoration of their business empire.

Mesa has a well-documented history of advancing the goals of transnational companies at the expense of his own country's population. The neoliberal politician and media personality served as vice president when the US-backed President Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada [provoked mass protests](#) with his 2003 plan to allow a consortium of multinational corporations to export the country's natural gas to the US through a Chilean port.

Bolivia's US-trained security forces met the ferocious protests with [brutal repression](#). After [presiding over](#) the killing of 70 unarmed protesters, Sanchez de Lozada fled to Miami and was succeeded by Mesa.

By 2005, Mesa was also [ousted by huge demonstrations](#) spurred by his protection of privatized natural gas companies. With his demise, the election of Morales and the rise of the socialist and rural Indigenous movements behind him were just beyond the horizon.

US government cables released by WikiLeaks show that, after his ouster, Mesa continued regular correspondence with American officials. A [2008 memo](#) from the US embassy in Bolivia revealed that Washington was conspiring with opposition politicians in the lead-up to the 2009 presidential election, hoping to undermine and ultimately unseat Morales.

The memo noted that Mesa had met with the chargé d'affaires of the US embassy, and had privately told them he planned to run for president. The cable recalled: "Mesa told us his party will be ideologically similar to a social democratic party and that he hoped to strengthen ties with the Democratic party. 'We have nothing against the Republican party, and have in fact gotten support from IRI (International Republican Institute) in the past, but we think we share more ideology with the Democrats,' he added."



5. (C) Carlos Mesa, who had been eyeing an aggressive anti-constitution campaign as a means to launch his bid on the presidency, seems now to be reconsidering. In a meeting with the Charge October 27, Mesa all but acknowledged that Evo would win his new constitution in January and that there was little point in taking on the quixotic task of trying to defeat it. Mesa instead wants to focus on presenting an alternate vision for the country that is not against Evo but rather represents better change (than what Evo has offered so far). "So long as we don't take away the change message from Evo, we have no chance," Mesa commented. While not confident, Mesa believes that Evo could be defeated in a December 2009 election: "it (the election) is over a year away and that is a lifetime in Bolivian politics. Long-term in Bolivian politics these days is 24 hours," he joked. Mesa believes a souring economy and Evo's inability to improve the lives of Bolivians will weaken him. "Passage of a new constitution will raise everyone's expectations, but will people's quality of life improve? That will be the question," Mesa postulated.

Today, Mesa serves as an [in-house "expert"](#) at the Inter-American Dialogue, a neoliberal Washington-based think tank focused on Latin America. One of the Dialogue's top donors is the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the State Department subsidiary that was exposed in classified diplomatic cables published on Wikileaks for strategically directing [millions of dollars](#) to opposition groups including those "opposed to Evo Morales' vision for indigenous communities."

Other top [funders of the Dialogue](#) include oil titans like Chevron and ExxonMobil; Bechtel, which inspired the initial protests against the administration in which Mesa served; the Inter-American Development Bank, which has forcefully opposed Morales' socialist-oriented policies; and the Organization of American States (OAS), which helped delegitimize the Morales's re-election victory with dubious claims of irregular vote counts.

Finishing the job

When Carlos Mesa touched off nationwide protests in October by accusing the Evo Morales government of committing electoral fraud, the right-wing firebrand hailed by his followers as "Macho Camacho" emerged from the shadows. Behind him was the hardcore separatist shock force that he led in Santa Cruz.



Mesa faded into the distance as Camacho emerged as the authentic face of the coup, rallying his forces with the uncompromising rhetoric and fascist symbology that defined the Unión Juvenil Cruceñista paramilitary.

As he declared victory over Morales, Camacho exhorted his followers to “finish the job, let’s get the elections going, let’s start judging the government criminals, let’s put them in jail.”

Back in Washington, meanwhile, the Trump administration released an [official statement](#) celebrating Bolivia’s coup, declaring that “Morales’s departure preserves democracy.”

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