

The Honduras Coup: Is Obama Innocent?

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Is President Obama innocent of the events occurring in Honduras, specifically the coup launched by the Honduran military resulting in the abduction and forced deportation of democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya? Obama has denounced the coup and demanded that the rules of democracy be honored. Still, several troubling questions remain.

First, almost all the senior Honduran military officers active in the coup are graduates of the Pentagon's School of the Americas (known to many of us as "School of the Assassins"). The Honduran military is trained, advised, equipped, indoctrinated, and financed by the United States national security state. The generals would never have dared to move without tacit consent from the White House or the Pentagon and CIA.

Second, if Obama was not directly involved, then he should be faulted for having no firm command over those US operatives who were. The US military must have known about the plot and US military intelligence must have known and must have reported it back to Washington. Why did Obama's people who had communicated with the coup leaders fail to blow the whistle on them? Why did they not expose and denounce the plot, thereby possibly foiling the entire venture? Instead the US kept quiet about it, a silence that in effect, even if not in intent, served as an act of complicity.

Third, immediately after the coup, Obama stated that he was against using violence to effect change and that it was up to the various parties in Honduras to resolve their differences. His remarks were a rather tepid and muted response to a gangster putsch.

Fourth, Obama never expected there would be an enormous uproar over the Honduras coup. He hastily joined the outcry against the perpetrators only when it became evident that opposition to the putschists was nearly universal throughout Latin America and elsewhere in the world.

Fifth, Obama still has had nothing to say about the many other acts of repression attendant with the coup perpetrated by Honduran military and police: kidnappings, beatings, disappearances, attacks on demonstrators, shutting down the internet and suppressing the few small critical media outlets that exist in Honduras.

Sixth, as James Petras reminded me, Obama has refused to meet with President Zelaya. He dislikes Zelaya mostly for his close and unexpected affiliation with Venezuela's Hugo Chavez. And because of his egalitarian reformist efforts Zelaya is hated by the Honduran oligarchs, the same oligarchs who for many years have been close to and splendidly served by the US empire builders.

Seventh, under a law passed by the US Congress, any democratic government that is the

victim of a military takeover is to be denied US military and economic aid. Obama still has not cut off the economic and military aid to Honduras as he is required to do under this law. This is perhaps the most telling datum regarding whose side he is on. (His Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, is even worse. She refuses to call it a coup and states that there are two sides to this story.)

As president, Obama has considerable influence and immense resources that might well have thwarted the perpetrators and perhaps could still be applied against them with real effect. As of now he seems more inclined to take the insider track rather than an actively democratic stance. On Honduras he is doing too little too late—as is the case with many other things he does.

Michael Parenti's recent books include: *Contrary Notions (City Lights)*; and *God and His Demons (Prometheus, forthcoming)*. For further information, visit his website: www.michaelparenti.org .

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