

Report

FALL 2020

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“The US Appears to be Destined by Providence to Plague the Americas with Misery in the Name of Freedom.”

-Simón Bolívar, 1829

CUBA: Cuban Spies Disguised as Doctors



Cuban medical brigade in Haiti. Photo: Juvenal Balán

By Roger Stoll, Task Force Member

The European Union now excludes travelers from the COVID-ridden US, but welcomes those from the virtually COVID-free Cuba. Cuba, the country that sends doctors and infectious disease specialists around the world to fight the pandemic, the country the US has held in contempt for 60 years, vilified with every epithet and sanctioned and embargoed and blockaded to within an inch of its life.

In a catharsis of propaganda, the US tries to convince the world that Cuban doctors are victims of human trafficking, or else they are all spies, or perhaps both. Cuban journalist Rosa Miri-

am Elizalde likened it to a vision of Cuba as the Red Planet, sending spies to take over the Earth, like the invasion in HG Wells’ War of the Worlds as told by Orson Welles in his (in)famous radio play.

Spies. Yes, they just might be spies. What perfect disguises: doctors, nurses, epidemiologists, medical technicians. And what if they could come to the US?

Perhaps they will secretly take over our health care system, make sure we are all carefully looked after, and teach us to treat epidemics like they are epidemics, as if everyone must be protected because everyone is at risk. You know, like in Cuba.

And while they are at it, perhaps they

might send us more spies disguised as economists to surreptitiously teach us how to give everyone a home, a job, education, money to live on and time for recreation. You know, like in Cuba.

Maybe they will send us still more spies, disguised as actors, artists, photographers, musicians, who will teach us...well, they won’t necessarily have to teach us too much about art (though that would be nice), but they will show us how to do it all collectively, cooperatively, without the corporate veto that corrupts, defunds, starves, and destroys so much art and the ones who make it.

And then maybe Cuba will send yet more spies, disguised as school teachers and literacy experts, to teach us exactly how to go about educating everyone without exception, to the best of their abilities and inclinations, to make every school as good as every other school, and to show us how to treat our teachers like the precious mentors they are. Like in Cuba.

Oh, Cuba, please send us all the spies you can spare. For we are suffering from a severe lack of spies. And we are dying because of it.

Source: *Dissident Voice* on July 23, 2020

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VENEZUELA: How US Policy Failed



Elliott Abrams, image: DonkeyHotey

By Vijay Prashad, historian and editor of LeftWord Books and Érika Ortega Sanoja, Venezuelan journalist

On August 4, 2020, the United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing on Venezuela. Appearing before the committee was US State Department Special Representative Elliott Abrams. Abrams, who has had a long, and controversial, career in the formation of US foreign policy, was assaulted by almost all the members of the Senate committee. The senators, almost without exception, suggested that Abrams had been, since 2019, responsible for a failed US attempt to overthrow the Venezuelan government of President Nicolás Maduro.

From Republican Senator Mitt Romney to Democratic Senator Chris Murphy, Abrams received a severe tongue-lashing. There was no disagreement in the committee about the goals of US policy, namely to overthrow, with force if necessary, the government of President Maduro. Murphy laid out the timeline of Trump's policy, which began with the recognition of minor Venezuelan politician Juan Guaidó as president of Venezuela in January 2019 to the current moment, including how the United States, in Murphy's words, "tried to sort of construct a kind of coup in April of last year."

Abrams was unfazed. "Obviously we hope that [Maduro] will not survive the year and we are working hard to make that happen," he said. The policy, including "a kind of coup", remains intact. Abrams has now added another file to his post: he will be Trump's special representative on Iran; the man who failed to conduct regime change in Venezuela is now going to deepen US attempts to

overthrow the government in Iran.

A clip from Murphy's comments, including the "kind of coup" sentence, circulated widely on social media inside Venezuela. Senior members of the Venezuelan government, including Vice President Delcy Rodríguez and Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza, shared it. It was also shared by former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, who acidly noted that Senator Murphy "is surely a good person, but he doesn't even understand what he is acknowledging." What he is saying is that the US government has tried to do a coup in Venezuela. This is what created outrage in the country.

We asked Foreign Minister Arreaza to comment about Murphy's use of the term "coup" in his statement about US policy vis-à-vis Venezuela. Arreaza told us the following: "US spokespersons continue to openly admit to their crimes and illegal aggressions against the Venezuelan people." It is not only Murphy, a liberal Democrat, who used the language of a "coup." Trump's former national security adviser, John Bolton, recounts in his book how Trump had said that, per John Kelly, "it would be 'cool' to invade Venezuela"; Trump also said that Venezuela is "really part of the United States." Speaking of Murphy's comment and Bolton's book, Arreaza said, "these confessions are priceless evidence for the complaint we raised at the International Criminal Court."

Even members of the Venezuelan opposition, such as Enrique Ochoa Antich, said that the open way in which Abrams and the US senators spoke of armed action against Venezuela "is painful and unacceptable." The entire Trump-Bolton-Abrams policy, he said, has failed to dent the government of Maduro. Ecuador's Correa correctly said that Murphy did not know what he had acknowledged. It is rare for a US politician to care when they say things that violate international law. Murphy's casual statement about a "coup" is in clear violation of the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS), of which the United States is a member. Two arti-

cles from Chapter IV of the OAS charter explicitly outlaw a coup:

"No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the State or against its political, economic, and cultural elements." (Article 19)

"No State may use or encourage the use of coercive measures of an economic or political character in order to force the sovereign will of another State and obtain from it advantages of any kind." (Article 20)

There is no need to interpret these articles, because they are written very plainly. They say that not only is "armed force" forbidden as a "form of interference," but so is the "use of coercive measures of an economic or political character" to violate the sovereignty of a country. The tenor of the Senate hearing was in total violation of the spirit and letter of the OAS charter and the Charter of the United Nations. But this has been the behavior of the US government since at least 1954, when the Central Intelligence Agency overthrew the government of Jacobo Árbenz of Guatemala.

The US senators certainly attacked Abrams for his failure. But what was the failure that bothered them? Not the failure to abide by the laws and conventions signed by the United States; that was not the problem.

Universally, the senators attacked Abrams for not being able to succeed with his coup plans. They gave him advice about how to better overthrow the government of Maduro. Thus far, the US government has denied Venezuela access to IMF funds, charged the leadership in Venezuela of drug-trafficking (with a hallucinatory indictment), and sent a carrier group to tighten the embargo on the country; none of these policies have succeeded, despite the full weight of the US government behind them. Rather than concede that the government of Maduro has popular support, the United States wants to pursue its policy with even more draconian methods.

The United States is currently conducting a hybrid war, which includes an economic war (coloring the government

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Save the Date: TFA WEBINAR Sunday Oct. 4, 4:00 PM PDT

US Intervention and Popular Resistance in Latin America and the Caribbean

It is unfortunate that this year we will be unable to host our usual Annual Dinner, with good food and music, and time for us all to catch up with old friends. However we hope that TFA supporters who regularly come to our Annual Dinner can attend our webinar event. All it takes is a click of the computer to join the event, and we will post instructions on registering and attending the event two weeks in advance on our website, taskforceamericas.org

The mission of the Task Force has always been to study and expose US foreign policy in Latin America and the Caribbean, and this year our Annual Fundraiser event will feature four terrific speakers who will be giving incisive talks about the consequences of US policy in different countries in the Americas including:

Nan McCurdy, a United Methodist missionary who has lived and worked in Nicaragua since 1985. Nan is editor and writer of afgj.org/nicanotes, a premier source of news and analysis from Nicaragua.

Pierre Labossiere, a long time Bay Area activist and leader grew up in Haiti, before coming to the US as a teenager with his family. Pierre co-founded **Haiti Action Committee** and Haiti Emergency Relief Fund and has his hand and heart on the pulse of the struggles of the Haitian people.

Ricardo Vaz, a well known journalist and political analyst who covers the enduring aggressive attacks on the Bolivarian Revolution from his home in Merida, Venezuela. Ricardo is an editor at venezuelanalysis.com and will be sharing his wealth of knowledge and experience about this key country.

Karen Spring has lived in Honduras for many years and is married to Honduran activist and political prisoner Edwin Espinal. Karen is coordinator of the **Honduras Solidarity Network** and author of the aquiabajo.com blog.



2013, TFA members participating in Election Monitoring Delegation in Honduras visit Rio Blanco to support the Lenca community protesting a dam on the Gualcarque River. Photo: Rick Sterling

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Newsletter Committee:

Editorial: Bill Hackwell
Carol Costa
Dale Sorensen
Roger Stoll

Production: Alicia Jrapko

Photography: Bill Hackwell

Distribution: Faye Hinze

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TFA is struggling financially. Would you become a TFA sustainer by making a small recurring donation each month? You can do that by using Paypal or a credit card. Go to our website to donate: taskforceamericas.org

Unfortunately, US foreign policy is not being seriously discussed in the US 2020 election campaign. That makes our work more crucial than ever, because whoever wins the presidency, US intervention in the form of sanctions, coups and invasions is likely to continue in our hemisphere and around the world.

Join us on Sunday, October 4, at 4 PM (PDT), to hear facts and analysis from this exceptional panel of speakers who combine internationalism, insight and a spirit of humanity.

And don't forget to donate to TFA so that we may continue to speak out, exposing US interference in the Americas, taking action in solidarity with popular movements and producing the *TFA Report*. Can we count on you? Please be as generous as you can and send a check in the envelope provided. Thank you.

HONDURAS: Garifuna Lives Matter!



Photo: Roxana Lopez

By the Coalition Against Impunity, a network of civil society organizations with the shared goal of protecting and defending human rights in Honduras

Ed. note: *The Garifuna people of Honduras are of mixed African and indigenous descent. Their African ancestors were kidnapped and brought to the Caribbean, where they were shipwrecked, rebelled against their captors, and escaped before they could be made slaves.*

In 2015, the Inter-American Human Rights Court issued two rulings on Garifuna cases. The court found the Honduran state responsible for violating the Garifuna's collective ownership rights and not affording them due judicial protections. They affirmed the importance of free, prior, and informed consent, and ordered reparations including a public statement of responsibility, collective land ownership titles, and future protections for ancestral lands

It has been many days since Alberth Snider Centeno Tomás, President of the Patronato de Triunfo de la Cruz and member of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), along with Garifuna leaders Suami Aparicio Mejía García, Gerardo Mizael Rochez Cáliz, Milton Joel Martínez Álvarez and a friend of the community, Junior Rafael Juárez Mejía, were separated from their family members and the community by unknown armed actors dressed as agents of the Investigative Police (DPI). The

state of Honduras has provided no response regarding their whereabouts.

Garifuna territories are the scene of a historic conflict of forced displacement of communities from their ancestral territories by the greed of the tourism sector companies; INTUR, Camatur, ITH and the INDURA group, in collusion with the State of Honduras.

Honduras has failed to uphold its obligations according to rulings by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. As a result, the Garifuna population is condemned to violence and displacement which has intensified in recent years.

Prior to the disappearance of the five young men, the lifeless body of community leader Antonio Bermúdez was found in the community of Punta Piedra on June 21st. On May 20, Edwin Fernandez a member of OFRANEH, was murdered in front of his family for not handing over the key to the community security gate.

There are enough indicators to identify a pattern of systematic violence against the Garifuna population, a policy of extermination and displacement to guarantees that their lands, beaches, territories and cultural riches be at the full disposal of investors in tourism. There are attacks and crimes committed against community leaders, the people who are key to efforts to resist extractive industries and defend ancestral territories.

This wave of crimes and disappearances is not new in Honduras; neither is the impunity that protects the criminals that drive this policy. According to the Committee of the Detained-Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), in the context of the COVID-19 emergency, at least seven people are registered as disappeared, including the Garifuna leaders.

These cases reveal a pattern similar to three critical historical times in Honduras: during the decade of the 80s when 184 people were disappeared; in the aftermath of the 2009 coup d'état when President Mel Zelaya was ousted and at least 13 people were detained or disappeared; and the post electoral crisis (2017-2018), when another person was

disappeared and remains missing after being detained by security agents.

Since 2009, in the aftermath and context of the coup d'état, an alert was raised regarding the resurgence of forced disappearance as a tool for social and political control. The facts to date make it clear that this is not a matter of common abductions or kidnappings, rather they are part of a pattern of execution, profiling of victims and a pattern of managing the investigations to assure impunity for these crimes. delete.

In response to all of this, we demand that the five Garifuna men be returned alive.

We demand that the investigation not be carried out by the Investigative Police (DPI), given that testimonies regarding the facts point to the apparent involvement of this institution. There is ample precedent of criminal actions in which DPI has been involved.

We support the position of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras (OACNUDH), calling for the specialized unit of the Technical Agency for Criminal Investigation, the Special Prosecutor for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Groups and Cultural Heritage to be an active part of the investigation.

Above all, we demand comprehensive answers that assure the protection of the Garifuna population. We insist that the Inter-American Court for Human Rights rulings be upheld as the only real way to mitigate the sources of the risks that the Garifuna constantly confront.

We want peace for our Garifuna brothers and sisters. We want life, not death. We want them to live in harmony with their environment and Cosmovision, without the criminal hand of greed.

Because their lives are our lives. Because Garifuna lives matter.



Photo: Orlando Sierra

Source: *Coalition Against Impunity, on July 28, 2020*

WORLD: Uncomfortable Truths



*Christopher Columbus biting the dust.
Photo: Tony Webster*

By Abel Prieto, former Cuban Minister of Culture

The protests that erupted in the wake of George Floyd's murder, in the US and other countries, have made visible a conflict that tends to go unnoticed: symbolic war. Demonstrators have furiously attacked enemies of bronze and marble, quiet and meek in appearance.

"It is an uncomfortable truth that our nation and city owes much of its wealth to its role in the slave trade," said London's Mayor Sadiq Khan, amidst debate over the anti-racist movement taking direct action to eliminate icons of colonial barbarism.

On June 7, in Bristol, a city in southwest England, the statue of slave trader Edward Colston was pulled down and thrown into the Avon River.

The likenesses of Robert Milligan and Cecil Rhodes, colonists and slave traders, were defaced. "Son of slavery" and "colonialist profiteer," were the labels added by protesters to a statue in Edinburgh of Robert Dundas, second Viscount of Melville.

In London, near Parliament, the phrase "He was a racist" appeared on the statue of Winston Churchill, so idealized for his role in World War II. On another Churchill monument in Prague, the same uncomfortable truth was noted.

Boris Johnson accused "violent extremists" of lashing out at time-honored figures. "We cannot now try to edit or censor our past," he said, "We cannot pretend to have a different history."

British Interior Minister Priti Patel stated that these acts of "vandalism" were "a distraction from the issues that

people are protesting. While Montserrat Alvarez rightly retorted: "The exact opposite is true: this reflects conscious awareness of the real historical reasons" for the events.

In Brussels, Leopold II, majestic on horseback, in Trône Place, greeted the dawn with anti-racist graffiti added: "BLM" (Black Lives Matter) and a denunciation: "This man killed 15 million people," referring to genocide in the so-called Belgian Congo. In Antwerp and other cities, Leopold II was covered with paint and humiliated.

The US is once again divided, as if a new Civil War had broken out, this time in the symbolic field. Trump has rejected an initiative to rename military bases named after Southern officers who fought ruthlessly in defense of slavery.

But the statues of Generals Wickham (Richmond, Virginia) and Lee (Montgomery, Alabama), Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States during the Civil War (Durham, North Carolina), and racist journalist and politician Carmack (Nashville, Tennessee) were toppled. In Portland, Oregon, the bronze image of Thomas Jefferson, who signed the US Declaration of Independence and was the country's third President, fell to the ground, its base spray-painted with the epitaph: "Slave Owner." Several local authorities in the South have proposed removing provocative racist monuments.

The genocide of indigenous peoples following the supposed "discovery" rests on the shoulders of Christopher Columbus. His effigies rolled to the ground in Richmond and St. Paul, Minnesota. One of his statues was decapitated in Boston, Massachusetts, while another in Houston, Texas, was covered in red paint. In Miami, Columbus and Ponce de Leon, the "discoverer" of Florida, were labeled with slogans denouncing racism.

HBO Max withdrew from its schedule the famous and racist 1939 film, *Gone with the Wind*. Paramount studios cancelled the television show *Cops*, featuring US police. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat, called for the remov-

al from the Capitol of eleven statues honoring Confederate military leaders.

At the same time, white supremacist groups are mobilizing to defend the Confederate flag, their idols of this era, and the primitive machismo of their armed heroes.

The entire phenomenon is worth studying. Monuments and symbols have been destroyed before in different countries, associated with different historical periods, but never before has an assault on the past been seen on such a scale.

It has been said that statues become invisible with time; that people get used to their presence and stop wondering about their meaning. But anti-racist protesters have seen them and interpreted their message. One certainty stands out: the current capitalist system is built on centuries of colonialism, discrimination, abuse and millions of dead.

Those who attacked these symbols understood this, as Umair Haque says, "Just as white Americans today are rich because their ancestors enslaved blacks, so too today white nations are rich because their ancestors conquered and enslaved a world."

Source: *Granma*, on July 1, 2020

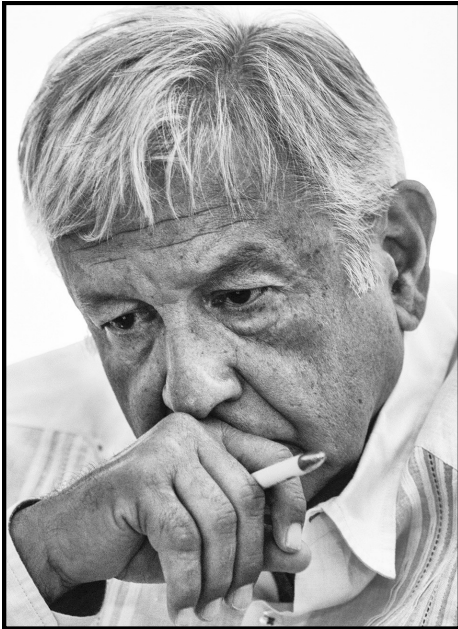
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as authoritarian). Some senators wanted the Trump administration to go beyond this highly destructive form of warfare. They wanted the US government to run a full blockade of Venezuelan ports.

The Trump administration is unwilling to go that far. Such a policy, Abrams said, would be an "act of war." Trump wants a war, but not an open war; the US military knows that it might be able to flatten Caracas, but it would not be able to win a war against the Venezuelan people.

Source: *Counterpunch* on August 12, 2020

MEXICO: First the Poor



AMLO. Photo: Time Magazine

By Roger Stoll, Task Force member

Por el bien de todos, primero los pobres
("For the good of all, first the poor.")

—AMLO

Mexico is a semi-colony with a population of 129 million. Its political, financial and business elites are bound to the US, which receives 80% of Mexican exports. International corporations feast on Mexico's cheap labor and resources, from the *maquilas* in the north, to the central mines and the coffee lands of the south. Walmart is Mexico's biggest employer.

Mexico's GDP per capita is nearly one-third that of the US and 20% greater than that of China. (World Bank, 2019.) But while China will eliminate its poverty very soon, in Mexico half the country is poor.

For four decades the brutality and corruption of neoliberalism plundered the Mexican people. Against this rose a popular nation-wide movement, and in 2018, after losing the 2006 and 2012 elections (widely considered stolen with US complicity), the first anti-neoliberal President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador ("AMLO"), won a landslide victory.

Considering the political and economic millstones around its neck, the

government's achievements in its first year-and-a-half are striking: substantially raising the minimum wage, from USD \$4.39 to \$5/day, and to \$9/day in the wealthier border region; recovering 100s of millions in back taxes from international mega-corporations including Walmart, Coca-Cola, IBM and more; giving tens of thousands of loans and grants to small farmers; guaranteeing prices for corn, wheat, beans, rice and milk, with the goal of food sovereignty; giving student grants for educational expenses; increasing pensions by 40%; creating a national universal and free health care system; and opening over 100 new hospitals.

AMLO's government also created a network of 100 new universities, emphasizing the poorer states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero and Michoacan. Next year a public bank of 2700 branches will serve the poor and rural populations private banks ignore. Gender equity in government has improved (under a 2014 law AMLO promoted while mayor of Mexico City). Renationalization of the state oil and electrical companies PEMEX and CFE has begun, and there is no more distribution of private oil contracts (which AMLO called "the politics of pillage").

The new government keeps good relations with China, Iran, Cuba and Venezuela. It harbors progressive politicians exiled by US-authored hard and soft coups (Bolivia, Ecuador). It exited the US-aligned Lima Group (an instrument of regime change in Venezuela). It plans to strengthen the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Mexico's COVID-19 response, though attacked in the media, is praised by the World Health Organization (WHO): "Mexico is taking several of the lessons learnt by other countries, like China, and applying measures consistent with WHO recommendations; it was the first to set in place a coronavirus detection program...." With Cuba's much-appreciated help, Mexico acted early with targeted testing, contact-tracing and limitations on public gatherings. Yet Mexico suffers a high COVID-19 death toll due in part to the country's long-underfunded healthcare system. At mid-August, Johns Hopkins reports that the country is 13th in COVID-19 deaths per

capita, but still behind Belgium, France, UK, Spain and Italy.

The new government has not had time to carry out its plan to defeat the root causes of crime: poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment. Crime continues to increase, though at a slower pace, with over 35,000 murders and 5,000 disappearances in 2019.

Mexican and US elites, including virtually all Mexican media and the traditional parties (PAN, PRI), vehemently oppose the new government. Mexican Cardinal Juan Sandoval Íñiguez called AMLO's government "atheist" and "communist." FRENA, a rightist alliance with probable US and Wall Street support, is trying to overthrow AMLO in a "color revolution." With explicit threats to destroy Mexico's economy, the US forced Mexico to enforce immigration restrictions at both borders. And in a thus far unsuccessful effort to stop AMLO's renationalizing of Mexico's energy sector, international finance agencies downgraded Mexico's state debt and that of PEMEX.

The impoverished indigenous communities of the south of the country have been treated with callous indifference at best and genocidal violence at worst by past governments. The new government plans megaprojects for the region: a "Maya Train" to take tourists to the great archaeological sites of Tabasco, Chiapas, Yucatán, Campeche and Quintana Roo; a million hectares of fruit and other commercial trees; new mining operations.

This national development program seeks to lure foreign capital with public-private partnerships and "special economic zones." It would bring jobs in agriculture and manufacture for export, and in the tourist industry. The revenue generated would fund social development, poverty would be alleviated and Mexico could honor "the right to stay home" (referring to the migrants of Guatemala and southern Mexico forced to travel north for work). That at least is the plan.

But many indigenous civil organizations have waged protests to resist this plan, and the Indigenous Governing Council (CIG) of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) has sued to stop

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the projects, charging violations of domestic and international law. They predict with good reason the projects will irrevocably damage the environment and their traditional communities and ways of life.

These civil organizations are allied with the Zapatistas and are explicitly anti-capitalist. Their governing philosophy is horizontalist and autonomous. They up

hold anti-capitalist Cuba, but reject progressive reform governments, including Bolivarian Venezuela, Lula-era Brazil, Rafael Correa-era Ecuador, and AMLO and the MORENA party. These civil organizations may not represent all of Mexico's 25 million indigenous citizens but their significance is great and their political criticisms profound.

Their rejection of progressive governments in Latin America may prove prescient. The US has tormented the people

of Venezuela, overthrown Evo Morales of Bolivia, reversed the gains of Correa's Ecuador, and sanctioned and attempted a violent coup against Nicaragua. Perhaps any government trapped in bourgeois democracy and capitalist globalization, no matter how progressive, cannot achieve lasting social progress.

Source: *Task Force on the Americas*, August 24, 2020

NICARAGUA: US Plans to Overthrow Government

By Nan McCurdy, journalist who calls Nicaragua home after living there for decades and raising a family there.

An orchestrated plan financed by the United States to launch a government transition in Nicaragua over the next two years was leaked in a document from the US embassy. It was released, by Nicaraguan journalist William Grigsby on his political analysis program "Sin Fronteras," on *Radio La Primerísima*, July 31. Grigsby says the new coup plan is in response to the fact that the US realizes President Daniel Ortega will win the November 2021 elections. The 18 page document is titled RAIN or Responsive Assistance in Nicaragua.

While the document tries to portray the US intentions as peaceful and "democratic" and the description of the plans tries to paper over the violent intent of US policy, it is a shocking example of illegal interference in another nation's internal affairs.

The document is one of "Terms of Reference" used to contract a US company to take charge of carrying out the planned removal of the government. The company chosen by USAID will head the plan to try to destroy public order and do other actions (violent and otherwise) before, during and/or after the 2021 elections.

The funds to implement this plan are or have been allocated through the International Development Agency (AID) which is also the US institution that has provided the most money openly in re-

cent years to the Nicaraguan opposition for coup activities.

The document establishes three scenarios that they call "democratic transition in Nicaragua:" "RAIN will pursue these activities against a variety of sce-

narios is to create the conditions for a "democratic transition" in Nicaragua involving the media, businessmen, non-governmental organizations and students, just like the 2018 failed coup attempt.

Another section states that if the opposition were to win the elections that new government must immediately submit to the policies and guidelines established by the US. This scenario includes persecution of Sandinistas, and dissolving the National Police and the Army, among other institutions.

The document calls for the opposition to try to deepen political and economic problems taking into account the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since March the US-

directed opposition has focused 95% of their actions on attempting to discredit Nicaragua's prevention, contention and Covid-19 treatment. However this had more success in the international media than in Nicaragua and is now backfiring since Nicaragua has one of the lowest mortality rates in the world.

The document was written in March or April and it is clear the authors thought the Covid-19 Pandemic would cause great stress on the Nicaraguan health system and that this would be one way to bring about a "crisis" and exert "pressure." "Once a great health, political and economic crisis is created in Nicaragua," USAID intensifies its new programmatic strategy, which will lead to destabilizing the country.

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Photo: Jairo Cajina

narios generally falling under three categories: 1. Free, fair and transparent elections lead to an orderly transition: the US candidate wins. 2. A sudden political transition occurs following a crisis: a coup leads to a US backed government. 3. Transition does not happen in an orderly and timely manner, and: The regime remains resilient in the face of domestic and international pressure. It is also possible that the regime may remain in power following electoral reforms and a fair election, but without changes to the rule of law or democratic governance; meaning, without changes that benefit US corporations."

The document reveals that the US government realizes it is a good possibility that the FSLN party will win the 2021 elections in a transparent manner that receives international approval. It states that the purpose of hiring the com-

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In other words their plan counted on the development of “unrest” in the population from Covid-19 that could be utilized.

Despite the US\$31 million that the opposition received from the United States through the USAID from the end of 2017 up to May 1, 2020, the document laments that the opposition is not unified around a political party or candidate. The document also states that “conflicts often arise between peasant groups and the rest of the opposition, and students often distrust business leaders.”

USAID will fund activities to destabilize the country, using local partners, public opinion analysis, and social network monitoring to create false news. As it is clear to the US that in 2021 the FSLN may be victorious, USAID proposes a “delayed or unforeseen transition of government” where it seeks to create a political and economic crisis. And the plan contemplates abrupt changes and the ability to respond quickly to “install a new government.”

Confident that there will be a coup

d'état in Nicaragua, USAID writes that the best option may be to have the opposition refuse to participate in elections, which is what happened in 1984 because of the US direction of the opposition.

The document states various times that it is possible that the government will win the elections even after electoral reforms, and that the elections could be seen as fair internationally. Under this type of situation, the company hired by USAID must be prepared to respond immediately in directing civil society to implement actions that destabilize the country.

The document also details the participation of the US Embassy in Managua, which will be in charge of executing a series of diplomatic actions such as the creation of a commission to legitimize a new government imposed by a coup d'état.

Finally, the document makes it clear that the people of Nicaragua will be left without basic services as a result of the coup d'état orchestrated and financed by the United States, and “organized crime would increase.” Saying that the population would be left without basic services

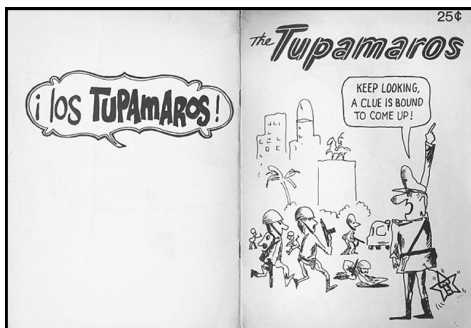
sounds as though at some point there could be a plan to blow up electric plants.

This written evidence of US plans to overthrow the government is very big news in Nicaragua and anywhere the press will cover it. Only more blatant was the CIA manual for the US-led Contras in the 80s that taught everything for overthrowing a government from torture and assassination to blowing up ports, electric lines, schools and health clinics. Whether the US public will ever hear of this plan and contact their representatives to ask for its termination remains to be seen

The Company contracted by USAID is likely a descendent of Blackwater's Eric Prince. According to a Reuter's source, “Prince has also been actively pitching projects in countries around the world, including Venezuela, where he floated a plan last year to deploy a private army to help the opposition topple President Nicolas Maduro”

Source: *Alliance for Global Justice on August 5, 2020; RAIN document RFTOP No: 72052420R00004*

URUGUAY: Police Reform to Police Repression: 50 Years after an Assassination



Cover of NACLA comic drawn by the Mexican cartoonist Rius about the Tupamaros. (NACLA archives).

By Stuart Schrader, author of: Badges without Borders: How Global Counterinsurgency Transformed American Policing, 2019.

Fifty years ago, in August 1970, police discovered the corpse of a kidnapped fellow officer in a stolen Buick. He was shot multiple times, and his blood pooled beneath the parked car. His name was Dan A. Mitrione, formerly the po-

lice chief in Richmond, Indiana.

But Mitrione's body turned up not on the streets of Indiana but in Montevideo, Uruguay. Sent there as “chief public safety advisor” in 1969 by the USAID, Mitrione believed he was working as a police reformer, instilling professionalism and technical expertise. His kidnapers, the *Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros*, a radical, left-wing underground organization, claimed his reforms improved the ability of Uruguayan police to dominate the working class and repress revolutionary activity. Both were right.

Five decades after Mitrione's killing, the meaning of police reform is now a topic of debate in the streets of the United States, even as police respond to ongoing political protests with overwhelming shows of force. Mitrione's story shows that police reforms can actually exacerbate the problems they purport to solve.

Mitrione's organization, the US Office of Public Safety (OPS), trained po-

lice in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It advocated administrative efficiency, new forensic technologies, and skilled performance of routine duties. These reforms enabled police to better impede narcotics smuggling and investigate serious crime. But strengthening police power in this way meant ensnaring greater numbers of people in a web of ideological suspicion as well.

The OPS deepened Uruguay's turn toward authoritarianism by endowing the police with new capabilities of mass surveillance and armed confrontation. Mitrione's predecessor in Uruguay reflected that there “was some truth to the allegation” that his advisory work in the mid-1960s resulted in “police brutality and repression under the ‘control’ of US Government agents.” This brutality in turn pushed activists to militancy, ultimately paving the way for Mitrione's kidnapping.

Although Uruguay was a peaceful

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and relatively prosperous country at the beginning of the 1960s, economic stagnation spurred labor strikes and student demonstrations. Fearful of public protest getting out of hand, the police clamped down. With US help, officers adopted the frequent use of tear gas to disperse crowds. This was a “humanitarian” reform in a country whose police had previously tended to confront demonstrators with sabers.

Escalating repression of public demonstrations and interference with strikes propelled more young radicals, including the *Tupamaros*, toward subversive tactics. The government began censoring the press. Deprived of a right to speak out, including by clouds of US-supplied tear gas, leftists went underground.

Initially, the *Tupamaros* earned support among ordinary people by distributing stolen food in poor barrios. But police repression caused them to change priorities. Members reveled in making Uruguay’s security forces look hapless. They burglarized police officers’ homes and military installations. Because the *Tupamaros* targeted police, the group’s supporters risked arrest for their beliefs.

When Mitrione arrived in Montevideo, the OPS had already facilitated arrests of hundreds of political dissidents. By kidnapping Mitrione on July 31, 1970, the *Tupamaros* hoped to prompt the release of 150 prisoners in exchange, but Uruguayan President Jorge Pacheco Areco refused to negotiate. US Secretary of State William Rogers suggested that Uruguay threaten to kill imprisoned *Tupamaros*, while paramilitary death squads menaced their families.

Allegations swept Montevideo, and many believed Mitrione was killed in

retaliation for facilitating torture. After Mitrione’s death, the 1972 French film *State of Siege* amplified accusations that he taught torture on behalf of the CIA. Such accusations from activists in the US ultimately pushed Congress to close the OPS.

The police assistance program became a topic of broad public concern in the US for the first time in the summer of 1970. Already keenly focused on the US military-industrial complex and US interventions in Latin America, the violent death of a public safety advisor inspired NACLA to expose the operations of the OPS in the hemisphere. Using obscure but publicly available records, interviews, and sharp investigative skills, NACLA explained why public safety advisors were detailed to Latin America and tabulated the size of the program in each country. They revealed how Congress funded police assistance, and how the CIA supported it.

The evidence that Mitrione taught torture is inconclusive to this day. By expediting the delivery of tear gas and constructing a nationwide police telecommunications network, however, US advisors certainly helped build the foundations of repression beneath the veneer of ordinary modern police reform. This was already the conclusion of NACLA in 1971, observing, “The US is fast becoming the world’s policeman in the most precise sense of the word.”

In Uruguay, the political repression begun in the 1960s was lasting. The country became one of the most authoritarian military dictatorships of the 1970s, thought to hold more political prisoners per capita than any of its neighbors. Protest became impossible, while the shadowy Far Right was emboldened. This frightening history is a warning for the US today.

Like the Pacheco regime in Uruguay,

the Trump administration intensified its confrontation with demonstrators in recent weeks. Federal law-enforcement agents have aggressively targeted, in the president’s terms, “anarchists,” “antifa,” and “the radical Left,” placing whole cities under ideological suspicion. Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf boasted of “proactive” arrests, a mockery of the Constitution.

This sequence of increasingly belligerent police action against demonstrators, combined with their vilification from the top, emulates Uruguay’s turn toward authoritarianism. Many in the US fear that the administration is provoking protesters to justify further clampdowns.

The movement for police reform is at a crossroads. The heavily armed officers in Portland signal one path forward. Call it the old Uruguayan route. Another is the attempt to regain legitimacy through technical and administrative reforms, likely the Joe Biden route. But the experience of the OPS shows how closely related these two can be.

Amid political upheaval, we must ask whether police reform can advance technical mastery, institutional legitimacy, and protection of human rights simultaneously. Most reformers claim the three coincide, but Uruguay’s Cold War experience suggests otherwise. Technical mastery at dispensing non-negotiable coercive force led to violations of human rights. Targeting political dissidents in police operations imperils institutional legitimacy.

The demands of activists today, like those that originated with NACLA fifty years ago concerning the Office of Public Safety, to defund the police and invest in alternatives, are the only ones that chart a new pathway toward justice and equality.

Source: *NACLA.org, August 10, 2020*

BOLIVIA: Protesters bring Country to Standstill over Election Delays



La Paz, Photo: Gaston Brito

By Blair and Cindy Jiménez Bercerra, freelance journalists

Demonstrators in Bolivia have dynamited Andean passes, scattered boulders across highways and dug trenches along rural roads to protest against repeated delays to a rerun of last October’s deeply contentious election, which led to the downfall of the long-serving leftist president, Evo Morales.

Amid a mounting death toll from the coronavirus pandemic, more than 100 roadblocks and marches nationwide, convened on Monday by Bolivia’s main workers’ union and indigenous and *campesino* movements allied to Morales’s Movement Towards Socialism (MAS), have brought the country to a standstill for six days.

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The largest demonstrations since last year's crisis come soon after the electoral authorities postponed elections originally scheduled for May for the third time, from September 6 to October 18, citing the need to avoid a projected peak in coronavirus infections.

The ruling late last month, and the resulting backlash, has ratcheted up a sense of crisis in a country already ravaged by Covid-19, an economic slump and fierce political divisions.

"We're not doing this out of choice," said Jaime Quiñones Veliz, 35, part of a group of mask-wearing protesters manning a roadblock made of tires, stones and wire strung across a street in El Alto, the sprawling conurbation overlooking Bolivia's political capital, La Paz. "The people are desperate to know who their president will be, no matter who wins at the polls. We need a stable government," Quiñones explained. "We're demanding that they respect the election date of September 6. If not, things are going to get even uglier."

The caretaker government of Jeanine Áñez, a rightwing senator who came to power after Morales's fall promising fresh elections within 90 days, and later declared her own candidacy for president, has threatened to dismantle the roadblocks by force, claiming that by preventing oxygen and ambulances from reaching hard-pressed hospitals, the blockades have killed at least 31 people. Among the nearly 85,000 people to have been infected in Bolivia to date are Áñez herself and about half her cabinet, including the public works minister, Iván Árias.

In a wheezy audio message circulat-

ing on social media, Árias said his nurses were in tears lamenting the lack of oxygen and medicines and were blaming MAS for the shortages. "Bolivians, let's not be manipulated, let's save lives. I beg you with all my heart: life first, then we'll sort out our political problems.... We won't allow this group of crooks that has taken control of a party, to defeat us and bring us death," he said.

The Áñez government has airlifted medicines and oxygen between Bolivia's main cities, but a shipment of medical supplies worth \$1.8m donated by the World Health Organization remains stranded, said Virgilio Prieto, Bolivia's epidemiology chief. "We're going through a critical moment," he added. "Things have been made a lot worse by the blockades, there's an attack on the health sector by different groups that don't believe that the illness exists."

But critics accused the authorities of trying to blame already-severe shortages on the opposition for political purposes, and pointed to videos online showing demonstrators temporarily dismantling roadblocks to let trucks and ambulances through.

Union authorities have threatened to seal off La Paz entirely if any roadblocks are attacked, while Morales has warned on Twitter that Áñez is plotting a "massacre." Sporadic clashes have broken out between police, protesters, and rightwing counter-demonstrators.

Luis Arce, formerly Morales's economy minister and the current frontrunner in the polls, said that the demonstrations reflected widespread anger, not just with "illegal maneuvering" on the election date but with incompetence, corruption and repression under Áñez.

"The interim government wants to

continue in power for eternity. They've demonstrated it various times," he argued. "Every time they fix a date, the health minister says that will be the [coronavirus] peak. We've had so many supposed peaks, it's a plateau. We want someone to genuinely guarantee us that there'll be elections this year." An abrupt decision this month to cancel the school year, a deep economic recession, intimidation of the press, and apparent moves towards privatization in key industries like the state oil and gas firm had contributed to popular unrest, he suggested. "You can't blame MAS for being behind everything."

Carwil Bjork-James, a scholar of Bolivian protest movements at Vanderbilt University, suggested that an earlier date for the elections or a binding commitment to October 18 could calm tensions. "We're already seeing some fracturing on the government side," he added. Áñez's interior minister, Arturo Murillo, has lambasted the electoral court for "setting the country alight" with the latest postponement.

There are also divisions within the opposition, said Ximena Velasco-Guachalla, a political scientist at the University of Essex. In late-night crisis talks this Saturday, the MAS signaled it would accept an intermediary date for the elections, but the union federation insisted they would remain in the streets. Velasco-Guachalla added that "a big portion of the population, especially in the context of the virus, is just standing still. They have the most to lose and many are not taking sides."

Source: *The Guardian* on August 9, 2020

HAITI: Say their Names



*Large protests continue in Haiti.
Photo: Haiti Action Committee*

Statement from the Haiti Action Committee

Haiti Action Committee stands in solidarity with the determined resistance to police terror and white supremacy being led by Black people in the United States. We join with so many others to honor the memory of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and the countless other Black people who have been murdered by police in this country and in Haiti, where it is often the case that the mur-

derous police were trained by US and Canadian agents.

There is a deep history of solidarity between the people of Haiti and Black people in the US. In 1804, Haitians waged a successful revolution against one of the most powerful European empires of the time, emancipating themselves from slavery and colonialism, becoming the world's first Black republic and the first nation to

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permanently ban slavery. It can be said that the Haitian Revolution was the most radical assertion of the right to have rights in human history. Fueling hope, resistance and rebellion among enslaved people throughout the Caribbean and the United States, the newly independent Haitian government offered asylum and citizenship to any African who escaped slavery.

The independent Haitian government invited people of African and Indigenous origins who were fleeing oppression to come and live in Haiti. Freedom fighters such as Simón Bolívar and liberation movements throughout the Americas were given material support by the Haitian government on the condition that they abolish slavery if they came to power. Haiti stands at the very center of the world struggle to end slavery.

Haiti's freedom posed a great threat to the system of slavery in the US and the Americas. The white supremacist leaders of the United States attempted to strangle the new nation at its birth by instituting a worldwide boycott against Haiti. France took similar action, forcing Haiti to pay reparations to French slave owners for the property they lost when slavery ended. This "property" was the human beings who had been enslaved. The debt was not paid off until the 1940s, by which time banks in the United States had taken over the collection process. Over time Haiti paid France \$21.7 billion USD an extortion that has been aptly called the greatest heist in history.

In the 20th century Haiti became a virtual colony of the United States, beginning in 1915, when the US marines were sent by President Woodrow Wilson to occupy the country. More than 20,000 people were killed by the marines. During 19 years of occupation Haitians put up a fierce and protracted resistance, and Black activists in the United States were in the forefront of solidarity with the Haitian struggle. The NAACP de-

nounced the invasion, as did the Garvey Movement. NAACP leader James Weldon Johnson detailed the crimes committed by US occupying forces in "The Truth About Haiti: An NAACP Re-



Stanley Noel, Haitian student activist, shot nine times and killed by US-funded and trained Haitian police

port" (1920) published in *The Crisis*. The marines finally left Haiti in 1934, leaving in their place the notorious Haitian Armed Forces to violently protect foreign corporations and the Haitian elite by smashing all opposition.

From the 1950s through the 1980s, the US government supported the brutal dictatorships of "Papa Doc" and "Baby Doc" Duvalier, who tortured and killed thousands of Haitians. The popular mass movement that came to be known as Lavalas (The "flash flood" of the people), succeeded in toppling the Duvalier dictatorship and electing Jean-Bertrand Aristide as President of Haiti. Twice, the United States supported coups to overthrow the elected government, in 1991 and 2004. Ever since this last coup, Haiti has been occupied by the United Nations, and the people of Haiti have been engaged in a fierce struggle against a series of puppet dictatorships installed by the US.

Today, the people of Haiti are facing down another US-backed dictatorship,—this time headed by Jovenel Moïse, installed in 2016 through a series of fraudulent elections based on massive voter suppression. The militarized police of the Moïse regime, trained by US police and financed by the US government, including the notorious NYPD, have been killing Haitian grassroots leaders and working with paramilitary death squads to carry out horrific massacres in poor neighborhoods such as Lasalin in an attempt to destroy the pro-democracy Lavalas movement.

These massacres are underwritten by US tax dollars. Just recently, on July 12th, there was another paramilitary assault against the unarmed people of the popular, impoverished community of Cité Soleil; among the victims was a baby who was shot in the head. The mother, who has denounced the killers, is now in hiding. The assault was reportedly led by a co-spokesperson of the G-9 paramilitary formation also headed by ex-

-police officer Jimmy Cherizier, aka "Barbecue," one of the main perpetrators of the Lasalin massacre. G-9 represents the restoration of the death squad "Tonton Macoute" system of the Duvalier period, a development supported by the ruling Moïse regime and the US government.

A recent solidarity statement from peasant organizations in Haiti reads, in part: "Today, we follow the history of our ancestors as we stand in solidarity with the people of the US, particularly the Black community that is subjected to racist attacks and oppression. Hand in hand, let us struggle together to eradicate racism and injustice."

From Minneapolis to the Bay Area to Haiti, the fight against empire and white supremacy is worldwide. Our solidarity needs to be worldwide as well.

Source: www.haitisolidarity.net
on August 1, 2020

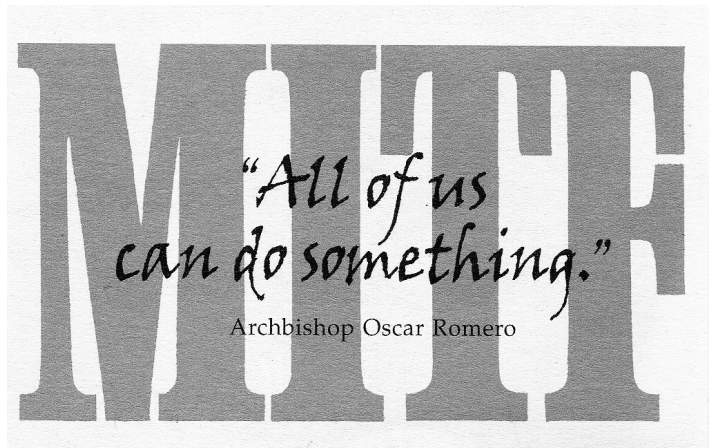
Tell Congress to Stay out of Nicaragua!



In a clear regime change operation, a document leaked from the US embassy in Nicaragua details plans by the US to undermine the November 2021 elections and the likely winner,

President Daniel Ortega. (See article on page 7.)

Contact your Congressional representative to express your opposition to a blatant and unlawful interference in another nation's internal affairs. The document titled RAIN or "Responsive Assistance in Nicaragua." Instead of meddling in the sovereignty of another country the US should keep its focus here at home where we have plenty of problems to solve.



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