

Clinton Behind 2009 Honduras Coup? Emails Show US Warned OAS Head Not to Support Ousted Honduran President Zelaya

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Leaked WikiLeaks emails provide a behind-the-scenes look at the negotiations between the State Department, OAS representatives and Honduran coup regime.

Leaked email exchanges between U.S. State Department officials in the days after the 2009 Honduran coup show that U.S. diplomatic staff pressured the head of the Organization of American States, OAS, against actions in support of the country's ousted president, and even entertained proposals by coup leaders to dialogue without the OAS head or countries that had opposed the ouster.

In a June 5, 2009 email, sent by then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Craig Kelly, he stated he had been in contact with former Honduran president and coup supporter, Roberto Flores, who had a proposal for U.S. diplomats on behalf of the head of the de facto coup government which toppled President Manuel Zelaya.



Former Honduran President Manuel Zelaya and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton |
Photo: Reuters – EFE

Zelaya, a left-leaning politician who had initiated some moderate reforms, was forcibly put on a plane by Honduran military leaders and sent to Costa Rica on June 26, 2009. The move

came after the country's predominantly conservative political leaders declared his attempts to hold a non-binding referendum on the country's constitution as "illegal" and moved to have him removed from office.

"Flores just called me," Kelly wrote. "Roberto said he has spoken to (Assistant Secretary-General of the OAS Albert) Ramdin to pass along a proposal from (de facto president of Honduras after the coup, Roberto) Micheletti."

Kelly, who would later be rejected as U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela and is now Senior Director for the Americas for ExxonMobil, briefly outlined the proposal whereby the Honduran Supreme Court and Legislature—both of which had helped orchestrate the coup against Zelaya—would "dialogue" with the OAS, on the condition that the bloc's General-Secretary Jorge Insulza not be included.

(The) OAS reps should be working level (i.e. not Insulza) and include reps of willing member states," Kelly added. "(Micheletti) wondered if (the) U.S. would participate.

In a reply to Kelly's email, U.S. permanent representative to the OAS, Hector Morales, outlined that leftist presidents from the region including Argentine President Cristina Fernandez, then Paraguayan leader Fernando Lugo, and Ecuador's Rafael Correa were assembling in neighboring El Salvador in order to support Zelaya's efforts to return to the country.

"(Zelaya) ... will attempt to go to Tegucigalpa and when unsuccessful will then meet the others in San Salvador," the senior diplomat wrote.

A week after the coup, with violence and repression by the military escalating, U.S. diplomats were pushing against the return of Zelaya to the country, and were concerned about Insulza's perceived support for the elected president.

On the same day the OAS voted to condemn the coup, assistant secretary of state for western hemisphere affairs, Thomas Shannon reported about "Strong push by key countries, including Mexico and Costa Rica, to try to convince Zelaya not to return today." However Shannon acknowledged that "Zelaya seems intent on returning," and that "Insulza feels under an obligation to accompany (Zelaya)" on the planned return flight.

"I told Insulza that he should not go and that neither the (OAS General Assembly) nor (the Permanent Council) gave him the mandate for this trip," Morales wrote in a separate email string that Shannon was also on.

Despite internal council to take hard measures against the coup regime, Hillary Clinton's State Department pushed for a negotiation with the "de facto" leaders—with critics arguing [Clinton worked to legitimize the coup](#). These negotiations helped solidify a deal in October between Honduras' constitutional government and the coup regime.

"Throughout the crisis we we worked closely with the OAS and friends in the region," Kelly wrote in an email dated Oct. 30, 2009.

After extensive U.S. lobbying to get other OAS states on board, the final agreement helped orchestrate elections that were widely seen as a farce, including a lack of monitors from

international institutions, a media blackout and targeted assassinations of anti-coup leaders ahead of the polls.

A few weeks later, in an email dated Nov. 18, 2009, sent by former United States Ambassador to Honduras Hugo Llorens, it was revealed that in a private conversation held between Llorens, Kelly and Michelliti, Kelly had confessed to the de facto president that “the Honduran crisis had exposed the U.S. and complicated our Latin America policy.”

The leaked emails were posted by the whistleblowing website WikiLeaks last March as part of an online database that includes over 30,000 emails and email attachments sent to and from Hillary Clinton’s private email server while she was Secretary of State.

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