

Washington's "Terror Diplomacy" in Latin America: Destabilize Countries and Overthrow Governments

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Global Research Editor's Note

The following article by Toni Solo was first published by Scoop New Zealand under the title

Globalization and terror: hold the ham n' eggs, 4 December 2007.

It reveals the actions of a team of State Department appointees under the helm of John Negroponte, Number 2 in the State Department, including Ambassador Philip Goldberg, who was recently expelled from Bolivia.

Efforts by the Bush regime to destabilize and overthrow governments resisting corporate globalization in Latin America, and everywhere else too, will persist whoever wins the next US Presidential election – assuming no attack is launched on Iran and the election does in fact take place. The monolithic plutocracy that runs the United States is supported in those destabilization efforts by the governments of their European and Pacific allies. Analysing a list of the world's top corporations, leaders in their respective industries, explains why this should be so.(1).

One finds that companies from the United States and its European and Pacific allies account for well over 80% of the total. One can also note that the Latin American, African and Asian corporations in the list are all State owned companies, with the exception of China Mobile and Brazil's CVRD mining company (privatized from 1997 onwards). The consolidation of monopoly corporate capitalism over the last decade through mergers and acquisitions is certain to continue. So the only chance for less developed countries to defend the rights and needs of their impoverished majorities against the ravages of monster multinational companies is to integrate and to invest in their future together.

That is the strategic importance of the ALBA initiative led by Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua. Together these countries are encouraging nations in Central America, the Caribbean and the Andes to collaborate in joint investment projects and solidarity based commercial, technical, cultural, educational, sports and health programmes. Venezuela's President Chavez openly contrasts these "gran-nacional" projects and programmes with the vampire capitalism of foreign giant multinational corporations. Here is the fundamental reason that the US government and its European and Pacific allies are determined to destroy the ALBA project. This is emphatically confirmed by the current blatant destabilization by the Bush regime and its allies targeting Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua and the Bush regime's tightening of already savage genocidal sanctions against Cuba.

Destabilization : no more ham n' eggs

Recent State Department attempts to soften its traditional overt do-what-we-want-or-else diplomacy have been led by Thomas Shannon, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. Shannon's press-release-deep goodwill is contradicted by the behaviour of his ambassador colleagues in the ALBA countries : **Phillip Goldberg** in Bolivia, **Patrick Duddy** in Venezuela, **Paul Trivelli** in Nicaragua and **Michael Parmly**, Chief of Mission for US interests in Havana. All these men are dedicated career diplomats very much in the mould of individuals like John Negroponte or Thomas Pickering, both former US ambassadors helping prop up death-squad, State-terror regimes in Central America who went on to represent the US at the United Nations.

After a spell as assistant to **Richard Holbrooke** (buddy and colleague of **John Negroponte** since they worked together in Vietnam) in former Yugoslavia, Goldberg served four years as an assistant to President Clinton's Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott. Paul Trivelli was notable for outspokenly intervening for the US government in electoral politics in El Salvador before being sent to do the same in Nicaragua. Patrick Duddy in Venezuela is a graduate of the National War College with a master's degree in National Security Strategy. Chief of Mission for US Interests in Cuba, Michael Parmly, taught at the National War College as a Professor of National Security Studies.

With such records it is no surprise that the credibility of Shannon's efforts to update Dwight Morrow's famous ham n' eggs diplomacy, by being a bit more polite about Daniel Ortega and Hugo Chavez, has quickly been exhausted. In Bolivia, there is little doubt Goldberg has encouraged right-wing separatists who have sabotaged the work of the country's constituent assembly as it tries to devise a more democratic and representative constitution for Bolivia. President Evo Morales has openly accused Goldberg of trying to act as a counterweight to his government.(2)

In Venezuela, the www.aporrea.org web site published an intercepted memorandum from embassy official Michael Steere to CIA director Michael Hayden. The memo discussed in detail progress of plans to fund and organize destabilizing interventions in the referendum on constitutional reforms on December 2nd and afterwards. It confirmed the egregious political intervention and covert action that writers like Eva Golinger have been exposing for years.

Corporate media - weaving their own virtual shroud

The astonishing wave of distortion and deceit about the latest referendum in Venezuela broadcast and distributed by the corporate media in North America and Europe must surely mark a point of no return even by their own shameless standards. Press reports and TV programmes and coverage have blatantly served the political agenda of the the Bush regime and its political allies. CNN have had to apologise for running a piece on Venezuela in which they ran an image of Hugo Chavez with the caption "who killed him?", generally interpreted by the Venezuelan government and its supporters as a subliminal invitation to assassinate the Venezuelan President.

BBC2's November 19th programme "Trillion dollar revolutionary" by John Sweeney was yet another cliché-ridden hatchet job regurgitating the same old fact-impooverished caricature of Chavez that readers of the British mainstream press have been fed for years now. Dan Feder of Narco News has detailed how the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and the Washington Post have all reported the run up to the referendum so as to discredit its integrity. (3) Pascual Serrano and others have analysed in detail the anti-Chavez, pro-

opposition distortions in Spanish papers like El Mundo and El Pais, through misleading coverage of incidents during recent demonstrations. (4) Michael Fox has pointed out the underlying links between US corporations in Venezuela and opposition referendum propaganda. (5) The Managua variation

While Phillip Goldberg, Patrick Duddy and their colleagues seem to work mostly by covert means to overthrow the Bolivian and Venezuelan governments, in Managua Paul Trivelli intervenes quite openly. Nicaragua is a country where US ambassadors have done more or less what they liked since 1990. One of his predecessors, Oliver Garza, openly canvassed for presidential candidate Enrique Bolaños during the 2001 presidential campaign and even insisted on changing election-count personnel in Managua's national polling centre on the night following the vote.

Nicaragua has been treated to almost the whole US State Department circus-troupe over the last few years with visits from Otto Reich, Robert Zoellick, Jean Kirkpatrick, John Negroponte and Thomas Shannon. Even Oliver North did a turn. But ungrateful Nicaraguan voters were so unimpressed as to vote in Daniel Ortega as President despite Paul Trivelli's determined and blatant efforts to promote right-wing unity while denouncing Ortega as "undemocratic". In November, an unrepentant Trivelli put his thoughts to paper in an article in the opposition MRS-aligned El Nuevo Diario. He had thechutzpah to title his piece "Democracy : in principle and in practice".

His argument here is that while Daniel Ortega and the FSLN may have returned to power by the ballot box, they cannot really be regarded as democratic because they fail to respect legitimate democratic practice. He cites six examples to justify this view. In every single one, by turns, he stretches and curtails the facts to fit his argument.

In the case of the Esso company's anomalous tax position and refusal to lease storage space, he appeals to a tenuous legal argument suggesting the key issue was not Esso's apparent abuse of taxation law through a questionable and possibly corrupt deal with the Bolaños administration and what amounts to economic sabotage, by refusing to lease redundant oil storage facilities for desperately needed Venezuelan fuel imports, but whether or not a local judge was entitled to hold the company to account.

Then, he questions the legislature's good faith for pursuing an investigation into corruption and influence trafficking by the previous government. He would do, since it was his predecessor Oliver Garza who helped shoo in the corrupt Bolaños administration to start with – Bolaños whom Trivelli consistently praised for his anti-corruption policies. He also condemns the treatment enjoyed by Arnaldo Aleman, former Nicaraguan president currently under notional house arrest. Of course he is right – in the corrupt US, former Presidents and senior officials and other elite figures are simply pardoned, like Richard Nixon, or, more recently, Scooter Libby.

Thirdly, Trivelli appeals on behalf of news media in Nicaragua because the FSLN government removed tax exemptions on importation of some of their inputs. It may be true that some small local radio stations may have suffered as a result of the change but the main beneficiaries were opposition media that serve as party political megaphones for Trivelli's local political allies the centrist MRS and the right wing ALN. Trivelli is in the odd position for a US ambassador of contradicting IMF and World Bank advice that the Nicaraguan government needs to reduce those kinds of exemptions in order to boost tax revenues.

Fourthly, Trivelli tries to exculpate the people responsible for a notorious financial scam – the CENIS -whereby members of the Aleman and Bolaños administrations helped themselves and banking buddies to hundreds of millions of dollars of internal debt by selling off the assets of several failed banks at fire sale prices. The Nicaraguan authorities have identified the intellectual authors of the scam and are going after them. Among those implicated is the US embassy’s preferred political champion, right-wing banker and businessman Eduardo Montealegre.

Trivelli’s fifth point completely misrepresents the Power to the Citizen Councils (CPCs), an attempt by the FSLN government to help people at grass roots speak on policy issues for themselves direct to government without having NGOs and other vested interests pose as intermediaries. Anyone working at community level in Nicaragua knows that in many communities the CPCs include a majority of members of the already existing municipal community councils with people from all political backgrounds. Opposition parties are desperate to boycott the workings of the CPCs because they promote grass roots democracy. Trivelli’s intervention directly encourages that boycott.

Finally, ambassador Trivelli berates various bodies among the Nicaraguan authorities for removing the immunity of a deputy accused of violating electoral law (based on citizenship anomalies at the time he registered as a candidate). The individual concerned, who appears to have dual US and Nicaraguan nationality, was also accused of being involved in suspicious property deals, misappropriating land from rural families in a local cooperative. Trivelli has decided to back this person and calumny the Nicaraguan authorities for their attempts to deal with various issues the case raised.

“Worrying tendency”

In Trivelli’s view, taken together, all these points indicate “a worrying tendency for democracy and democratic institutions in Nicaragua”. This can be read to mean, more accurately : “In Nicaragua, they’re clamping down on tax anomalies that favour our corporations and our political friends, extending democracy to grass roots to marginalise our allies in the oligarchy and the NGOs and, to cap it all, we don’t even have the judges in our pocket.....”

A lot more worrying is the US State Department’s tendency, through its embassies and other US government agencies in league with multinational corporations and local allies, overtly and covertly to destabilize and overthrow democratically elected governments in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Despite almost universal world condemnation, the US government continues economic aggression against the people of Cuba and protects terrorists guilty of mass murder wanted by the authorities in both Venezuela and Cuba.

In all the ALBA countries the modus operandi is the same:

- provoke economic instability via various forms of economic sabotage

- relentlessly spread falsehoods in local and international corporate media

- organize internal political and other violence to create a climate of fear and insecurity

- provide moral and economic aid and comfort to local US proxies, co-opting NGOs intervene directly through “democracy building” aid to help consolidate

a pro-US/EU base create anxiety that foreign investment and aid will leave the country

encourage dissension within the government/military/party leadership

emphasise and exaggerate issues of corruption and freedom of expression

These are the fundamental ingredients of US intervention. One can be sure that representatives of European Union countries also engage in their own versions of the same recipe. Daniel Ortega said as much about Spain's ambassador during the recent Ibero-American Summit in Santiago de Chile.

The referendum on the constitutional reforms in Venezuela may well be a catharsis for various issues. One of the positive outcomes after all the fuss has died away will be that many people may see more clearly the inhuman greed of rich country multinational companies determined to access less developed countries' natural resources. The link between the promotion of corporate globalization and the exploitation of fear and insecurity to demonize government leaders like Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, Evo Morales and Daniel Ortega should be clearer as well.

The international corporate media are likely to suffer a further drop in their already questionable credibility. Likewise, the role of the US government, and its European counterparts, prioritizing the interests of giant multinational corporations behind bogus concern for their version of "democracy" has perhaps never been more self-evident. ALBA's creative solidarity-based social, economic and trade model will continue to catch people's imagination against corporate capitalism's inhumanity. So the coming three years years in the run up to the next round of elections in Latin America will see increasing tension and continuing destabilization from the US government and its allies. When other people do it, they call it terrorism.

Notes

1. Telecoms : Alltel (U.S.), BellSouth (U.S.), BT Group (U.K.), Cable & Wireless (U.K.), China Mobile (China), Japan Telem (Japan), NTT DoCoMo (Japan), Olivetti (Italy), OTE - Hellenic Telecom (Greece), Portugal Telecom (Portugal), SBC Communications (U.S.)

Arms manufacture : Lockheed Martin (US), Boeing (US), BAE Systems (UK), Northrup Grumman (US), Raytheon(US), General Dynamics (US), EADS (Netherlands), L-3 Communications (US), Finmeccanica (Italy), United Technologies (US)

Seed companies : Monsanto (US), Dupont (US), Syngenta (Switzerland), Groupe Limagrain (France), Land O' Lakes (US), KWS AG (Germany), Bayer Crop Science (Germany), Sakata (Japan), DLF-Trifolium (Denmark)

Engineering :

Hochtief AG (Germany), Skanska AB (Sweden), Vinci (France), Strabag SE (Austria), Bouygues (France), Bechtel (U.S.A.), Technip (France), KBR (U.S.A.), Bilfinger Berger AG (Germany), Fluor Corp. (U.S.A.)

Media :

Time Warner (USA), News Corporation (USA), General Electric (USA), CBS Corporation (USA), Walt Disney Company (USA), DirecTV (USA), Bertelsmann (Germany), Cox Enterprises (USA),

Advance Publications (USA), Gannett (USA)

Mining :

Almazy Rossii Sakha (Russia), Anglo American (UK), Barrick Gold (Canada), BHP Billiton (Australia), Codelco (Chile), CVRD (Brazil), Freeport McMoran (USA), Newmont Mining (USA), Norilsk Nickel (Russia), Rio Tinto (UK)

Chemicals & Pharmaceuticals:

Novartis (Switzerland), Monsanto (USA), AstraZeneca (Sweden-UK), DuPont (USA), Bayer (Germany), Sanofi-Aventis (France), Bristol-Myers Squibb (US), Pfizer (US), Glaxo-SmithKline (UK), Cyanamid (USA), Dow Chemicals (USA), BASF (Germany)

Oil :

Saudi Arabian Oil Co. (Saudi Arabia), Petroleos Mexicanos (Mexico), Petroleos de Venezuela (Venezuela), China National Petroleum (China), BP Amoco (UK), ExxonMobil (USA), Royal Dutch/Shell (UK-Netherlands), Nigerian National Oil Co. (Nigeria), Iraq National Oil Co. (Iraq??), Kuwait Petroleum (Kuwait), Chevron-Texaco (USA)

2. "Bolivian president accuses U.S. of conspiracy" - http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-11/19/content_7104012.htm

3. "Deception from the Dailies on the Eve of Venezuela Referendum", Dan Feder, Narcosphere, NarcoNews.com, 2/12/2007
(Narco News needs financial help - see www.authenticjournalism.org)

4. "El asesinato en Venezuela de un partidario de Chavez", Pascual Serrano, Rebellion.org, 28/11/2007 www.pascualserrano.net

5. "U.S. Companies Behind Anti-Reform Propaganda in Venezuela", Michael Fox, Venezuelanalysis, ZNet, 28/11/2007

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