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Key leaders of Honduras military coup trained in U.S.

At least two leaders of the coup launched in Honduras on June 28 were apparently trained at a controversial Department of Defense school based at Fort Benning, Georgia infamous for producing graduates linked to torture, death squads and other human rights abuses.



Leftist President Manuel Zelaya was kidnapped and transported to Costa Rica on Sunday morning after a growing controversy over a vote concerning term limits. Over the last week, Zelaya clashed with and eventually dismissed General Romeo Vasquez -- who is now reportedly in charge of the armed forces that abducted the Honduran president.

According to the watchdog group [School of Americas Watch](#), Gen. Vasquez trained at the [Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation](#) at least twice -- in 1976 and 1984 -- when it was still called School of Americas.

The Georgia-based U.S. military school is infamous for training over 60,000 Latin American soldiers, including infamous dictators, "death squad" leaders and others charged with torture and other human rights abuses. SOA Watch's annual protest to shut down the Fort Benning training site draws thousands.

According to SOA Watch, the U.S. Army school has a particularly checkered record in Honduras, with over 50 graduates who have been intimately involved in human rights abuses. In 1975, SOA Graduate General Juan Melgar Castro became the military dictator of Honduras. From 1980-1982 the dictatorial Honduran regime was headed by yet another SOA graduate, Policarpo Paz Garcia, who intensified repression and murder by Battalion 3-16, one of the most feared death squads in all of Latin America (founded by Honduran SOA graduates with the help of Argentine SOA graduates).

General Vasquez isn't the only leader in the Honduras coup linked to the U.S. training facility. As [Kristin Bricker](#) points out:

The head of the Air Force, Gen. Luis Javier Prince Suazo, studied in the School of the Americas in 1996. The Air Force has been a central protagonist in the Honduran crisis. When the military refused to distribute the ballot boxes for the opinion poll, the ballot boxes were stored on an Air Force base until citizens accompanied by Zelaya rescued them. Zelaya reports that after soldiers kidnapped him, they took him to an Air Force base, where he was put on a plane and sent to Costa Rica.

For previous Facing South coverage of controversy surrounding the School of Americas/Western Hemisphere Center, see [here](#).



By [Chris Kromm](#) on June 28, 2009 2:57 PM

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Thank you for reporting on this important matter. So far, I haven't found any other site with this relevant information.



AJAXX

[June 28, 2009 4:17 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

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¿Y por qué es esto de alguna importancia? ¿El Presidente dice que fue torturado? ¿Por qué imprimir algo que sólo conducirá a más falsos rumores e insinuaciones? Muchos jefes militares, como aquí en nuestra gran Estados Unidos de América han sido formados en la misma forma. Y como la historia nos muestra, muchos de ellos han utilizado su formación. Esto es un caso más de irresponsabilidad de presentación de informes por parte de alguien que tiene acceso a una computadora portátil y la Internet. A veces un pocoquito de conocimiento y sabiduría es peor que nada



Anonymous
[June 28, 2009 8:55 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

I don't see how this is a military coup if it was the supreme court and the congress that ordered the military to take into custody Zelaya.



pt o'mally
[June 28, 2009 10:50 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

Wow! It'd Howdy Doody Time again, with Buffalo John Negrofonte and the Army School of the Americas Bass Band. Back to the 80's; it's like old home week brought to you by Ronald McDonald Reagan and Ollie North. Where are the freedom fighters?
 H.Buckingham



Hugh Buckingham
[June 29, 2009 1:10 AM](#) | [Reply](#)

Everyone interested at the situation in Honduras should know:

- That the honduran people has resisted stoically for over 3 years the governo of an individual that changed its mind at every tip creating confrontation between the institutions of the state.
- That the honduran people had as president someone who considered Honduras as his particular state.
- That his continued reject of the law has been the custom and not the exception.
- That his intention its and have been to seek indefinite reelection trying to becoming a Chavez line dictator.
- That the venerable Army of the Republic of Honduras did only the will of the law by removing Manuel Zelaya Rosales from the presidency.
- That Honduras is only in a process of transition of powers as is written in the constitution of our Republic.
- That several contries are trying to meddle into our soberaniry by promising to send troops into our country to reinstate a fellow chavista to power

Please help us to change the denomination that the international news networks give to this situation naming it a "Coup of Etat" when what is really going is a peaceful transition of power as is written by law and that will avoid Honduras to become another Chavez Filial.



Gerardo Paredes
[June 29, 2009 1:29 AM](#) | [Reply](#)

barack obama coal
 coal combustion
 waste economic crisis
 economy Election
 2008 Energy
 Watch florida
 georgia gulf coast gulf
 watch Gulf Watch
 louisiana new orleans
 north carolina obama
 administration race
 and racism texas
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POLICY AND RESEARCH

Applied Research Center
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 Economic Policy Institute
 Highlander Research and
 Education Center
 Progressive States Network
 SouthNow

This is a legal removal of a president that is in violation of the Honduran Constitution. This was not a coup. Zelaya was legally removed by the military at the request of the Honduran Congress and the Honduran Supreme Court that have the following two articles of the Honduran Constitution as the legal authority to do so; ARTICULO 239.- declares that any president that seeks to invalidate the Honduran Constitution in an effort to stay in office shall be removed immediately and not be eligible for office for 10 years. And ARTICULO 205.- which states that Congress has the power to investigate and remove said president at their leisure.

Why is Obama now meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation and why is he siding with Hugo Chavez against the nation of Honduras?



Hondureno Orgulloso
[June 29, 2009 6:32 AM](#) | [Reply](#)

Latinoamerica is known for its high level of economic disparity between a few very rich oligarchy (usually white) who own the country and the very poor majority. And in no other country as in Honduras this gap can be seen.

The whole state of Honduras (including the constitution) had been created to keep the current status quo in place, allowing the rich to control the whole legal, economic, and social-political.

The idea of people's participation in the political process, via a referendum, is extremely dangerous for the system. Any type of legal engineering is used to prevent those Indians and Blacks to have a voice in the future of Honduras, after all Honduras belongs only to them, the rich whose family tree started in Europe.



LatinoAmericano Honesto
[June 29, 2009 10:01 AM](#) | [Reply](#)

Hasta cuando Honduras seguira siendo el patio trasero de USA y sus pitanyankies seguiran entregando la patria por cuatro monedas.
 Viva Zelaya Viva Morazan viva Bolívar Viva Chavez.

...que se puede esperar de un pueblo que no valore la gloria de ser LIBRE. Bolivar



ALVARO CABRERA
[June 29, 2009 10:09 AM](#) | [Reply](#)

Gerardo and Hondureno:

The account you give of the kidnapping of the president and his forced removal to Costa Rica is not supported by the evidence. Some important clarification:

(1) The referendum President Zelaya was seeking was not to expand his term, but to allow the people to vote on whether there should be a 2nd vote allowing him to run again. If you and the Honduran military are so sure this isn't what the people of Honduras wanted, why didn't they allow the referendum and allow the people to vote it down?

(2) Whatever the disagreements between the military and courts vs. Zelaya about the referendum, the world community is united on the belief that kidnapping and forced removal of the president was not the solution. The strongest condemnation has come from other Latin American countries at the current Organization of American States meetings.

(3) It's clear that many more details will be coming forward about the role of different players -- the military, the U.S., etc. -- in the events unfolding in Honduras. The purpose of this post was not to make a broad claim about the role the U.S. is playing, but to give an important backdrop about U.S. history in Honduras, which surely has an impact on what's happening today.



Chris Kromm
[June 29, 2009 12:54 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

Here is a copy of the Organization of American States statement on the coup, which passed unanimously:

<http://www.narconews.com/Issue57/article3586.html>

The statement states that "No Government Arising from this Unconstitutional Interruption

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- January 2008 (52)
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- November 2007 (43)
- October 2007 (38)
- September 2007 (37)
- August 2007 (46)
- July 2007 (65)
- June 2007 (76)
- May 2007 (47)
- April 2007 (38)
- March 2007 (46)
- February 2007 (38)
- January 2007 (51)
- December 2006 (52)
- November 2006 (72)
- October 2006 (56)
- September 2006 (41)
- August 2006 (48)
- July 2006 (49)
- June 2006 (57)
- May 2006 (83)
- April 2006 (70)
- March 2006 (75)
- February 2006 (63)
- January 2006 (76)
- December 2005 (54)
- November 2005 (89)
- October 2005 (102)
- September 2005 (91)
- August 2005 (58)
- July 2005 (46)
- June 2005 (73)
- May 2005 (71)
- April 2005 (69)
- March 2005 (55)
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Will Be Recognized" and demands "the Immediate, Safe and Unconditional Return of President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales to His Constitutional Functions" in Honduras.



Chris Kromm

[June 29, 2009 1:10 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

If the Honduran military does not immediately permit the elected President to return to office, these events seem likely to give rise to an investigation of the roles of U.S. citizens in preparing the coup. Honduras was the main base from which the U.S. launched its "contra" operation against Nicaragua in violation of international law in the 1980s.

What training did the coup leaders have in the United States during their careers? What contacts have they maintained with U.S. personnel? What supply and other relationships does the Honduran military maintain with the U.S. military? Journalists are undoubtedly asking these questions privately today.



David Keil

[June 29, 2009 1:13 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

Interesting correlation however Obama has called for the return of the president. If the military is representing the interests of the US in this case, then why does the US officially support the exiled president?



Anonymous

[June 29, 2009 1:29 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

"Why is Obama now meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation"

When will the world wake up to Americas meddling in just about every country in the world?

Those capitalistic war pigs meddle in everyones affairs...america is definately not your friend.

The good ol united states of terrorists have proven again and again...every single day that they are the ones to be afraid of...every single day there are reports of scores of innocents being slaughtered by american terrorists all around the globe.

Wake up!



Anonymous

[June 29, 2009 2:02 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

Why doesn't this surprise me.



Expat in Poland

[June 29, 2009 2:03 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

Gerardo Paredes: "That the venerable Army of the Republic of Honduras did only the will of the law by removing Manuel Zelaya Rosales from the presidency."

A venerable army that treats the citizens it is meant to defend like pests, to be killed at will, without letting them defend themselves in a civilian court?

Hondureño Orguloso: The difference between censure by a democratic assembly, and a judge ordering the military to do his will, not that of the people (the Honduran parliament never had a formal vote, or followed the law of its land, in seeking the removal of the president), is the difference between the most basic democracy and a country ruled like a feudo.



anon

[June 29, 2009 2:15 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

I support the reinstatement not as an overall strategy towards liberation but as a tactic that

realizes concrete and real improvements in the lives of poor people. I created this my understanding that the rich in Honduras are definitely behind the coup and therefore the CIA is also probably secretly supporting the coup. This is what makes the coup horrible. It is my hope and my dream that the people of Honduras might be able to create spaces through this disaster that will lead to a government of the poor. The poor of Honduras have my full and complete support!



Michael Butler
[June 29, 2009 2:26 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

Obama is another war mongerer and liar. Obama is also a huge fraud who is just another militarist and corporatist, albeit, with smiles and sounding good. Obama will do the world no good as he is just the latest incarnation of Imperial America, coming at you with feel good speeches and fake images of "change." There is nothing to trust about Obama at all. For one thing, Obama is no smarter than former President Bush pertaining to foreign affairs. Obama also lacks deep knowledge over financial matters as well. Obama will be a one-term president and it is time to call Obama on the fraud he is before he continues to strong arm other nations around the world, all the while lying to the American people that he is a "change" president. Obama is a true fake and fraud and the world needs to understand that he believes in the same sinister U.S. policies of all those who came before him in the Oval Office.



Maxwell
[June 29, 2009 3:14 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

Wow look at all the CIA posts on this comment section. Looks like the have a lot of people working the propaganda on the web now. They always do a bad job of trying to look like everyday people posting their comments.

A Coup is a coup no matter what you call it. The murdering death squad bastards are back in power thanks to the CIA and the poor people of Honduras will suffer again.



Jack Fulton
[June 29, 2009 3:22 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

Gerardo y "Hondureno Orguloso",

Zelaya did not attempt to invalidate the constitution. Merely, he tried to poll his citizens. You are traitors of your country. The USA is behind the coup.



Hugo A.
[June 29, 2009 3:42 PM](#) | [Reply](#)

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