



United States Department of State

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

**AUG - 4 2009**

Dear Senator Lugar:

Thank you for your letter of July 30 expressing concerns regarding the political crisis in Honduras and your interest in moving forward on the nomination of Arturo Valenzuela to be Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs.

All countries of the hemisphere should respect fundamental civil and political rights, democratic principles, and institutions of democracy. The events of June 28 were preceded by a political conflict between President Zelaya and the other institutions of Honduras' government. We energetically condemn the actions of June 28. We also recognize that President Zelaya's insistence on undertaking provocative actions contributed to the polarization of Honduran society and led to a confrontation that unleashed the events that led to his removal. For this reason, our public statements and actions have focused on the importance of a negotiated, peaceful solution that restores democratic order in accordance with the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, addresses the underlying problems of democratic governability, and enhances the rule of law. This understanding is reflected in our support for the mediation efforts of President Arias of Costa Rica, which we see as offering the best hope for Honduras' democratic future and the well-being of its people.

In both public and private communications, we have urged both sides to work constructively with President Arias, an experienced and proven mediator, to resolve the crisis peacefully. We will continue to do so. To enhance the success of these efforts, we have maintained the presence of our Ambassador in Honduras to ensure a reliable channel of communication with all relevant parties in the political crisis.

The Honorable  
Richard Lugar,  
United States Senate.

Secretary Clinton has spoken with Roberto Micheletti and President Manuel Zelaya as part of our ongoing efforts to help fashion a peaceful, negotiated solution to the events of June 28. Our policy and strategy for engagement is not based on supporting any particular politician or individual. Rather, it is based on finding a resolution that best serves the Honduran people and their democratic aspirations.

We are encouraged by Mr. Micheletti's July 29 public reaffirmation of the Arias mediation process and his request that President Arias send a high-level international delegation to facilitate a dialogue among Honduran society concerning the terms of the proposed Arias agreement. On the same day, Honduran Vice President Mejia, on behalf of President Zelaya, signed the declaration of the Tuxtla Summit of Central American leaders, a text which fully supports the Arias process. We will continue our efforts to support President Arias and his mediation process, encourage both sides to negotiate a peaceful return to the democratic order in Honduras, and work with others in the international community to encourage the Arias process and discourage those who advocate violence.

With respect to the legality of actions in Honduras, we have suspended certain assistance as a policy matter pending an ongoing determination under U.S. law about the applicability of the provisions requiring termination of assistance in the event of a military coup. Our course here is consistent with past Department practice in similar situations in which aid that might be affected has been paused to ensure that the U.S. government stays on the right side of the law while a political crisis unfolds. In addition, after careful review, we revoked the diplomatic visas of five officials of the de facto regime in Honduras.

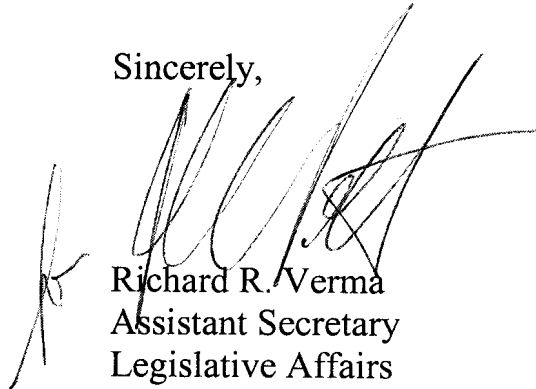
At the Organization of American States (OAS) we have worked closely with our partners in the region to ensure that the OAS, while condemning the removal of President Zelaya and suspending Honduras' participation in the Organization, serves to further the cause of a negotiated and peaceful resolution of the crisis. We have rejected calls for crippling economic sanctions and made clear that all states should seek to facilitate a solution without calls for violence and with respect for the principle of nonintervention. We continue to work in and with the OAS to support the efforts of President Arias.

The Department of State has regularly briefed Congress on the situation in Honduras. Starting shortly after the June 28 coup, the Office of Central American Affairs held daily conference calls with Congressional staff in which Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff members Carl Meacham and Fulton Armstrong have participated as their schedules have permitted. In addition, former Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs David Robinson and Office of Central American Affairs Director Christopher Webster gave a classified briefing on Honduras-related developments to Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff and Mark Lopes of Senator Menendez' staff on July 7. Acting Deputy Secretary of State Robinson's successor, Bisa Williams, and Mr. Webster have been in touch regularly with Congress to answer questions and to discuss initiatives.

Regarding the nomination process in the Senate for Messrs. Valenzuela, Pascual, and Shannon, we appreciate your interest and support in moving these nominations forward.

We hope this information is useful to you. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard R. Verma', is written over the typed name and title. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'R' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Richard R. Verma  
Assistant Secretary  
Legislative Affairs