

## Rights Action

### CANADA'S ROLE IN HONDURAS

Day 32 of Honduran Coup Resistance, July 30, 2009  
(Alert #39)

#### **MILITARY AID FLOWS TO HONDURAS DESPITE COUP**

by Jennifer Ditchburn

Today - Thursday, July 30 - was one of the worst days of repression since the June 28 military coup. We will send a report later tonight on some of today's stories.

On July 29, The Current radio program, of the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation), aired a 2-part discussion about "Canada's role in Honduras: part one with Grahame Russell of Rights Action; part two with Peter Kent, Canada's Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas.

To listen: <http://www.cbc.ca/thecurrent/2009/200907/20090729.html>

As Peter Kent spoke second, and responded to points Grahame made, we will publish further responses to comments made by Mr. Kent.

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As follow-up to The Current's coverage, the following piece reports on how Canada continues with a small military assistance program to Honduras.

#### **MILITARY AID FLOWS TO HONDURAS DESPITE COUP**

by Jennifer Ditchburn,

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/military-aid-flows-to-honduras-despite-coup/article1236664/>

Ottawa — The Canadian Press (Last updated on Thursday, Jul. 30, 2009 04:53PM EDT)

To dismay of human-rights groups and opposition critics, National Defence confirms training program remains in operation.

Canada is still providing training to members of the Honduran army, despite the military coup that sent the Central American country into turmoil late last month.

National Defence confirmed the government has maintained its military training assistance program with Honduras, which provides language and peacekeeping training to soldiers.

The Conservative government is already facing criticism for not following the lead of the United States and European Union in taking concrete action against the regime, although it has condemned the coup.

“That's a message to them, that we may criticize you in public but don't worry we'll maintain economic and military relations with you, and that's what real power is, economic and military relations,” said Grahame Russell of Rights Action, a non-governmental organization that works in Central America.

“A logical step would be to say we're going to suspend participation until the situation is resolved,” said Liberal foreign affairs critic Bob Rae. “Otherwise it gives the impression that for us it's just business as usual and there's nothing more that can be said or done.”

Early on June 28, members of the Honduran military stormed the presidential palace in Tegucigalpa and removed democratically elected president Manuel Zelaya. They put him on a plane to Costa Rica, and have barred him from entering the country at border crossings. They've also broken up protests by supporters of Mr. Zelaya, and maintained curfews across Honduras. Some dissidents have been jailed.

Mr. Zelaya had challenged the country's legislative and judicial branches by announcing he would hold a referendum on major constitutional reform, a move only the country's supreme court was allowed to make. A leftist, he also confronted the country's elite by raising the minimum wage by 60 per cent and proposing other social reforms in the hemisphere's second-poorest country. Some conservative voices in the United States have backed Mr. Zelaya's ouster, linking him with Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez.

The Canadian government issued a statement condemning the coup. It also supported the suspension of Honduras from the Organization of American States and is backing the mediation efforts of Costa Rican President Oscar Arias. But it has hesitated to take further steps.

Peter Kent, minister of state for foreign affairs, said Canada's one-year-old military training program, known as MTAP, is “not a major issue.”

This year, three Honduran soldiers are receiving English-language training at bases in Kingston, Ont., and St. Jean, Que., and two others are attending Canada-funded peacekeeping courses in Chile and Argentina. The cost is estimated at \$70,000 annually. "The MTAP program that we support is, at this point in Honduras, a very small investment," Mr. Kent said in an interview. "We're reviewing all of the security assistance that we provide, but at this point it's not a major issue."

The U.S., which has major military operations in Honduras, announced a week after the coup that it was suspending \$17.9-million in military aid and an estimated \$195-million in development aid. The EU also suspended development aid of about \$100-million.

"We're focusing our support on President Arias's attempts to find a non-violent, mediated solution, and the earliest possible return of President Zelaya and Honduras to democratic practice and principle," said Mr. Kent, who has spoken directly to the key players. He added Canada is not cutting the \$16.4-million in development aid it provides each year to Honduras.

But non-government groups that work in the region say Canada must go beyond words if it wants to send a message that it does not countenance the toppling of democratic governments – and a first step would be to end the military program. "It doesn't really matter what it's doing, whether it's training the military to be good polite people or training them to use new armaments," said Rick Arnold of Common Frontiers. "You need to have some areas where you stand up and say we're not going to continue the kind of relationship we had with you in the past."

Mr. Russell, who recently returned from Honduras, said the government should be taking a series of steps against Honduras as Washington has done. The most recent action by the Obama administration was to strip visas from officials associated with the coup, and revoke the credentials from the Honduran ambassador, who had supported the coup. "It sends a clear message to the regime that small measures are being taken, and if they don't restore the constitutional order than larger measures will be taken," Mr. Russell said.

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WHAT TO DO

AMERICANS AND CANADIANS SHOULD CONTACT YOUR OWN MEDIA,  
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, SENATORS & MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, TO  
DEMAND:

an end to police, army and para-military repression  
respect for safety and human rights of all Hondurans  
unequivocal denunciation of the military coup  
no recognition of this military coup and the 'de facto' government of  
Roberto Micheletti  
unconditional return of the entire constitutional government  
concrete and targeted economic, military and diplomatic sanctions  
against the coup plotters and perpetrators  
application of international and national justice against the coup plotters,  
and  
reparations for the illegal actions and rights violations committed during  
this illegal coup

TO DONATE FUNDS TO PRO-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT IN HONDURAS,  
MAKE TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS TO "RIGHTS ACTION" AND MAIL TO:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

CANADA: 552-351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: <http://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>

Upon request, Rights Action can provide a proposal of which  
organizations and people, in Honduras, we are channeling your funds to  
and supporting.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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