



# NICARAGUA NETWORK NICARAGUA MONITOR

May 2009

# 156

## Former Sugar Workers Protest

By Giorgio Trucchi - Rel-UITA

[This article was published on the web page of Radio La Primerisima on May 14, 2009. Translation by Chuck Kaufman.]

Since March 9, former sugar workers suffering from Chronic Renal Insufficiency have been camped in Managua calling for compensation. They belong to the Nicaraguan Association of Those Affected by Chronic Renal Insufficiency (ANAIIRC) which is affiliated with the International Union of Food Workers (UITA). They are demanding compensation from Nicaragua Sugar Estates, Ltd. (which owns the San Antonio Sugar Mill and is part of the Pellas Group, Nicaragua's wealthiest corporation) for damage to their health caused by indiscriminate use of agrochemicals and water contamination. For more than two months they have tried to sit down to have a discussion with the company without receiving a response or even a signal that demonstrated the intention to look for a solution to this drama which is the daily reality for thousands of former sugar workers and their families. On the contrary, all they have received have been pressure and threats. Their tenacity, proud and firm, has earned them the help and solidarity of international organizations and people who have followed what is happening in Nicaragua.

To highlight the struggle and to learn her perspectives on the future, I conversed with Carmen Rios, president of ANAIIRC.

**Q – It has been two months since you arrived in Managua. How do you evaluate that period and what advances have there been in the struggle?**

**Rios** – It has been a very hard struggle with many difficulties. With the company we haven't progressed much, but, I believe that, yes, there was a great advance in terms of presenting our demands at a national and international

level and to pressure the Pellas Group so that it listens to us. We have received support from some national organizations, from university students, and from a group that is promoting a boycott of Flor de Caña rum. At the international level solidarity support has been bountiful and I want to thank especially UITA and the Italy-Nicaragua Association for the support they are offering us.

Another very important aspect is the experience that a good part of our people are gaining in these days. For many of our affiliates and widows, it is the first time they've participated in an activity of protest of this type, leaving their homes

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Carmen Rios is the President of the Association of Those Affected by Chronic Renal Insufficiency (ANAIIRC). Photo: REL-UITA

## Alliance for Global Justice Expands Mission

By Chuck Kaufman

In 1998, the Nicaragua Network created a new organization, the Alliance for Global Justice, as a non-profit umbrella to help grow the progressive movement in the United States.

As many will remember, in 1995 we had formed the Campaign for Labor Rights to fight global sweatshop abuses. A couple of years later, when the big environmental and development groups were ready to close down the 50 Years Is Enough Campaign to change World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies, we took financial and organizational responsibility for it and converted it into a grassroots organizing campaign.

Some funders and donors were confused as to why two global campaigns were under the single country solidarity organization, the Nicaragua Network. So, we created the Alliance for Global Justice (AfGJ), dissolved our own tax-exempt status, and placed Nicanet under AfGJ. A number of other groups such as

Mexico Solidarity Network were forming at the time or looking to grow by sharing resources. We launched the AfGJ with seven projects which operated autonomous programs and fundraising and shared resources, infrastructure and analysis.

By 2003 most of the projects had reached self-sufficiency and incorporated independently with their own tax exempt status.

Currently there are four campaigns under the AfGJ: Nicanet, Campaign for Labor Rights, Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, and Respect for Democracy Campaign. The last is a campaign to promote participatory democracy and to oppose US democracy manipulation programs such as the mis-named National Endowment for Democracy. The AfGJ also acts as fiscal sponsor for about two dozen local, national, and international progressive groups enabling them to offer tax deductible contributions through the

**See Alliance, p. 6.**

# U.S.-Trained Human Rights Abusers

By John Lindsay-Poland

[This article was published on April 20, 2009 by *Foreign Policy In Focus* at [www.fpij.org](http://www.fpij.org). It is republished here by permission. Lindsay-Poland co-directs the Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and the Caribbean, in Oakland, California. He can be reached at [johnlp@igc.org](mailto:johnlp@igc.org).]

President Barack Obama has reversed a few of the Bush administration's most egregious policies violating human rights and international law, such as the announced closure of the detention center in Guantánamo. But it remains to be seen to what extent he will lead the military toward respect for human rights, and change the institutional impunity to which American commanders and U.S. military allies have become accustomed.

In March, combatant commanders came before Congress to make their case for funding. Southern Command Chief Admiral James Stavridis didn't hesitate to say how critical funds are for military training, especially the former School of the Americas (now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation). "The camaraderie developed among our military officers at these institutions," Stavridis said, "and the schools' strong emphasis on democratic values and respect for human rights are critical to creating military establishments capable of effective combined operations."

But what evidence is there that the specific military units in 149 other nations receiving U.S. training and other assistance actually respect human rights more after receiving the training? Legislation known as the "Leahy Law"

since 1997 has prohibited U.S. assistance to foreign military units that have committed gross human rights abuses. But the focus is on abuses committed before assistance is given. The United States doesn't conduct any institutional evaluation of the human rights impacts of



*The United States trains thousands of foreign troops without evaluation of the human rights impact of that training.*

its military assistance after it's given.

## Is It the Students, Or the Training?

The underlying article of faith for evaluating other nations' human rights records to see if they are worthy of U.S. military assistance, is that such assistance will "professionalize" other armies, or at worst be neutral for its impact on respect for human rights.

In fact, sometimes the opposite is true. A study of School of Americas graduates in 2005 found that soldiers taking more than one course at the school were several times more likely to have allegedly committed abuses than those who took just one course. A 2006 study by the RAND Corporation found that U.S. military training supported forces that continued to commit gross violations in Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Similar claims could be made about assistance given to

Iraq and Israel, to consider two obvious examples. In Colombia, the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Amnesty International reviewed data on army units receiving U.S. assistance—especially training. We found that nearly half (47%) of civilian killings reportedly committed by the army in 2007 were committed by units that had been reviewed and received U.S. assistance in 2006 and 2007. Many more were committed by units from which individual officers were drawn and received leadership and other training at U.S. military schools.

Periodic evaluation is a basic prerequisite for any government program, but especially one that imparts lethal skills and equipment. As Congress' comptroller, the General Accountability Office should study whether assistance is fulfilling U.S. human rights policy objectives. Instead its reports focus on limited questions of efficiency in the use of funds. A GAO evaluation of Plan Colombia last year, for example, that was two years in the making, didn't once address the impacts on respect for human rights—for good or bad—of the \$5 billion in U.S. military aid to Colombia since 2000.

In Colombia, progress on human rights is measured by macro-factors, such as overall levels of political violence, instead of by violations by the institutions that were directly assisted by the United States or by the extent that those violations were prosecuted in civilian courts. The result is that, while political violence has diminished as a result of dominion by the State and—in many areas—the mafia, over insurgent groups, killings of civilians by the Army trained and equipped by the United States has risen dramatically, 72% since 2002.

The Colombian military's long history of gross human rights abuses should have suggested long ago that the departments of State and Defense evaluate their military training for human rights. But although international military training aims to "emphasize an understanding of internationally recognized human rights," the military doesn't evaluate human rights performance, either. The U.S. Southern Command, for example, typically measures success of training by promotions of officers receiving

**See U.S. Trained, p. 8**

The **Nicaragua Monitor** is published by the Nicaragua Network (a project of the Alliance for Global Justice) to educate US citizens about the effects of US policy on the people of Nicaragua and to build ties of peace and friendship between our two peoples.

**Subscription information:** Electronic version free. Paper \$30 for one year (individuals), or \$60 yearly for committees which includes 5-10 copies. This publication may be reproduced in whole or in part to educate US citizens about Nicaragua and US policy. Credit the *Nicaragua Network*.

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# D'Escoto Sends Message to Linder Family

[Bryan Moore, Senior Instructor of Spanish at the University of Oregon, Eugene, forwarded to us this tribute to Ben Linder by Miguel D'Escoto. Moore has organized tributes to Linder at the U. of OR.]

Message of His Excellency Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann  
President of the United Nations General Assembly  
In Memory of Ben Linder  
28 April 2009

Dear Elisabeth, Bryan, Brothers and Sisters,  
Friends of Ben Linder and of Nicaragua,

I am moved and honored to send greetings to you in Oregon as you celebrate the life and mission of Ben Linder. I am also pleased to know that the University of Oregon has decided to make Latin American Studies a full-fledged academic department. I am certain such programs do contribute in palpable and strategic ways to greater cultural understanding among the peoples of Latin America and the United States, and ultimately among the peoples of the world. In these difficult times, I'm sure Ben would agree that we need understanding and solidarity more than ever.

Twenty-two years have passed since the murder of Ben, Pablo and Sergio while they worked in the isolated Nicaraguan communities of El Cua, San Jose de Bocay, and others -- communities that were trapped in the war zone. Ben and his co-workers were admired for performing the miracle of producing "light from water." I have no doubt these communities still remember, honor and miss Ben, in the same way his family, friends and a new generation of admirers remember him at home in Oregon.

Today I am addressing you not as the Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, but as the President of the United Nations General Assembly. When I assumed my post last September, I spoke in my opening address of a world in crisis, indeed, of multiple converging crises, that were tipping millions of the world's marginally poor into extreme poverty. In addition to a global economic meltdown, poor people are facing scarcity of food, water and energy as well as the calamities provoked by climate change.

I made no secret of my own belief that

the current economic crisis is the result of a deep systemic crisis, and of a deeper moral and ethical failure. I underscored the need for greater solidarity, one that places at the core of our work, the many millions



*Engineer Ben Linder was also a clown and enjoyed entertaining children of all ages.*

of our most vulnerable brothers and sisters who today are suffering, through no fault of their own, the multiple impacts of these crises. To my amazement, I was informed that "solidarity" was not part of the UN vernacular, and using the word in UN speeches would confuse the Member States.

I am happy to say that these views, which only a few months ago seemed radical to many at UN headquarters in New York, are now becoming mainstream views in every region of the world. I have no doubt Ben is as happy as we are that others are recognizing the need—indeed the imperative—for solidarity.

At its crux, the crisis we are facing stems from an all pervading system that has sanctioned, promoted and defended unbridled greed over the common good. Over the past five decades, a select few nations – those with majority voting rights or with pre-emptive veto power – have arrogated to themselves the power to define the rules of the global

financial institutions. But the rule makers themselves refused to be bound by the very same rules they had created. Now under the aegis of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the

brunt of the burden is being placed upon the world's most vulnerable populations.

This means our first and overriding task must be to mobilize the necessary resources to avert a further human catastrophe. This is an undertaking that we at the General Assembly and the UN are taking seriously by convening a Summit of world leaders – from all 192 UN Member States – during the first days of June of this year. This task will require immense focus, flexibility, a shared sense of overwhelming urgency and a commitment to using every resource at our disposal— economic and political, moral and religious – to find our way forward.

But I remain convinced that the strongest forces for social justice remain within us as individuals, families and communities. Let us draw from Ben Linder's example the inspiration to take the lead in promoting these essential values in our societies. Leadership is crucial. All of us must become leaders, advocates, and ambassadors-at-large for a more just world – one imbued with respect for the inherent dignity due to all persons everywhere.

I believe we are at a foundational moment in the history of the United Nations. We must be brave — we must have vision to fulfill the purposes for which this Organization was founded. Today, more than ever, the world's most vulnerable are in need of the global force of the G-192 present in UN General Assembly. We have the challenge of joining together in a noble mission to defend the right to full participation in our

**See Linder Family, p. 8.**

# \$97 Million from U.S. to Bolivian Separatists

By Eva Golinger

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Recently declassified documents obtained by investigators Jeremy Bigwood and this author reveal that the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has invested more than \$97 million in “decentralization” and “regional autonomy” projects and opposition political parties in Bolivia since 2002. The documents, requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), show that USAID in Bolivia was the “first donor to support departmental governments” and “decentralization programs” in the country, proving that the US agency has been one of the principal funders and fomenters of the separatist projects promoted by regional governments in Eastern Bolivia.

## Decentralization and Separatism

The documents confirm that USAID has been managing approximately \$85 million annually in Bolivia during the past few years, divided amongst programs related to security, democracy, economic growth and human investment. The Democracy Program is focused on a series of priorities, the first outlined as “Decentralized democratic governments: departmental governments and municipalities.”

One document, classified as “sensitive,” explains that this particular program began when USAID established an Office for Transition Initiatives (OTI) in Bolivia during 2004. The OTIs form a division of USAID and function as rapid response teams to political crises in countries strategically important to US interests. The OTI only address political issues, despite USAID’s principal mission dedicated to humanitarian aid and development assistance, and they generally have access to large amounts of liquid funds in order to quickly and efficiently achieve their objectives.

The OTIs operate as intelligence agencies due to their relative secrecy and filtering mechanism that involves large contracts given to US companies to operate temporary offices in nations

where OTIs requires channeling millions of dollars to political parties and NGOs that work in favor of Washington’s agenda. After the failed coup d’état against



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President Chávez in April 2002, USAID set up an OTI in Venezuela two months later, in June 2002, with a budget of over \$10 million for its first two years. Since then, the OTI has filtered more than \$50 million through five US entities that set up shop in Caracas, reaching more than 450 NGOs, political parties and programs that support the opposition to President Chávez.

In the case of Bolivia, the OTI contracted the US company Casals & Associates to coordinate a program based on decentralization and autonomy in the geographical region called the “media luna” (half-moon), where the hard core opposition to President Evo Morales is based, particularly in the province of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Casals & Associates was also charged with conducting a series of training seminars and workshops to strengthen opposition political parties that were working against then presidential candidate Evo Morales in 2004 and 2005.

After Morales was elected president at the end of 2005, the OTI directed the majority of its funding and work to the separatist projects that later produced regional referendums on autonomy in Eastern Bolivia. Their principal idea is to divide Bolivia into two separate republics, one governed by an indigenous majority and the other run by European descendents and mestizos that inhabit the

areas rich in natural resources, such as gas and water. After 2007, the OTI, which had an additional budget of \$13.3 on top of USAID’s general Bolivia program funding, was absorbed into USAID/Bolivia’s Democracy Program, which since then has been dedicating resources to consolidating the separatist projects.

USAID’s work in Bolivia covers almost all sectors of political and economic life, penetrating Bolivian society and attempting to impose a US political and ideological model. The investment in “decentralization” includes all the support and funding needed to form “autonomous” regions, from departmental planning to regional economic development, financial management, communications strategies, departmental budget structures, and territorial organization designs – all prepared and implemented by USAID representatives and partners in Bolivia. As part of the program titled “Strengthening Democratic Institutions” (SDI), USAID describes its work to “enrich the dialogue on decentralization; improve management of departmental budgetary resources; and promote regional economic development.” Through this program, USAID has even created “territorial organization laboratories” to help regional governments implement their autonomy successfully.

In one document dated November 30, 2007, just months before the separatist referendums held in Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija during early 2008, the Democratic Initiatives Program of OTI/USAID worked closely with the Prefects (regional governments) to “develop sub-national, de-concentrated” models of government. In those regions, those promoting such “sub-national, de-concentrated” models, or separatism, have made clear that their objective is to achieve a political, economic and territorial division from the national government of Bolivia, so they can manage and benefit solely from the rich resources in their regions. It is no coincidence that the separatist initiatives are all concentrated in areas rich in gas, water and economic power. The multi-million dollar funding from USAID to the separatist projects in Bolivia has encouraged and supported destabilization activities during the past few years, including extreme violence and racism

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## Sugar Workers, from p. 1.

to come to live in the camp, defending and demanding respect for their rights. Lamentably we must also indicate the lack of coverage that the national media has given our protest, as opposed to international press coverage which we evaluate as very successful so that our fight is known anywhere in the world.

Finally, I think also that little by little the Nicaraguan people are beginning to develop a consciousness of what we are doing here, of what our demands are. We never tire of speaking and explaining to people who we

are and what it is that we want: justice and a right to compensation for what they did to us. So independent of the fact that the company has not yet given us an answer, we are sure that we are going to win.

### Q – What changes have there been in the camp?

Rios - We arrived with few things. Hammocks, personal belongings, and something to cook in and to survive. Thanks to the aid that has been offered at the national and international level, we could hold on with dignity these two months and we are ready for more. Now that we are entering the rainy season the camping has become more difficult. We have raised

black plastic tarps thanks to the support of the UITA and are going to be able to hold on with the arrival of the rains. We are not going away.

### Q – How is the morale of the people? Are there problems with sickness?

Rios – New people keep coming and we have tried to rotate so as not to worsen anyone's health. Those who were most ill went home and consulted the health center. They rested and got well and later returned. Seventeen people were directed to return to Chichigalpa because of their health. Lamentably we



Former sugar workers protest lack of response to their kidney disease. Photo: Mike Elliot

also had a death. Yesterday we buried to Pedro Tercero, a former sugar worker who was here with us but had to return home because he was very ill. He sent us his son to follow in the struggle, and he requested

that when he died we hold his wake in front of the Pellas Building, but that was not possible.

The people are here because they are conscious of the struggle that we are taking forward and that we are going to win. It has been hard, but the *compañeros* say we cannot leave, we must go forward. Our people have learned a lot in the course of these two months, and they see that it was necessary to come to Managua to undertake this fight.

### Q – Also there were difficult moments, pressures and threats. What is the situation now?

Rios

– There were difficult days. We were afraid for our lives and there were rumors that workers of the company were going to come to attack us with the excuse that our objective was the closing of the sugar mill and the liquor plant, which is totally false. We have always said that this has never been, nor

is going to be, our objective because we know that these companies provide many jobs. At the moment it seems that the situation has calmed a little. We went to Chichigalpa and talked with people so that they no longer believe all these lies and they understand our fight. We are like an anthill. We have come along doing our work little by little and now it is time for the harvest.

### Q – What do you want to say to the sugar companies?

Rios – We are people of dialogue; we want an opportunity to dialogue. We have said that over and over in so many letters to Mr. Carlos Pellas that haven't been answered. We want him to remember that his former workers are dying. To date 3,326 people have passed away, and this means thousands of people who have been abandoned. The only thing we ask is to begin a dialogue.

## View videos of LASC-NACLA teach-ins!

Between February and May 2009, the Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC) and the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) held a series of three teach-ins in Washington, DC, in Chicago, IL, and in the San Francisco Bay Area in CA. The title of the teach-ins was: "Not Just Change, But Justice" and each had a separate focus. The focus of the Washington, DC, teach-in was on U.S. militarization in Latin America, the second in Chicago was on issues of sovereignty and democracy manipulation and the third in California was on U.S. Trade Policy and its Impacts on Food, Land, and Immigration in the Americas.

To watch the videos of the Washington, DC, and San Francisco Bay Area teach-ins, go to [www.nicanet.org](http://www.nicanet.org).

## Alliance, from p. 1.

AfGJ's tax exempt status and to enjoy other benefits such as our payroll service and group health insurance.

In its March 2009 meeting, the AfGJ board (which is composed of the same people who serve as the Nicaragua Network Executive Committee) decided to raise the profile of the Alliance for Global Justice, expand our mission, and transition into doing most of our work as the Alliance for Global Justice rather than in the names of the several campaigns.

The exception to this will be the 30 year old Nicaragua Network, which will join AfGJ campaigns on labor rights, trade, democracy, and environmental issues, but will also continue the Nicaragua specific programs such as the Hotline, News Service, Monitor, brigades and delegations, and speaking tours that have made it the dominant source of reliable, balanced information about Nicaragua and US solidarity.

Part of the motivation for combining the work of Campaign for Labor Rights, Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, and Respect for Democracy Campaign, as well as future campaigns that become necessary to build that better world we all know is possible, is the financial pressure that all progressive non-profits have been under since 2007 when the presidential primaries began and which are now exacerbated by the worst crisis in capitalism since the Great Depression.

But, the other motivation for the change in organizing strategy is the amazing and positive changes that are sweeping Latin America. We have understood, since the 1990 electoral defeat of the revolutionary Sandinista government, that virtually all issues are intertwined and have causes and effects that expand well beyond any country's borders. There is so much overlap between labor rights, trade issues, sovereignty and self-determination, sustainable development and respect for the environment, that it only makes sense to reflect those commonalities in our work.

The change allows us to expand our mission to include education and mobilization on cross-border issues such as participatory democracy, Latin America integration, and ALBA-style cooperative trade. It continues to be in the vital interest of the Latin America solidarity movement, for instance, to demand that the US government respect the sovereignty and right to self-determination of the

Venezuelan people. It continues to be a priority to educate the people and policy makers of the United States. And it continues to be important to support the Bolivarian Revolution and work to apply the positive examples from there in our own country.

But Venezuela no longer stands alone on these issues which it pioneered and still leads by example. An organization that



*Chuck Kaufman (center), with Donna Leist (right), AfGJ board chair and Hannah Frisch, AfGJ supporter.*

focuses only on Venezuela (or Nicaragua) is ignoring Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Honduras, Cuba, and other countries where positive change is sweeping the hemisphere.

Adding Campaign for Labor Rights (CLR) into the mix allows us to address the critical support of workers for economic and social justice across the hemisphere (and beyond) both in countries that are improving worker rights and those, like Colombia, where labor organizing and demands for worker rights is a life-threatening activity.

CLR's work focuses on US transnational corporations' responsibility for worker exploitation in other countries, how so-called "free trade" agreements contribute to that exploitation and also put pressure on workers to emigrate, and directs solidarity support for front-line unions that don't receive support from the big US labor federations. These foci improve our ability to educate and mobilize people in the US on big picture, root cause issues.

The Respect for Democracy Campaign also enables us to not only challenge the US government's attempts to manipulate elections in Nicaragua and Venezuela, but also Bolivia, Haiti, Mexico, and every country where the US attacks democracy under the guise of building it.

It also enables us to build the beginning of a Democracy Movement in the United States by learning and educating US activists about the advances in participatory democracy in Latin America.

The Vision and Mission statements adopted by the Alliance for Global Justice's at its founding in 1998 continue to be as important today as they were eleven years ago:

"We envision societies which explore and implement alternatives to the unjust domination of governments, global financial institutions and multinational corporations which denigrate the world's peoples and devastate ecosystems. We envision the development of a unified domestic and international movement of transformational grassroots organizations that promote a socially,

ecologically and economically just world.

"It is the mission of the Alliance for Global Justice to achieve social change and economic justice by helping to build a stronger more unified grassroots movement. We recognize that the concentration of wealth and power is the root cause of oppression requiring us to work together across ideologies, issues and communities. The Alliance nurtures organizations seeking fundamental change in international and national conditions that disempower people, create disparities in access to wealth and power, poison the earth, and plunder its resources.

"We support locally-based grassroots organizing by sharing political analysis, mobilizing for direct action, monitoring the centers of corporate and government power, expanding channels of communication, and sharing skills and infrastructure. Our commitment to solidarity and to non-hierarchical democratic process enables us to respectfully listen and respond to each other within the movement."

Venezuela stands out as the hemispheric pioneer and leader in the effort to build a multi-polar world through greater political and economic integration in Latin America and to base trade on cooperation through ALBA-type agreements rather

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## Alliance, from p. 6.

than competition as the US-backed free trade agreements do. So a continued focus on US relations with Venezuela will be a natural priority. There is major momentum to improve US-Cuba relations right now. If US elites can improve relations with Cuba, then surely it is stupid for them to retain a hostile posture toward Venezuela.

We need to work hard right now to pressure the US government to normalize relations with Venezuela, Cuba, and Bolivia and to end the occupation of Haiti, especially during this period when there are opportunities for the US to begin acting as a responsible neighbor and better world citizen.

Those changes are not going to happen without our continued, active pressure. They aren't going to be the changes we want if we sit back while groups like the Chamber of Commerce define what those changes will be. We are balanced on the knife edge of epochal change. It is our responsibility to make sure that we jump to the Left, not to the Right!

The priority of the Alliance for Global Justice campaigns will always be focused on changing US government and corporate behavior and educating and mobilizing US residents to force positive change. We will follow the solidarity model, which to us means that we take our cues from the people and groups in the Global South who best articulate and represent the aspirations of the great majority of people who have been excluded and marginalized by corporate globalization and neo-liberal "democracy." Our job is to amplify their voices, not to tell them what their message should be.

For instance, workers in Venezuela are engaged in a vigorous debate about their role in the Bolivarian process. That is not a discussion we will be joining, although we follow it with great interest. Our view of solidarity is that questions about the role of labor in Venezuela are issues for Venezuelan workers to resolve without outside interference. Our role is to keep the US from intervening. The same can be said for the debates within Sandinismo in Nicaragua.

In that context the following are our major objectives:

1) Support efforts in Latin America to expand direct, participatory democracy to those closest to the problems and the solutions at the community level such as is being pioneered by Venezuela's Community Councils and experimented with by Nicaragua's Councils of Citizen Power.

2) Expose and oppose US efforts to



*The Colombian farm workers' union FENSUAGRO bears the brunt of attacks from death squads.*

restrict democracy to its own deformed style of corporate-owned representative democracy. To accomplish this we will work to abolish the falsely-named National Endowment for Democracy and to return the US Agency for International Development to its original disaster relief and development roles and to abandon its democracy manipulation projects.

3) Support Latin American economic and political integration initiatives such as the cooperative trade Bolivarian

Alternative for Our Americas (ALBA) agreements, the Bank of the South development bank, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and other regional integration bodies that enable a united Latin America to counter-balance what Bolivar called "the Colossus of the North."

4) Oppose neoliberal Free Trade Agreements that destroy small farmers and businesses, increase corporate domination, and force wage earners to abandon their families to try to find work in other countries, including the US.

5) Provide solidarity support for unions such as the Colombian farmers and farm workers union, FENSUAGRO, which bears the brunt of attacks by Colombia's death squad government, the Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) union which continues to be repressed for opposing the US-led coup against President Aristide, and the Palestinian Farmers Union which is struggling to organize farmers in the midst of a brutal occupation.

6) Oppose military solutions such as the failed "war on drugs" including Plan Colombia and the Merida Initiative as well as the re-christening of the Fourth Fleet and expansion of US military bases in an effort to surround Venezuela's oil producing region.

7) Support just negotiated peace efforts in Colombia and Haiti.

8) Oppose US disinformation campaigns by the government and corporate media.

This is an ambitious agenda but the Alliance for Global Justice is already working on all these issues within the many coalitions we help lead such as the Latin America Solidarity Coalition, Justice in the Maquiladoras, Stop CAFTA Coalition and others. Let's continue the work together!

## Echoes of Silence Delegation July 14 – 29 2009

*\*Work on grassroots eco-technology and tree-planting projects*

*\*Sing with legendary musicians under the stars*

*\*Live within a typical Nicaraguan family in a poor but creative neighborhood*

*\*Plant food sustainability creating kitchen gardens*

*\*Celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution with Sandino's grandson and family*

*\*Learn about the visionary 'eco-community' Sandino founded*

Brigade is international and for all ages; Spanish/English translation provided.

US\$68/€50 per day all-inclusive: board, lodging, transport, analysis, events, translation. Come all 14 days or whatever suits you. Contact Echoes of Silence coordinator, Paul Baker Hernández at: paulbaker2004@yahoo.com.

## U.S. Trained, from p. 2.

assistance, by the officers' positive image of the United States, and whether they rise to positions of prominence such as defense attaché, or even the presidency.

### Addressing the Problem

Today, a reform process of the Foreign Assistance Act undertaken by the House Foreign Affairs Committee offers an unprecedented opportunity to require periodic and comprehensive evaluation of the human rights impacts of U.S. military assistance. As part of such evaluation, the government should establish an independent commission to investigate the past activities of U.S. military schools, and make recommendations to establish safeguards to prevent violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The commission should include representatives of relevant government agencies, as well as human rights organizations and academics. Most importantly, such a commission should be given access to detailed data on who has received U.S. assistance and on human rights violations over long periods.

Periodic evaluation of the human rights performance of military training beneficiaries could draw on information already gathered by U.S. embassies from local courts, human rights NGOs, intelligence and enforcement agencies, and media reports. Basic criteria for evaluation should include whether there are credible reports of beneficiaries or troops under their command committing gross human rights abuses, and whether civilian courts are successfully trying those crimes. This evaluation should be transparent and made available to the public, and it should apply to assistance given through the Defense Department and other agencies, as well as the State Department.

Policymakers aren't given to asking "why" questions. In the case of the human rights performance of client armies viewed as strategic allies, however, we should all be asking: If the United States is excluding abusive units from assistance, and training the rest in human rights, why so many of these armies continue abuse and kill their civilian compatriots? In the meantime, where the results of U.S. assistance are executions, torture, forced displacement, and other violations, the Obama administration should terminate military aid and cooperation.

## Linder Family, from p. 3

global community. Poor people can no longer be seen as scapegoats or victims, but as the legitimate stakeholders that they are. We must endeavor to ensure that relief and opportunity are not privileges reserved solely for more affluent societies, but include and prioritize our brothers and sisters in greatest need.

I am certain that together, we can and will find the moral strength and creativity



*D'Escoto says we need "food systems that are ecologically sound and sustainable, and that offer just reward to small-scale farmers."*

that we as human beings possess, and the resolve to see this process through. Let us follow the legacy of Ben Linder. Just as Ben used the unicycle, juggling, and laughter to mobilize children and their caretakers in vaccination drives; just as Ben offered his skills and intellect as an engineer to bring development to remote areas; just as Ben offered his presence to accompany those most vulnerable during times of suffering... We must join together

as members of the broader international community to harness our creativity and intellectual prowess to develop innovative paradigms based on a new understanding of prosperity and progress.

If prosperity and progress are to benefit each and all of us; they cannot be based on patterns of insatiable greed and consumption, but rather on sound internationally regulated financial and monetary institutions – and equally as important, on a profound sense of solidarity and connection with all our Brothers and Sisters.

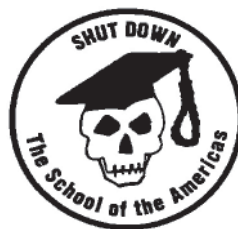
Genuine prosperity and progress will flow from institutions that enable, not hinder, the formulation of inclusive and people-centered development policies; trade regimes based on principles of fairness and equity; food systems that are ecologically sound and sustainable, and that offer just reward to small-scale farmers; labor regimes that address the special needs of women as the baseline for judging economic performance.

I believe ardently that such a World is possible. Whether in my home country of Nicaragua (together with the Frente), here at the United Nations, or in your community, let each of us individually and collectively, make the construction of a new, vibrant vision of our global society a shared priority and our common endeavor. I am confident that Ben would have wanted this as well. Let us follow his example.

Blessings to Elisabeth and the other members of Ben's family, and to each and all of you, my deepest and sincere admiration and affection.

**Miguel D'Escoto**

## Sign petition asking Nicaragua to withdraw from the School of the Americas!



The US grassroots movement to close the Army School of the Americas (now called Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) is mobilizing for victory this summer under a new administration and a new Congress. Last year the vote to close the SOA would have succeeded had we changed only six votes. Five Latin American countries have already announced their withdrawal from the SOA.

Please sign the petition, co-sponsored by the Nicaragua Network and SOA Watch, asking Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega to withdraw Nicaragua from the SOA. To sign go to [www.nicanet.org](http://www.nicanet.org) and scroll down. Click on the link to sign!



## Bolivia, from p. 4.

against Indigenous communities, terrorist acts and even assassination attempts against President Morales.

### Strengthening Political Parties in the Opposition

Another principal priority of USAID in Bolivia as outlined in the declassified documents is the extensive funding and training of opposition political parties. Through two US entities, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and National Democratic Institute (NDI), both considered international branches of the Republican and Democratic parties in the US that receive their funding from the Department of State and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), USAID has been providing funding and strategic political aide to political groups and leaders from the opposition in Bolivia.

During the year 2007, \$1.25 million was dedicated to “training for members of political parties on current political and electoral processes, including the constituent assembly and the referendum on autonomy.” The principal beneficiaries of this funding have been the opposition political parties Podemos, MNR, MIR and more than 100 politically-oriented NGOs in Bolivia.

### Intervention in Electoral Processes

An additional substantial part of USAID’s work in Bolivia has been devoted to intervening in electoral processes during the past few years. This has included forming a network of more than 3,000 “observers,” trained by USAID grantee Partners of the Americas, a US corporation that also receives funding from major companies and entities that form part of the military-industrial complex. The creation of “networks” in “civil society” to monitor electoral processes has been a strategy utilized

by Washington in countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador and Nicaragua, to later use such apparently “independent” observers in an attempt to discredit and

as the Organization of American States, European Community and the Carter Center. These “networks” function as centers for the opposition during electoral



*When Evo Morales (center) was elected president of Bolivia in late 2005, the US began directing money toward separatist projects.*

delegitimize elections and denounce fraud when results are not favorable to US interests.

In the case of Venezuela, for example, the organization that has implemented this strategy is Súmate, a Venezuelan NGO created with funding and strategic support from USAID and NED, that has presented itself in the public opinion as “apolitical” but in reality was the principal promoter of the recall referendum in 2004 against President Chávez and later the leader in denouncing fraud after every electoral process in Venezuela lost by the opposition, despite that such events have been certified as legitimate and “fraud-free” by international institutions such

processes to strengthen their position in the arena of public opinion and through the mass media.

### Penetration in Indigenous Communities

USAID’s work in Bolivia is not just oriented towards strengthening the opposition to Evo Morales and promoting separatism, but also involves attempts to penetrate and infiltrate indigenous communities, seeking out new actors to promote Washington’s agenda that have an image more representative of the Bolivian indigenous majority. One declassified document clearly outlines the necessity to give “more support to USAID and Embassy indigenous interns to build and consolidate a network of graduates who advocate for the US Government in key areas.” The document further discusses the need to “strengthen democratic citizenship and local economic development for Bolivia’s most vulnerable indigenous groups.” According to USAID, “this program shows that no one country or government has a monopoly on helping the indigenous. The program shows that the US is a friend to Bolivia and the indigenous...”

The declassified documents in original format and with Spanish translation are available at: [www.jeremybigwood.net/BO/2008-USAID](http://www.jeremybigwood.net/BO/2008-USAID)

## Announcing the film “The Living Documents: One Land, One Voice, One Struggle”

*A documentary by Mallory Sohmer*

The documentary was filmed in Bluefields, Monkey Point, Pearl Lagoon, the Pearl Cays, Leon and Managua, Nicaragua. It tells the story of the murder of Francisco Garcia, a Bluefields businessman and science professor, who was killed in an attempt to silence his wife, indigenous rights lawyer Maria Luisa Acosta. The film includes testimony of lawyers involved in the case and of indigenous leaders of the communities which were represented by Attorney Acosta in their struggles to preserve their traditional lands.

*To see scenes from the documentary, go to [www.nicanet.org](http://www.nicanet.org) and scroll down. To order a copy, write: [thelivingdocs@gmail.com](mailto:thelivingdocs@gmail.com).*

*Write to Nicaraguan authorities demanding that they bring to justice those responsible for the murder of Francisco Garcia! For a sample letter, contact information and background material, go to [www.nicanet.org](http://www.nicanet.org).*

# Month In Review

## Foreign Relations

President Daniel Ortega, said at a ceremony on May 15 where he received 130 busses donated by the Russian government, that he did not expect the United States to renew Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) funding that was suspended after accusations of fraud during the Nov. 2008 municipal elections. He said that US Ambassador Robert Callahan had relayed a Secretary of State Hilary Clinton statement that the funds would not be renewed unless the election results were revised. Ortega said, “Thank God that, just as today the Russian Federation has given us these buses without conditions, we also have my dear brother Chavez who made the decision that the ALBA [Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas] will assume the burden of the suspended programs.” The MCA board will meet June 10. You can send an email to the MCA making the point that only the poor will be hurt by a cut-off in aid at <http://www.mcc.gov/contact/index.php>. For more info, visit: <http://www.nicanet.org/?p=594>.

Ortega government officials also met last week with European counterparts to discuss European budget support suspended after the November municipal elections. Budget support funding is important because it can be used in any area where it is needed. After the meeting Mendel Goldstein, head of the European Commission Delegation for Central America and Panama said, “Here we are on the subject of governability. Within that subject there are several themes. The donors have expressed their concerns; what we think is that there has to be change in the future.” He said that the European Commission respects Nicaraguan sovereignty and for that reason “we cannot force change.” However, he said that the countries he represents “have good memories.”

By the following weekend there were rumors that the government would revisit the cancellation of legal recognition of two political parties, the Conservative Party (PC) and the Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS), which lost their legal existence before the 2008 elections due to failure to field the legally required number of candidates by the PC, and failure to file required reports by the MRS. MRS leader

Dora Maria Tellez said that the strategy would be to revive the PC and the party of dissident Sandinistas before the meeting of the Millennium Challenge Board on June 10 and the Budget Support Group on June 11.

The Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry released a communiqué on the night of May 4 rejecting an April 30 report by the US State Department which claimed that

“They class us as a dictatorship,” he said adding that Embassy officials have been meeting with opposition figures and offering opposition groups funding to unite against his government, even while they maintain respectful relations with the government. Ortega said that no one had been expelled because he was taking US President Barack Obama at his word when Obama said that he would not permit



*Daniel Ortega listens with earphones to Barack Obama at Summit of the Americas.*

the Nicaraguan government maintains close relations with terrorists. The Foreign Ministry said “Nicaragua rejects any report that links us with terrorism. On the contrary, our political will to fight this evil is shown by our participation in all international legal covenants of the United Nations and of the inter-American community, including participating in the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism.” The response continued: “Nicaragua has its own view about the conduct of the United States government on the international level; however, based on a desire to respect all nations’ sovereignty, we will abstain from stating those views.” To read the State Department report, go to: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/122435.htm>.

On Apr. 22, during an appearance on the Cuban television program “Round Table,” Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega said that functionaries of the United States Embassy in Managua are conspiring against his government and that Nicaraguan officials have “all the information” about the conspiracy which they have not yet wanted to make public.

interventionist policies

On April 24, Nicaragua signed on to the U.S. sponsored Plan Merida which will provide the country’s National Police with US\$1.4 million to fight international organized crime. The bulk of Plan Merida funding will go to militarize the US-Mexico border. In May, Ambassador Callahan said during ceremonies handing over four boats and four trucks and other equipment to Nicaragua’s Naval Force, that the US is moving forward with a plan to donate US\$5 million to repair the La Mascota Children’s Hospital and to provide it with medical equipment in exchange for the destruction of 651 SAM-7 missiles, evidently as part of a plan originally suggested by President Daniel Ortega.

At the Summit of the Americas, held April 17 – 19 in Trinidad and Tobago, the presidents of the Central American countries (plus Panama and the Dominican Republic) held a meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama which lasted over an hour. As the current president of the Central American Integration

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## Month, from p. 10.

System, Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega presided over the meeting which, according to the President of Guatemala, Alvaro Colom, was "relaxed and friendly." After the meeting, Ortega talked with Obama for several minutes in what sources said was a cordial conversation. Ortega said of Obama, "I want to believe that he has the disposition, has the will, but he is president of an empire and that empire has its rules that he can't change; he has to deal with them." Ortega added, "That is the great challenge."

### Abortion/Church

Supreme Court Justice Rafael Solis said that within the Supreme Court there has been a change with respect to the possibility of an imminent ruling on the issue of the constitutionality of the 2006 criminalization of therapeutic abortion when a woman's life and health are at risk. Solis said that the issue is not going to be resolved at this time. He confirmed that relations between the Ortega government and the Catholic Church have improved and after Catholic leaders meet with officials of the executive branch, the Supreme Court will receive them to converse about the suspension of the ruling on abortion.

The announcement was timed to coincide with a meeting of 60 Latin American Catholic bishops meeting at their 32nd assembly. Gone from their pronouncements were Vatican II concerns about economic human rights. Instead they expressed concern about moves toward popular democracy which they described as a "certain disenchantment with democracy that has led to the search for new political models mixed with populism," apparently targeting countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua. They noted that the global economic crisis has caused a resurgence of poverty in a number of countries. They condemned a "fragility" in many states when it comes to fully guaranteeing human rights, which they blamed on a "secularist current that silences religious and moral values." The closing document spoke in support of those who have been "persecuted" or have been "objects of slander, discredit and even of violence." Observers took that to be a message of solidarity with Nicaraguan clerics who were recently accused of corruption in a letter posted to a government listserve but later repudiated by the government.

### Politics

The alignment of Deputies in the National Assembly has changed considerably since the 2006 presidential and legislative election. Then, the breakdown was 38 Sandinista Front (FSLN), 25 Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC), 24 Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN), and five Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) deputies.

Benches are what we might call caucuses in the US. A bench receives staff and a budget if it has a minimum of four members. The ALN bench has been particularly decimated by defections and is now down to only five members. The PLC has lost six members, several of



*Latin American Catholic Bishops meeting in Managua said Mass at the Cathedral. Photo: END*

whom were expelled for taking positions opposed by the party leadership. The MRS only held on to its status as a bench when remaining members Enrique Saenz and Victor Hugo Tinoco were joined by two other deputies who switched explicitly so that the dissident Sandinista bench would not lose its status. Two of the original five MRS delegates joined the FSLN and Monica Baltodano is now the lone independent in the Assembly besides former President Enrique Bolaños who has a seat by law but doesn't occupy it.

On April 14, Baltodano announced that she was leaving the MRS bench saying that she did not agree with a series of decisions taken by the leadership which has been trending increasingly to the right. She said that she was following a decision made by the Sandinista Rescue Movement (MPRS) to which she belongs. The MPRS joined the MRS for the presidential elections of 2006. She stated, "In the last few months the political spokesperson of the MRS took decisions with which we differed and the last big difference was

with the position that Edmundo [Jarquin] took with relation to the elections in El Salvador when he practically went to campaign for ARENA (Nationalist Republican Alliance)."

A new bench in the National Assembly with seven members has taken the name Nicaraguan Unity Bench (BUN). Observers noted that if, as expected, the members of the bench vote with the FSLN, and the ALN continues its frequent alliance with the FSLN, their combined 12 votes bring the Sandinistas to 50 votes, close to the 56 vote super majority needed to make constitutional changes. These include moving from a presidential to a parliamentary system and allowing

consecutive re-election of the president and prime-minister as well as other elected officials.

The Nicaraguan Democratic Bench (BDN) is now the third largest bench in the Assembly with 14 members. Last week all BDN deputies announced that they would sign letters of resignation that they would give to Managua Archbishop Leopoldo Brenes for safe-keeping. The letters would go into effect if they voted for constitutional changes that would allow presidential re-election. This came after members of the PLC signed a document the previous week promising not to support those changes.

On April 21, Supreme Court Justice Rafael Solis told a Managua media outlet that if amendments to the constitution that would allow Daniel Ortega to run for re-election are not approved by the National Assembly, First Lady Rosario Murillo could be the Sandinista candidate for president in the 2011 election. Murillo, 57, is coordinator of the Council of Social Communication and Citizenship, principal

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## Month, from p. 11.

promoter of the Councils of Citizen Power (CPCs), which are neighborhood groups promoted by the Sandinista government as vehicles for citizen participation, and she shares power with her husband to a degree not seen before in Nicaragua. According to the M&R Consultants polling firm, Murillo has only 17.4% approval rating among the citizenry.

### Banana Workers



*A Los Angeles judge threw out two law suits by Nicaraguan banana workers. Here banana workers are camped in Managua.*

After Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Victoria Chaney threw out two consolidated lawsuits (Mejia vs. Dole Food and Rivera vs. Dole Food) by Nicaraguan banana workers, Dole Food Company reveled in its victory. With its US\$7.6 billion in net profits in 2008, Dole is the largest marketer of fruit and vegetables in the world. At Camp Nemagon in Managua, banana workers said they would not give up the fight for justice. The judge agreed with Dole that two lawyers for the workers had recruited clients to give false testimony that the pesticide DBCP (Nemagon and Fumazone) used by the company had made them sterile while working in Dole banana fields.

Judge Chaney said that this month she will initiate new procedures to determine if fines should be imposed against the plaintiffs and their lawyers. She said that other cases in California should be suspended and said that she was alerting courts in other states where banana worker cases are moving forward not to accept legal documents, medical reports or court rulings from what she said was the “corrupt legal system of Nicaragua.” She said that she had obtained her information about the Nicaraguan legal system from the U.S. Department of State.

Attorney Antonio Hernandez, who with Los Angeles attorney Juan Jose Dominguez had brought the cases against

Dole, said that they had used specialized laboratories in Nicaragua and the United States which proved that the plaintiffs were sterile and suffered other physical and mental conditions due to their exposure to Nemagon and Fumazone. He said that although they had presented evidence that Dole had tried to suborn testimony [www.nicanet.org/?p=666], the judge rejected that evidence. He urged the government of President Daniel Ortega,

the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Foreign Ministry to protest the decision.

### Indigenous

On April 18, Miskito Council of Elders proclaimed an Independent Caribbean Coast Nation with the election of Rev. Hector Williams as the Wihta Tara (grand judge) or maximum leader of Moskitia. He,

along with a Council of Ministers of the Communitarian Miskito Nation, will hold the reins of government, according to the proclamation. An Indigenous Army of Moskitia was formed as well.

The unsatisfied historical demands for land, self-determination, and respect for culture along with exploitation by successive local, regional and national governments were some of the causes that pushed the elders to declare independence according to the proclamation. The Council of Elders proclaimed independence July 2002 but never took the steps to set up a government and army. The proclamation announced a period for the turnover of government from the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN). The proclamation called for suspension of all elections within the Miskito Nation and the Elders later announced that they would block March 2010 regional elections. They ordered businesses to stop paying taxes to the Nicaraguan government, announcing that they will be collected by the Miskito government.

Only a week after the declaration, the Mayangna indigenous people of the same Caribbean Coast region, declared themselves the Indigenous Mayangna Nation of Nicaragua, but stated that they had no intention of seceding from the Republic of Nicaragua. They stated their declaration in terms of preserving their land, culture, and language. The Minister

of the Caribbean Coast Development Council of the Ortega government promised to respect and support the Sumu-Mayangna indigenous nation.

The Rama indigenous community of Tiktik Kaanu near Bluefields in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS) asked President Daniel Ortega to suspend titling of land to colonists on indigenous lands. The Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH) confirmed violent incidents in the zone and also sent a letter to James Anaya, Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Peoples of the United Nations. The indigenous appealed to President Ortega to “instruct government functionaries to stop illegal titling of land and to publicly reiterate your promise to respect indigenous communal property.” They also urged him to take effective measures to carry out the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and “to adopt the methods of protection for the life and physical integrity of the indigenous communities.”

### CAFTA

In an outcome forewarned by opponents of US-sponsored “free trade” agreements, Nicaraguan pig farmers say that imports of pork from the United States are pushing them towards bankruptcy. Minister of Trade Orlando Solorzano said that nine



*The Miskito Council of Elders traveled to Managua to try to meet with President Ortega. Photo: La Prensa*

importers, among them PriceSmart, Delicarne, and Delmor, have licenses to import pork into Nicaragua under the quotas established by the trade agreement with the United States known as the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA). Solorzano said that for this year there is a quota of 1400 tons that can enter with no import tariff and that the quota will grow each year by 100 tons until 2020. US-corporate agriculture is heavily subsidized by US taxpayers enabling transnational corporations to dump agricultural products in Mexico and Central America at prices with which local farmers cannot compete.