



# UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

## USSOUTHCOM HEADLINE NEWS

### Monday, December 12, 2011

US SOUTHCOM *Headline News* publication is a daily (duty day) compilation of published articles and commentary concerning significant defense and defense-related national security issues as pertains to the AOR. These publications aim to represent how the public, Congress and the press see military and defense programs and issues. It is an internal management tool intended to serve the informational needs of senior SOUTHCOM officials in the continuing assessment of defense policies, programs and actions. Further reproduction or redistribution for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions. This product is prepared by the US Southern Command Public Affairs Office. The use of these articles does not reflect official endorsement. Story numbers indicate order of appearance only. [Subscribe/Unsubscribe](#)

## USSOUTHCOM, Components & Associates

### JTF-Guantanamo

#### 1. New York Times

December 12, 2011, Pg. 1

#### Detainee In Iraq Poses A Dilemma As U.S. Exit Nears

*The alternative would be ...to take Mr. Daqduq out of Iraq and prosecute him in one of three venues: before a civilian court, before a military commission at the prison at Guantánamo... or before a tribunal somewhere else. One site under consideration is the naval base at Charleston, S.C. Republicans have made clear that they think Mr. Daqduq should go to Guantánamo.*

#### 2. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

#### US Defends Conditions In Gitmo Discipline Block

*Officials at ...are defending conditions at ...Five Echo, denying that they violate the Geneva Conventions...Lawyers for detainees say the cells are too small, the toilets are inadequate and it is inhumane to keep detainees held there for 20 hours a day ...especially inappropriate for detainees who have not been convicted of crimes...*

#### 3. The Miami Herald

December 9, 2011

#### Prison Camp Discloses Secret Discipline Unit At Guantanamo

*U.S. military officials at Guantanamo Bay are defending conditions in a disciplinary block known as "Five Echo," taking the unusual step ... of releasing photos of a section ... not typically shown to outsiders... David Remes ...attorney who represents three prisoners who have been held in Five Echo, said ... that the disciplinary unit appears to violate the Geneva Conventions.*

## Features

#### 4. McClatchy

Monday, December 12, 2011

#### Egypt's Military Rulers To Decide Fate Of Guantanamo Returnee

*Other transitional North African governments are muddling through the same quandary as Egypt. Libya controversially integrated some former jihadist fighters into its new military, while one of the first decrees of the interim Tunisian government was amnesty for political prisoners, including former or current detainees from the U.S. Naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.*

### Security Cooperation

#### 5. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

#### US Provided Aerial Surveillance Of Jamaican Raid

*A U.S. P-3 Orion aircraft provided aerial surveillance of the effort to capture Christopher "Dudus" Coke, Prime Minister Andrew Holness told reporters ...The raid set off a fierce battle ...that left more than 70 people dead. Holness said the U.S. had no other role in the raid ..."We would want to reaffirm our position that the U.S. Government or its military did not participate ..."*

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## -----Other AOR Related Items-----

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## Andean Ridge

### Bolivia

## Features

#### 6. The Miami Herald

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

#### Morales tries to take revolution to kindergarten

*Morales... has nationalized gas, loosened the rules on coca ...and ejected the U.S. ambassador. Now... the schools... schoolchildren must learn Aymara, Quechua or another local language along with Spanish and a foreign tongue. Schools will teach students to value their cultures...The curricula will be tailored to... communities and students will learn ...trades.*

### Colombia

#### 7. Semana (Bogota) (in Spanish)

10 Dec 11 - 16 Dec 11

#### Countdown

*From legal limbo to the labyrinth of legal proceedings ... the fate that awaits demobilized members of self-defense groups, beginning 28 December. Though it has been years since they left the paramilitary ranks and have believed that their legal situation was resolved, if they want avoid being jailed, they must register before that date ...7,000 of them have not done so.*

Opinion/Editorial/Commentary8. **The Wall Street Journal** December 12, 2011**Commentary: Colombia's Compromised Courts** By Mary Anastasia O'Grady

Why gangsters still have the space they need to operate may be explained by the second phenomenon ... "the deterioration of the justice system....We raise the alarm to warn of the infiltration of [narcoterrorism's] agents in our judiciary, as well as in (NGO) where under the guise of human rights defenders they support actions to attack democratic institutions."

Peru9. **Associated Press** Mon, Dec. 12, 2011**Peru's president in major shake-up of Cabinet**

Peruvian President Ollanta Humala replaced more than half his Cabinet on Sunday... in a move widely interpreted as signaling less tolerance for social protests. The new Cabinet chief, Oscar Valdes, taught Humala at Peru's military academy in the 1980s and has advocated a hard line against protesters who oppose the country's biggest mining project.

10. **Al Jazeera** 0735 GMT 12 Dec 11**Peru Cabinet Shuffle Brings Crackdown Fears**

Peruvian President Ollanta Humala has sworn in a new team of ministers in a shake-up that could lead to harsher crackdowns on social protests but will leave the country's free-market economic model in place. Humala, who was a soldier before becoming a politician, chose Oscar Valdes, a former army officer who was his instructor in the military, to be prime minister on Monday.

11. **Associated Press** Sunday, December 11, 2011**Peru Cabinet Chief Out; Interior Minister Steps In**

Peruvian Cabinet chief Salomon Lerner resigned Saturday after less than five months in the post and was replaced by the interior minister... The reason for Lerner's resignation was not explained, but he was recently involved in failed attempts to negotiate an end to protests that stalled the \$4.8 billion Conga gold mining project... plagued by increasingly violent protests.

Venezuela12. **Associated Press** Saturday, December 10, 2011**Chavez Cancels Trip To Argentina And Brazil**

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on Friday canceled a trip to Argentina and Brazil, citing his government's efforts to help flood victims. Chavez announced the decision in a phone call on state television. "Unfortunately I had to cancel my trip to Buenos Aires... "The rains hit us hard," said Chavez, who also chatted by phone with evacuees at a disaster shelter.

13. **Associated Press** Saturday, December 10, 2011**Brazil Organization Says Chavez Cancels Trip**

An organization headed by former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Friday that Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez canceled a trip to Argentina and Brazil due to flooding and mudslides in Venezuela. Venezuelan government officials in Caracas declined to comment on the account.

14. **The Associated Press** Fri, Dec. 09, 2011**Heavy rains in Venezuela cause at least 8 deaths**

Floods and mudslides unleashed by torrential rains have caused at least eight deaths in Venezuela, a government official said Friday. Thousands of families have left their homes to take refuge in government disaster shelters, Interior and Justice Minister Tareck El Aissami said. Five people died in ...Zulia state, while three others died in Caracas and adjacent Miranda state...

CaribbeanCuba15. **Associated Press** Sunday, December 11, 2011**Cuba's 'Ladies' Mark Human Rights Day Amid Protest**

Cuba's Ladies in White dissident group paid homage to their late leader while observing International Human Rights Day ... Saturday, surrounded by a jeering pro-government crowd ... Authorities insist such counterprotests known as ... are spontaneous acts by citizens disgusted by the dissidents... Little is done to hide coordination with state security, however.

16. **Associated Press** Saturday, December 10, 2011**Exile Fireworks Show Off Cuba Irks Castro Govt**

Fireworks ... off the coast ... irritated Cuban officials but drew few spectators... When an AP team tried to interview the few who came out, a pro-government crowd of more than 20 ... ran across the wide boulevard shouting "American press!" ... One cameraman was punched in the face, another's thumb was sprained and a video camera was broken in the melee ...

17. **Miami Herald** Saturday, December 10, 2011**Cubans In Havana Watch Fireworks From Exile Flotilla**

A Cuban exile flotilla shot ... fireworks ... about 13 miles from the Havana coast Friday in a defiant show of support for dissidents on the island who are struggling for democracy and human rights. Cuba's government branded the flotilla as a provocation, detained tens of dissidents ... and sent security agents to shut off parts of Havana's seaside Malecón boulevard.

## Features

18. New York Times

Sunday, December 11, 2011

### Socialism's Sacred Cows Suffer Zombie Attack In Popular Cuban Film

.... Juan and Sara emerge ... to find the streets filled with people roving aimlessly, their wide eyes blank. "It all looks the same to me," Sara shrugs. The suggestion that ... socialist rule ... turned Cuba into a zombie state, a central conceit of the new Cuban horror spoof "Juan of the Dead," is daringly irreverent satire in a country that takes its revolution with deadly seriousness.

### Haiti

19. Associated Press

Sunday, December 11, 2011

### Oprah Winfrey To See Haiti's President Michel Martelly, Designer Donna Karan, Sean Penn's DP Camp

Haitian President Michel Martelly says he'll host Oprah Winfrey on her Sunday-Monday visit in the Caribbean nation. The Haiti leader said on Friday that he would like to see Winfrey promote the troubled nation's lesser known attributes to outside investors as it struggles to recover from the 2010 earthquake that threw hundreds of thousands of people into makeshift camps.

20. The Associated Press

Sun, Dec. 11, 2011

### Farrakhan, Winfrey land in Haiti on separate trips

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has arrived in Haiti, saying he wants to see how his organization can help the poor Caribbean country rebuild from the devastating 2010 earthquake... Airport authorities hustled journalists out of the airport shortly after Farrakhan's arrival to prevent them from covering the arrival of Oprah Winfrey, who was arriving on a separate visit.

### Jamaica

21. The Associated Press

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

### More than 200 Jamaica policemen fail polygraph

Jamaican authorities say 217 police officers who took voluntary lie-detector tests this year failed. Assistant Police Commissioner Justin Felice said Friday that was 60 percent of the 362 officers who underwent the tests. He doesn't say whether the officers who failed will be disciplined in any way.

## CENTAM

### El Salvador

22. The Associated Press

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

### El Salvador marks 30 years of El Mozote massacre

Rights activists are marking the 30th anniversary of one of the worst massacres of El Salvador's civil war. The groups say they are still awaiting justice ... an army battalion swept through the township of El Mozote during a counterinsurgency campaign, slaughtering about 1,000 people before tossing many of their bodies into a church and burning it.

23. The Associated Press

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

### Hector Silva, moderate leftist San Salvador mayor

A Boston-born Salvadoran physician who helped the Central American nation recover from its 12-year civil war has died of a heart attack. Hector Silva was 64. Public Works Minister Gerson Martinez said Silva collapsed at the presidential palace on Thursday while making an impassioned appeal for greater anti-corruption efforts.

### Honduras

24. The Associated Press

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

### Honduras passes wiretap, bike laws to stem crime

The Honduran Congress has passed bills allowing authorities to wiretap the telephone conversations, emails and bank accounts of suspected criminals and temporarily banning motorcycles from carrying passengers. The two initiatives are aimed at stemming a wave of drug violence and organized crime that has plagued the Central American nation.

### Panama

25. Associated Press

Monday, December 12, 2011

### Noriega Returns To Panama A Largely Irrelevant Man

...Manuel Noriega returned to Panama on Sunday as a prisoner and, to many of those he once ruled with impunity, an irrelevant man. Some Panamanians feel hatred for the former strongman and rejected American ally; a few others nostalgia. But as he returned to his native country for the first time since his ouster, it seemed like few people had any strong feelings at all.

26. New York Times

Monday, December 12, 2011

### Noriega Is Sent To Prison Back In Panama, Where The Terror Has Turned To Shrugs

Panama has clearly moved on. It has held four presidential elections declared clean by international observers. An economic boom has altered the skyline with gleaming skyscrapers. Even longtime opponents concede that public rancor has faded, although many who lost loved ones or were tortured ... said they would fight for him to face additional trials here ...

27. ABC

Dec. 11, 2011

**[ABC World News story 6, 0:20: Panama-Noriega Returns For Prison Sentence](#)**

"... one of the world's more notorious figures, the former dictator of Panama, Manuel Noriega is back in the headlines tonight. He was released from a French prison and flown to Panama to face more prison for the murders of a political opponent and a general in the 1980s. Noriega has spent the last 20 years behind bars in France and here in the US on drug charges."

28. Associated Press

Sunday, December 11, 2011

**[Noriega Flown Home To Be Punished Once Again](#)**

Noriega's return comes after more than 20 years in U.S. and French prisons for drug trafficking and money laundering. Panama convicted him during his captivity overseas for the slayings of two political opponents in the 1980s. He was sentenced to 20 years in each case, and Panamanian officials say he will be sent straight to a jail cell when he lands.

**[Trans-Regional Issues](#)****[CIT](#)**

29. The Associated Press

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

**[Puerto Rico fugitive caught in Dominican Republic](#)**

Miguel Diaz Rivera was arrested late Friday in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo. Puerto Rican police said Saturday he had been living there under a false identity. The 39-year-old faces charges including murder and drug possession and is being held on a \$1.2 million bond. He is accused of running a drug trafficking network in at least five Puerto Rican cities.

**[Counter-Terrorism](#)**

30. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

**[AP Sources: Obama Makes Push To Change Terror Bill](#)**

President ... Obama and his national security team are appealing to lawmakers for last-minute changes to a ... defense bill that requires military custody for terrorism suspects linked to al-Qaida, including those captured within the U.S. The legislation is caught in an escalating dispute ... over the .. issue of whether to treat suspected terrorists as prisoners of war or criminals.

31. NPR

December 9, 2011, 4:10 P.M.

**[All Things Considered: Brennan Discusses Defense Authorization Bill](#)**

... the bill ... is facing a veto ... According to the administration ... the bill mandates military custody for a certain class of terrorism suspects... it would apply ... inside the U.S., it would... "be inconsistent with the fundamental ... principle that our military does not patrol our streets." ... John Brennan is President Obama's chief counterterrorism adviser, and he joins us...

**[International Relations & Economics](#)****[Opinion/Editorial/Commentary](#)**

32. New York Times

Sunday, December 11, 2011

**[Opinion: What Latin America Can Teach Us By Jorge G. Castañeda](#)**

According to one definition of the middle class ... the middle class is in the majority in Chile, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay, Costa Rica and to a lesser extent Colombia. In the 1960s and '70s, even after decades of robust growth, those middle classes were barely at 30 percent; today in Mexico, Brazil and Chile the figures range from 55 to 60 percent.

33. The Miami Herald

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

**[Commentary: Latin America may split into Pacific and Atlantic blocs By Andres Oppenheimer](#)**

Ideally, Latin American countries should seek to create a single trading bloc ... intra-regional trade in Latin America is a pitiful 20 percent of the region's total trade, compared with 46 percent in Asia and 67 percent in Europe.... despite all the talk about ... integration ... we may soon see a Latin America of the Pacific, and a Latin America of the Atlantic.

34. Miami Herald

December 10, 2011

**[Opinion: The Tehran, Havana, Caracas Axis In Latin America By Jose Aze/](#)**

Increasingly, the Tehran, Havana, Caracas bloc speaks with a unified anti-American voice in a concerted effort to undermine U.S. influence by any means at its disposal. The geopolitical alignment of Tehran, Havana and Caracas, if it can be described as ideological at all, is based on an ideology of hate towards the United States and democratic governing principles.

**[Southern Cone](#)****[Argentina](#)**

35. Associated Press

Sunday, December 11, 2011

**[Argentina's Cristina Fernandez Sworn In 2nd Time](#)**

.... Cristina Fernandez took the oath of office for the second time Saturday... "I swear to God, the country and the blessed saints to carry out the office of the president and to honor ... the Argentine constitution..." "If I don't, then let God, the country and him take me to task for it," the president added, her voice cracking with emotion as she referred to Kirchner.

36. AFP

Sunday, December 11, 2011

**[Argentina's Kirchner Sworn In For Second Term](#)**

... Cristina Kirchner was sworn in Saturday to a second four-year term at the peak of her popularity but with the country's booming economy shadowed by Europe's financial crisis. The 58-year-old took the oath of office, invoking her late husband and predecessor ... and then received the presidential sash from her daughter Florencia amid cheers and applause in Congress.

**[Brazil](#)**

37. The Associated Press

Sun, Dec. 11, 2011

**[Voters in Brazil reject Para state's partition](#)**

Voters in a northern Brazilian state have rejected a proposal that would have broken it into three new states... electoral officials say that with more than three-fourths of ballots counted Sunday night, about 67 percent of the votes are against dividing Para state... it's mathematically impossible for the measure to pass... The state ... is approximately the size of Peru.

38. The Associated Press

Dec. 11, 2011

**[Brazil: 50 tons of corn stolen from moving train](#)**

Police in Brazil's southeastern Sao Paulo state are investigating the theft of 50 metric tons (55 U.S. tons) of corn from a moving train. A police report says the thieves greased the train tracks, making the wheels of the 54-wagon locomotive skid and slow down before they used a tow truck with a hook to remove the corn-filled containers.

39. The Wall Street Journal

December 10, 2011

**[New Pockets of Influence Emerge in Brazil](#)**

João Salame, a state lawmaker in the northern Brazilian state of Pará, has an unusual pitch for his constituents: Let's split our state into three. Voters will get their say in a widely watched state referendum on Sunday. Proponents ... argue that a government ... closer to home can better solve local problems. Some towns in the state sit 700 miles away ... its capital ...

**[Features](#)**

40. Associated Press

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

**[Century-old Afro-Brazilian religion under threat](#)**

Although an estimated 400,000 Brazilians ... follow the religion, they also continue to face prejudices... tolerance and ... hostility against Umbanda, as well as Brazil's other major African-descended religion Candomble, have recently returned to the spotlight as religious-freedom activists denounce the demolition of a house known as Umbanda's birthplace.

41. Associated Press

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

**[Saving the Amazon, from forest floor up](#)**

Just three years ago, the manmade fires here were so fierce smoke would blot out the Amazon sky... Paragominas was losing forest faster than nearly any other place in the Amazon. Today, the town has risen from those ashes to become a pioneering "Green City," a model of sustainability with a new economic approach that has seen illegal deforestation virtually halted.

**[Other Items](#)****[Military Affairs](#)**

42. Army Times

December 19, 2011, Pg. 10

**[As Enlisted Ranks Shrink, Brass Adds Top Officers](#)**

Former Defense Secretary... Gates sent shock waves through the Pentagon ... when he announced plans to eliminate 102 general and flag officer positions... Yet the number of top-level officers has actually increased since then... The Pentagon added six general and flag officers ... raising the total to 970, up from 964, according to Defense Department data.

43. Kitsap (Wa.) Sun

December 10, 2011

**[Military Update](#)****[National Guard Gains Joint Chiefs Status](#)**

Congress is about to elevate the position of Chief of the National Guard Bureau to full membership on the Joint Chiefs ... Every current member of the Joint Chiefs opposes the move, finding no military reason for the elevation, and several ... problems. But National Guard representation on the JCS is hugely popular with ... governors and adjutant generals, and ... many politicians.

## USSOUTHCOM, Components & Associates

### JTF-Guantanamo

1. **New York Times**

December 12, 2011, Pg. 1

## **Detainee In Iraq Poses A Dilemma As U.S. Exit Nears**

*By Charlie Savage*

WASHINGTON — As United States troops prepare to exit Iraq at the end of the month, the Obama administration is facing a significant dilemma over what to do with the last remaining detainee held by the American military in Iraq.

The detainee, Ali Musa Daqduq, a Lebanese suspected of being a Hezbollah operative, is accused of helping to orchestrate a January 2007 raid by Shiite militants that resulted in the death of five American soldiers. The administration is wrestling with either turning him over to the Iraqi government — as the United States did with its other wartime prisoners — or seeking a way to take him with the military as it withdraws, according to interviews with officials familiar with the deliberations.

But each option for dealing with Mr. Daqduq has drawbacks, officials say, virtually guaranteeing that his fate will add a messy footnote to the end of the Iraq war. Mr. Daqduq is likely to be a subject of negotiation when Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki of Iraq meets with President Obama at the White House on Monday.

“There are serious and ongoing deliberations about how to handle this individual to best protect U.S. service members and broader U.S. interests,” said Tommy Vietor, a spokesman for the National Security Council.

Mr. Maliki’s visit comes as the United States is joining a series of ceremonies here and across Iraq to proclaim — with a clear sense of uncertainty — the end of the war.

Even after the final American combat troops withdraw from Iraq by Dec. 31, a few hundred military personnel and Pentagon civilians will remain, working within the American Embassy as part of an Office of Security Cooperation to help in arms sales and training. Negotiations are expected to resume next year on whether additional American military personnel can return to further assist their Iraqi counterparts.

Hanging over the decision on what to do with Mr. Daqduq is the 2012 presidential campaign. Polls show that Americans approve of the withdrawal from Iraq by a ratio of three to one, and Mr. Obama is poised to leverage that sentiment by emphasizing the idea that Republicans were responsible for invading Iraq, while he guided the United States out.

Republicans, however, are seeking to frame the withdrawal in different terms: that Mr. Obama endangered national security by pulling out of Iraq too soon, and that he should have persuaded the Iraqis to allow United States troops to stay beyond the deadline agreed to by the Bush administration three years ago. Elevating the profile of Mr. Daqduq and highlighting any unsatisfactory outcome to his case could bolster such efforts to cast Mr. Obama’s Iraq record in a negative light.

The decision about what to do with Mr. Daqduq is complex, and time is running out. The ability of the military to hold any prisoners in Iraq is fast evaporating as it closes detention facilities and sends its remaining guards home, and so the military has been asking the administration to resolve his fate well before Dec. 31.

Under the status quo arrangement, Mr. Daqduq would be turned over to the Iraqis for possible prosecution. Officials are wary, however, because many former detainees have either been acquitted by Iraqi courts or released without charges, and Mr. Maliki could face political pressure to free Mr. Daqduq. The administration, officials say, wants to find a solution in which Mr. Daqduq remains locked up — not only because of his suspected role in helping attacks on American troops, but also because his release could become a propaganda victory for Iran and Iraqi Shiite militants at a time of significant tensions. It is not clear whether some important evidence of Mr. Daqduq’s suspected involvement in attacks on Americans — like a confession to American interrogators — would be admissible in an Iraqi court. Still, officials said, Iraqi prosecutors might be able to win a lengthy prison sentence on other charges, like entering Iraq illegally.

The alternative would be for the United States to take Mr. Daqduq out of Iraq and prosecute him in one of three venues: before a civilian court, before a military commission at the prison at Guantánamo Bay,

Cuba, or before a tribunal somewhere else. One site under consideration is the naval base at Charleston, S.C.

Republicans have made clear that they think Mr. Daquduq should go to Guantánamo. At a hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee last month, for example, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina warned Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. against any other outcome.

“Mr. Attorney General, if you try to bring this guy back to the United States and put him in civilian court, or use a military commission inside the United States, holy hell is going to break out,” Mr. Graham said. “And if we let him go and turn him over to the Iraqis, that is just like letting him go. I think this would be a huge mistake.”

But within the administration, the Guantánamo option has been seen as unacceptable — not only because Mr. Obama has resisted adding to the detainee population there and still hopes to close the prison, but also because the facility is anathema in the Middle East and Mr. Maliki would not approve sending someone there, one official said.

It would violate Iraq’s sovereignty to remove him from the country without the Iraqi government’s permission. Under the Status of Forces Agreement the Bush administration struck with Iraq in late 2008, decisions on the disposition of any detainees in Iraq are ultimately up to the Iraqis, and the United States pledged to respect Iraq’s laws and sovereignty.

It remains to be seen whether Mr. Maliki might grant permission for the United States to take Mr. Daquduq to one of the other venues — or, in a variant of that plan, agree to support a request to formally extradite him to the United States, which would require at least temporarily transferring him to Iraqi custody. But Mr. Maliki is facing pressures not to do anything that could be seen as subordinating Iraqi sovereignty to American interests.

Some conservatives have argued that since the United States has physical control of Mr. Daquduq, it should just put him on a plane, without seeking Iraq’s permission — essentially, a rendition instead of an extradition. They contended that Iraqis would complain but that it would not ultimately matter.

But administration officials said that solution would be a prominent violation of Iraq’s sovereignty, undercutting the strategic relationship at a moment when the primary goal is to relegate the war and occupation to the past, and establish the kind of normal diplomatic relationship that exists between two sovereign states.

*Thom Shanker contributed reporting.*

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## 2. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

### **US Defends Conditions In Gitmo Discipline Block**

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) - Officials at Guantanamo Bay are defending conditions at a disciplinary block known as Five Echo, denying that they violate the Geneva Conventions.

Officials say Five Echo is by its nature harsher than the communal section of Guantanamo for detainees who follow prison rules. But Army Col. Donnie Thomas says the camp meets regulations.

Lawyers for detainees say the cells are too small, the toilets are inadequate and it is inhumane to keep detainees held there for 20 hours a day. They say its especially inappropriate for detainees who have not been convicted of crimes.

Guantanamo officials took the unusual step Friday of releasing photos of Five Echo to The Associated Press. Lawyers say they believe no such photos have previously been released.

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## 3. The Miami Herald

December 9, 2011

### **Prison Camp Discloses Secret Discipline Unit At Guantanamo**

***In releasing a photo of the so-called discipline unit called 'Five Echo,' the military at Guantanamo was showing to the public a detention block the media don't see.***

*By Ben Fox, Associated Press*

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico -- U.S. military officials at Guantanamo Bay are defending conditions in a disciplinary block known as "Five Echo," taking the unusual step Friday of releasing photos of a section of the jail not typically shown to outsiders.

Lawyers for detainees say the cells are too small, toilets inadequate, lights overly bright and the air foul, and they call it inhumane to keep detainees there for 22 hours a day, especially when they have not been convicted of a crime.

David Remes, a Washington-based attorney who represents three prisoners who have been held in Five Echo, said this week that the disciplinary unit appears to violate the Geneva Conventions.

"Five Echo is really a throwback to the bad old days at Guantánamo," Remes said.

Guantánamo Bay officials said Five Echo is by its nature a worse place to be imprisoned than in the communal blocks where most detainees at Guantánamo are now held, but the military disputed the assertions that its conditions violate the Geneva Conventions.

"It is safe, humane and meets all the regulations," Army Col. Donnie Thomas, commander of the guard force at the prison, said of Five Echo during a telephone interview from the U.S. base in Cuba.

The photos released to The Associated Press show empty cells with steel, pale green walls and a translucent, rectangular window near the ceiling covered in steel mesh. The military said the cells have about half the space of those in nearby Camp Five. The cells have a squat toilet in the floor, instead of a standard prison toilet found elsewhere in the prison.

Lawyers said that they did not believe any photos of the unit had been released previously and that the military has been secretive about the section of the prison.

Guantánamo, which is now approaching its 10th anniversary as a detention center for men suspected of links to al-Qaida and the Taliban, holds about 170 men in three camps. President Barack Obama vowed to close the prison upon taking office but has been thwarted by Congress, which has blocked efforts to move detainees to the U.S.

The 15 most notorious prisoners, including the self-proclaimed mastermind of the 9/11 attack, are held in a top-secret section known as Camp Seven. Little is known about that area and even its location on the base is classified.

About 80 percent of the detainees are held in Camp Six, where they are free to congregate with each other in a communal setting for 20 hours a day, and they have access to games, classes and 20 channels of cable television. The military has credited creation of this communal block for a sharp drop in prisoners' protests, hunger strikes and assaults on guards.

Camp Five is now largely used for detainees who attack a guard or otherwise violate the rules in Camp Six and are deemed "noncompliant." It has capacity for about 100 prisoners but is less than half full.

Five Echo originally was created in 2007 as an overflow disciplinary section, but now is used as an "extension" of Camp Five, Thomas said.

Thomas declined to disclose the criteria for the use of Five Echo. He said it was empty Thursday, the day of the phone interview, but added that he could resume using it at any time at his discretion. He declined to say when it last held detainees.

Five Echo has not been included in media tours of the Guantánamo jail provided for members of the media, and officials have previously provided little information about the unit.

Remes, a lawyer for a number of prisoners, said he drew a diagram and collected other details following a meeting with one of his clients, a Saudi national and British resident named Shaker Aamer who has been held in Five Echo. But he said the notes were deemed classified by a government review team and he is not permitted to release them.

Ramzi Kassem, a lawyer and law professor who also represents Aamer, said the detainee described abysmal conditions in Five Echo. He said the squat toilet is difficult to use, there are foul odors, bright lights shine on detainees and air conditioners keep it extremely cold.

"It is decrepit, filthy and disgusting. Those are the words he used to describe it," said Kassem, a professor of law at the City University of New York.

Aamer also told him there is not enough room in Five Echo for the Muslim prisoners to do their prayers. Detainees in the block are allowed two hours a day out of the cells for recreation.

Kassem said conditions are akin to those of a Supermax prison in the United States.

Thomas denied the lights are overly bright and said the toilets are adequate and conditions overall are humane.

"Quite frankly, detainees make the determination where they live," he said. "If they are compliant they live in Camp six. If they are noncompliant they live in Camp 5."

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## Features

4. McClatchy

Monday, December 12, 2011

### **Egypt's Military Rulers To Decide Fate Of Guantanamo Returnee**

*By Hannah Allam*

CAIRO - Adel el Gazzar emerged from his eight-year detention at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, with one leg, no U.S. charges against him and zero chance of returning to his native Egypt, where he was sure to have been locked up again by then-President Hosni Mubarak's regime.

So, Gazzar was shipped instead to Slovakia and languished there in a holding center until last winter, when Mubarak became the second autocrat to fall in the Arab Spring uprisings. The revolt against three decades of authoritarian rule presented Gazzar with a gamble: Would the new Egypt grant a fair trial and eventual freedom to a man once branded as a terrorist?

His answer is expected Dec. 27, in a military court case that could set precedent for how Egypt deals with the Guantanamo detainees, former jihadists and other suspected militants who are trickling back now that the feared regime has collapsed.

"Egypt has an opportunity to, in a sense, wipe the slate clean when it comes to the human rights violations of the Mubarak years," said Katie Taylor of Reprieve, a London-based advocacy group monitoring Gazzar's case for its "Life After Guantanamo" project.

Other transitional North African governments are muddling through the same quandary as Egypt. Libya controversially integrated some former jihadist fighters into its new military, while one of the first decrees of the interim Tunisian government was amnesty for political prisoners, including former or current detainees from the U.S. Naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In recent months, two Tunisian prisoners have returned safely from Guantanamo, while another former Guantanamo detainee was freed from a Tunisian jail where the old regime had kept him since his release from American custody in 2007.

Few analysts expect similar tolerance from Egypt's ruling military council, which for years hyped the threat of Islamist extremism to Western allies as justification for Mubarak's repressive police state. Since taking power in February, the council has outraged human rights advocates by putting some 12,000 Egyptians to military trials - more than in Mubarak's entire time in office.

If that's how revolutionary Egypt treats its civilians, Gazzar's family worried, then a bearded Islamist fresh out of Guantanamo stood little chance for a smooth repatriation.

"They paid no consideration to his age or his health," said Gazzar's wife, 40, who asked to be identified as Um Abdul Rahman, a nickname. "If he was cleared and released by America, then why try him again and imprison him for three more years? They were supposed to have cleared him as soon as he got back."

Gazzar, 46, made his risky return to Egypt in June, four months after Mubarak's fall, against the advice of family members who warned him that the old regime's vast security and intelligence apparatus remained intact. Sure enough, Gazzar was arrested upon arrival at the Cairo airport - he was allowed a few moments with his wife and four children, their first meeting in a decade, and then disappeared once again into Egypt's prisons.

Gazzar's latest detention stems from his conviction in absentia in 2002 for militant activities in a group known as the Waad Cell. Authorities had opened the case right after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. Egyptian political analysts say Mubarak's government ginned up or greatly exaggerated the threat posed by the defendants to prove to Washington it was a reliable ally in the fight against terrorism.

Authorities rounded up about 100 Islamists and doled out prison terms after brief trials in a headline-grabbing case that state media hailed as a counterterrorism coup. Some defendants, including Gazzar and his brother Ashraf, weren't even residing in Egypt at the time of the dragnet.

Ashraf el Gazzar, who was among those later cleared, recalled that interrogators told the prisoners point blank: "Sorry, it's just bad timing for you guys. You're Mubarak's gift to the Americans."

Even under the old regime, judges quickly overturned most of the convictions for lack of evidence. Other defendants served three-year sentences and are now free.

Gazzar, however, is believed to be the last of the Waad Cell suspects still in prison, and now it's up to a military court to rule whether he should be freed, kept behind bars or granted a new trial based on what his attorneys say is a conviction based on evidence obtained through torture. On Dec. 27, a ruling is expected on Gazzar's appeal for a new trial.

"The evidence against the defendant is based on the statements of other defendants, which they subsequently recanted," according to a memorandum of appeal submitted by Gazzar's legal team. "The court ruled that statements had been the result of physical and moral coercion by state security agents. The coercive methods of the security services became clear in the scandal following the revolution when it was revealed that physical torture had led to false confessions."

Major Gen. Mukhtar el Mullah, a member of Egypt's ruling military council, said last week that he hadn't heard of el Gazzar by name and had no information about the case. No other government official could be reached to comment on Gazzar's prospects for a new trial.

The waiting game is torturous for Gazzar's family. For the past decade, Um Abdul Rahman, his wife, has lived as a single mother to their four children: three teenage sons, and an 11-year-old daughter who was an infant when Gazzar was detained.

Gazzar's ordeal began when he traveled to Pakistan in 2000 to work with the Saudi Red Crescent Society. He was wounded in a U.S. air strike while working as a volunteer to aid displaced people on Pakistan's border with Afghanistan in November 2001, according to his legal team.

Pakistani forces seized him from a hospital, where he was recovering, then transferred him to a U.S. prison in Kandahar where, lawyers say, he "was subject to severe beatings, exposure to freezing temperatures, sleep deprivation for days on end, and suspension by the wrists."

By the time he was transported to Guantanamo, his leg was gangrenous from the lack of care, so with grave reservations, he consented to an amputation, according to his statements to human rights groups. Gazzar also said he was subjected to beatings in his time at Guantanamo and participated in civil disobedience acts with other prisoners to protest conditions at the camp.

Gazzar was among a trio of cleared captives shipped to Slovakia upon their release from Guantanamo in January 2010; the Eastern European nation received the men after U.S. officials objected to repatriating them to home countries, such as Mubarak's Egypt, where torture and open-ended detention of terror suspects was well documented.

Gazzar landed in a holding facility his attorneys describe as a detention camp; Slovakian authorities deemed it an integration center. He joined a hunger strike there to demand greater freedoms, but switched his focus to a return to Egypt once the popular uprising against Mubarak erupted in January of this year.

Now, his lawyers and family say, he's in the notorious Tora Prison, the same complex where Mubarak's two sons and top associates are awaiting trial on corruption and other charges.

Mohammed Zrae, an Egyptian attorney representing him on appeal, said his client is receiving good treatment in prison and is not "abused or violated." Until recently, his family was allowed frequent visits, though they've been curtailed for now because Egypt is on high alert for parliamentary elections.

Gazzar has left the prison just once, his brother said, when he was granted a day pass to visit his ailing mother at the family home in Cairo. His brother, Ashraf, said Egyptian authorities flooded their block with security forces and even placed snipers on the roof of the house. The family said the security presence was absurd for a man with one good leg, and said it was designed to shame them among neighbors. Authorities sent along a video crew, Gazzar's brother said, but the family refused to allow filming for fear the government would use it as propaganda to trumpet changes in the Egyptian security forces. Gazzar's relatives said the ruling at the end of the month is the only barometer they need to decide whether human rights are a priority in the post-Mubarak Egypt.

"They wanted to pretend that they cared about prisoners' rights," Ashraf el Gazzar said of the attempts to film his brother's visit. "I told one officer to his face, 'You're an extension of Guantanamo. What the Americans do there, you do here.'"

*Carol Rosenberg of The Miami Herald contributed to this report.*

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**Security Cooperation**

5. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

**US Provided Aerial Surveillance Of Jamaican Raid***By Howard Campbell*

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) - A U.S. surveillance plane helped monitor the deadly 2010 raid by Jamaican security forces to capture a fugitive crime boss, the prime minister said, reversing earlier government denials.

A U.S. P-3 Orion aircraft provided aerial surveillance of the effort to capture Christopher "Dudus" Coke, Prime Minister Andrew Holness told reporters Thursday. The raid set off a fierce battle in a West Kingston slum that left more than 70 people dead.

Holness said the U.S. had no other role in the raid in the Tivoli Gardens neighborhood.

"We would want to reaffirm our position that the U.S. Government or its military did not participate in the operations in West Kingston," he said.

His statement came a day after Minister of National Security Dwight Nelson said at a news briefing that the U.S. had not provided any surveillance of the raid, denying a report in The New Yorker magazine. Holness said that Nelson made the statement in error because Nelson was not aware of the details of the U.S. assistance. Previous government statements had also denied any U.S. role in the operation. The prime minister said the surveillance was coordinated between the Jamaican Defense Force and the "relevant government agency" in the U.S.

"The United States Government initially made an offer to provide surveillance and technical equipment," he said. "We accepted and followed the normal protocol of exchanging diplomatic notes to provide the government-to-government cover for such assistance."

Ocsar Derby, director of Jamaica's Civil Aviation Authority, said Friday that officials with the island's Defense Force had advised him the U.S. craft would conduct a surveillance mission.

"We made sure to keep other aircraft away from the area," he said.

The hunt for Coke in his West Kingston slum stronghold led to a confrontation that killed 73 civilians and three security officers over four days of fighting. He was captured by Jamaican authorities in June 2010 and extradited to the U.S., where he pleaded guilty in August to racketeering and assault charges. He faces up to 23 years in prison when he is sentenced.

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-----Other AOR Related Items-----

**Andean Ridge****Bolivia****Features**

6. The Miami Herald

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

**Morales tries to take revolution to kindergarten***By Emily Alpert Special to The Miami Herald*

Decades ago, when Alejandra Cruz first came to La Paz from the little village of Choquenaira, the other children pulled her long braids, tripped her after class and knocked her bowl of oatmeal onto her shirt.

Aymarista, they called her, making her mother tongue into a slur. The shame stuck. Years later, Alejandra decided against speaking Aymara to her children, fearing they would suffer the same slights. Today, she teaches preteens in a comfortable zone of La Paz how to count and name colors in the language she once abandoned. She credits Evo Morales, the country's first indigenous president.

"I thank God for this government," she said one day after class.

Bolivia has undergone a sea change under Morales. Six years into his presidency, he has nationalized gas, loosened the rules on coca cultivation and ejected the U.S. ambassador.

Now, he is taking on the schools. Under a new law passed in December, schoolchildren must learn Aymara, Quechua or another local language along with Spanish and a foreign tongue. Schools will teach students to value their cultures, making schools both "intercultural" and "intracultural." The curricula will be tailored to specific communities and students will learn useful trades.

Morales has declared the changes will be a reality within three years. The Ministry of Education is still hammering out new regulations to make schools “decolonizing, liberating, revolutionary (and) anti-imperialist.” It is a radical change meant to wipe out centuries of oppression.

The reforms come at a crisis point for Morales. He lobbied hard for a highway that would divide a pristine forest — and divided the indigenous people who once adored him. Street protests exploded last year over soaring prices for gas. And many voters snubbed the elections for judges that he championed. Remaking the schools could be his toughest battle yet. Bolivia could be called ground zero for the achievement gap, saddled with some of the starkest poverty and most stunning inequality in the Americas. It has a thin budget and a tortuous bureaucracy. Old prejudices are still kicking — and some critics say the reforms will breed new ones by putting Indian cultures first.

“I think it’s vengeful,” said Gonzalo Rojas, a professor at the Universidad Mayor de San Andres. “Reverse discrimination is not desirable either.”

The Ministry of Education did not respond to questions. Last year, Morales told the Bolivian press, “If someone rejects this project, under whatever pretext, that means they still have a racist mentality.”

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The revolution looks a lot like a science fair. On a sunny day in Rodeo, a farming town in the mountains two hours from Cochabamba, children in little booths papered with posters earnestly explained how to harvest ch’aki jawas beans and earned praise for chanting in Quechua. Teachers-in-training took notes.

“In January the altramuz is mature,” a timid boy said in Spanish, explaining the calendar for the Andean legume. “We have to protect it from the birds so they don’t eat it. Then in April we sell it to the markets.”

“Now in Quechua,” fifth grade teacher Romuelda Monasterios urged him. The boy complied.

The old idea that children should shake off their country ways is being turned upside down. Though the government is still installing the reforms, some nonprofits have already been at work in the countryside to remake education, giving a sneak peek at what education reform here might mean.

For instance, “when we teach about medicine from the Western world, we might also ask, ‘What are the herbs that your parents and grandparents use to prevent illness?’” said Silvana Gonzales, who handles communications for Faith and Happiness, a Christian non-profit that helped with the event.

Planting potatoes might seem little like school reform. But just like teaching Quechua, the idea is that the schools should teach things that matter to the community. It sounds a lot like the frequent calls for “relevance” in high school reform in the United States -- and potatoes are relevant in Tiraque.

In the remote village of Piriquina in northern Potosi, teenagers tended to the onions they planted earlier this year in the school garden. They’ve tested the kinds of minerals in the soil to improve their production, learning chemistry outside the classroom.

“We’ve had high school graduates that know a differential equation perfectly,” said Arturo Choque, public policy coordinator for the Bolivian Center for Educational Research and Action, which spurred some of the changes in Piriquina. “But they don’t know how they’re going to apply it to their lives.”

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The government must win the hearts and minds of more than 160,000 teachers before these ideas can be more than an experiment. It is a tougher sell in the cities, especially with some of the radical teachers unions. A bold poster on the stairwell of the La Paz union decries the reforms as “another lousy law.”

“The law is doomed to fail,” said Jose Luis Alvarez, the group’s president. He argued that, like the last reforms, it merely papered over real economic inequalities. “The only thing that has changed are the names.”

The last round of education reform was more than a decade and a half ago, under now-exiled President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. It tried to free schools from rigid drills and memorization. It also brought Aymara and Quechua into many schools for the first time.

But teachers resisted, saying the reforms were imposed from the top. Aymara and Quechua barely touched the cities: A World Bank study found less than 1 percent of urban schools ultimately became bilingual. Many rural parents also revolted at the idea of teaching their mother tongues in school.

“We are colonized in our minds,” lamented Susana Bejarano, former chief of the education cabinet.

Because their languages were so stigmatized, “the parents preferred, logically, to protect their children.”

There are important differences between this law and the last one. All schools are supposed to teach local languages, not just schools where kids speak them at home. The old reforms talked about knowing other cultures, while the new reforms talk about knowing your own culture. “Decolonization” is new.

But teachers fret there has been little training to explain the new law. They know they need to learn an indigenous language. "Otherwise we are doomed!" Ramiro Alcazar joked before his Aymara class. Other ideas are still murky. A new curriculum was supposed to be polished off this summer. That didn't happen. Urbanites are confused about how "productive education" will work in the city. And nobody is sure how to measure whether they're instilling "interculturality."

"If we don't have more detailed regulations," said Luis Cameo Borda, principal of the Rotary Chuquiago Marka high school in sprawling El Alto, "we'll just continue the same way."

Emily Alpert writes about education in Southern California. She reported this story with a grant from the International Reporting Project.

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## Colombia

7. **Semana** (Bogota) (in Spanish)

10 Dec 11 - 16 Dec 11

### **Countdown**

From legal limbo to the labyrinth of legal proceedings: this is, paradoxically, the fate that awaits demobilized members of self-defense groups, beginning 28 December. Though it has been years since they left the paramilitary ranks and have believed that their legal situation was resolved, if they want avoid being jailed, they must register before that date to prevent arrest warrants being issued. And with two weeks remaining until the deadline, 7,000 of them have not done so.

For the last two months, as a temporary office of the DAS [Administrative Department of Security] in Bogota, 20 prosecutors have been working at full steam in a recently created division of the Public Prosecutor's Office: the National Unit for the Demobilized. By January, there will be 70 prosecutors in charge of a titanic task: to resolve the juridical situation of 26,000 ex-paramilitary troops, which was left in limbo after several high court rulings which cast doubt on the existing legal framework for their treatment. After the Supreme Court of Justice and the Constitutional Court drastically curtailed the application of the instrument for political crime, sedition, and amnesty for the demobilized, and closed various juridical channels for the legal treatment of paramilitaries who had not committed crimes against humanity, the government succeeded in getting Law 1424 passed in December 2010. This law set a one-year deadline that expires, paradoxically, on 28 December, Day of the Innocent [Dia de los Inocentes, Spanish equivalent of April Fool's Day], for ex-members of self-defense groups who are in the process of reintegration to civilian life and who are not part of the Justice and Peace process to register and be covered under its benefits.

The deal seems simple: if demobilized [paramilitaries] have not committed any subsequent crime, if they report their participation in the war to the Center for Historical Memory, which created the Victims' Law, and sign a document in which they promise to contribute to the truth and reparation for those affected by the actions of the AUC [Colombian United Self-Defense Groups], they will avoid going to prison and will be able to continue (or begin, if they have not already done so) their reintegration process. The law applies only to ex-AUC combatants whose crimes are only having belonged to the armed group and illegal possession of weapons and uniforms. However, there is one detail that can complicate things a lot and that led to the creation of the new unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office: judicial proceedings must be carried out against every single demobilized [paramilitary].

If of the 36,000 demobilized AUC members one discounts those who have died, been captured and convicted, and those who are in the Justice and Peace process, 26,000 remain. Of those, 16,000 entered the reintegration program run by the Colombian Agency for Reintegration, headed by Alejandro Eder. Nearly 10,000 more are lost: the government knows who 6,400 of them are, but they did not enter the program and there are 4,000 who never joined. These lost ones are the big challenge from now until 28 December.

The 16,000 who are active in the reintegration program already signed the letter of commitment required by Law 1424. But of the 10,000 who are absent, scarcely 3,000 have shown up and it is not known how many of the remaining 7,000 will do so before the 28th.

Even if all of them did, the real problem will begin as of that date. Each of the 70 prosecutors who, in Cali, Bucaramanga, Medellin, Monteria, Santa Marta, Valledupar, Villavicencio, Cucuta, and Bogota, will investigate all of these demobilized combatants, one by one, start off with a caseload of more than 350 cases each. As Liliana Calle, head of the new unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office, told SEMANA,

"everyone, including those who avail themselves of the law as well as those who do not, will be investigated, tried, and punished. The difference is that those who take advantage of the law will be able to enjoy the benefits. Those who do not will be imprisoned."

Thus, an already overburdened Public Prosecutor's Office will have to take on more than 20,000 new trials. It has the obligation not only of pursuing and capturing those who do not honor the terms of Law 1424, but also of bringing to a successful conclusion the trials of those who do, so that demobilized paramilitaries can finally return to civilian life with juridical clarity, after all the floundering the State and the Colombian justice system have done regarding their treatment.

[Description of Source: [Bogota Semana.com in Spanish -- Website of private, most influential weekly news magazine; URL: <http://www.semana.com>]]

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## Opinion/Editorial/Commentary

8. The Wall Street Journal

December 12, 2011

**Commentary:**

### **Colombia's Compromised Courts**

#### ***Narcoterrorists have infiltrated the country's judiciary***

*By Mary Anastasia O'Grady*

American drug warriors cite Colombia as an example of victory in the battle against drug-trafficking criminal networks. Colombians know better.

In a Dec. 1 letter to U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Enrique Gomez Hurtado, a Conservative Party member and a former president of the Colombian senate, and Rafael Nieto Navia, a former justice at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and a former magistrate for the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia and Rwanda, warn that the relative peace Colombia has achieved in recent years is not secure.

One "grave concern," Messrs. Gomez and Nieto write, is "the resurgence of narco-terrorism by the [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC], the [National Liberation Army, ELN] and criminal gangs." They say kidnapping is increasing; extortion and attacks on pipelines continue; villages and towns are targeted; and children are murdered or forcibly recruited to the rebel ranks.

Why gangsters still have the space they need to operate may be explained by the second phenomenon that Messrs. Gomez and Nieto describe: "the deterioration of the justice system." It is not an accident, the letter writers charge: "We raise the alarm to warn of the infiltration of [narcoterrorism's] agents in our judiciary, as well as in [nongovernmental organizations] where under the guise of human rights defenders they support actions to attack democratic institutions."

These are extraordinary allegations and they are not made without examples of what appear to be clear miscarriages of justice. "An emblematic case" they cite is the conviction of two army officers on the charge of forced disappearance in the 1985 rescue of hostages from the Palace of Justice in Bogotá.

Messrs. Gomez and Nieto do not summarize the case in their letter but it is worth reviewing here.

The infamous siege at the Palace of Justice by the left-wing guerrilla group known as the M-19 was an effort, on behalf of drug lord Pablo Escobar, to force the Supreme Court to rule extradition unconstitutional. The rebels breached security by killing two guards and commandeered the building.

The military stormed the premises and was able to rescue more than 200 people. But the guerrillas took hostages and set a fire to destroy court records. When the smoke cleared all the rebels were dead and so too were some 40-50 hostages whose bodies were burned beyond recognition. Eleven individuals were never accounted for.

Army brigade commander General Jesús Armando Arias and the officer in charge of one of the battalions that went to the palace, Colonel Alfonso Plazas, were both praised as heroes in the aftermath of the massacre. A 1986 tribunal investigated the case and laid the blame for carnage at the feet of the M-19.

The left did not give up. Subsequently two separate affidavits were used to accuse the army in the disappearance of the 11 unaccounted for. The first notarized affidavit, presented by former policeman Ricardo Gámez in 1989, was thrown out when it was learned he was not at the palace during the crisis and could not have been a witness. The fraudulent document had been brought before the prosecutor by

a Jesuit priest well-known for his accusations against the army and his leftwing politics. Neither Mr. Gámez nor the priest faced any consequences for their roles in the affair.

In 2007, another affidavit allegedly signed by Cpl. Edgar Villamizar was used to put Col. Plazas in jail and later convict him. Gen. Arias was found guilty by association. But during the appeal process, Mr. Villamizar emerged to say that he was not at the palace that day and investigators admitted that the signature on the affidavit is not his. Nevertheless, a three-judge court in Bogotá last month ruled 2-1 that the Plazas conviction should stand.

This is hardly an isolated case. Hundreds of uniformed Colombians have been convicted based on unreliable testimony accepted by the court.

In other recent news the nation's attorney general, Viviane Morales, has remarried her ex-husband Carlos Alonso Lucio, who happens to be a former member of the M-19 and a former adviser to both the ELN and the paramilitary. He was in jail when they married the first time. In other words, the attorney general's husband has spent years cavorting with the type of people she is supposed to be investigating. One wonders how Americans would have reacted if Mabel Walker Willebrandt, the assistant U.S. attorney general during prohibition, had married an alleged mafioso. Requests for comment from the Colombian government, made via the embassy in Washington, went unanswered.

It was Colombia's highest criminal court that chose Ms. Morales for her job, from a list of nominees submitted by President Juan Manuel Santos. That court has made other unfathomable decisions, including one that says that evidence from computers of FARC leader Raúl Reyes that were seized during a 2008 raid cannot be admitted in court.

If the Colombian judicial system has been infiltrated by gangsters, as Messrs. Gomez and Nieto claim, the nation has not won any part of the war on drugs. The terrorists have only changed fox holes.

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## Peru

### 9. Associated Press

Mon, Dec. 12, 2011

## **Peru's president in major shake-up of Cabinet**

*By Franklin Briceno*

Peruvian President Ollanta Humala replaced more than half his Cabinet on Sunday, a day after accepting its chief minister's resignation in a move widely interpreted as signaling less tolerance for social protests.

The new Cabinet chief, Oscar Valdes, taught Humala at Peru's military academy in the 1980s and has advocated a hard line against protesters who oppose the country's biggest mining project.

Among the eight Cabinet members retained were business-friendly Finance Minister Luis Castilla and Foreign Minister Rafael Roncagliolo, a left-leaning sociologist.

Prominent among the 10 ministers replaced was Susana Baca in the culture portfolio. The Latin Grammy-winning singer had been Peru's first Cabinet minister of African descent. Her replacement is Luis Peirano, a sociologist and theater director.

Also among those removed were the mining and environment ministers, casualties of the dispute over the \$4.8 billion Conga gold mine project, the first major crisis of Humala's nearly five months in office.

After increasingly violent protests led by local politicians in the northern state of Cajamarca, the chief Cabinet minister who just resigned, Salomon Lerner, went to negotiate with the protest leaders.

But after only seven hours of talks Dec. 4, Humala declared a state of emergency in four affected provinces, curtailing civil liberties.

As interior minister, Valdes had asked prosecutors to arrest several protest leaders on charges including "hindering the functioning of public services."

Analyst Carlos Monge of the nonprofit environmental group Revenue Watch Institute expressed concern over Valdes' ascent to Cabinet chief.

"It's worrisome that the power of prime minister has been granted to Valdes, a former military man who incarnates the most authoritarian voice of the regime."

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10. Al Jazeera

0735 GMT 12 Dec 11

## Peru Cabinet Shuffle Brings Crackdown Fears

Peruvian President Ollanta Humala has sworn in a new team of ministers in a shake-up that could lead to harsher crackdowns on social protests but will leave the country's free-market economic model in place.

Humala, who was a soldier before becoming a politician, chose Oscar Valdes, a former army officer who was his instructor in the military, to be prime minister on Monday.

He replaces Salomon Lerner, a businessman who helped Humala shed his left-wing image to win elections in June, forged ties with investors and led efforts to solve social disputes through dialogue during his short five-month tenure.

Humala also replaced 10 of his 19 ministers in a swearing-in ceremony, but reappointed Finance Minister Luis Miguel Castilla, who is well-regarded by Wall Street for his management of one of the world's fastest-growing economies.

Trade Minister Jose Luis Silva, who has pushed an ambitious free-trade agenda for the Andean country, also stayed in his post.

Critics said the promotion of Valdes, who had been interior minister, meant the government would be less willing to negotiate with rural communities opposed to billions of dollars in new mining and oil projects, and quicker to use authoritarian tactics to break up a growing number of protests.

'Militarization of the government'

Former president Alejandro Toledo announced on Sunday that his party was leaving Peru's ruling coalition following the appointment of Valdes. "We don't support the militarization of the government of Humala, which was democratically elected," former President Alejandro Toledo told reporters.

Toledo, an unsuccessful presidential candidate this year, said his Peru Possible party would distance itself from the ruling party, Gana Peru, but still vote with it in Congress where it has a working majority. Peru Possible had held two ministerial posts, defence and labour, but chose not to participate in the cabinet after the shuffle.

"We don't have any faith in Valdes," said Gregorio Santos, governor of the region of Cajamarca, who has opposed a \$4.8bn gold mine proposed by US-based Newmont Mining.

"He isn't interested in dialogue at a time when the government is going to face social conflicts," he told the newspaper El Comercio.

'More work, less talk'

Valdes dismissed worries Humala would lead as a strongman, but said that as prime minister he would introduce order in a cabinet that had at times appeared disjointed and full of clashing personalities.

"This isn't a militarization of the government," Valdes said on television. "There were errors in co-ordination that will be fixed. This cabinet will work more and talk less."

Humala declared a state of emergency last week that gave the army and police special powers to quash roadblocks against Newmont's Conga project, the first real sign of his willingness to use tough tactics since he took office in July.

Days later, Peru's counterterrorism police detained two leaders of the protest as the crackdown widened. Valdes reportedly had urged Humala to take tough measures, frustrated that Lerner's efforts to negotiate a truce over Conga had failed and worried that Humala would face more protests nationwide.

More than 200 disputes nationwide have threatened to delay \$50bn in planned mining and oil projects that Humala says would fuel economic growth for years.

The projects often anger rural communities worried about pollution, losing control of scarce water supplies, or getting their share of lucrative mining profits.

Since taking office in July, Humala has raced to steer more social spending to rural areas to defuse community opposition to natural resource projects in poor towns left behind by Peru's decade-long economic boom.

Despite his relatively high approval rating of 59 per cent, he has found it difficult to mediate conflicts and has labelled as "intransigent" the protesters who had hoped he would usher in a period of rapid social change.

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## 11. Associated Press

Sunday, December 11, 2011

**Peru Cabinet Chief Out; Interior Minister Steps In**

Peruvian Cabinet chief Salomon Lerner resigned Saturday after less than five months in the post and was replaced by the interior minister, who inherits an unresolved dispute over the country's biggest mining investment.

The reason for Lerner's resignation was not explained, but he was recently involved in failed attempts to negotiate an end to protests that stalled the \$4.8 billion Conga gold mining project, which has been plagued by increasingly violent protests.

His resignation letter, posted online by the newspaper La Republica, does not make direct reference to the conflict but hints Lerner was unhappy with the government's handling of it.

As Cabinet chief, Lerner wrote in the 1 1/2-page resignation letter, "our direct mandate has been dialogue and the seeking of consensus to avoid confrontation between Peruvians."

After just one day of talks that Lerner led with local officials who fear the Conga project could taint and diminish water supplies affecting thousands, President Ollanta Humala on Dec. 5 called a state of emergency in four affected northern provinces for 60 days.

Lerner's replacement, Interior Minister Oscar Valdes, is a 62-year-old former army officer who quit the military as a lieutenant in 1991 and became a successful executive at various businesses in the southern coastal city of Tacna, most recently a trucking company and pasta producer. Humala, 49, was a student of Valdes in the 1980s at Peru's military academy.

Humala, who canceled a trip to Argentina for the Saturday inauguration of President Cristina Fernandez, met with Valdes for four hours Saturday but did not comment publicly.

"There is no crisis, only a readjustment in the Cabinet," Valdes told reporters after the meeting.

He said the government would turn "neither to the left or the right" but hew to its centrist approach.

A successful businessman of Jewish descent, Lerner was twice campaign manager for the center-left Humala, a former army officer who lost the 2006 race and then won election last June after toning down his once passionate pro-socialist message.

The fate of the Conga project, whose principal owner is U.S.-based Newmont Mining Corp., is considered key to prospects for other mining investments in Peru, which gets 61 percent of export income from the sector.

A windfall tax that the industry agreed to, and that Lerner played a key role in brokering, is helping to underwrite social welfare programs that Humala promised during the election campaign.

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**Venezuela**

## 12. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

**Chavez Cancels Trip To Argentina And Brazil**

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on Friday canceled a trip to Argentina and Brazil, citing his government's efforts to help flood victims.

Chavez announced the decision in a phone call on state television.

"Unfortunately I had to cancel my trip to Buenos Aires," Chavez said, adding that Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro would take his place at Saturday's inauguration of Argentine President Cristina Fernandez.

"The rains hit us hard," said Chavez, who also chatted by phone with evacuees at a disaster shelter.

Interior and Justice Minister Tareck El Aissami said floods and mudslides this week have caused at least eight deaths and that thousands of families have left their homes to take refuge in government shelters.

Chavez confirmed he was canceling the trip hours after an organization headed by former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said it had been informed that Chavez was no longer going. Chavez had planned to visit Silva in Brazil after attending Fernandez's inauguration.

As for his health, Chavez said "I'm very well."

"I'm very sweaty. I've been jogging. ... I jogged 40 minutes today," he said.

The 57-year-old president had a cancerous tumor removed from his pelvic region in June and underwent four rounds of chemotherapy. He has said that he is now cancer-free.

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## 13. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

**Brazil Organization Says Chavez Cancels Trip**

SAO PAULO (AP) - An organization headed by former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said Friday that Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez canceled a trip to Argentina and Brazil due to flooding and mudslides in Venezuela.

Venezuelan government officials in Caracas declined to comment on the account.

Argentina's Foreign Ministry said the government had not been notified of any cancellation of the Venezuelan leader's visit for Saturday's inauguration of President Cristina Fernandez.

Silva's non-governmental group, Citizenship Institute, said in a statement that Chavez canceled his trip "to monitor the problems caused by heavy rains."

Chavez had planned to visit Silva in Brazil after attending Fernandez's inauguration.

The floods and mudslides unleashed by torrential rains have caused at least eight deaths in Venezuela, Interior and Justice Minister Tareck El Aissami said Friday in Caracas.

He said at a news conference that thousands of families have left their homes to take refuge in government shelters and that Chavez has been closely monitoring the government's efforts to help flood victims.

El Aissami did not refer to Chavez's plans for the trip to Argentina and Brazil.

The 57-year-old president had a cancerous tumor removed from his pelvic region in June and underwent four rounds of chemotherapy. He has said that he is now cancer-free.

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## 14. The Associated Press

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

**Heavy rains in Venezuela cause at least 8 deaths**

Floods and mudslides unleashed by torrential rains have caused at least eight deaths in Venezuela, a government official said Friday.

Thousands of families have left their homes to take refuge in government disaster shelters, Interior and Justice Minister Tareck El Aissami said.

Five people died in western Zulia state, while three others died in Caracas and adjacent Miranda state, El Aissami said.

President Hugo Chavez's government has ordered the military and rescue teams to be on alert in several regions of the country that have seen heavy rains this week. El Aissami said at a news conference that Chavez has been closely monitoring the government's efforts to help flood victims.

Heavy rains at the end of 2010 also forced tens of thousands of Venezuelans into shelters. Some are still in shelters nearly a year later, while others were moved into new public housing.

El Aissami said about 29,000 families are being housed in hundreds of shelters due to this week's rains and more than 1,000 homes have been seriously damaged.

He said the government is providing about \$350 in cash assistance to each family. The government ordered schools closed due to the deluges.

Parts of neighboring Colombia have also been coping with floods. Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos toured flooded areas south of Bogota on Friday and promised assistance to those whose houses have been damaged.

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## Caribbean

### Cuba

## 15. Associated Press

Sunday, December 11, 2011

**Cuba's 'Ladies' Mark Human Rights Day Amid Protest**

By Peter Orsi

HAVANA (AP) - Cuba's Ladies in White dissident group paid homage to their late leader while observing International Human Rights Day at her home Saturday, surrounded by a jeering pro-government crowd for a second straight day.

Photos of Laura Pollan and messages of condolence adorned the wall of the house where she lived in central Havana and that served as a headquarters for the Ladies since the group was formed in 2003. Next to a lit candle, an empty chair was draped with white clothing that belonged to Pollan. A single gladiola and a tiny Cuban flag rested on the lap.

"Laura Pollan lives!" the Ladies cried, and "Freedom for political prisoners!"

Outside, dozens of supporters of President Raul Castro's government, many of them students, massed at the front door and shouted revolutionary slogans and insults at the women inside.

"Viva Fidel! Viva Raul!" they chanted, draping huge Cuban and revolutionary flags from the roof.

Bertha Soler, one of the founders of the Ladies and its unofficial leader since Pollan's death in October, blamed authorities for the crowd.

"We want to go into the streets, which is the right of the Cuban people, but the Cuban government prevents us from doing so with these organized mobs," Soler said. "The aggression is psychological, not physical, and it's a demonstration of the Cuban government's intolerance."

Authorities insist such counterprotests known as "acts of repudiation" are spontaneous acts by citizens disgusted by the dissidents, whom authorities accuse of being mercenaries paid by the U.S. to destabilize the island. Little is done to hide coordination with state security, however.

It was the second counterprotest outside Pollan's home in as many days.

On Friday, a crowd gathered there as the Ladies held a "literary tea" inside and a flotilla organized by Miami exile groups parked in international waters off Cuba, setting off fireworks in solidarity with the Ladies and other dissidents.

The exiles had also urged acts of protest by Cubans such as banging on pots and pans, though there was no sign that many people heeded their call.

The Ladies in White was founded in 2003 by Pollan, Soler and other wives of government opponents who were rounded up and given long prison terms in a crackdown on dissent.

The last of those prisoners still behind bars were released earlier this year, and many left the island for exile with their families.

Those still remaining in the Ladies in White have vowed to press for the release of other inmates who are serving time for politically motivated but violent crimes like hijacking and sabotage. Because of the violence tied to their acts, those inmates are not recognized as prisoners of conscience by outside human rights groups like Amnesty International.

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## 16. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

### Exile Fireworks Show Off Cuba Irks Castro Govt

By Peter Orsi

HAVANA (AP) - Fireworks shot from a flotilla organized by Miami exiles exploded in red and white balls off the coast of Havana to call attention to Cuba's human rights record. The stunt irritated Cuban officials but drew few spectators.

The display was visible only intermittently Friday night at a distance of a little more than 12 miles (19 kilometers) from where the exiles anchored their boats just outside Cuban territorial waters under overcast skies and sporadic rain.

Just a handful of people were out along the Malecon seaside promenade, which normally is bustling with young Cubans who socialize along the city's "great sofa" on weekends.

When an Associated Press team tried to interview the few who came out, a pro-government crowd of more than 20 people ran across the wide boulevard shouting "American press!" and demanding that a video camera be turned over. Some were holding bottles of alcohol and appeared to have been drinking. The journalists identified themselves as accredited members of the press with the right to work in Cuba. One cameraman was punched in the face, another's thumb was sprained and a video camera was broken in the melee before the crew managed to leave.

Exile organizers in Miami said the 18th protest flotilla over the years was not meant as a provocation, though they also said they were trying to coordinate the protest with actions by dissidents on the island on the eve of International Human Rights Day.

The exiles said they were exercising their right to freedom of expression, and the U.S. government said it couldn't legally stop them.

Cuban officials accused them of having malicious aims.

"There's a whole program of provocative acts," said Jose Luis Mendez, an official at Cuba's Interior Ministry. "This is not just about innocuous fireworks. It is subversive."

Before the fireworks, more than two dozen members of the Ladies in White dissident group held a literary tea and discussion of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the house of former leader Laura Pollan, who died last month.

A boisterous crowd of government supporters clogged the street outside the house shouting epithets like "worms" and proclaiming support for Fidel and Raul Castro in what is known in Cuba as an "act of repudiation."

The government says such counter-demonstrations are spontaneous outpourings of revolutionary sentiment, despite thinly veiled coordination with state security agents. The street outside the house had been closed to traffic since Thursday.

"We cannot celebrate Human Rights Day here in Cuba. We can't because they repress us and beat us. Right now there's an act of repudiation in front of the Ladies in White headquarters," said Bertha Soler, one of the group's founders. She accused police of blocking some members from attending the meeting. Other dissidents also reported that government opponents were briefly held to keep them from gathering or protesting, though their accounts could not be independently confirmed.

The government strenuously denies beating dissidents, whom it considers common criminals. It accuses them of taking money from Washington to destabilize the island and bring down its socialist revolution. Flotilla organizer Ramon Saul Sanchez of the small nonprofit group the Democracy Movement said about 50 protesters put on the fireworks display from six boats, including an 85-foot vessel and a small security craft. About a dozen members of the news media followed them.

State Department Spokesman William Ostick said U.S. authorities had met with the organizers to ensure they complied with U.S. and international laws. He said the organizers offered assurances they would not violate Cuban territorial waters or airspace.

"The United States government does not promote or encourage this activity," Ostick said in a statement. The U.S. Coast Guard said it would patrol the area to ensure the protesters stayed more than 12 miles off Cuba.

Nevertheless, Cuban authorities criticized Washington for not blocking the protest.

"That the Obama administration did not refuse to allow this kind of action is a very troubling sign, from the vantage point of it could create situations that nobody wants," Mendez said.

An official in the Cuban Foreign Ministry, Rene Mujica, said President Raul Castro's government had communicated its concern to Washington but declined to say whether it had sent a formal protest note.

"The United States is perfectly informed about the Cuban government's concerns regarding this kind of provocations that have been repeatedly made against our country," Mujica said.

Past exile actions have included clandestine missions on or near the island. In 1996, the Cuban military shot down two planes carrying activists from the exile group Brothers to the Rescue, killing four members. Cuba maintains the group flew into Cuban territory. The activists deny the allegation.

*Associated Press writers Anne-Marie Garcia in Havana and Laura Wides-Munoz in Miami contributed to this report.*

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17. Miami Herald

Saturday, December 10, 2011

## Cubans In Havana Watch Fireworks From Exile Flotilla

*By Juan Carlos Chavez*

A Cuban exile flotilla shot bright fireworks into the sky only about 13 miles from the Havana coast Friday in a defiant show of support for dissidents on the island who are struggling for democracy and human rights.

Cuba's government branded the flotilla as a provocation, detained tens of dissidents on the eve of International Human rights Day and sent security agents to shut off parts of Havana's seaside Malecón boulevard.

But the "Lights of Liberty" from the 8-inch shells were clearly visible in Havana despite a light rain, and blogger Orlando Luis Pardo quickly tweeted a blurry photo of a bright globe floating above part of the capital's horizon.

"Despite the rain, controls and arrests, the flotilla fireworks can be seen!" blogger Yoani Sanchez wrote in another Tweet. "Havana full of lights, and short of human rights."

"Our goal has been met," flotilla organizer Ramon Saul Sanchez boasted after the first fireworks went up shortly after 7 pm. Despite the Cuban complaint, he added, "what we have here is a party!" The flotilla of at least four vessels organized by the Miami-based Democracy Movement began setting off its fireworks when it reached "Democracy Point" - 12.5 miles from Havana and only half-a-mile from Cuba's territorial waters.

Dissident Baptist Pastor Mario Felix Leonart told El Nuevo Herald that many people were gathering along the Malecon despite a light rain, apparently hoping to see the upcoming fireworks. His telephone went dead after that.

At vessels carrying about 60 exiles left Key West and Marathon Key early Friday and sailed through 3-foot waves to reach the designated launch point for the three-hour fireworks show.

Participants prayed and sang the Cuban national anthem before setting off for the coast off Havana, where they hoped that some dissidents in the capital would support the fireworks show with a pots-and-pans protest of their own.

Sanchez, who reported the first launch of fireworks to Miami's La Poderosa radio station via satellite telephone, earlier Friday had said the flotilla's "spiritual leader" was Ladies in White founder Laura Pollán, who died of a heart attack in October.

Blogger Sanchez reported that State Security agents in plain clothes and posted in streets leading to the Malecón were turning people away from the seawall, where Havana residents gather nightly to walk and meet friends and lovers.

Parts of the five-mile long Malecón had been closed to pedestrian traffic Friday morning, allegedly because of flooding from sea water.

But many dissidents had planned to be on the seawall for the fireworks show.

Rapper X Alfonso "coincidentally" scheduled a concert for 10 p.m. Friday not far from the Malecón," and organizers of a hip-hop poetry event Saturday noted that the fireworks could serve as an interesting "preamble" to their own event.

Authorities also appeared to have blocked most of the dissidents' telephones beginning Friday afternoon, most likely to keep them from reporting on the many arrests and the fireworks show.

Leonart also reported during the day Friday that he was trying to tamp down rumors that the flotilla off the coast was ready to pick up any Cubans who wanted to escape the island.

The Democracy Movement has organized several such flotillas in the past, including two that used fireworks. But this time, the 43-foot "Musele Prince" was firing 8-inch shells, compared to the 6-inch fireworks used in the past.

Cuba's Foreign Ministry for the first time Friday officially condemned the flotilla as a "provocation" and confirmed that the Cuban government had expressed its concerns to Washington.

The U.S. government "is perfectly informed of the Cuban government's concern with this type of provocation," René Mujica, a top analyst in the ministry's North American affairs section, told journalists in Havana.

The Communist Party's Granma newspaper also reported Friday that five persons drowned when their boat sank off the coast of Santa Cruz del Norte, about 30 miles east of Havana, as they tried to escape the island.

Another 18 would-be refugees were rescued by the military and oil workers during the incident in late November, Granma added. Cuba's government-controlled news media seldom reports on such incidents.

The State Department, meanwhile, confirmed an El Nuevo Herald report earlier this week that U.S. officials had urged the Democracy Movement and the Cuban government "to exercise caution and restraint" during Friday's fireworks.

"We have also made it clear to Cuban authorities as well as participants in this event that the U.S. government would punish any violation of U.S. laws," spokesman William Ostick said in a statement. Ramon Saul Sanchez broke away from one of the previous Democracy flotillas and entered Cuban territorial waters. U.S. prosecutors put him on trial, but he was found not guilty.

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## Features

18. New York Times

Sunday, December 11, 2011

# Socialism's Sacred Cows Suffer Zombie Attack In Popular Cuban Film

By Victoria Burnett

HAVANA - The day after Havana is invaded by the living dead, Juan and Sara emerge from their dilapidated apartment building to find the streets filled with people roving aimlessly, their wide eyes blank.

"It all looks the same to me," Sara shrugs.

The suggestion that 52 years of socialist rule have turned Cuba into a zombie state, a central conceit of the new Cuban horror spoof "Juan of the Dead," is daringly irreverent satire in a country that takes its revolution with deadly seriousness.

But instead of being forced underground, the movie was included in an officially sanctioned film festival last week where Cubans flocked to see it in such numbers that the police had to intervene and extra screenings were added. Its camp humor notwithstanding, this crude, low-budget splatter film has become an improbable landmark in the gradual opening of Cuban culture.

"Cinema reflects what's going on around us," said Carlos Hernandez, 47, a street performer who was among the 1,300 people in the audience at a screening on Thursday. "There are openings. The walls around what you can and can't say are starting to crumble.

"There's an irreverence in the movie that reflects the wider irreverence felt by a lot of young people."

"Juan of the Dead" is by no means the first Cuban film to examine the darker aspects of life on the island or to poke fun at Cubans' hardships. Several feature films produced over the past two decades, with or without state sponsorship, have critiqued issues like homosexuality, exile and social inequality.

But Juan's gleefully mischievous pot shots at Cuban sacred cows, from government-controlled media to Fidel Castro himself, are unusually risqué, reflecting a growing cinematic freedom in a country where open criticism of the political system is barely tolerated. Because they are embedded in the constructs of a popular action genre, the film's cheeky gags are ensured a broad audience.

The shifts in Cuba's film industry mirror the broader reality on the island, where President Raúl Castro has gradually reduced the role of the state, cutting subsidies and public-sector jobs and opening space for private enterprise in a bid to salvage the economy.

Filmmakers and moviegoers said the zombie film, Cuba's first, reflected an emerging diversity in Cuban film as less-expensive digital technology has allowed an explosion of independent movie production. It also signaled the coming of age of a group of filmmakers who grew up during the post-Soviet era, when the destitute Cuban state lost its near-monopoly on Cuban cinema.

For decades, the state-financed Cuban Institute of Cinematic Art and Industry controlled the production and distribution of Cuban film and to a large extent defined Cuban cinema, which was viewed as an important pillar of the revolution. The institute produced some highly acclaimed films, including Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's "Memories of Underdevelopment" in 1968, and the Oscar-nominated "Strawberry and Chocolate," about the relationship between a gay man and a committed Communist, in 1993.

But the institute's budget dropped dramatically after the fall of the Soviet Union, and it turned to joint productions with countries like Spain to survive.

The digital revolution, which took off in Cuba over the past 10 years, kindled a surge in independent film, from shorts and video clips to features.

Film experts said the fact that the five Cuban feature films in competition at the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema this year were shot digitally, most of them with minimal input from the institute, was a watershed.

"It is a reflection of what's going on in Cuban cinema," said Juan Carlos Cremata, a Cuban director whose ultra-low-budget feature film "Chamaco" is competing at the festival. "The most interesting things happening in cinema today are happening outside the institute."

Mr. Cremata said he made "Chamaco," which deals with sexual exploitation and abuse, without institutional help so he could retain creative independence.

"Juan of the Dead" - the title is an homage to the campy zombie touchstone "Dawn of the Dead" and its spoof "Shaun of the Dead" - cost about \$3 million, the most expensive Cuban movie to be produced on

the island with private financing and virtually no input from the institute. It was produced by a Spanish company and one founded by young Cuban filmmakers.

"Juan of the Dead" tells the blood-drenched tale of a slacker who decides to save the island from an invasion of cannibalistic zombies. As the zombies turn Havana into a gory circus of flying limbs and severed heads, the nightly news anchors continue to calmly assert the government line, that the attacks are not the work of the undead but dissidents in the pay of the United States.

The film is scattered with allusions to traumatic moments in Cuba's recent history: Cubans flee the zombies in makeshift boats that recall the raft-borne exodus of 1994; the darkened, shuttered streets, one character says, echo the "special period" of economic hardship after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"Cuban reality is so incredible that there are things in the movie that seem like you made them up, but in fact they are based on truth," said Alejandro Brugués, the 35-year-old director, who was born in Argentina but grew up in Cuba. "I just put zombies in the scenario, instead of real people."

Mr. Brugués insisted that that the film is "social commentary, not political."

Still, the movie includes a couple of digs at the paramount leader of the revolution, Fidel Castro, who is rarely the butt of jests on the big screen. The last zombie standing, with his back to the audience as the credits roll, wears a familiar olive-green uniform with the revolutionary motto "Until victory, always" emblazoned on his jacket.

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## Haiti

19. Associated Press

Sunday, December 11, 2011

### **Oprah Winfrey To See Haiti's President Michel Martelly, Designer Donna Karan, Sean Penn's DP Camp**

*By Tony Fraser*

Haitian President Michel Martelly says he'll host Oprah Winfrey on her Sunday-Monday visit in the Caribbean nation.

The Haiti leader said on Friday that he would like to see Winfrey promote the troubled nation's lesser known attributes to outside investors as it struggles to recover from the 2010 earthquake that threw hundreds of thousands people into makeshift camps.

Martelly said he planned to meet with Winfrey on Monday.

"I am hoping she will serve as an ambassador for Haiti, to help us get the kind of assistance needed," Martelly said at a trade summit for Caribbean leaders.

Winfrey is expected to arrive in Haiti on Sunday evening and on Monday visit a settlement camp for displaced people run by Hollywood actor Sean Penn and his aid group J/P HRO. She is also expected to meet with fashion designer Donna Karan, who has celebrated the work of Haiti's artisans through her Urban Zen Foundation since the quake.

Chance Patterson, a spokesman for Winfrey's Harpo Studios, couldn't be reached for comment Friday night.

The interview with Martelly came on the second day of the Caricom-Cuba summit, an effort aimed at encouraging cooperation among Caribbean nations and advocating for their interests.

Martelly, a former musician who performed under the stage name "Sweet Micky," also said he plans an ambitious world tour in an effort to raise money for an education program that seeks to ensure children attend school in Haiti. Few parents can afford tuition for his country's many private schools.

"We would take the tour to Los Angeles, Korea, Japan, France to raise money for the children's education," Martelly said, adding that he understands the power of the stage.

"I will get on it and dance and have great groups of entertainers to perform to help Haiti, including Wyclef (Jean) and Oprah and have others play my music and sing my songs," he said.

Separately, Martelly said he is moving ahead with a campaign pledge to restore Haiti's army despite opposition raised by some people, including Nobel peace laureate and former Costa Rican President Oscar Arias.

Arias sent a letter this week to Martelly saying it would be an error to bring back the military that was disbanded in 1995 because of a long history of abuse. Arias and others have said money for the \$25 million force would be better spent elsewhere for the struggling country.

In the interview, Martelly reiterated his position that the new force would be a modern one and a departure from its predecessor, which was an instrument long used to topple presidents and jail opponents in Haiti.

"I could bring arguments which could prove him wrong," Martelly said about Arias. "For instance, in a modern army we would have engineers and a medical corps who, if they were there in the time of the earthquake, could have saved lives."

Martelly said he hopes the new force will provide jobs and education to the youth of Haiti, where only about 60 percent of the people have regular employment.

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20. **The Associated Press**

Sun, Dec. 11, 2011

## **Farrakhan, Winfrey land in Haiti on separate trips**

Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has arrived in Haiti, saying he wants to see how his organization can help the poor Caribbean country rebuild from the devastating 2010 earthquake.

Farrakhan tells reporters at the airport that he has always wanted to visit Haiti. He says he is particularly interested in learning about Voodoo, the religion widely practiced in Haiti.

He was greeted at the airport Sunday by Haitian Foreign Minister Laurent Lamothe before talking to reporters. Farrakhan is expected to meet with Haiti's president later in the week.

Airport authorities hustled journalists out of the airport shortly after Farrakhan's arrival to prevent them from covering the arrival of Oprah Winfrey, who was arriving on a separate visit.

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## **Jamaica**

21. **The Associated Press**

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

## **More than 200 Jamaica policemen fail polygraph**

Jamaican authorities say 217 police officers who took voluntary lie-detector tests this year failed.

Assistant Police Commissioner Justin Felice said Friday that was 60 percent of the 362 officers who underwent the tests. He doesn't say whether the officers who failed will be disciplined in any way.

The Caribbean island's police force has used lie detector tests as part of its vetting process since 2008.

Officials denied re-enlistment to 62 officers this year. An additional 34 have been charged with corruption and seven dismissed for failing the test.

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## **CENTAM**

## **El Salvador**

22. **The Associated Press**

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

## **El Salvador marks 30 years of El Mozote massacre**

Rights activists are marking the 30th anniversary of one of the worst massacres of El Salvador's civil war.

The groups say they are still awaiting justice three decades after an army battalion swept through the township of El Mozote during a counterinsurgency campaign, slaughtering about 1,000 people before tossing many of their bodies into a church and burning it. The killings took place Dec. 11-13, 1981.

The Center for International Law and Justice says it hopes the Costa Rica-based Inter-American Court of Human Rights will hear the case next year.

Some of the alleged perpetrators have died. Before that, they were covered by an amnesty law.

The war between leftist rebels and an authoritarian government claimed 75,000 lives.

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23. The Associated Press

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

## Hector Silva, moderate leftist San Salvador mayor

A Boston-born Salvadoran physician who helped the Central American nation recover from its 12-year civil war has died of a heart attack. Hector Silva was 64.

Public Works Minister Gerson Martinez said Silva collapsed at the presidential palace on Thursday while making an impassioned appeal for greater anti-corruption efforts.

Silva studied medicine in El Salvador and later at the University of Michigan and at Johns Hopkins University.

He returned to El Salvador shortly before a 1992 peace accord and served in the country's legislature. In 1997, he became the first leftist mayor of the capital following the civil war, earning a reputation for moderation during six years in office, easing tensions in the polarized nation.

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## Honduras

24. The Associated Press

Fri, Dec. 09, 2011

## Honduras passes wiretap, bike laws to stem crime

The Honduran Congress has passed bills allowing authorities to wiretap the telephone conversations, emails and bank accounts of suspected criminals and temporarily banning motorcycles from carrying passengers.

The two initiatives are aimed at stemming a wave of drug violence and organized crime that has plagued the Central American nation.

The lawmakers passed the measures Thursday, just days after a radio news host and a former adviser to the government were fatally shot by gunmen on motorcycles, presumably by shooters who were riding as passengers. The passenger ban is for six months.

President Porfirio Lobo is expected to sign both bills into law.

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## Panama

25. Associated Press

Monday, December 12, 2011

## Noriega Returns To Panama A Largely Irrelevant Man

By Juan Zamorano

More than two decades after the U.S. forced him from power, Manuel Noriega returned to Panama on Sunday as a prisoner and, to many of those he once ruled with impunity, an irrelevant man.

Some Panamanians feel hatred for the former strongman and rejected American ally; a few others nostalgia. But as he returned to his native country for the first time since his ouster, it seemed like few people had any strong feelings at all.

There were no legions of admirers at Panama City's Tocumen airport when the Spanish Iberia airlines' flight touched down, delivering him from Paris' La Sante prison after a stopover in Madrid. The crowds in the capital Sunday were of holiday shoppers.

Noriega, who has served drug sentences in the United States and a money-laundering term in France, was whisked by helicopter to the El Renacer prison to serve out three 20-year sentences for the slayings of political opponents in the 1980s. An elevated platform was set up at the prison so journalists could watch him enter, giving Panamanians what likely was their only glimpse of the man who once ran the country like his private fiefdom.

Authorities sowed confusion at the prison by first wheeling in a person thought to be Noriega in a wheelchair, covering him with what appeared to be a coat so his face could not be seen. But then a convoy arrived about a half hour later, triggering speculation the first person was a decoy.

Roxana Mendez, the interior minister, later told the TVN news channel that Noriega was in the second convoy.

"We reiterate that we had to safeguard the physical safety of Noreiga," she said.

The director of Panama's prison system, Angel Calderon, eventually gave journalists a view of Noriega from a distance.

"The inmate Noriega is there," Calderon said, gesturing toward the former leader who was sitting in a wheelchair next to guards who took him to a part of the prison to check on the possessions he brought with him.

Noriega was wearing a red long sleeve shirt, and Calderon said he was refusing to wear a prison uniform.

The lack of a view of Noriega afforded by the tight security outside the prison frustrated some Panamanians.

"We are disappointed at the excessive security that kept us from seeing the prisoner," said Aurelio Barria, a member of the old opposition to Noriega, who was once known for his snappy military uniforms and nationalistic swagger.

"Why not let him be seen? What are they hiding? We want to see him handcuffed in a cell," Barria told TVN.

About a dozen protesters, identifying themselves as relatives of army officers shot by Noriega's forces, gathered at the prison's main entrance. One held a sign saying "Justice, Noriega, Killer." Another woman shouted "Die, you wretch! Now you're going to pay for your crimes." It was unlikely the ex-dictator could hear her.

President Ricardo Martinelli said Noriega "should pay for the damage and horror committed against the people of Panama."

Downtown, some people could be heard banging pots and honking car horns, a symbolic gesture of repudiation that activists had suggested to show their rejection of Noriega.

The 77-year-old former general returned to a country much different from the one he left after surrendering to U.S. forces Jan. 3, 1990. The government, once a revolving cast of military strongmen, is now governed by its fourth democratically elected president.

El Chorrillo, Noriega's boyhood neighborhood and a downtown slum that was heavily bombed during the 1989 invasion, now stands in the shadow of luxury high-rise condominiums that have sprung up along the Panama Canal since the United States handed over control of the waterway in 2000.

The rotting wooden tenements of the community have been replaced by cement housing blocks.

Noriega's former headquarters have been torn down and converted into a park with basketball courts.

While some Panamanians are eager to see punishment for the man who stole elections and dispatched squads of thugs to beat opponents bloody in the streets, others believe his return means little.

"I don't think Noriega has anything hugely important to say," said retired Gen. Ruben Dario Paredes, who headed Panama's army before Noriega took over in the early 1980s. "The things he knows about have lost relevance, because the world has changed and the country has, as well."

"In politics, he won't have any great impact, because the people of Panama have other concerns," said Marco Gandasegui, a sociology professor at Panama's Center for Latin American Studies.

Things were different in the 1970s and 1980s, when Noriega, whose pockmarked face earned him the nickname "Pineapple Face," became a valuable ally to the CIA. At that time, Noriega helped the U.S. combat leftist movements in Latin America by providing information and logistical help, and also acted as a back channel for U.S. communications with unfriendly governments such as Cuba's.

But as the Cold War waned, Noriega became a more powerful and unforgiving dictator at home.

Tensions developed between the strongman and U.S. officials, who also had been aware for some time that he was also working with the Colombia-based Medellin drug cartel.

On Dec. 20, 1989, more than 26,000 U.S. troops began moving into Panama City, clashing with Noriega loyalists in fighting that left sections of the city devastated. Twenty-three U.S. troops, 314 Panamanian soldiers and 200 civilians died in the operation.

The dictator hid in bombed and burned-out neighborhoods before he sought refuge in the Vatican Embassy, which was besieged by U.S. troops playing loud rock music. When he gave up he was flown to Miami for trial on drug-related charges.

Noriega was convicted on the U.S. drug trafficking charges two years after the invasion, and served 17 years. He received special treatment as a prisoner of war and lived in his own bungalow with a TV and exercise equipment.

When his sentence ended, he was extradited to France, which convicted him for laundering millions of dollars in drug profits through three major French banks, and investing drug cash in three luxury Paris apartments.

In Panama, Noriega was sentenced in absentia for the murders of military commander Moises Giroldi, slain after leading a failed 1989 rebellion, and Hugo Spadafora, a political opponent found decapitated on the border with Costa Rica in 1985. He also was convicted in a third case involving the death of troops who aided one of his opponents in a rebellion, and could be tried in the deaths of other opponents.

Unlike his minimum-security digs outside Miami, Noriega's cell at El Renacer will be spartan.

Noriega "will be located in an individual cell, without luxuries and in similar conditions to the rest of the inmates," Interior Ministry spokeswoman Vielka Pritsiolas said.

Pictures posted on the ministry's website showed a cell with little more than a bed, a table, and a shelf. The cell has its own tiny bathroom, relatively wide window slits and door screens that look out onto a sunny, tropical space with plants.

Noriega's lawyers in Panama have said they plan to request house arrest under a law that allows those over 70 to serve their sentences at home. Noriega's legal team says he has blood pressure problems and is paralyzed on the left side as a result of a stroke several years ago.

Hatuey Castro, 82, a Noriega opponent who was detained and beaten by his henchmen, says it is about time Noriega paid for what he did.

"Noriega was responsible for the invasion and those who died in the operation," he said. "He dishonored his uniform, there was barely a shot and he went off to hide. He must pay."

Others are more sympathetic toward the aging ex-general. When last seen during his extradition from the United States to France, he appeared to have difficulty walking and was assisted by others.

"This man has paid for his crimes, and it looks like he can hardly walk anymore," said 67-year-old retiree Hildauro Velasco. "If he dies in prison, or at home, what does it matter?"

Although they are probably in a minority, there are also those who harbor a certain nostalgia for the Noriega era. Panama has seen a spike in street gangs and drug violence since his ouster.

The country also remains a base for international drug trafficking and money laundering, and suffers from income inequality. Its government is struggling with an ambitious plan to expand the Panama Canal more than a decade after it regained control of the waterway, and to balance foreign investment in tourism and mining against concerns they could harm the environment.

Where Martinelli, the current president, rose to prominence as a supermarket magnate, Noriega worked hard to develop the image of a man of the people. His private life was that of a rich man, but publicly he stressed his humble origins and spent weekends courting the residents of rural towns and villages.

Noriega "did bad things, but he also did good things," said Sabina Delgado, 60, a mother of six who has lived her whole life in El Chorrillo, which has been hit by a wave of violent gang crime. "Imagine, when he was here, the country didn't have as much crime. There weren't as much drugs, there was more control."

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26. **New York Times**

Monday, December 12, 2011

## **Noriega Is Sent To Prison Back In Panama, Where The Terror Has Turned To Shrugs**

*By Randal C. Archibald*

Nearly 22 years ago an American military plane whisked the de facto leader of this nation, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, off to Florida to face trial, and ultimately a prison sentence, for drug trafficking.

On Sunday evening, a commercial airliner landed here with much less fanfare, carrying him back. After flying more than 15 hours from Paris, where he had served additional time for money laundering, Mr. Noriega arrived at El Renacer Prison, a former American facility, to complete a 20-year sentence for three convictions stemming from several deaths and await possible further judgment in Panama's courts. As the plane descended, a doctor checked Mr. Noriega, 77, who appeared to react to seeing the capital city from the air for the first time in years, a correspondent on the plane said.

Mr. Noriega was kept out of public view after he landed at 6:08 p.m. aboard Iberia Airlines Flight 6345. A photo released by the Panamanian government showed him at the prison in a wheelchair, with a thin smile and wearing a dark suit, a red tie and a dark windbreaker slung partly over him.

The limited glimpse just added to many Panamanians' sense of Mr. Noriega as a cipher. Three-quarters of the citizens were young children when he was seized, so he often comes across as someone parents may talk about but one who arouses little passion either way.

Panama has clearly moved on. It has held four presidential elections declared clean by international observers. An economic boom has altered the skyline with gleaming skyscrapers. Even longtime opponents concede that public rancor has faded, although many who lost loved ones or were tortured under the Noriega dictatorship, from 1983 to 1989, said they would fight for him to face additional trials here and demand his accomplices pay, too.

Relatives of Dr. Hugo Spadafora, a popular opponent whose decapitated body was found in 1985, recently demanded that Mr. Noriega disclose the location of Dr. Spadafora's skull. Others believe Mr. Noriega can shed light on dozens of murders and disappearances, and there is speculation he harbors political secrets that can damage the elite.

Still, he is largely the obsession of longtime Noriega watchers, not Panamanians in general.

"There is no hatred among the public," said Guillermo Sanchez Borbon, a co-author of the Noriega biography "In the Time of the Tyrants." "We Panamanians are the kind of people to make a fuss for a couple of days and then move on."

Demonstrations leading up to his return were small, and on Sunday people flocked instead to the annual holiday children's parade on Calle 50, a major thoroughfare here that was a hotbed of protest when he ruled.

Renata Flores, 52, said she had waved white flags and banged pots in protests in the months before Mr. Noriega's departure but shrugged off his return now.

"He has been in prison and is probably not going to have a big impact now," she said, holding the hand of her niece, Florencia, 12.

Florencia said she knew little about Mr. Noriega.

"The truth is," she said, "I only know they used to call him Pineapple Face," a reference to his severe acne and resulting scars.

It was, then, a somewhat anticlimactic end to an extraordinary odyssey.

Mr. Noriega rose through the ranks of the military during the 1970s and 1980s, eventually assuming command and essentially running the country through threats, intimidation and force.

He was an informant for the Central Intelligence Agency and the Drug Enforcement Administration, historians have written, but also took payments from Colombian drug traffickers to allow cocaine to pass through Panama to the United States, American prosecutors said.

As tensions grew, President George Bush ordered an invasion of more than 27,000 troops, then the largest American military action since the Vietnam War.

Mr. Noriega, exhausted and tormented by deafening heavy metal music that troops played outside the Vatican Embassy, where he had taken refuge, surrendered on Jan. 4, 1990. He was convicted on drug and racketeering charges in 1992 and, at the conclusion of his prison sentence in Miami, was extradited to France in 2010.

With his French sentence completed, Mr. Noriega could have walked free had Panama not requested his extradition, Foreign Minister Roberto Henriquez has said, batting away suggestions from critics of Panama's president, Ricardo Martinelli, that he orchestrated Mr. Noriega's return to distract attention from political scandals at home.

Those who had fought his regime said they hoped his arrival reminded people that democracy should not be taken for granted.

"Society should remember again that the military cannot return to power," said Roberto Arosemena, a former opposition party leader repeatedly beaten by Mr. Noriega's police in 1987.

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27. ABC

Dec. 11, 2011

**ABC World News (story 6, 0:20)**

## **Panama-Noriega Returns For Prison Sentence**

MUIR: "We're going to turn overseas now, where one of the world's more notorious figures, the former dictator of Panama, Manuel Noriega is back in the headlines tonight. He was released from a French prison and flown to Panama to face more prison for the murders of a political opponent and a general in the 1980s. Noriega has spent the last 20 years behind bars in France and here in the US on drug charges."

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## 28. Associated Press

Sunday, December 11, 2011

**Noriega Flown Home To Be Punished Once Again***By Juan Zamorano and Thibault Camus*

PARIS (AP) - Former military strongman Manuel Antonio Noriega was flown home to Panama on Sunday to be punished once again for crimes he committed during a career that saw him transformed from a close Cold War ally of Washington to the vilified target of a U.S. invasion.

Noriega left Orly airport, south of Paris, on a flight of Spain's Iberia airlines, delivered directly to the aircraft by a four-car convoy and motorcycles that escorted him from the French capital's walked La Sante prison. The flight, which stops in Madrid, left at 8:08 a.m. (0708 GMT), about a half-hour behind schedule.

The French Justice Ministry, in a one-line statement, said France turned Noriega over to Panamanian officials on Sunday in accordance with extradition proceedings. It was the only official remark.

Noriega's return comes after more than 20 years in U.S. and French prisons for drug trafficking and money laundering. Panama convicted him during his captivity overseas for the slayings of two political opponents in the 1980s.

He was sentenced to 20 years in each case, and Panamanian officials say he will be sent straight to a jail cell when he lands. The ex-general, whose pockmarked face earned him the nickname "Pineapple Face," could eventually leave prison under a law allowing prisoners over 70 to serve out their time under house arrest.

A doctor was reported to be among the team of Panamanian officials escorting the 77-year-old ex-dictator back to Panama.

"He was very impatient, very happy. He's going home," one of his French lawyers, Antonin Levy, said by telephone Saturday night, a day after his last visit with Noriega.

But many Panamanians still want to see the man who stole elections and dispatched squads of thugs to beat opponents bloody in the streets to pay his debt at home.

"Noriega was responsible for the invasion and those who died in the operation. He dishonored his uniform, there was barely a shot and he went off to hide. He must pay," said Hatuey Castro, 82, a member of the anti-Noriega opposition who was detained and beaten by the strongman's thugs in 1989. Though other U.S. conflicts have long since pushed him from the spotlight, the 1989 invasion that ousted Noriega was one of the most bitterly debated events of the Cold War's waning years.

Noriega began working with U.S. intelligence when he was a student at a military academy in Peru, said Everett Ellis Briggs, the United States ambassador to Panama from 1982 to 1986.

As he rose in the Panamanian military during the 1970s and 1980s, Noriega cooperated closely with the CIA, helping the U.S. combat leftist movements in Latin America by providing information and logistical help. He also acted as a back channel for U.S. communications with unfriendly governments such as Cuba's.

But Noriega was playing a double game. He also began working with Colombia's Medellin drug cartel, and made millions moving cocaine to the United States.

"He was for rent to a lot of people," Briggs said. The U.S. avoided taking action because of concerns about the security of the Panama Canal and overall stability in Central America, he added.

"There was just a feeling that now is not the time to take the lid off this particular mess," Briggs said.

As the Cold War waned, and the U.S. war on drugs gained prominence, Noriega's drug ties became a source of increasing tension. After a U.S. grand jury indicted him on drug charges in 1988, tensions escalated between his forces and U.S. troops stationed around the Panama Canal. A U.S. Marine was killed in one clash. President George H.W. Bush also accused Noriega's men of abusing a U.S. Navy serviceman and his wife.

On Dec. 20, 1989, more than 26,000 U.S. troops began moving into Panama City, clashing with Noriega loyalists in fighting that left sections of the city devastated.

Twenty-three U.S. troops, 314 Panamanian soldiers, and some 200 civilians died in the operation.

Noriega hid in bombed and burned-out neighborhoods before he sought refuge in the Vatican Embassy, which was besieged by U.S. troops playing loud rock music.

He gave up on Jan. 3, 1990, and was flown to Miami for trial on drug-related charges.

Bush was praised for a precise and limited strike, and pundits said the president, with soaring approval ratings, had shed the wimpy image that had plagued him during the 1988 presidential campaign.

Noriega's return to the U.S. as a prisoner of war was "a triumph for diplomacy and a triumph for justice," said the late Democratic Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, normally a harsh critic of Bush. Critics, however, saw a dangerous precedent in Bush's willingness to send troops into harm's way to topple a foreign leader, particularly one who had been supported for years by the U.S. The United Nations General Assembly called the invasion "a flagrant violation of international law and of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states."

Noriega was convicted two years after the invasion, and served 17 years at a minimum-security prison outside Miami, where he received special treatment as a prisoner of war and lived in his own bungalow with a TV and exercise equipment.

When his sentence ended, he was extradited to France, which convicted him for laundering millions of dollars in drug profits through three major French banks, and investing drug cash in three luxury Paris apartments.

Noriega suffers from high blood pressure and partial paralysis as the result of a stroke several years ago, according to his lawyers in France.

He returns to a nation that has seen a sustained economic boom, fueled largely by the return of the Panama Canal and surrounding land and military bases to Panamanian control in 2000. Dozens of new skyscrapers have risen around the war-scarred capital, and tourism is flourishing.

The ex-dictator's return "should finally close a chapter of history that we do not ever want to happen again," said former Panamanian Foreign Minister Samuel Lewis, whose family was forced out of the country in retaliation for opposing Noriega.

"Hopefully, we can put this sad chapter of history in the past and focus on the future," Lewis said.

Panama remains a base for international drug trafficking and money laundering, however, and it also suffers from street crime and income inequality. In many parts of society, there is nostalgia for the Noriega years.

Julio Rangel, a 63-year-old painter who sells his works in a park in the capital, said Noriega "doesn't represent any sort of danger to the people here" and never deserved to become the target of a U.S. invasion.

"What the North Americans wanted to do was destroy our defense forces," he said.

Omar Rodriguez, who was selling soft drinks nearby, said that in Noriega's time, "there was more work, and there wasn't criminality like today."

"I can't speak ill of him," Rodriguez said.

Noriega faces immediate punishment for the murders of military commander Moises Giroldi, slain after leading a failed rebellion on Oct. 3, 1989, and Hugo Spadafora, a political opponent found decapitated on the border with Costa Rica in 1985.

He also could be tried in the deaths of other opponents during the same period.

"He's coming to serve his sentences, and that's important for the families of the victims," said former Panamanian Attorney General Rogelio Cruz. "His presence here is important because he'll satisfy the demands of justice for his criminal convictions and the trials that he still has to face."

*Zamorano reported from Panama City. Oleg Cetinic in Paris and Michael Weissenstein in Mexico City contributed to this report.*

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## **Trans-Regional Issues**

### **CIT (Counter-Illicit Trafficking)**

29. **The Associated Press**

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

### **Puerto Rico fugitive caught in Dominican Republic**

Federal authorities and police in the Dominican Republic have arrested one of Puerto Rico's most sought-after criminals.

Miguel Diaz Rivera was arrested late Friday in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo. Puerto Rican police said Saturday he had been living there under a false identity.

The 39-year-old faces charges including murder and drug possession and is being held on a \$1.2 million bond. He is accused of running a drug trafficking network in at least five Puerto Rican cities.

Diaz is expected to be extradited soon.

The U.S. Caribbean territory blames drug trafficking for the majority of its killings. More than 1,066 people have been killed this year on the island of 4 million people, a record number.

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## **Counter-Terrorism**

30. Associated Press

Saturday, December 10, 2011

### **AP Sources: Obama Makes Push To Change Terror Bill**

*By Donna Cassata*

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Barack Obama and his national security team are appealing to lawmakers for last-minute changes to a sweeping defense bill that requires military custody for terrorism suspects linked to al-Qaida, including those captured within the U.S.

The legislation is caught in an escalating dispute between the White House and Congress over the politically charged issue of whether to treat suspected terrorists as prisoners of war or criminals.

The president led a full-court press this week that included Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and FBI Director Robert Mueller asking for revisions to the bill as House and Senate negotiators move swiftly to complete a final version. The White House already had threatened a veto if the bill isn't changed, saying it could not accept legislation that "challenges or constrains the president's authorities to collect intelligence, incapacitate dangerous terrorists and protect the nation."

Obama spoke to Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin, D-Mich. Clinton and Panetta also spoke to Levin, and Mueller has met with Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, administration and congressional officials said Friday.

They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations.

The administration insists that the military, law enforcement and intelligence agents need flexibility in prosecuting the war on terror. Obama points to his administration's successes in eliminating Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida figure Anwar al-Awlaki. Republicans counter that their efforts are necessary to respond to an evolving, post-Sept. 11 threat, and that Obama has failed to produce a consistent policy on handling terror suspects.

The Senate bill would require that the military take custody of a suspect deemed to be a member of al-Qaida or its affiliates and involved in plotting or committing attacks on the United States, with an exemption for U.S. citizens. The bill does allow the executive branch to waive the military's authority based on national security and hold a suspect in civilian custody, but the administration argues that is insufficient.

"We want to work with the Senate to ensure our counterterrorism professionals have the tools and flexibility they need to keep America safe," National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor said Friday.

As negotiators have raced to finish the bill by early next week, administration officials have offered various changes to the provisions but have had little success in convincing lawmakers. One potential change was to limit the cases in which the military custody provision would apply.

The legislation also would deny suspected terrorists, even U.S. citizens seized within the nation's borders, the right to trial and subject them to indefinite detention. The Obama administration also opposes that change.

In a letter to Levin on Friday, Sen. Mark Udall, D-Colo., pleaded with him to consider changes in the bill, warning it could undermine national security and have a chilling effect on Americans' constitutional rights. Udall singled out the provision on indefinite detention without trial.

"Congress should endeavor to stand firm in defending that which our enemies seek to destroy rather than enacting legislation that weakens constitutional protections and limits the ability of our government to use all of the tools at their disposal to fight and defeat our enemies," wrote the senator, a member of the Armed Services Committee.

The administration also is seeking changes to potential sanctions on Iran, penalties that the Senate passed on a 100-0 vote last week.

The bill would go after foreign financial institutions that do business with Iran's central bank by barring them from opening or maintaining correspondent operations in the United States. It would apply to foreign central banks only for transactions that involve the sale or purchase of petroleum or petroleum products.

The petroleum penalties would only apply if the president, in six months, determines there is a sufficient alternative supply and if the country with jurisdiction over the financial institution has not significantly reduced its purchases of Iranian oil. It also allows the president to waive the penalties based on national security.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, in a Dec. 1 letter to senators, said the administration opposed the measure in its current form because it would undermine its effort to bring international pressure on Iran. He also warned that the penalties could actually boost oil prices and benefit Iran financially.

"Iran's greatest economic resource is its oil exports," Geithner wrote. "Sales of crude oil line the regime's pockets, sustain its human rights abuses and feed its nuclear ambitions like no other sector of the Iranian economy."

The administration is seeking both substantive and technical changes, including delaying implementation of all the penalties for six months.

Overall, the bill would authorize \$662 billion for military personnel, weapons systems, national security programs in the Energy Department, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in the fiscal year that began Oct. 1. Reflecting a period of austerity and a winding down of decade-old conflicts, the bill is \$27 billion less than Obama requested and \$43 billion less than Congress gave the Pentagon for the year before.

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31. NPR

December 9, 2011, 4:10 P.M.

## ***All Things Considered***

### **Brennan Discusses Defense Authorization Bill**

LYNN NEARY: This is All Things Considered from NPR News. I'm Lynn Neary.

ROBERT SIEGEL: And I'm Robert Siegel. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 runs hundreds of pages. It authorizes hundreds of billions in defense spending. And as it stands, the version of the bill approved by the Senate is facing a veto by President Obama.

The administration's main objection is to one part of the bill, the part that governs the treatment of detainees. According to the administration's reading of it, the bill mandates military custody for a certain class of terrorism suspects. And since it would apply to individuals inside the U.S., it would, and this is a quote, "be inconsistent with the fundamental American principle that our military does not patrol our streets."

Well, John Brennan is President Obama's chief counterterrorism adviser, and he joins us from the White House.

Welcome.

JOHN BRENNAN [Deputy National Security Advisor]: Hi, Robert.

SIEGEL: The administration says the detainee provisions here could restrict intelligence professionals from doing their job and restrict the president's ability to fight terrorism. How exactly would it do that?

BRENNAN: Well, in a number of ways. First of all, we don't believe that this legislation is necessary from the standpoint of the language that is included on detainees and military detention. What it calls for is that there'd be required military detention for certain individuals who are determined to be part of al-Qaida, and that would apply whether or not these individuals are captured overseas or, you know, captured, arrested here in the United States.

And so what we've tried to do in this administration is to maintain as much flexibility as possible. And anything that restricts our flexibility in terms of how we want to detain them, question them, prosecute them is something that counterterrorism professionals and practitioners really are very concerned about.

SIEGEL: But is the administration's concern here based on the efficacy of making cases, investigating terrorist suspects? Or is it over the principle that the military doesn't enforce law in the U.S.?

BRENNAN: Well, it's both. One is that it complicates greatly the ability of individuals who capture these individuals or arrest them to make the determinations in the immediate aftermath of that detention, about

how to handle them. And so that puts quite frankly a lot of red tape. And the last thing that we need in government is more red tape.

Secondly, we have, I think, a very strong established track record of dealing successfully with individuals here in the United States who are involved in terrorism-related activities. President Obama, I think, has a record second to none in terms of his willingness and determination to go after these individuals aggressively overseas, but also to deal with them forcefully if they're found here the United States.

SIEGEL: But it seems that part of what you're up against here is some pretty broad public resistance to treating terror plots as common felonies. This is what Republican Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said when he took issue with those who claim that this law violates the prohibition against a military role in law enforcement.

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM (R-SC): This is the central difference between us. I don't believe fighting al-Qaida is a law enforcement function. I believe our military should be deeply involved in fighting these guys at home and abroad.

BRENNAN: Yeah. Well, I don't agree with Senator Graham. I, you know, I think that they are well-intentioned in terms of what they're going to do. But the practitioners who are out there really want to make sure that we're able to deal with these individuals appropriately. They're not considered to be common criminals.

What we want to do is to extract the intelligence from them so that we can keep this country safe. We cannot hamper this effort. It's been successful to date and this legislation really puts that at risk.

SIEGEL: Now, there's criticism from the other side as well. Some civil libertarians are very concerned that this bill would permit a U.S. citizen to be detained indefinitely by the military. In addressing that concern, Senator Carl Levin of Michigan quoted the Hamdi decision, which said that a citizen, no less than an alien, can be part of supporting forces hostile to the U.S., and there is no bar to this nation's holding one of its own citizens as an enemy combatant.

For the administration, is the inclusion of U.S. citizens picked up on U.S. soil at all troubling here?

BRENNAN: It is very troubling in terms of picking up somebody here on U.S. soil. If there are U.S. citizens who are engaged in hostilities on the battlefield abroad, we want to make sure that our military is able to deal with them appropriately. But there also are certain considerations we need to account for in terms of U.S. citizenship.

We are a country that takes very seriously our commitment to the rule of law. When I go overseas and I talk to other governments, talking to them about making sure that they handle their cases appropriately and not throw people into military detention, not throw them into a military court, hold them indefinitely without the due process of law, this is what has caused a lot of problems overseas. And if we go down this road, we're sending a very bad signal.

We need to demonstrate, through the strength of our judicial system, that we can handle these issues, particularly on our soil, in a way that's consistent with our commitment to that rule of law, but also works very effectively in terms of getting the intelligence we need to keep this country safe.

SIEGEL: Senator Dianne Feinstein of California attached an amendment to the bill which says: Nothing in this section shall be construed to affect existing law or authorities relating to the detention of United States citizens, lawful resident aliens of the U.S., or any other persons who are captured or arrested in the United States.

If that language isn't sufficient to satisfy the administration and win the signature of the president, what is? What would be sufficient?

BRENNAN: Well, you know, we've looked at the latest versions of the legislation and it's still insufficient. And the president has made it clear he is not going to sign any piece of legislation that restricts his ability to deal effectively with the terrorist threat we face. And so, there are a number of recommendations that have been put forward to ensure that we are able to continue to prosecute our effort.

You know, Senator Feinstein and others have been, I think, working very strongly to try to get some of this language in there that will protect our citizenship, our liberties and our freedom.

SIEGEL: Well, Mr. Brennan, thank you very much for talking with us today.

BRENNAN: Thank you. Thank you.

SIEGEL: John Brennan, who is deputy national security adviser for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, and assistant to the president. He is President Obama's chief adviser on counterterrorism.

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**International Relations & Economics****Opinion/Editorial/Commentary**

32. New York Times

Sunday, December 11, 2011

**Opinion:****What Latin America Can Teach Us***By Jorge G. Castañeda*

IN a Bertelsmann Foundation study on social justice released this fall, the United States came in dead last among the rich countries, with only Greece, Chile, Mexico and Turkey faring worse. Whether in poverty prevention, child poverty, income inequality or health ratings, the United States ranked below countries like Spain and South Korea, not to mention Japan, Germany or France.

It was another sign of how badly Americans are hurting their middle class. Wars, famine and violence have devastated middle classes before, in Germany and Japan, Russia and Eastern Europe. But when the smoke cleared and the dust settled, a social structure roughly similar to what existed before would always resurface.

No nation has ever lost an existing middle class, and the United States is not in danger of that yet. But the percentage of national income held by the top 1 percent of Americans went from about 10 percent in 1980 to 24 percent in 2007, and that is a worrisome signal.

So before the United States continues on its current road of dismantling its version of the welfare state, of shredding its social safety net, of expanding the gap between rich and poor, Americans might do well to glance south. The lesson is that even after a large middle class emerges, yawning inequities between rich and poor severely strain any society's cohesion and harmony.

If ever a geographical stereotype had some truth to it, it would be that in Latin America, where a handful of immensely wealthy magnates wielded power over a sea of the poor. If there has ever been a social cliché with roots in reality, it would be that a vast middle class was always the backbone of the United States' strength.

The United States has never had the type of robust welfare state that Europeans built after World War II. It didn't need that. Through private initiative and efforts to equalize opportunity, Americans long ago ensured that a huge middle class would provide the social glue to hold their society together.

If that middle class withers, what might America look like? Well, what Latin America used to be, and in some ways still struggles to stop being.

So here are two questions: Does the United States really want to look like what Latin America was? And is there a lesson to be learned from its neighbors to the south - that once inequality becomes entrenched, reversing it becomes incredibly difficult?

Consider, first, some history. From the pre-Columbian era through most of the 20th century, conventional wisdom painted Latin America as the planet's most unequal region, where the extreme poverty of its destitute was matched only by the extreme wealth of its rich.

In fact, this perception began departing from reality some 50 years ago in most of the region, and today it is true for only a few nations: Haiti, Honduras, Bolivia and maybe Nicaragua. By 1970, the larger nations like Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Chile and Peru had all witnessed the emergence of sizable middle classes. Others, like Argentina and Uruguay, had been, for all practical purposes, middle-class societies since at least midcentury (although the Argentines in later decades worked hard at regressing.) But there was always a gulf between those societies and the United States. Until quite recently, the Latin middle classes made up barely one-third of the population, and some of their most prominent members - Che Guevara in Argentina, Fidel Castro in Cuba, Salvador Allende in Chile - made political careers out of the cause of eradicating inequality. That cause was shared by thousands of students, union leaders, academics and middle-of-the-road politicians, who found their own way of life morally intolerable and politically untenable.

After years of frustration and failure, at the end of the 20th century something began to change. And over the last 15 years the trend has become unmistakable. According to one definition of the middle class used in recent research by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the middle class is in the majority in Chile, Brazil, Mexico, Uruguay, Costa Rica and to a lesser extent Colombia. In the 1960s and '70s, even after decades of robust growth, those middle classes were barely at 30 percent; today in Mexico, Brazil and Chile the figures range from 55 to 60 percent.

Yes, it is still a slim and precarious majority, and it is not your mother's middle class - as secure and well-off as in Europe, North America, Japan or South Korea. The Latin middle class still struggles, with living standards far behind those of the local affluent. But a middle class it is nonetheless: with cellphones and used cars; with tiny but well-built homes with every appliance; and with modest but deeply enjoyable holidays at the beach.

Consumer markets have expanded. The World Bank and the O.E.C.D., writers like this one and universities like the Getulio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro have produced reams of data and analysis about the size, depth and lasting power of this middle class. Politicians know they can be elected only if they connect with that class and are doomed when they appeal exclusively to the poor, who, though now a minority, are still too large a share of the population.

So it can be said that much of Latin America has arrived: it is democratic, with a slight but growing majority of its people prosperous, competitive and possessing international ambitions (real, though not always realistic).

But reducing poverty and building broad middle classes do not automatically reduce inequality. The statistical measures of inequality known as Gini coefficients have begun to fall slightly in Latin America, but remain the highest in the world, with the wealthiest 1 percent, 5 percent or 10 percent of the population controlling incredibly high shares of total wealth or income. In Brazil, Chile and Mexico, which together account for nearly 70 percent of the region's G.D.P. and population, the wealthiest 10 percent held an average of 42 percent of national income in 2008-9; the equivalent figure for the United States was 29 percent.

This is why hundreds of thousands of Chilean students have brought their country's government to a virtual standstill this year, even though Chile is the most successful Latin nation by any economic or social standard. It is why Colombia, Brazil and Mexico have murder or kidnapping rates far higher than those of the richer nations, which are, despite their wealth, less unequal.

Indeed, the historic inequalities that linger have produced singular traits of national character, handed down between generations, that must change if these societies are to continue equalizing their wealth and realizing their promise. Brazilian fatalism, Chilean insularity and Mexican individualism are being slowly shed. And that is good; these traits should be jettisoned completely if these societies ever hope to achieve the level of equality for which the United States has been their model.

And yet, as all of this is occurring, the United States - that epitome of the middle-class society, of the egalitarian dream that pulled millions of immigrants away from Latin America - has begun to go Latin American. It is in a process of structural middle-class shrinkage and inequality expansion that has perhaps never occurred anywhere else (again, possibly excepting Argentina).

Americans can object - and in this they have a point - that their society differs from Latin America because there is mobility at the top and the bottom. South of the Rio Grande, the affluent are always the same; in the United States, they vary from generation to generation, often strikingly. This is what gives so many Americans the impression - false as it must be for most - that one day they might reach the top and that those already there will make room for them. But this ability to aspire does not really address the issue of how large the distance is growing between those at the top, middle and bottom; nor does it comfort those in the middle who see their chance of moving up growing ever more slight.

WHICH leads to a question for the United States: why would you allow that to happen, when we in Latin America can show you how difficult it is to achieve the kind of exemplary middle class that you invented in the first place, and that gave you such economic power and social cohesion - at least since the 1920s? Especially when we all know its existence is crucial to preserving some of the best traits of your own national character.

Alexis de Tocqueville made the point nearly two centuries ago. Something in the American character had produced a far more egalitarian society than any in Europe, and something in that society was producing a different, more modern and exciting national character, with room for experimentation, cooperation and acceptance of differences. Americans cannot retain the tolerant, forward-looking and innovative national character they cherish if they give up the egalitarian middle-class configuration that comes with it.

Mexico and other Latin American lands are reshaping our national characters and democratic politics in our quest for a larger and more vibrant middle class, and at last we are having some success. The United States' middle class is coming under increasing pressure as the income gap between it and the very rich widens.

Do Americans really have nothing to learn from us, after we have learned so much from them?

*Jorge G. Castañeda is a professor of politics and Latin American and Caribbean studies at New York University, who served as foreign minister of Mexico from 2000 to 2003.*

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33. The Miami Herald

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

**Commentary:**

## **Latin America may split into Pacific and Atlantic blocs**

*By Andres Oppenheimer*

President Barack Obama's recent announcement that he will seek to create what may be the world's largest trading bloc along the Pacific rim raises an interesting question in this part of the world: whether we will see a de facto split of Latin America into a Pacific bloc and an Atlantic bloc.

It may be already happening. Obama's recent proclamation that "the United States is a Pacific country" and his announcement that Washington will seek to dramatically expand the nine-member Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has shaken world trade negotiations.

International economists agree that it is the biggest thing happening in world trade talks right now.

Under the plan, the TPP — it currently includes, among others, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Vietnam, Chile and Peru — would be expanded to include Japan, the world's third largest economy, as well as Mexico and Canada, and perhaps even South Korea. Japan, Mexico and Canada have announced they are interested in joining the group.

The new Asia-Pacific trading bloc would be the most ambitious of its kind, since it would eliminate customs duties and set common standards for investments, labor and environmental regulations.

Although they will not say it publicly, in addition to enhancing trade, the United States wants to counter-balance China's growing economic weight in Asia, and Mexico wants to offset Brazil's clout in Latin America.

In Latin America, four Pacific rim countries — Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Chile — have already agreed to start their own sub-regional group aimed at taking advantage of the new Asia-Pacific trade opportunities.

At a Dec. 5 summit in Merida, Mexico, the four countries — plus Panama, which participated as an observer — agreed to officially launch their trade bloc, known as the Alliance of the Pacific, on June 4, 2012, in Chile.

Members of the Alliance pledged to combine their stock exchanges, and set a gradual timetable for the total elimination of tariffs of goods and services by 2020 or 2025.

Mexico's economy secretary Bruno Ferrari told me in a telephone interview that "we are entering an era of trade blocs" that will replace the era of bilateral free trade agreements. Countries either team up with others to create supply chains that produce goods more competitively, or risk being left behind, he said. "When Mexico signed its first free trade agreement a few decades ago, there were 40 free trade agreements in the world. Today, there are 290," Ferrari told me. "This means that we are seeing an erosion of the free trade agreements' importance, since you are competing with more countries that enjoy your same customs preferences."

Ferrari added, "With no doubt, TTP is the most important trade agreement in the works today in the world. It is therefore paramount that Mexico be part of it."

In a separate interview, Colombian Trade Minister Sergio Diaz-Granados told me that one of the central goals of the Alliance, in addition to facilitating intra-regional trade, will be "to increase Latin America's participation in the Asia-Pacific rim, which will be the most dynamic economic zone in the next 20 years."

My opinion: Ideally, Latin American countries should seek to create a single trading bloc from Mexico to Argentina. According to a recent Inter-American Development Bank study, intra-regional trade in Latin America is a pitiful 20 percent of the region's total trade, compared with 46 percent in Asia and 67 percent in Europe.

But there are no signs of that happening. The Dec. 3 summit in Caracas, Venezuela, that created the Community of Latin American and Caribbean Nations (CELAC) was filled with poetic speeches about regional unity, but did not include any concrete measures to speed up economic integration. In fact, economy ministers didn't even participate.

In 2012, we are likely to see a further consolidation of the Chile-Peru-Colombia-Mexico bloc, with the possible future addition of Central American countries, all of which have free trade deals with the United States and want to insert themselves further into the emerging TPP.

On the other hand, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Venezuela, which in recent years have benefitted from record commodity export prices, are likely to continue exporting their raw materials to China and India, and in Venezuela's case to the United States, without feeling much urgency to join larger trading blocs.

I hope I'm wrong about this, but despite all the talk about Latin America's integration in recent weeks, we may soon see a Latin America of the Pacific, and a Latin America of the Atlantic.

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34. **Miami Herald**

December 10, 2011

**Opinion:**

## **The Tehran, Havana, Caracas Axis In Latin America**

*By Jose Azel*

The International Atomic Energy Agency warns, in its recent report, that Iran appears to have conducted advanced research on a miniaturized warhead that could be delivered by medium range missiles. The implications for U.S. foreign policy extend beyond the Middle East.

Iran is an increasingly important politico-economic player in Latin America. Its influence transcends geography, language, culture and religion. At the heart of this growing Iranian influence is a peculiar trilateral political configuration with Cuba and Venezuela. The basis of this eccentric alignment is not East-West political philosophy, or a coalition based on congruent economic models, or North-South ideological affinity.

Even more perplexing, it is a strategic alliance that transcends profound theological differences. What, then, brings together Fidel Castro, a Marxist-Leninist atheist; Hugo Chávez, a putative socialist Christian; and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a product of Islamic fundamentalism? What allows the Iranian theocracy, so removed from Latin America by ethnicity, customs and values, to play an increasingly influential role in this hemisphere?

If we answer these questions in terms of the growing economic ties among these countries, and there are many, licit as well as illicit and covert, we would be basing our analysis on strict Western economic rationality. We mistakenly would be extrapolating our logical model to Castro, Chávez and Ahmadinejad. A second analytical mistake is to scrutinize Iran's influence in discrete country-by-country terms rather than in terms of the synergies and symbiosis of the Tehran-Havana-Caracas alliance.

We would further compound our error if we formulate U.S. foreign policy in similarly disconnected terms. As world events have repeatedly demonstrated, we eventually gain the Socratic insight that we know very little of the logical reasoning models of autocratic leaders like Ahmadinejad, Castro and Chávez. Although it may seem that way to us, these countries do not pursue an irrational foreign policy. The analytical challenge for the United States is how to understand, in our cultural and analytical milieu, actions arising in another.

In the case of Iran, Cuba and Venezuela, the unifying point seems to be virulent hostility toward the United States, liberal democracy and market economies. In other words, the Ahmadinejad-Castro-Chávez nexus is fundamentally an anti-American political alignment. As such, it follows its own logic and rules of engagement. Recall, for example, that in 1979, with the victory of the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Fidel Castro abandoned his support of the communist Iranian People's Party (IPP) and embraced Ayatollah Khomeini's theocratic anti-communist regime. In Castro's logic the Ayatollah's anti-Americanism trumped his anti-communist ideology.

The growing Iranian influence in Latin America, together with its Cuban and Venezuelan connections, should be understood in this context of an anti-American alliance determined, above all other considerations, to undermine U.S. national interests.

For example, Cuba and Venezuela have become the most strident defenders of Iran's nuclear ambitions and the three countries have formed a strategic partnership to evade U.N. and U.S. economic sanctions. Cuba's sophisticated intelligence and counter intelligence capabilities are reportedly shared with Iran and Venezuela. Moreover, the triumvirates' influence has expanded now to include Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua.

Increasingly, the Tehran, Havana, Caracas bloc speaks with a unified anti-American voice in a concerted effort to undermine U.S. influence by any means at its disposal. The geopolitical alignment of Tehran, Havana and Caracas, if it can be described as ideological at all, is based on an ideology of hate towards the United States and democratic governing principles.

Often, the formulation of U.S. foreign policy is imbued with inherent tensions between policies anchored on our democratic principles and policies based on our national interests. In this case, a rare congruence exists for clarity of purpose in a coordinated U.S. foreign policy that blends our support of democratic values and human rights in Iran, Cuba and Venezuela with our national security concerns.

*José Azel is a senior scholar at the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, University of Miami. He is the author of "Mañana in Cuba: The Legacy of Castroism and Transitional Challenges for Cuba."*

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## Southern Cone

### Argentina

35. Associated Press

Sunday, December 11, 2011

## **Argentina's Cristina Fernandez Sworn In 2nd Time**

*By Almudena Calatrava and Debora Rey*

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) - Argentine President Cristina Fernandez took the oath of office for the second time Saturday, the only female leader in Latin America to ever be re-elected, in an inauguration marked by a tearful tribute to her late husband and political partner.

Fernandez, 58, held back tears as she pledged before Congress and a gathering of foreign dignitaries to honor the constitution and the memory of the late President Nestor Kirchner.

"I swear to God, the country and the blessed saints to carry out the office of the president and to honor ... the Argentine constitution," said Fernandez, who wore a black dress with a wide belt and sleeves of transparent lace - mourning garb of the kind she has used since Kirchner's death in October 2010.

"If I don't, then let God, the country and him take me to task for it," the president added, her voice cracking with emotion as she referred to Kirchner.

After accepting the wooden presidential baton decorated with a gold-and-silver version of Argentina's national shield, Fernandez remarked, "This is not an easy day. ... Despite the joy, there is something and someone missing."

The president entered the House of Deputies accompanied by her children, Maximo and Florencia, and received the baton from Florencia.

Fernandez summarized a litany of accomplishments during her first term, including policies that have led to the resumption of trials for former officials accused of rights violations during the country's last military dictatorship, which lasted from 1976 to 1983.

She said that she hopes by the time she leaves office in 2015 the country "will have closed the book" on dictatorship-era human rights violations.

The president won re-election last month with the biggest vote share since President Juan Peron captured 62 percent of ballots in 1973. Her closest rival, Santa Fe Gov. Hermes Binner, came in 37 percentage points behind.

The bulk of her support comes from the working classes, who have received pay and pension increases as well as more public aid under her government.

She's also continued evoking the legacy of her late husband, whose death sparked enormous public sympathy at a time when her presidency had been losing support.

At the same time, Argentina's 40 million people are facing economic uncertainty, and the big question for Fernandez is whether to continue the government spending and price controls that worked so well in her first term.

Cutting public spending to prepare Argentina for a dicier economic climate could bring political harm, so the president is expected to try to strengthen the economy without cutting social programs dear to her base.

Fernandez and outgoing Economy Minister Amado Boudou, who assumed the office of vice president, took their oaths before outgoing Vice President Julio Cobos, who has distanced himself from Fernandez over the past two years. Government officials had questioned whether Cobos would show up.

Foreign dignitaries attending the inauguration included female Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff; the presidents of Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Uruguay; U.S. Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, and President Barack Obama's senior adviser on Latin America, Daniel Restrepo.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez had planned to attend, but canceled at the last minute, citing the need to attend to the needs of citizens in his own country who had been affected by heavy rains that led to flooding and mudslides and claimed the lives of at least eight people.

The 57-year-old president had a cancerous tumor removed from his pelvic region in June and underwent four rounds of chemotherapy. He has said that he is now cancer-free. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro attended the inauguration in his place.

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36. AFP

Sunday, December 11, 2011

## Argentina's Kirchner Sworn In For Second Term

By Oscar Laski

Argentine President Cristina Kirchner was sworn in Saturday to a second four-year term at the peak of her popularity but with the country's booming economy shadowed by Europe's financial crisis.

The 58-year-old took the oath of office, invoking her late husband and predecessor Nestor Kirchner, and then received the presidential sash from her daughter Florencia amid cheers and applause in Congress. "Today, as you can imagine, is not an easy day for this president," said Kirchner, recalling that at her first inauguration in 2007, she received the sash of office from her husband, who died of a heart attack in October 2010.

Outside Congress, thousands of young Argentine followers watching the ceremony on a giant screen shouted "Cristina, Cristina." Similar chants broke out inside Congress as well from supporters in her Peronist party.

Still in mourning, Kirchner wore black to the swearing-in and ended the oath of office with a reference to her husband, declaring "May God, country and he hold me to account."

In the first speech of her new term she outlined her plans to Congress, sticking to policies of support for domestic industries and consumer spending despite the storm clouds over Europe.

"This situation in Europe is the mirror image of that of Argentina in 2001," she said, referring to the near collapse of the Argentine economy amid a crisis that led it to default on more than \$100 billion in debt. Nestor Kirchner, who assumed office in 2003, is credited with rescuing Argentina by breaking with the International Monetary Fund, restructuring the debt and promoting spending.

Argentina's experience, "which thrust us before the world like the worst in the class, (is what) other countries are facing today," his widow said Saturday.

Kirchner was re-elected October 23 with 54 percent of the vote, a single round landslide that buried her nearest competitors and won her back control of Congress.

The win, a year after her husband's sudden death, was powered by a slew of popular social programs and years of strong, virtually uninterrupted economic growth.

She stressed that Argentina's recent gains "would not have been possible if we had not shifted our economy and our outlook: we returned home to our continent, to South America, because we know that regional integration is one of the best defenses against a difficult world."

The presidents of Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay and Bolivia attended the swearing-in ceremony. Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, Colombia's Juan Manuel Santos and Peru's Ollanta Humala canceled their trips at the last minute.

Kirchner "begins her mandate politically stronger than in 2007 but with a more complex economic outlook. The global crisis is a threat here as it is everywhere else," said Rosendo Fraga of the Nueva Mayoria institute.

Under the Kirchners, Argentina has had a stretch of good years with growth averaging an enviable eight percent annually between 2003 and 2008. Last year saw 9.2 percent growth.

The outgoing vice minister of the economy, Roberto Feletti, forecast "prudent" growth next year of 5.1 percent. But fears of recession in Europe and slowing growth elsewhere will pose challenges for Argentina.

The government has slashed costly energy and transport subsidies, while taking draconian measures to slow capital flight, which has put a dent in Argentina's foreign reserves.

Economists estimate capital flight has neared \$68 billion over the past four years, including \$22 billion this year alone.

Kirchner's new vice president is Amado Boudou, her former economy minister. In a show of confidence in her inner circle, she changed just three of 20 cabinet members, including new cabinet chief Juan Manuel Abal Medina and new Economy Minister Hernan Lorenzino, who was finance secretary. The opposition, which suffered a major defeat in the elections, is hoping Kirchner will be open to dialogue in the new term.

"I am optimistic and I hope we can face, all of us together, the challenges of the global crisis," said Ricardo Alfonsin, who ran for president as the candidate of the Radical Civic Union, which came in third with 11.7 percent of the vote.

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## **Brazil**

37. The Associated Press

Sun, Dec. 11, 2011

### **Voters in Brazil reject Para state's partition**

Voters in a northern Brazilian state have rejected a proposal that would have broken it into three new states.

Brazilian electoral officials say that with more than three-fourths of ballots counted Sunday night, about 67 percent of the votes are against dividing Para state.

They say it's mathematically impossible for the measure to pass. The results were expected.

The state in the Amazon region is approximately the size of Peru. It's the wealthiest and most populous of northern Brazil.

Proponents of the division argued that the interests of people living far from the state capital aren't well represented. Opponents said creating two more state governments would be too costly.

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38. The Associated Press

Dec. 11, 2011

### **Brazil: 50 tons of corn stolen from moving train**

RIO DE JANEIRO -- Police in Brazil's southeastern Sao Paulo state are investigating the theft of 50 metric tons (55 U.S. tons) of corn from a moving train.

A police report says the thieves greased the train tracks, making the wheels of the 54-wagon locomotive skid and slow down before they used a tow truck with a hook to remove the corn-filled containers.

The report says the theft occurred as the train traveled through a rural area about 180 miles (300 kilometers) north of the capital. The train was headed to the southeastern port of Santos with 60 metric tons (66 U.S. tons) of corn and sugar.

The case is reminiscent of Wild West robberies, where bandits on horses stole from moving trains.

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39. The Wall Street Journal

December 10, 2011

### **New Pockets of Influence Emerge in Brazil**

*By Paulo Prada*

BELÉM, Brazil—João Salame, a state lawmaker in the northern Brazilian state of Pará, has an unusual pitch for his constituents: Let's split our state into three. Voters will get their say in a widely watched state referendum on Sunday.

Pará is bigger than California and Texas combined—a vast state of Amazon rainforest, cattle ranches and mines that is as lawless as America's Old West in many parts.

Proponents of splitting Pará into smaller pieces argue that a government based closer to home can better solve local problems. Some towns in the state sit 700 miles away from Belém, its capital at the mouth of the Amazon.

Opponents of the move say new states would also mean new costs, starting with the need to create and pay for legislative, executive, and judicial bureaucracies. That alone might cost billions of dollars a year, causing both new states to be born with big budget deficits, according to one recent study.

Right now, polls suggest at least 60% of the state's voters want to keep the state together and just 30% want the proposed new states, tentatively called Carajás and Tapajós.

Nonetheless, the plebiscite is being watched as a sign of new pockets of power emerging in Latin America's biggest economy. As soaring exports from commodity-rich regions empower long-neglected swaths of the country, economic growth is beginning to reorder the rules that have long governed Brazil, giving voice to remote, but fast-growing electorates.

In addition to the vote in Pará, at least a dozen other proposals for new states are in various stages of discussion in a country with 26 states on total land area slightly bigger than the contiguous U.S. Most of the proposals are in regions where inroads by agriculture, mining and other industries are forging new economic frontiers.

"There are entire parts of the country that are just now getting developed, just beginning to grow, and just beginning to struggle with the needs of real government," says Valeriano Costa, a political scientist and expert on federalism at the State University of Campinas, near São Paulo.

Brazil's boom has allowed Belém and big landowners to prosper, but poverty, violence, deforestation and other ills are flourishing in far-flung corners of the state where there is little, if any, government presence—let alone the security, public services and infrastructure necessary for true prosperity to take root.

"A few people are getting rich, but everyone else is struggling from a lack of authority, investment, and interest," says Mr. Salame, the state assemblyman and leader of one of the campaigns in favor of the division. Like many from rural Pará, he believes Belém is too far removed from places like Itupiranga, a southern town of 40,000 that ranks atop Brazil's per capita murder list.

The pressure is greatest in the hinterlands of Brazil's immense center and north, long governed as mere outposts of a national government beholden to southeastern hubs like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, which together account for more than a third of the country's economy.

From the farm belt that blossomed across the central savannah in recent decades to mineral-rich pockets of the Amazon, other regions are increasingly contributing to Brazil's natural-resource-fueled prosperity and as such are demanding changes to the way the country manages its growing wealth. Local governments, for instance, are pushing a pending mining reform that could nearly double the royalties, to as much as 4%, levied on valuable minerals like iron ore. Inland states, meanwhile, have slowed development of Brazil's massive new offshore oil discoveries, wrangling for a greater share of the profits when the beds begin to produce.

Pará is a good example of how the boom has created new social and political pressures.

Covering much of Brazil's eastern Amazon, Pará for centuries was a no-man's land of dense, little-known jungle. The exception was Belém, which prospered as a shipping hub for regional produce like cacao, vanilla, rubber and Brazil nuts, known in Brazil as castanhas do Pará.

The rest of Pará, however, saw little development until Brazil's military dictatorship, in power for two decades until 1985, tried to settle the Amazon, cutting roads through the jungle and encouraging poor migrants to move there.

Its rich resources, from iron ore to gold to lumber, quickly became apparent. As migrants poured into Pará, wildcat loggers and ranchers fanned out through the jungle, causing rampant deforestation, bloody conflicts over land and resources and slave-like labor conditions for some workers.

By the time commodity prices began to soar last decade, millions of new residents had settled in once-remote parts of Pará, exacerbating the problems. Pará's population from 2000 to 2010 soared by 22%, compared with 12% for Brazil as a whole.

But state investment in those regions hasn't kept up, causing a dearth of public services for the swelling population.

A "Violence Map" compiled by the Justice Ministry shows the state has eight of the country's 30 most murderous towns. An Education Ministry ranking puts Pará dead last in terms of education quality nationwide. A study by the Pastoral Land Commission, which tracks conflicts in rural Brazil, found Pará led the country last year in reported incidents of slave labor.

Making matters worse, Pará distributes its money unevenly, greatly favoring the state capital and the surrounding region that is home to about half of the state's 7.6 million residents.

Last year, the state spent about 9.3 billion reais (\$5.17 billion) in the area on health, education, transportation, security, and courts, according to government figures. The rest of the state only received about 1.3 billion reais.

"Belém is a city state," says Josenir Nascimento, executive secretary of an association of towns in southern Pará. "It always turned its back on the rest of us."

The region of Carajás, one of the would-be states in the south, has one policeman for every 776 residents, compared with one for every 207 in Belém.

"Where are the doctors, the police, the roads?" asks João Hiran, a lumber dealer who moved to southern Pará from the northeastern state of Maranhão a decade ago.

Opponents of division say Pará's problems lie in federal laws that sap its resources, but provide few profits in return. Home to the world's largest iron-ore mine and 17 million head of cattle, Pará helps make Brazil the world's largest exporter of both. Along with sales of soybeans, lumber and other products, Pará's exports gave the state a trade surplus of nearly \$12 billion in 2010.

Pará earns little from those exports, however, because a federal law exempts export-bound raw materials from state taxes. To make up for the exemption, Brazil's government pays an annual "compensation" back to the state, but the payment is a fraction of what Pará would collect without the law—260 million reais last year (\$145 million), compared with 1.5 billion in missed taxes.

For many in Belém, the newcomers' complaints in rural parts of the state are also unfair. Long-term development, after all, takes longer than migration.

"This is like inviting someone into your home, feeding them, and then watching them wall off a part of the house and say this over here is mine," says Sérgio Bitar, president of the state merchants' association and a leader of the campaign against the new states.

Mr. Salame, the state representative campaigning for the division, says newcomers have just as much right as anyone else to seek better government. For the past month, he has visited over 30 towns in northern Pará in efforts to swing "no" voters around to the views held by many outside Belém.

"Those who would vote no have had centuries to make Pará work," he told a crowd of 260 people at a social club outside the capital in late November. "Pará is a giant, yes, but it's a giant failure."

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## Features

40. Associated Press

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

### **Century-old Afro-Brazilian religion under threat**

*By Juliana Barbassa*

Rosa Cardoso has practiced the Afro-Brazilian religion of Umbanda almost all of her 89 years, yet she hasn't stopped hiding her faith from the rest of the world.

The door to the temple she runs in a middle-class neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro sits behind a plain, dilapidated door and has no sign out front announcing its presence. Inside, worshippers pay homage to images of African-descended gods, the Orixas, but the figures are stored discreetly behind a wooden lattice beneath an altar adorned with a nearly life-sized image of Jesus flanked by St. Barbara and the Virgin Mary.

Although an estimated 400,000 Brazilians such as Cardoso follow the religion, they also continue to face prejudices that clash with the country's public image of racial and religious harmony.

Intolerance and outright hostility against Umbanda, as well as Brazil's other major African-descended religion Candomble, have recently returned to the spotlight as religious-freedom activists denounce the demolition of a house known as Umbanda's birthplace.

At the same time, the owner of another Umbanda temple in the same city, Sao Goncalo, across the bay from Rio, is fighting an eminent domain order to turn his house into a sports center.

Cardoso said she's learned not to let down her guard when it comes to protecting herself from religious scorn. This country of 190 million remains predominantly Roman Catholic, even as Pentecostal congregations have won over legions of converts.

Many in Rio can rattle off the names of a few Orixas, and thousands of believers and sympathizers flock to beaches on New Year's dressed in white to leave offerings for the ocean goddess Iemanjá.

Nonetheless, many Brazilians often view Umbanda and Candomble as barely benign versions of witchcraft, and believers are loath to acknowledge publicly they follow the faiths. In many parts of the country, practicing Umbanda was outlawed until the 1950s, and in the following three decades believers were supposed to register with the police.

"We used to have to hide in the woods to do our ceremonies," Cardoso said one night, as an Umbanda ceremony full of drums, dancing and bodily possessions got under way. Even now, Cardoso doesn't open her house to strangers without a thorough vetting.

Umbanda was founded a little more than a century ago, drawing from older traditions such as Catholicism, the beliefs of enslaved Yoruba people brought from West Africa, the spirituality of Brazil's indigenous groups and the teachings of 19th century French spiritualist Allan Kardec.

The religion has many variations, but all share belief in a supreme being, Oxala, and in a pantheon of other African-origin deities, many of whom are identified with a Catholic saint and with natural forces or elements. They also believe these deities, along with other spirits, can enter the body of psychics to advise and interact with the living.

A city survey in 2011 found 847 Umbanda houses of worship in Rio, though like Cardoso's they're often not easy to spot.

On a recent night at Cardoso's house, a young woman in a long white dress stepped into a six-pointed star painted in the center of the room, calm despite the fast-beating drums, the chanting and the thick incense smoke around her.

Suddenly, she crumpled to the floor. When she stood up again, she had the deeply bowed back of the very old. Her fingers and toes curled as with arthritis, and her face was drawn, mouth puckered, eyes squinting. Her voice cracked as she shuffled around the room, blessing each of the ceremony's participants.

It was the beginning of the night of the "pretos velhos," or the old black men. Soon, all the "sons" and "daughters" of the house were incorporating, according to their belief, the spirits of wise old black ancestors, and later offering one-on-one advice to the dozens of followers attending the ceremony.

Brazil's post-dictatorship 1989 constitution enshrined the freedom to hold such ceremonies, but Umbanda's followers say official disdain and intense prejudice still put their lives and shrines at risk. According to police reports, followers of Afro-Brazilian religions report on average 100 cases of physical or verbal attacks a year because of their faith, in the state of Rio de Janeiro alone.

Another report, which was submitted to the U.N. Human Rights Council by a Brazilian religious-freedom group, details 39 cases of discrimination around the country in 2009. Cases range from a bank's refusal in Minas Gerais state to give an Afro-Brazilian religious association an account to the partial destruction of a Candomble temple in Bahia state. The two cases, from 2008, are still being investigated.

"Umbanda has suffered a lot of pressure from other religions, as well as from the state and from police," said Fernando Altemeyer, a theologian at the Catholic University of Sao Paulo. "It has these elements from Catholicism, but isn't Catholic; from spiritualism, without following exactly Kardec's beliefs. So no one recognizes it as their own."

Cases of persecution against Umbanda and Candomble have increased along with the presence and the power of Pentecostal religions, Altemeyer said.

"There is always a discourse of 'taking them from the hands of the devil,' converting them," Altemeyer said. "Evangelical actions on this front are very significant."

Such tensions have come into relief in Sao Goncalo, where Mayor Aparecida Panniset, an outspoken Pentecostal, has been accused of failing to protect Umbanda sites, or even destroying them.

In October, she ignored pleas by religious tolerance activists to stop the demolition of the house where the first Umbanda rituals were held in 1908. She also turned down requests to meet the activists, they said.

Panniset then moved ahead with efforts to raze another traditional Umbanda house in the same city. Tractors have started to level the land and a fence was built around the property with signs announcing a sports center's arrival, although Sao Goncalo has not been granted rights to build it and the case is pending in court.

The mayor didn't respond to several calls and emails from The Associated Press requesting comment. Documents filed in court by the city do not mention a temple on the land, or the owners' home. Instead it refers to unspecified buildings "in poor state of preservation" and "illegal occupations," and says the area has little value as real estate. Owner Cristiano Ramos said no city officials ever inspected the property. "Ever since slavery, we've been used to taking beatings and keeping quiet to survive," Ramos said. "But that doesn't mean we're not going to resist. We've been here all these centuries, and we're going to continue."

Ramos inherited the house from his father, also an Umbanda priest who in 1947 incorporated the spirit of an indigenous deity, the Indian with a Golden Feather, that gives the 40-year-old temple its name. The Commission Against Religious Intolerance, a Rio-based nonprofit, is still fighting to build a museum of Umbanda on the site of the religion's first house of worship. The Sao Goncalo city council announced Thursday it will seek to declare the property a protected historical site and will examine the plan to build a museum on the spot.

"Building the museum is one way to repair and minimize the damage done in October, when the house that was the birthplace of Umbanda was torn down," said council member Amarildo Aguiar in a statement.

Ramos said he wants to see the museum built, but at the same time, he said Umbanda should remain a living faith. And he said that means protecting the houses where this most Brazilian of faiths lives on.

"I'm not ready to turn into an exhibit," Ramos said. "My house is an active house. We've been here, living in our faith with our Orixas, and respecting others. We're going to ask for that respect back."

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41. **Associated Press**

Sat, Dec. 10, 2011

## **Saving the Amazon, from forest floor up**

*By Bradley Brooks*

Just three years ago, the manmade fires here were so fierce smoke would blot out the Amazon sky, turning the days dark. Towering rainforest trees exploded in flames, their canopies cleared to let pasture grow for cattle.

The ash that snowed down onto this jungle town was shin-deep. Dirty layers hid red-hot timber chunks, glowing coals that burned the bare feet of children walking through the cinder drifts.

Paragominas was losing forest faster than nearly any other place in the Amazon.

Today, the town has risen from those ashes to become a pioneering "Green City," a model of sustainability with a new economic approach that has seen illegal deforestation virtually halted. Experts say the metamorphosis is the best hope for showing the 25 million people who live in the Amazon that the forest is worth more alive than dead.

The transformation came after Brazil cracked down on 36 counties responsible for the worst deforestation in the Amazon. A resulting economic embargo left the town with two options. It could fight against change, or it could embrace a new path and promote development with minimal harm to the environment.

Mayor Adnan Demachki is the unlikely environmental warrior driving the change, a plump 46-year-old bespectacled lawyer who grew up here, and was mayor when his town was one of the worst deforesters. "Our city was on the government's 'black list,'" Demachki said. "There was no way out other than the new path we had chosen."

His "Green City" plan aims to halt all illegal deforestation through a mix of enforcement, the creation of the Amazon's only local environmental police force, and promotion of an economy that doesn't rely on clearing jungle. Instead, the focus is on sustainable development - using managed forestry for a wood industry, and introducing modern farming techniques to increase production while using less land.

In the past year Demachki's success has earned him high praise from environmental authorities that once harshly criticized his town. He's been featured on Brazil's biggest TV news programs and traveled around the country to spread the gospel of his Green City.

"Paragominas is an example of how to successfully overcome deforestation and begin the transition to an economy that conserves the forest," said Mauro Pires, head of the Environment Ministry's department that fights Amazon destruction. "They changed their stance and followed their leaders down an alternative path, one that coexists with the forest."

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The Amazon rainforest is arguably the biggest natural defense against global warming, acting as a giant absorber of carbon dioxide.

As it's cut, the world not only loses this defense, but the destruction itself adds to the problem. About 75 percent of Brazil's emissions come from rainforest clearing, as vegetation burns and felled trees rot. That releases an estimated 400 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year, making Brazil at least the sixth biggest emitter of the gas.

Nearly 20 percent of Brazil's Amazon has been cleared.

The destruction began in force five decades ago, when Brazil's government gave away free land to those who agreed to clear 50 percent of their plot, and incentives didn't end until the 1990s. Endless waves of migrants followed, carving a livelihood out of the jungle. Wood cutters, ranchers and grain farmers chewed up virgin jungle along the Amazon's southern border, a yawning 2,600-mile upside-down arc stretching between Brazil's western and eastern borders, the distance between New York and San Francisco.

The global economy's growing demand for hardwood timber, soy and beef pushed deforestation into overdrive, hitting a peak in 1995 when 11,220 square miles (29,060 square kilometers) were razed. The vast majority of the deforestation was against the law. But less than 5 percent of the land is deeded, and enforcing environmental laws is difficult when authorities cannot prove who owns it.

The Amazon is the size of the U.S. west of the Mississippi River, and much of it is wild, ruled by the gun in the absence of governmental and legal institutions. More than 1,150 rural activists have been murdered in the last 20 years by gunmen hired by loggers to silence voices decrying illegal cutting. Only a handful of those responsible are in jail.

Its massive expanses and wild nature make it impossible to uniformly enforce environmental laws. Under pressure from the nation's agricultural lobby, Brazil's Senate passed a bill last week that would loosen those laws. The bill is expected to pass both houses within weeks.

The Paragominas experiment is significant, experts say, because it shows it's possible to convince people at the local level that saving the forest is in their best interest.

In 2008 the Brazilian government for the first time set a concrete goal to decelerate rainforest destruction, aiming to reduce it to 1,900 square miles (5,000 square kilometers) by 2017. Armed field agents targeted Paragominas and others on a blacklist of 36 counties, handing out massive fines, confiscating cattle herds and shutting sawmills.

In Paragominas, home to about 100,000 people, federal agents closed nearly 300 illegal sawmills. The town lost 2,300 jobs within a year and the federal government cut off agricultural credits.

Paragominas leaders knew they had to change. So they took an unheard-of leap of faith in the Amazon: they asked the very environmental groups that had been castigating them to help them go green.

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The strategy was both revolutionary and simple.

In a reversal of the slash-and-burn mentality that had long ruled the Amazon, landowners would turn to basic conservation and agricultural methods that had been used in the U.S. since the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. They would rotate crops to keep land fertile, avoid overgrazing pasture, stop cutting native jungle and instead plant trees to use for wood products.

In short, people were forced to follow environmental laws to produce beef, grains and wood products instead of relying on illegal deforestation.

By doing so, the economic model shifts - from illegal to legal. The fate of the Amazon rests on the difference between the two.

Demachki turned to the president of the local rural producers union to help sell the switch. Mauro Lucio Costa holds a post that across the Amazon is almost uniformly filled by people who view environmentalists as the sworn enemy, with the federal government not much better.

It didn't take much persuading.

Costa is a big man with a big presence, in his signature sand-colored cowboy hat and oversized belt buckle. He has a booming voice and the rough hands of a man who has run cattle his whole life, like his father and grandfather before him.

Costa knew that ranching was responsible for more rainforest destruction than any other activity. As pasture degrades, ranchers create new grazing land by clearing forest and throwing out grass seed. He also knew the most important way to change the game was to stop demonizing ranchers and make them part of the solution.

"To talk of the Amazon without remembering those of us living here is to speak of utopia, it's fantasy," Costa said. "You want sustainability, you speak of untouched forest, but if you do so without giving people a livelihood, you have no chance at succeeding."

Together, the men reassured the farmers and ranchers in the vast county that the Green City project would allow them to thrive without cutting down more forest.

The first step was the signing of their Green City pact with leaders from all segments of society, formally agreeing to support the goal of eradicating illegal deforestation.

The leaders then sought a partnership with the U.S.-based environmental group, The Nature Conservancy, which had the expertise and know-how to execute the plan.

The Conservancy staff used satellite imagery to delineate the county's farms and get landowners legally deeded. They told landowners what percent of their land still had standing forest and how much they needed to replant. They taught ranchers and farmers best practices to draw more from the land.

It was the enforcement piece that nearly derailed the Green City plan.

On a Sunday morning in 2008, just four months into the new experiment, a mob gathered outside the environmental agents' office, where 15 trucks holding massive towers of illegally cut trees were lined outside, confiscated hours before. Fueled by rage and sugarcane liquor, the crowd torched the office and broke into the trucks to hot-wire and reclaim them.

The mob then moved toward Hotel Indiana, bent on lynching the federal agents behind the crackdown and its aftermath: the lost sawmills, the lost timber, the lost jobs.

"It was our lowest moment," Demachki said. "It seemed as if citizens wanted to go backward, to retreat from our project."

Police eventually broke up the mob and the mayor spent hours on the phone, calling the city leaders who had signed the Green City pledge, demanding they meet him at City Hall the next morning.

There, he held up two sheets of paper.

One was an apology addressed to the Brazilian nation that he would personally deliver to the Environment Ministry in Brasilia if all those gathered signed it, redoubling the promise to push ahead as the only Amazon city to meet its goal of zero rainforest destruction by 2014.

If they wouldn't sign it, he offered another option: His resignation, which would end the project and any chance that it might spread.

They voted for the Amazon.

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Four days later, Brazil's environment minister flew to the town at Demachki's invitation and personally shut down two illegal sawmills whose owners were spotted at the arson. After that, getting buy-in from Paragominas residents was easier.

Costa, Demachki's partner in the Green City plan, is philosophical about the rebellion.

"The Amazon is a paradise for those who live in New York, Paris, Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paulo. But it's a hell for those who live within it," he said. "It's hard to say to a poor man living in the Amazon 'that tree is beautiful, it's a wonder of nature' and then have him go home to children crying because they're hungry." Desperation leaves people susceptible to illegal woodcutters who will pay for a poor man's tree. Knowing that, Demachki added yet another enforcement arm to his arsenal of tools: the Amazon's first environmental police.

These days, Imazon, an environmental watchdog agency, uses satellite images to spot any new deforestation and passes the information over to the town's new environmental cops, headed by Felipe Zagalo. He investigates the claim, hands out fines and reports it to federal officials. The fact he's a longtime resident of Paragominas and knows the people he is confronting makes his job easier.

"More often than not, when I confront a landowner about an infraction, I'm met with an apology," Zagalo said. "They know what they've done is wrong. They also know there is no place to hide anymore."

Paulo Amaral, a senior researcher at Imazon who has studied the Amazon for 20 years, is convinced the tide is turning. This week, the Brazilian government announced that the latest annual deforestation statistics were the lowest since they began tracking it in 1988.

"This is the best model we've found yet, making the fight against deforestation a local issue," he said.

"It's the lasting answer for stopping the destruction."

Paragominas was the first city to be removed from the federal government's "blacklist" of deforesting counties. In March, Paragominas became the model for a statewide Green City program, with about 90 counties signed up so far.

Jungle destruction in Paragominas hit 64 square miles in 2008, according to Imazon. That fell to 1.2 square miles last year, an unprecedented drop that helped the city win the Chico Mendes prize, Brazil's most prestigious environmental award.

The town has recouped all the jobs it lost and added new ones, in large part by promoting a wood industry that relies on managed forestry.

The question these days is whether the project can be replicated. Some think Paragominas is an anomaly, a place that saw the perfect combination of extreme pressure from the federal government and local leaders willing to make a radical change.

Amaral hopes the results in Paragominas can persuade others that working with environmental groups is the best way forward.

"We can now show people that this model works in the real world. Before, it was just theoretical," he said. "Other cities in Para are seeing that Paragominas is benefiting from battling deforestation, that they are thriving by working within the law."

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## Other Items

### Military Affairs

42. Army Times

December 19, 2011, Pg. 10

#### **As Enlisted Ranks Shrink, Brass Adds Top Officers**

##### ***Gates' initiative to cut admirals, generals slow to kick in***

*By Andrew Tilghman*

Cutting the ranks of the Pentagon's top brass is proving to be a challenge.

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates sent shock waves through the Pentagon in March when he announced plans to eliminate 102 general and flag officer positions from the force. He specifically targeted 17 jobs for elimination between March and September.

Yet the number of top-level officers has actually increased since then, continuing a long-standing trend often referred to as "brass creep." The Pentagon added six general and flag officers between March and September, raising the total to 970, up from 964, according to Defense Department data.

Meanwhile, the number of enlisted troops has fallen by more than 14,000, as a planned draw-down of troops continued and the total force shrank to about 1.17 million enlisted service members.

"I don't know who these guys are commanding and why we need more people at the top if we have fewer at the bottom," said Ben Freeman, a national security expert at the Project on Government Oversight, who first identified the trend in a POGO report.

The number of general and flag officer positions has increased overall about 11 percent since 2001. The number of general officers in the Air Force is up nearly 17 percent and the number of Navy admirals increased by 15 percent. The Army now has 5 percent more generals than in 2001 and the Marine Corps increase was 10 percent.

Pentagon spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said the Defense Department's raw personnel data that are published monthly offer only "a snapshot-in-time look at the number of personnel on active duty on any given day, and thus is not necessarily a reflection of the number of [general flag officer] positions within the department."

She said the downsizing effort continues and has reduced the total number of general and flag "positions" by 27, with an additional 20 general flag officer jobs reduced to a lower general flag officer rank -- for example, a two-star billet reduced to a one-star billet.

Yet the number of general and flag officers on the payroll has changed little since Gates announced his intent in August 2010 to reduce the top-level officer corps.

Top-level officers cost taxpayers millions in pay, benefits and support staff. Moreover, a top-heavy force is slower, less agile and less effective, said Winslow Wheeler, a military expert with the Center for Defense Information in Washington.

"It has much to do with the efficiency and effectiveness of the armed forces and the nature of the political culture in this country," Wheeler said.

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43. Kitsap (Wa.) Sun

December 10, 2011

**Military Update****National Guard Gains Joint Chiefs Status***By Tom Philpott*

Congress is about to elevate the position of Chief of the National Guard Bureau to full membership on the Joint Chiefs of Staff, joining the JCS chairman, vice chairman and four service branch chiefs as top military advisers to the president and his national security team.

It's a controversial bump in power and prestige that proponents argue honors all who have served in the Army and Air National Guard during a decade of war, expansion of the homeland security mission, and raised expectations by the public for swift, effective responses to natural disasters.

Every current member of the Joint Chiefs opposes the move, finding no military reason for the elevation, and several potential problems. But National Guard representation on the JCS is hugely popular with state governors and adjutant generals, with 468,000 current Guard members and with many politicians. With defense budgets tightening, it is an inexpensive way to show fresh support and appreciation for home state militias.

"I really think momentum for this started with Katrina," said retired Maj. Gen. Gus L. Hargett Jr., president of the National Guard Association of the United States. Within days of that massive hurricane hitting the Gulf Coast in August 2005, almost 60,000 Guardsmen were deployed. Yet President Bush also ordered to New Orleans an active duty force of 5,000, the 82nd Airborne, a move that grabbed the spotlight and chapped Guard leaders.

If the National Guard chief at the time, Lt. Gen. Steve Blum, "had been a member of the Joint Chiefs we would have never sent the 82nd Airborne to Louisiana," Hargett said. The Guard "would have done all of that itself and it would have been a more of unified effort" versus "two chains of command working to do the same thing."

The House last May led Congress into making the National Guard Bureau chief a permanent member of the JCS, giving voice vote to this as part of a block of more obscure amendments to the fiscal 2012 defense authorization bill.

Senate approval came Nov. 28, also on a voice vote, in this case for a stand-alone amendment from Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) to the Senate version of the defense bill. But Leahy's amendment had 70 co-sponsors.

Indeed, by early November, with the Joint Chiefs grumbling and Leahy's initiative gaining steam, the Senate Armed Services Committee called a hearing of historic significance. For the first time all six of four-star officers on the JCS appeared to testify and share their concerns.

The lone witness testifying in favor of putting the National Guard Bureau chief on the JCS was Gen. Craig R. McKinley, current National Guard chief.

The Defense Department's general counsel, Jeh Charles Johnson, also testified, advising that while the change would be legal it "could create legal confusion as to whether the Army and the Air Force chiefs of staff continue to represent their total force."

Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, JCS chairman, noted that he, like his predecessor, extended a standing invitation to Guard chief McKinley to attend JCS meetings. McKinley had enjoyed such access since becoming the first four-star officer to serve as NGB chief, the result of 2008 Guard reforms.

So, Dempsey said, "there is no compelling military need to support this historic change." He added that active and reserve component forces now are indistinguishable on the battlefield, in part because service chiefs of Army and Air Force "are the single voice for their respective branches. The proposed change could undermine this unity of effort."

Dempsey also noted that only two of six reserve components would be represented so directly on the Joint Chiefs, "creating what could at least be the perception of inequity" for Reserve forces.

A more important concern, Dempsey said, involves accountability.

"Each of the Joint Chiefs is subject to the civilian oversight of a single appointed and confirmed secretary. The chief of the National Guard Bureau has no such oversight. Elevation to the JCS would make him equal to the service chiefs without commensurate accountability," Dempsey said.

But McKinley testified that, after three years on the job, he feels it is best for the nation that the National Guard chief be a full JCS member. Only full membership "will ensure that the responsibilities and capabilities" of Guard units in their non-federalized role of supporting governors and states "are considered in a planned and deliberate manner."

His current effectiveness in getting resources and training for non-federalized missions are "based upon ad hoc or personal relationships" and not firmly rooted in the law and national strategy. The Guard's domestic mission must get more consideration in contingency planning, allocation of scarce resources, and advice to the president, secretary of defense and the national and homeland security councils, he added

Threats to the homeland, he added, are more dangerous "than at any time in our history." With the Guard chief as a full JCS member, he said, mission "planning and resourcing would be vastly improved." Many senators agreed.

"The citizen soldier's time has come," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), in a rapid-fire prosecutorial exchange with service chiefs and McKinley.

"General Dempsey, you're a very fine man. But if you got pissed off at (McKinley), could you tell him to get out of the room?"

"Yes, I could," the chairman said.

"Good," Graham said, and to McKinley added, "I think you need to be in the room with some weight behind you, not just an invitation."

Others opposed JCS expansion. Sen. James Webb (D-Va.), a Marine in Vietnam and architect of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, said "anyone who's saying that citizen soldiers are not at the table right now is being unnecessarily divisive [and] unfair to the stewardship and leadership of the Army and the Air Force This legislation is unnecessary."

Sen. Carl Levin (D-Mich.), committee chair, read reasons given by the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves in 2007 to oppose having the National Guard chief on the JCS. Topping the list was the fact that service chiefs have greater duties.

Hargett noted that the Joint Chiefs had opposed accepting the Marine Corps commandant in 1978 and passage of the Goldwater Nichols law in 1986, forcing the services to operate jointly. Both moves are now praised.

"So they are not always right," he said. "And they are very protective of their turf. That's what I believe this is about, more than anything else."

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