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The US Is Preparing to Oust President Evo Morales

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US intelligence agencies have ramped up their operations intended to remove Bolivian President Evo Morales from office. All options are on the table, including assassination. Barack Obama, who sees the weakening of Latin America's "*hostile bloc of populist states*" as one of his administration's foreign-policy victories, intends to buoy this success before stepping down.

Washington also feels under the gun in Bolivia because of China's successful expansion in the country. Morales is steadily strengthening his financial, economic, trade, and military relationship with Beijing. Chinese businesses in La Paz are thriving – making investments and loans and taking part in projects to secure a key position for Bolivia in the modernization of the continent's transportation industry. In the next 10 years, thanks to Bolivia's plentiful gas reserves, that country will become the energy hub of South America. Evo Morales sees his country's development as his top priority, and the Chinese, unlike the Americans, have always viewed Bolivia as an ally and partner in a relationship that eschews double standards.

The US embassy in La Paz has been without an ambassador since 2008. He was declared persona non grata because of his subversive activities. The interim chargé d'affaires is currently Peter Brennan, and pointed questions have been raised about what agency he truly works for. He was previously stationed in Pakistan, where "difficult decisions" had to be made about assassinations, but most of his career has been spent handling Latin American countries. In particular, Brennan was responsible for introducing the ZunZuneo service into Cuba (an illegal program dubbed the "Cuban Twitter"). USAID fronted this CIA program, under the innocent pretext of helping to inform Cubans about cultural and sporting events and other international news. Once ZunZuneo was in place, there were plans to use this program to mobilize the population in preparation for a "Cuban Spring". When reading about Brennan one often encounters the phrase – "dark horse". He is used to getting what he wants, at any cost, and his tight deadline in Bolivia (before the end of Obama's presidency) is forcing Brennan to take great risks.

Previously, Brennan had "distinguished himself" during the run-up to the referendum on allowing President Evo Morales to run for reelection in 2019, as well as during the vote itself. To encourage "no" votes, the US embassy mobilized its entire propaganda machine, roused to action the NGOs under its control, and allocated considerable additional funds for the staging of protests. It is telling that many of those culminated in the burning of photographs of Morales wearing his presidential sash. A record-setting volley of dirt was fired at the president. Accusations of corruption were the most common, although Morales has always been open about his personal finances. It would have been hard to pin ownership of "*\$43 billion in offshore accounts*" on him, as was done to Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro.

Brennan also has agreements in place with Washington about other operations to compromise the Bolivian president. An attack was launched by the CIA agent Carlos Valverde Bravo, a well-known TV journalist and former agent with Bolivia's security services. In his Feb. 3 program he accused Morales's former companion, Gabriela Zapata, the commercial manager of the Chinese company CAMC Engineering Co, of orchestrating shady business deals worth \$500 million. Insinuations simultaneously began circulating on the Internet about the Bolivian president's

involvement in those, although Morales completely broke ties with Zapata back in 2007 and has spared no individual, regardless of name and rank, in his battle against corruption.

The “exposés” staged by the US embassy continued until the day of the referendum itself on Feb. 21, 2016. The “no” votes prevailed, despite the favorable trend that had been indicated in the voter polls. Morales accepted defeat with his Indian equanimity, but in his statements after the referendum he was clear that the US embassy had waged a hostile campaign.

The investigation into Gabriela Zapata revealed that she had capitalized on her previous relationship with Morales to further her career. She was offered a position with the Chinese company CAMC and took possession of a luxury home in an upscale neighborhood in La Paz, making a big show of her “closeness” to the Bolivian leader, although he played no role in any of this. This was the same reason she tried to initiate a business and personal relationship with the president’s chief of staff, Juan Ramón Quintana. He has categorically denied having ever met Zapata.

Gradually, all the CIA’s fabricated evidence disintegrated. Zapata is now testifying, and her lawyer has holed up abroad because his contacts with the Americans have been exposed. The American agent Valverde Bravo has fled to Argentina. Accusations against Morales are being hurled from there with renewed vigor. The attack continues. It’s all quite logical: a continually repeated lie is an effective weapon in this newest generation of information warfare. The latest example was the ouster of Dilma Rousseff, who was accused of corruption by officials whom her government had identified as corrupt!

The US military has been increasing its presence in Bolivia in recent months. For example, Colonel Felando Pierre Thigpen visited the department of Santa Cruz, where there are strong separatist leanings. Thigpen is known to be involved in a joint program between the Pentagon and CIA to recruit and train potential personnel for American intelligence. In commentary by Bolivian bloggers and in publications about Thigpen, it is noted that the colonel was dispatched to the country on the eve of events related to *“the impending replacement of a government that has exhausted its potential, as well as the need to recruit alternative young personalities into the new leadership structure.”* Some comments have indicated that Thigpen is overseeing the work of diplomats Peter Brennan and Erik Foronda, a media and press advisor at the US embassy.

The embassy responded by stating that Thigpen had arrived in Bolivia *“at his own initiative”*, but it is no secret that he was invited to “work with youth” by NGOs that coordinate their activities with the Americans: the Foundation for Leadership and Integral Development (FULIDEI), the Global Transformation Network (RTG), the Bolivian School of Heroes (EHB), and others. So Thigpen’s work is not being improvised, but is rather a direct challenge to Morales’s government. Domestically, the far-right party Christian Democratic Party provides him with political cover.

The US plans to destabilize Bolivia – which were provided to Evo Morales’s government by an unnamed friendly country – include a step-by-step chronogram of the actions plotted by the

Americans. For example: *“To spark hunger strikes and mass mobilizations and to stir up conflicts within universities, civil organizations, indigenous communities, and varied social circles, as well as within government institutions. To strike up acquaintances with both active-duty and retired military officers, with the goal of undercutting the government’s credibility within the armed forces. It is absolutely essential to train the military for a crisis scenario, so that in an atmosphere of growing social conflict they will lead an uprising against the regime and support the protests in order to ensure a peaceful transition to democracy.”*

The program’s first fruits have been the emergence of social protests (recent marches by disabled citizens were staged at the suggestion of the American embassy), although Evo Morales’s administration has evinced more concern for the interests of Bolivians on a limited income than any other government in the history of Bolivia.

The scope of the operation to oust President Morales – financed and directed by US intelligence agencies – continues to expand. The Americans’ biggest adversary in Latin America has been sentenced to a fate of “neutralization”. Speaking out against Evo Morales, the radical opposition has openly alluded to the fact that it has been a long time since the region has seen a really newsworthy air crash involving a politician who was hostile to Washington...