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August 21, 2008

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am writing to express my grave concerns regarding Honduran President Manuel Zelaya's statements encouraging his country's membership to the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). As an ally of the United States, it is disconcerting to observe his recent outspoken support of an initiative founded on an agenda that directly contradict U.S. interests and democracy promotion goals in the region.

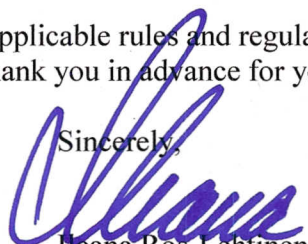
As you know, ALBA was originally launched in 2004 by Venezuela and Cuba as an alternative to the U.S. proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas. However, going beyond a series of mere cooperative agreements between its founding nations and other countries in the region, ALBA appears to be an ambitious region-wide initiative by Hugo Chavez to bolster the power of his petrodollars and influence of his friends, namely Cuba and Iran. The trend of anti-democratic behavior and anti-U.S. incitement that appears to coincide with involvement in the initiative is cause for concern, as its membership has grown to also include Bolivia, Nicaragua and several countries in the Caribbean.

While it appears President Zelaya will find little support in the Honduran Congress to achieve ALBA membership, the fact that he has demonstrated such public support for it calls for close review of his commitment to democratic principles in Honduras, and the region as a whole.

It is therefore imperative for the U.S. to articulate directly to President Zelaya our concerns about these statements and other recent developments, noting that ALBA membership runs contrary to the spirit and commitments made by Honduras as a beneficiary of CAFTA-DR.

With this in mind, and within all applicable rules and regulations, I would like to respectfully request your attention to this matter and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Ranking Member

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August 21, 2008

Mr. Daniel W. Fisk  
Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs  
National Security Council  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
1650 Pennsylvania Ave, NW Rm. 365  
Washington, D.C. 20504

Dear Mr. Fisk:

I would like to bring to your attention Honduran President Manuel Zelaya's recent statements encouraging his country's membership to the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). As an ally of the United States, it is disconcerting to observe his outspoken support of an initiative that was founded on an agenda that directly contradicts U.S. interests, democracy promotion, and security and stability goals in the region.

As you know, ALBA was originally launched in 2004 by Venezuela and Cuba as an alternative to the U.S. proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas. However, going beyond a series of mere cooperative agreements between its founding nations and other countries in the region, ALBA appears to be an ambitious region-wide initiative by Hugo Chavez to bolster the power of his petrodollars and influence of his friends, namely Cuba and Iran. The trend of anti-democratic behavior and anti-U.S. incitement that appears to coincide with involvement in the initiative is cause for concern, as its membership has grown to also include Bolivia, Nicaragua and several countries in the Caribbean.

While it appears President Zelaya will find little support in the Honduran Congress to achieve ALBA membership, the fact that he has demonstrated such public support for it calls for close review of his commitment to democratic principles in Honduras, and the region as a whole.

It is therefore imperative for the U.S. to articulate directly to President Zelaya our concerns about these statements and other recent developments, noting that ALBA membership runs contrary to the spirit and commitments made by Honduras as a beneficiary of CAFTA-DR.

With this in mind, and within all applicable rules and regulations, I would like to respectfully request your attention to this matter and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Ranking Member

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August 21, 2008

The Honorable Manuel Zelaya  
President of the Republic of Honduras  
Embassy of Honduras  
3007 Tilden Street, NW Suite 4M  
Washington, DC 20008

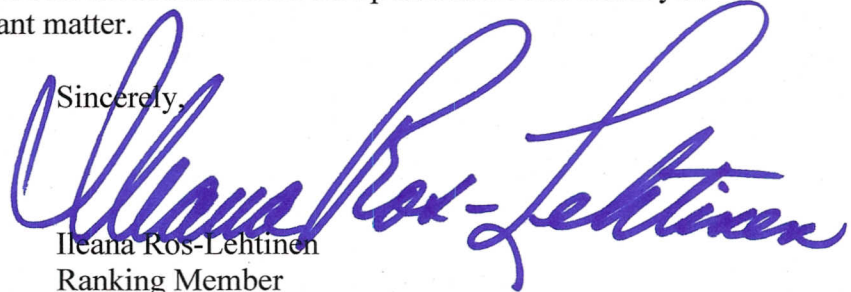
Dear President Zelaya:

I am gravely concerned about your recent statements encouraging Honduras' membership to the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). As Honduras shares a strong friendship with the United States, it is disconcerting to witness your outspoken support of an initiative that was founded on an agenda that directly contradicts democracy promotion and consolidation efforts in the region.

As you know, ALBA was originally launched in 2004 by Venezuela and Cuba as an alternative to the U.S. proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas. The trend of anti-democratic behavior and anti-U.S. incitement that appears to coincide with involvement in the initiative however is cause for concern, as its membership has grown to also include Bolivia, Nicaragua and several countries in the Caribbean. For this reason, I am especially concerned by your public support for ALBA and other recent developments, as membership to this initiative runs contrary to the spirit and commitments made by Honduras as a beneficiary of CAFTA-DR.

For years, Honduras and United States have shared a strong relationship based on the commonalities of our people and respect for democracy and freedom. With this in mind, I would like to respectfully request you reconsider your support for Honduran membership in ALBA and thank you in advance for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Ranking Member