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## CNN's John Roberts Omits Guest's Past Resignation Due to Scandal

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During an interview of Brookings Institution senior fellow Kevin Casas-Zamora on Wednesday's American Morning, CNN anchor John Roberts not only failed to mention the liberal political leanings of the fellow's organization, but omitted any mention of the scandal which led to Casa-Zamora's resignation from the vice presidency of Costa Rica.

Roberts brought on Casas-Zamora to discuss the recent military coup in Honduras, which unseated President Jose Manuel Zelaya, who had been seeking a referendum to extend his term in office. He introduced him as the "senior foreign policy fellow with the Brookings Institution [1]- also recently served as the vice president of Costa Rica." Specifically, the fellow served from 2006 until 2007 as the country's vice president and minister of planning and economic policy.

Juan Carlos Hidalgo of the CATO Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity wrote a column for the Miami Herald on October 5, 2007 [2] which reported that in a leaked private memorandum written to Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, Casas-Zamora had "suggested, among other things, withholding public money to mayors who failed to deliver their districts' votes on CAFTA [the Central American Free Trade Agreement], and circumventing some electoral rules. The ensuing scandal led to Casas' resignation and caused a dramatic fall in CAFTA's popularity."

The Brookings Institution senior fellow offered a nuanced position on the return of ousted President Zelaya during the interview: "My sense is that President Zelaya's idea of returning to Honduras immediately is probably a bad idea, and it's likely to make a bad situation worse. I think that some groundwork needs to be laid out before that- that happens, and by groundwork, I mean that the return to Honduras of President Zelaya won't solve anything, in and of itself." However, in a blog item for Foreign Policy posted two days earlier [3] on June 29, Casas-Zamora advised that "Zelaya, though he bears by far the greater responsibility for this crisis, must be reinstated in his position as the legitimate president of Honduras. The Organization of American States, the neighboring countries, and the U.S. government (which is still enormously influential in Honduras) should demand no less."

Later in the interview, the former Costa Rican vice president stated that "this is not only a question of- of Chavez, as some people have said, coming out very strongly against the [Honduran] coup. It's also President Lula from Brazil, President Calderon from Mexico- even President Obama, and that's quite remarkable." Even President Obama? An American liberal president siding with an ideological fellow traveler south of the border?

The full transcript of the interview, which began of the bottom half of the 8 am Eastern hour of Wednesday's American Morning:

JOHN ROBERTS: Well, the message is clear- leaders from nations in North and South America are telling those behind the recent coup in Honduras, put your deposed president back in power. President Jose Manuel Zelaya is vowing to return. So what does it mean for the future of Honduras and Central America?

Joining me with more is Kevin Casas-Zamora. He's a senior foreign policy fellow with the Brookings Institution- also recently served as the vice president of Costa Rica. Kevin, it's good to talk to you this morning. So, President Zelaya is vowing to return. Originally, it was going to be tomorrow. Now, it looks like he's not going to go back until at least Saturday. But Roberto Micaletti, who has assumed the presidency there, says if he sets foot in Honduras, he's going to be arrested, tried and thrown in jail. He's really playing hardball here.

KEVIN CASAS-ZAMORA: Indeed- well, thank you for- for having me here, John. My sense is that President Zelaya's idea of returning to Honduras immediately is probably a bad idea, and it's likely to make a bad situation worse. I think that some groundwork needs to be laid out before that- that happens, and by groundwork, I mean that the return to Honduras of President Zelaya won't solve anything, in and of itself. There's got to be some kind of- of- of political deal brokered before the underlying issue is tackled, and the underlying issue is how to make Honduras governable. Because in the end, it was not governable when President Zelaya was in power, and it is not governable now due to the immense international pressure that the- the new authorities in Honduras find themselves under.

ROBERTS: Yeah. Now, he was seeking changes to the constitution. He was trying to write them himself. He wanted another term in- in power. He has pledged that he's not going to pursue that any longer. Do you think that that might open the door for his return, or is Micaletti- I mean, hanging on so hard and fast to power he's never going to even let him back in the door?

CASAS-ZAMORA: My sense is that President Zelaya made all the right noises yesterday when he spoke at the General Assembly of the U.N., and he indeed opened some avenues of dialogue, and it remains to be seen whether the new authorities in Honduras are willing to respond in kind. If they- if they don't, my sense is that the international community will keep cranking up the pressure, and I really doubt that the new authorities in Honduras will be willing or able to pull off the North Korean or the Myanmar card-

ROBERTS: Right.

CASAS-ZAMORA: And- and remain as a pariah state for even seven months until the- a new government takes over. I don't think they'll be willing to do that.

ROBERTS: But if they- if they do, what's the effect in Central America? The president [President Obama] says he is very concerned about what happened there- he's called for President Zelaya to be reinstated. He says that we- we have to be careful about or worried about moving backwards to an area of military coups that changed governments in central America. We all remember what was going on during the 1970s and the 1980s- Nicaragua now taking a step backwards from democracy. So if- if the coup holds in Honduras, what's the net effect for Central America?

CASAS-ZAMORA: It will be a terrible precedent. It will be a terrible precedent and that explains the very strong and coherent reaction that you- that we've seen all through the Americas, not only in Latin America. Because this is not only a question of- of Chavez, as some people have said, coming out very strongly against the coup. It's also President Lula

from Brazil, President Calderon from Mexico- even President Obama, and that's quite remarkable, because my sense is that this poses a golden opportunity for the U.S. to make a clean break with the past and come out very strongly on the side of- of democracy. So yeah- I mean the problem is that this situation in Honduras adds to a very volatile political situation in Latin- in Central America. In Central America, it is really unraveling politically- in Honduras, in Nicaragua and in Guatemala, particularly.

ROBERTS: All right. We'll- it's definitely something we'll keep watching very, very closely. Kevin Casas-Zamora, it's good to talk to you, sir. Thank you for joining us this morning.

CASAS-ZAMORA: Thanks for having me.

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