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## Ousted Honduran leader asks Clinton stand on coup

By OLGA RODRIGUEZ (AP) – 58 minutes ago



TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — Ousted President Manuel Zelaya is asking the Obama Administration to explain why, after pressing for his reinstatement, U.S. officials say they will recognize upcoming Honduran elections even if he isn't returned to power first.

In a letter sent to the U.S. State Department on Wednesday, Zelaya asked Secretary of State Hillary Clinton "to clarify to the Honduran people if the position condemning the coup d'etat has been changed or modified."

His request came after Washington's top envoy to Latin America, Thomas Shannon, told CNN en Espanol that the U.S. will recognize the Nov. 29 elections even if the Honduran Congress decides against returning Zelaya to power.

"Both leaders took a risk and put their trust in Congress but at the end of the day the accord requires that both leaders accept its decision," Shannon said.

The U.S. has repeatedly pressed for Zelaya's reinstatement. President Obama was explicit in a speech this summer: "America supports now the restoration of the democratically elected President of Honduras."

But the U.S.-brokered deal between Zelaya and Roberto Micheletti's interim government leaves reinstatement in the hands of Congress.

Nonetheless, hours after shaking hands, Zelaya and others indicated a behind-the-scenes arrangement had been made with Congress to reinstate him.

"This signifies my return to power in the coming days, and peace for Honduras," he said.

His comments, and U.S. approval of the deal, left many believing Congress was ready to put him back in office.

"I think it was sort of assumed that there was a deal with Congress to reinstate him," said Dana Frank, a historian at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "But the U.S. negotiators may have underestimated the sheer nutso chaos of Honduran politics."

The leaders of Honduras' Congress said Tuesday they would consult the courts and prosecutors before deciding when to submit the measure to the full Congress for debate.

Juan Carlos Hidalgo, project coordinator for Latin America at Washington-based Cato Institute, said he doesn't expect Hondurans to be swayed by U.S. pressure.

"If Congress doesn't reinstate Zelaya, it certainly will be a diplomatic embarrassment for the United States since they pressured so much for his reinstatement and even threatened to not recognize the election results," said Hidalgo. "But not recognizing a popular vote was a dead-end road for the U.S. and they knew it."

*Associated Press Writer Martha Mendoza in Mexico City contributed to this report.*

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