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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

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July 30, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

The political crisis in Honduras continues to generate debate in the U.S. Congress. I am concerned that the timing of this crisis, which has coincided with the nomination of Arturo Valenzuela to be Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, will delay his confirmation.

According to some reports, the head of Honduras's de facto government expressed support for a compromise that would allow the ousted president of his country to return to power. Recent events in Honduras only heighten the urgency of assembling President Obama's diplomatic team for the region.

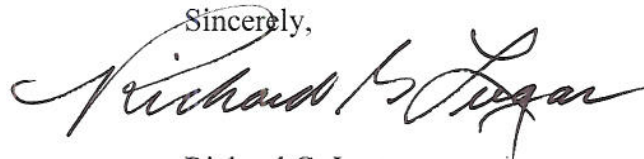
I share your strong support of Costa Rican President Oscar Arias's efforts to negotiate a peaceful restoration of democratic order in Honduras. However, as you know, the complexity of events that led up to the Honduran crisis has given rise to questions regarding U.S. policy.

In order to clear any obstacles that would impede Mr. Valenzuela's confirmation process, I request that the Department provide interested Members a detailed clarification of the steps that it has taken, and intends to take, in response to the events that transpired in the run-up to and period after the forced removal of President Manuel Zelaya from Honduras. Your explanation of U.S. policy towards Honduras and your outreach to the Senate can improve the prospects of confirming Mr. Valenzuela before the Congress recesses in August.

I also encourage you to work with the Senate to confirm Carlos Pascual as Ambassador to Mexico and Thomas Shannon as Ambassador to Brazil. The effectiveness of U.S. policy in the hemisphere will depend on the presence of our representatives on the ground, particularly in Brazil and Mexico, two of the region's most influential actors.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Richard G. Lugar