

WikiLeaks cables expose Peruvian politicians' subservience to Washington

Luis Arce
2 March 2011

Two weeks ago, *El Comercio*, Peru's most influential newspaper, began publishing secret cables from the US embassy in Lima released by of WikiLeaks. What has been released so far reveals the degree of submission and dependency on US imperialism by all the major political parties of the Peruvian bourgeoisie.

The day after *El Comercio* made public its possession of 4,000 pages of WikiLeaks cables, Washington's ambassador to Peru, Rose Likins, visited the director of the newspaper Francisco Miró Quesada, to express "her concern over the publication of the embassy documents, which are labeled as classified by the US Department of State," said *El Comercio*. "It is uncomfortable," added ambassador Likins, "to be in this situation."

Miró Quesada assured the ambassador that his intention was not to dig into US internal affairs and that the newspaper "would not put in danger the honor or the integrity of people who could feel threatened," reported *El Comercio*.

Despite this "self imposed" censorship, the documents tell the story of how top officials in the parties that have held political power over the last three decades—under presidents Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), Alejandro Toledo (2001-2006) and Alan Garcia (2006 until July 2011)—had met with US ambassadors to request Washington that take action on their behalf and against their electoral rivals, especially during the last presidential election held in 2006.

Most significant is how the WikiLeaks cables expose the utterly reactionary stand by the leader of the nationalist "left", Ollanta Humala. While publicly posturing as a representative of the oppressed and an enemy of US imperialism, Humala, a former lieutenant colonel in the Peruvian army, wasted no time in offering his services as the man who could control any mass social unrest.

Peruvians are six weeks away from voting for a new president. That all major contenders have in the past asked the US embassy to act in their favor represents stark proof that, no matter which of these candidates is elected, he or she will closely collaborate with Washington and bow to the interest of foreign capital.

The list includes former president Alejandro Toledo from Peru Posible, who at the moment is ahead of its rivals by 10 percent in the polls, Keiko Fujimori (former president Alberto Fujimori daughter) from Fuerza 2011, who is in second place, and Ollanta Humala from Gana Peru, who is in fourth place in the polls. The incumbent, Alan Garcia, is barred by the constitution from another term, and his ruling Apra party, facing deep internal divisions, is not running a candidate for president.

The first round of the 2006 elections was won by Ollanta Humala. His nationalist program and promises of stopping the exploitation of Peruvian resources by foreign capital appealed to a layer of the impoverished Peruvian masses, particularly among the more than six million-strong Inca population in the Andes.

At the time, Washington viewed the prospect of a Humala presidency with hostility, as he had identified his candidacy with the governments of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

With 87 percent of the votes counted in the 2006 elections, Alan Garcia of Apra and Lourdes Flores of the right-wing Partido Popular Cristiano were tied for second place, with 24.52 percent and 23.40 percent of the vote respectively.

Three days after Election Day, according to WikiLeaks "Apra's general secretary, Jorge del Castillo, had breakfast with the US embassy's political officer and made two requests. The first: to help in convincing Lourdes Flores that she had been defeated at the polls so that they could form a coalition of democratic forces in the second round, and in this way assure the stability of the country. The second request was to help them establish links with the evangelical pastor and leader of the Restauración Nacional party, Humberto Lay, who won more than 4 percent of the votes."

Del Castillo was concerned that waiting for the full count would take three weeks. *El Comercio* writes, Apra's general secretary "warned that if the democratic forces remained divided, this would give a momentum to the Humala campaign that would be difficult to overcome."

The fear of a nationalist Humala administration had been previously expressed to the US embassy by close advisors to then president Alejandro Toledo. According to an embassy cable dated 29 November 2005, Fernando Rospigliosi, former minister of the interior (until 2004), and Ruben Vargas, former director of national defense, had visited the embassy 11 days earlier. The purpose of the visit was to express their worries "about the prospects of the ultranationalist Ollanta Humala establishing himself as a political force in Peru".

Rospigliosi and Vargas proposed that the embassy to use its influence to get the information service Nexum to monitor Humala's moves and to support "anti-Humala news in the coca-growing regions". The WikiLeaks cable was written by US Ambassador James C. Struble.

WikiLeaks release of the Lima embassy cables has had an impact on the electoral process. Candidate Toledo has denied that Rospigliosi—who at the time of the meeting in the US embassy had left his administration—and Vargas had acted on his behalf, while Humala has denounced Toledo as a "traitor." Current US ambassador Likins has admitted that Rospigliosi worked for the NGO Capital Humano Social—an anti-drug consulting firm—that the embassy had under contract.

Ambassador Likins has over the past week personally talked to two of the candidates in the presidential election to be held next month—Keiko Fujimori and Ollanta Humala. On the one hand, this is no doubt a reflection of her fears of further embarrassment after the damage done by the documents made public by WikiLeaks. On the other, it is another confirmation that Washington has no respect for Peruvians' right to cast electoral ballots.

Ambassador Likins informed Keiko Fujimori of three documents. One of which said that, from the point of view of the embassy, Keiko would pardon her father if she wins the presidency this year.

On July 22, 2009, US Ambassador Michael McKinley wrote that the former president had been sentenced to seven and a half years for

embezzlement and for having paid Montesinos (Fujimori's infamous chief of intelligence) \$15 million. The WikiLeaks cable states: "The majority of observers say that this was a strategic measure designed to avoid a lengthy trial and prevent witnesses from presenting evidence that would have revealed major corruption, damaging the presidential aspirations of his daughter Keiko in 2011."

Another cable dating from 2006 records the visit to the US embassy, two weeks after Garcia began his presidency, by the newly elected members of the Peruvian Congress: Keiko Fujimori, Santiago Fujimori (brother of the former president) and Jaime Yoshiyama—currently running for second vice president on the Fuerza 2011 ticket. They came to explain their political strategy: Apra had won the presidency, but had only 36 congressmen, against 46 from the nationalist Ollanta Humala's party. Keiko offered to support the Apra government in exchange for stopping the "political persecution" against the Fujimoristas and a "fair" trial for his father.

In its report of the WikiLeaks cables, *El Comercio* writes, "The passage of time made evident the good relationship between the two parties. In light of the cables, the Apristas would have traded a lax jail regime for Fujimori in exchange for support keeping congress and its votes in favor of Apra, as in the case when Carlos Raffo forgave the ex-prime minister Jorge del Castillo in the 'petroaudios' case."

Throughout his presidency, Alan Garcia faced continuous struggles by the Peruvian working class and the oppressed masses against poverty, inequality and injustice. It is most revealing that during that period, Ollanta Humala, who almost won the 2006 elections based on an ultranationalist and anti-American program, visited the US embassy four times.

The first visit took place 18 days after his defeat to Alan Garcia in the second round of the presidential election. *El Comercio*, in its analysis of the cable dealing with this visit, writes that Humala "does not believe in a leftist or rightist axis and denies being anti-Chilean or anti-American. He added that his rhetoric could seem radical, but this was only because it revealed the situation facing many Peruvians."

In other words, as soon as the elections were over, Humala was ready to change his posture to a more moderate, non-threatening one to accommodate his position to the demands of Washington.

One year later, when ambassador Struble was about to leave Peru, Humala made his second visit to the embassy. At the time, Garcia was facing mass discontent, including strikes and protests, for not having fulfilled his electoral promises of reforms.

Humala, reports *El Comercio*, criticized President Garcia for his indifference to social conflicts and said it would be bad if Garcia did not complete his presidency. Humala told the US embassy that the "nationalists" were working to form a broad front to include defense committees, some regional presidents and the striking Casapalca miners. Ambassador Struble titled this portion of his report, "The benefits of social discontent."

On June 18, 2008, the third meeting took place, this time with the newly appointed US ambassador Peter Michael McKinley. On that occasion, Humala's true political position became clearer. He said he was a "pragmatist" (before he used the term "radical"), who could save the country from the "radicals opposed to the system, who could threaten the stability of the state."

Humala defined himself as "nationalist and not a leftist". He recognized it was important to have juridical security in matters of conflict in order to attract foreign capital and accepted the significance of the Free Trade Agreement, but said it was more important that it be "fair" than "free." During the 2006 election campaign Humala had aggressively spoken against the FTA, threatening that as president he would not comply with the trade agreements being worked out between the Toledo and Bush administrations.

The fourth, and most revealing, encounter between Humala and the US embassy took place at Humala's request in April 2009. The cable describes Humala as "extremely relaxed" and "remarkably open." McKinley expresses surprise at the extent of Humala's revelations about his 2010 electoral strategy and suggests that the State Department should consider organizing a trip to the US for the "nationalist" candidate.

When asked about his connections with leaders of the Stalinist-controlled union federation, the Confederacion General de Trabajadores del Peru (CGTP), the Maoist Patria Roja party and the Movimiento Nueva Izquierda (which defines itself as a democratic, patriotic organization with a socialist orientation), Humala said that it was better to have them inside than outside.

What can this mean? Humala is telling the US embassy that he is their man if it comes to potential trouble from the unions, left-wing parties and above all from the Peruvian working class.

This became utterly clear in the cable dated May 4, 2009 reporting that Humala had met twice with Prime Minister Yehude Simon to propose a multiparty coalition led by his party to supervise "the situation in the Apurimac and Ene River Valleys," a zone of heavy drug trafficking.

From April to July of 2009 a serious conflict developed between the Amazon indigenous people and the Garcia government. The confrontation was provoked when Garcia granted exploitation rights over the Amazon region to foreign oil and timber companies, in violation of the International Labor Organization rules requiring that the indigenous people be consulted prior to any decision regarding the Amazon territory.

In the end Garcia was forced to back off, but only after a bloody confrontation left dozens of people dead and unleashed a national mass protest. Thus, it was under conditions of mass unrest and opposition to Garcia's regime that Humala met with Ambassador McKinley and Garcia's Prime Minister Simon offering his collaboration.

The WikiLeaks cables exposing how the politicians, from the extreme right to the nationalist left, have lined up to vet their strategies with the US embassy and plead for its support, demonstrate the complete subservience of the entire Peruvian elite and its political establishment to the domination of US imperialism. Little has changed in Lima from the days when the US embassy dictated policy, installing and removing presidents at will.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact