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Honduran President Micheletti receives (The Order of Jose' Santos Zelaya) commemorating 19th Anniversary of Enrique Bermudez Assassination

On March 21, 2010 Nicaragua's Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) awarded former interim Honduran President Roberto Micheletti with their highest honor, The Order of Jose' Santos Zelaya. President Micheletti led the government of Honduras after the overthrow of Jose Manuel Zelaya's effort to overrule the Honduran constitution in June 2009. President Micheletti remained in office until the inauguration of current President Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo in January 2010. PLC spokesman Leonel Teller said, "we are proud to bring Mr. Micheletti, and we will decorate him with our highest order". But Nicaragua denied Mr. Micheletti a visa to attend the ceremony, and he presented his remarks via video.

In the days preceding the elections the U.S., Israel, Italy, Colombia, Panama, Peru, Germany, Costa Rica and Japan announced their intentions to recognize the results of the elections. On 30 November, 2009 at the 19th Ibero-American Summit in Estoril, Portugal the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela announced they were not recognizing the elections.

The ceremony on March 21, 2010 was to be held at a rally to commemorate the 19th anniversary of the murder of Contra commander Comandante' Enrique Bermudez.

Enrique Bermudez, codenamed "Comandante 380," founded and commanded the Contras, the largest group of Freedom Fighters in the war against Nicaragua's Marxist Sandinista government. From the inception in 1979 until the end of the military conflict in 1990, Bermudez was responsible for all military operations for the 25,000 man strong Contra force, and later the transition to a peaceful opposition political party after the historic free and fair election of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro on February 25, 1990.

Prior to his affiliation with the Contras, Enrique Bermudez had risen through the ranks of the Nicaraguan Guardia Nacional to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and served under former Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Lt. Colonel Bermudez was serving as military attaché' to the United States at the time of the 1979 revolution in Nicaragua by the Sandinistas. At that time Bermudez moved immediately into armed opposition against the Sandinista Government becoming one of the most influential leaders in the fight for a free Nicaragua. In 1981, Bermudez was influenced to return to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, from exile in the United States. He later became commander of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), the primary Contra movement.

Bermudez returned to Nicaragua after the Sandinista defeat in the 1990 election. He was killed on February 16, 1991, having been lured to what he thought was a meeting with then U. S. Ambassador, Harry Shlaudemann at the Inter-Continental Hotel in Managua. Bermudez left the hotel after the Ambassador failed to show, and was gunned down in the parking lot.

So much for Sandinista Fairness.

Best Warmest Regards,

Dr. Henry A. Fischer
President/CEO
ASCF

Life and Death Aboard a Tin Can By RADM. Robert H. Spiro Jr.

"The Golden Gate in '48!"

This was the slogan oft-repeated by sailors, soldiers, and marines as the Pacific War moved slowly yet inexorably westward toward the home islands of Japan. Although barely 21 when I volunteered for the Navy 20 days after Pearl Harbor, I was a college graduate and an approved applicant for graduate studies. I knew nothing about military service, yet inflamed by the "sudden and unprovoked attack" on Pearl Harbor, I marched down to the recruiting station and enlisted in the Navy on December 27th.

I was immediately assigned to the District Intelligence Office in Norfolk, given some form of security clearance, and handled the commander's mail and office. A year later he told me the Navy urgently needed junior officers, and that he wanted me to apply. He sent my application to Washington in late February 1943, and I was commissioned as the ensign on March 15th 1943. Shortly thereafter I was ordered to the Navy Supply Corps School at Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. In an accelerated program I was graduated in later October, processed for sea duty and combat assignment, and reported aboard USS Morris (DD417) on December 7th 1943, at Pearl Harbor.

Morris was flagship of Destroyer Squadron Two, and was back in Pearl for repairs and replenishment after the campaign in the Aleutians and combat in the Gilbert Islands. DesRon Two was comprised of 11 destroyers, some of the newest in the Pacific. Involved in eight campaigns when I came aboard, she had gone alongside the sinking Lexington in the Coral Sea and saved 500 men, and again evacuated 50 from the sinking Yorktown at Midway, and later saved 550 as Hornet sank. My service on Morris embraced the last 7 campaigns of the war Okinawa the biggest, most bloody, and most destructive battle of the entire Pacific War.

The size of DesRon Two varied from time to time, depending on combat needs, but of the 11 ships most involved, by the end of the war four were sunk and five severely damaged. Most, like Morris, won 15 battles stars, perhaps the most of any squadron in either the Pacific or Atlantic Fleets in WW II.

Friday, April 6, 1945, is a day emblazoned in my memory. Sixty years ago today, off Okinawa in the East China Sea, a Japanese kamikaze plane crashed into the port side of my destroyer (called by sailors a "tin can"), penetrating the hull and exploding on the starboard side of the ship, the USS Morris. The bow was almost severed from the ship, and the explosion was catastrophic. When it was over, 24 men were dead and 44 wounded, almost 30% of the ship's crew.

America and its allies had just landed 182,000 soldiers and Marines on the southwestern coast of Okinawa Gunto. I was on board as supply and disbursing officer; a lieutenant (junior grade) in my eighth Pacific campaign on Morris. More than 2,528 ships descend on Okinawa in a final, devastating amphibious operation envisioned as the final onslaught before invading the Japanese home islands in October that same year.

I recall the tension aboard Morris on the eve of Easter Sunday. Before midnight, in pitch dark, Morris and ships nearby quietly moved forward to be ready for the pre-dawn landings. Dozens of destroyers were stationed about 14 miles offshore to intercept the expected attacks by swarms of desperate kamikaze planes.

Friday, April 6 was the most momentous day in the history of Morris. This was no accident, for the admiral who commanded all Japanese forces in the East China Sea began his Operation Ten-Go in earnest. He had 699 aircraft, 355 of them kamikazes, available for April 6 and April 7. This was to be the first of 10 massed kamikaze onslaughts called kikusui.

Historian Samuel Eliot Morrison noted that a Japanese plane, later identified as a "Kate," carrying either a heavy bomb or torpedo, crashed into the ship on the port side between the No. 1 and No. 2 guns, just above the main deck. Fires spread rapidly. The fire main forward was severed. The fire main forward was severed. Fire hoses had insufficient water to check the fire. Ammo magazines were flooded and electricity forward was connected.

I was at my battle station in the combat information center when it happened, with about a dozen shipmates, perhaps 20-30 feet from the explosion. We were knocked violently to the deck and the CIC engulfed in total darkness. We came to dazed but uninjured, and dashed out on deck to find total chaos, with dead and injured lying around with terrible damage to the forward half of the ship.

We pulled the wounded to safety, administered first aid, manned fire hoses, organized rescue parties and tried to save the ship. Another destroyer and a DE finally arrived alongside to help with the wounded and to fight fires. We thought that the ship would have to be abandoned, for ammunition was exploding, and the fire was fast spreading, a severe list of the ship to port was developing. But with the help of other ships and the heroic efforts of Morris' surviving crew, it was saved.

About midnight, some six or seven hours after having been struck, the after-action report states that Morris slowly limped into the nearby anchorage of Kerama Retto, "underway with port engine ahead one-third, starboard engine ahead two thirds, maneuvering with left rudder because of a large section of hull bent outboard on starboard side at a speed of seven knots. Steering control in after steering with directions from bridge over JV circuit. Commenced pumping A-4 and A-6 to remove a 5 degree port list."

The repair officer at Kerama Retto recommended that Morris be towed to sea and sunk, because it was "junk."

"Historian Samuel Eliot Morrison noted that a Japanese plane, later identified as a "Kate," carrying either a heavy bomb or torpedo, crashed into the ship on the port side."



RADM. Robert H. Spiro Jr. is Chairman Emeritus of the ASCF.

But during two months at anchorage, and by heroic efforts of the surviving crew, Morris was patched up and set sail. It took almost 30 days to return to port in San Francisco's Hunters Point on June 18.

American casualties were the highest of any campaign in the Pacific War: 49,151, including more than 12,000 killed or missing and more than 36,000 wounded. The Army alone suffered 4,482 killed and 19,099 wounded.

Navy and Marine losses were high. The American fleet lost 36 ships sunk and 368 damaged. Japanese losses were staggering, with approximately 110,000 combatants and service troops killed. And more than 42,000 Okinawans perished.

Emerging Threats

By Bill Paisley

President John Kennedy managed to thwart the Cuban Missile Crisis by standing tough and steadfast in the face of Khrushchev's nuclear adventurism. A decade later, and at great cost to our national treasure (58,000 US lives), half a million US troops in Vietnam stopped the South East Asian dominos from falling any farther. Claimed as a defeat for America by many, the Vietnam War can be argued as a victory in the greater war against communist expansion.

Today, however, "emerging threats" cover a wide spectrum of target sets limited only by one's imagination. Events in distant lands or waters can also affect the United States as never before. Iran, long a thorn in the side of the US, could easily affect the supply of oil to many nations throughout the globe by closing down the Strait of Hormuz. Shore-based, anti-ship cruise missiles and mines could make transit through this passage significantly more difficult and dangerous for tankers, navies, and ships of trade and commerce. The US gets only 20% of our imported oil from the Arabian Gulf, so our overall impact would be low from such an action. However, other global economic giants like Japan (80%) and South Korea (83%) get most of their oil from this region. The fuel that powers the global economic engine is oil, and most of that oil for that engine comes from the Arabian Gulf – through the Strait of Hormuz. Other strategic straits of transit around the globe; Suez, the Strait Malacca, the Strait of Gibraltar, could be targeted as well. Maritime choke points are all over the world and transnational terrorism is not particular about where they can achieve their goals.

The military element of "emerging threats" is no less serious. Asymmetric warfare has been present throughout history. The interconnected world we live in today provides myriad of opportunities for military malfeasance. Called by various names today – 4th generation war, insurgency, guerilla or irregular or unconventional warfare, it all boils down to blurring the lines between conventional, fielded-force conflict and insurgent/guerilla/terrorism. In short, the ability of a smaller, numerically or hardware-limited organization to exact an asymmetric level of damage on a larger more powerful force. We saw it on September 11, we saw it with the Madrid bombings of 2004, we saw it in Bali and London and Istanbul and dozens of other countries and capitals around the world. We saw it with hijackers and shoe bombers and "underwear" bombers and car bombers and suicide bombers in boats and on bikes and with children or women. We see it anytime terrorism exacts its deadly toll.

A single computer hacker with access to the Internet can bring down trillion-dollar corporations or shut-down international trading markets and threaten the global networks that interconnect nations throughout this globalized world. International banking systems rely on signals pulsing at the speed of light through fiber optic lines spanning the globe and radio signals that bounce off satellites in geosynchronous orbit 22,500 miles above the earth. With a few strategically placed computer-based attacks cyber terrorists could bring down these networks and the resulting loss of communications infrastructure would result in massive economic chaos in many dozens of countries, rich and poor, leading to a world wide depression that would rival anything seen thus far in history. The top 5 import/export nations in the world engage in nearly a trillion dollars worth of trade each month. Imagine that being shut down in a few minutes.

Another "emerging threat" facing us today are nations that seek an increased ability to change the balance of power in a region. Venezuela, not much of a regional threat in the pre-Chavez years, is purchasing MiG fighters and billions of dollars in military equipment from Russia. Iran seeks an organic nuclear weapons program. China has developed hypersonic, carrier-busting cruise missiles. Pakistan and India continue their militaristic bombast, each with a nuclear arsenal pointed at the other. North Korea claims a questionable nuclear capability while a resurgent Russia has resumed flying Bear and Badger bombers along the U.S. Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), returning to the days of the Cold War.

To borrow a well known phrase from President Jefferson and others, "*the price of freedom is eternal vigilance.*" President Obama's lackluster, and at times spineless, foreign policy that turns a blind eye towards many of these "emerging threats" and weakens many of our traditional defenses is not a reassuring way to address these events of the day. Fortress America is long gone. Eternal vigilance is indeed called for, and the fear today is that such vigilance is gone. We need it back.



A 1942 photo of Yeoman First Class Robert H. Spiro, Jr., USNR.

ONLINE PETITION

Petition to Reverse
Attorney General
Holder's Plan to
Try 9/11 Terrorists
in Civilian Court.

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Keep Your Mouth Shut in Nicaragua

By Dr. Henry A. Fischer

U.S. Ambassador Robert Callahan is persona non-grata in the Nicaraguan city of León, following official accusations of corruption against León Mayor Manuel Calderón.

The U.S. government froze \$64 million in Millennium Challenge Corporation aid to support poor León and Chinandega farmers and entrepreneurs. Mr. Callahan rightly upheld the United States position that León's 2008 municipal elections were fraudulent and said the United States "will not partner with any mayors put in office as a result of vote fraud." In response León's Sandinista Front warned the ambassador to be careful what he says, "for they will not take responsibility for any reprisals against the Ambassador of the U.S. Embassy."

Nicaragua's Permanent Commission on Human Rights lists León Mayor Manuel Calderón and 13 other Sandinista Leaders and collaborators including the present President as suspected of genocide and crimes against humanity. Calderón's leadership role in the 1981 indigenous Miskito Indians relocation and massacre known as "Red Christmas" is well known. Charges filed in the Public Prosecutor's Office include 64 civilian assassinations, 13 cases of torture and 15 disappearances. In 2008 Calderón famously attacked an anti-riot police officer with a club during a Sandinista protest outside of León, which earned him the nickname "Commandant Club."

Our foreign policy will eventually restore freedom and the Rule of Law in this kleptocratic nation where corrupt politicians loot international aid funds at the expense of the country's poor who are forced further down the ladder of oppression.

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