

U.S. Official Meets with Venezuelan Opposition Figures



Caracas, March 12 (teleSUR-RHC)-- A high-ranking official from the U.S. National Endowment for Democracy (NED) recently traveled to Venezuela under suspicious circumstances to meet with right-wing opposition politicians, the president of the Venezuelan National Assembly Diosdado Cabello revealed Wednesday.

During his weekly television program, Cabello said the NED's Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Miriam Kornblith, arrived in Venezuela on February 28, and upon her arrival she opted to disguise her appearance, going so far as to dye her hair.

Kornblith then traveled to Bolivar City to meet with opposition politicians and representatives of a non-governmental organization, registering at a hotel under the pseudonym Sarah Collins.

"If she is acting in good faith, why does she feel the need to change her name and dye her hair?" asked Cabello. The Venezuelan official also said that Kornblith traveled in a vehicle using license plates belonging to a different car.

Cabello stated that Kornblith's mission in Venezuela was to resolve an issue regarding the allocation of money from the NED between opposition parties. After returning to Caracas, she allegedly held a four-hour meeting with opposition leader Ramon Jose Medina at the offices of an opposition political party.

Cabello called Kornblith's employer, the NED, “an institution used by U.S. imperialism to finance subversive terrorist groups that operate as so-called NGOs.” Although the NED claims to be a private foundation, its resources come from the U.S. Congress by way of the State Department. The NED has been widely accused of being a tool of U.S. foreign policy, funding groups that oppose governments that U.S. governments oppose.

According to the NED website, in 2014 alone, the foundation gave \$2,381,824 to organizations operating in Venezuela, ostensibly for things such as training in the use of social media, and the monitoring of human rights. A cursory examination of grant recipients reveals that the money mostly went to groups opposing the democratically-elected government of President Nicolas Maduro.

Kornblith does not hide her own political views concerning Venezuela. In 2013, she wrote in the NED's scholarly journal an article entitled: “Latin America’s Authoritarian Drift: Chavismo after Chavez?” In the article, Kornblith heavily criticizes Venezuela under Chavez for allegedly undermining democracy in the country, citing analysis by the conservative Freedom House think tank.

She also questions the legitimacy of elections in Venezuela – which have been praised by prominent groups such as the Carter Center – and praises the political arrangement that existed in Venezuela before Chavez. Known as the Punto Fijo Pact, under that system two traditional parties would alternate in power, deliberately excluding the voices of Venezuela's poor majority.

In addition, Kornblith distorts history and misrepresents facts to make her argument. For example, she makes an unsourced claim that military officers refused an order from Chavez to use force against demonstrators before the 2002 coup that briefly ousted him from power.

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