

The Llama Files

The Truth About Fernando Villavicencio, the Guardian's Source for Their Anti-Assange Campaign

On: June 7, 2018

"We are conveying the message in private that Correa's actions will have consequences for his relationship with the new Obama administration, while avoiding public comments that would be counterproductive. We do not recommend terminating any USG programs that serve our interests since that would only weaken the incentive for Correa to move back into a more pragmatic mode."

— Heather Hodges, former U.S. Ambassador to Ecuador, [2009 WikiLeaks cable](#)

According to the book, "[The WikiLeaks Files](#)," and based on published WikiLeaks cables, the United States organizes, funds, and trains entire networks of "'civil society' entities generally aligned with US interests" through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). These cables reveal how diplomatic missions work in conjunction with USAID to pursue political change and how U.S. diplomats directly help political allies "cultivate a network of US-funded NGOs." Not surprisingly, U.S. embassies hold aid hostage in order to affect change where they see fit and "pressure governments into adopting acceptable agendas." Alexander Main, Jake Johnston, and Dan Beeton wrote,

"The cables show how US diplomats, in violation of Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, have worked to unify divided political groups opposed to governments the United States does not like, sought to mobilize campaign funding in favor of political allies, and even engaged in smear campaigns against candidates they opposed."

According to [Telesur.tv.net](#), USAID's 2010 budget for Ecuador exceeded \$38 million and NED put aside a spending budget of over \$1 million including \$65,000 to right-wing groups. The large majority of these groups and programs that NED funded were in direct opposition to former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa. It was also reported that during a 2010 coup attempt to overthrow Correa, USAID and NED-funded groups and individuals connected with the Pachakutik political party supported the uprising.

It's no secret that the CIA uses USAID and NED as a vehicle to force political change in Latin America so it's not hard to guess that the foreign NGOs, organizations, and individuals that USAID and NED support essentially do the intelligence agency's bidding. And in terms of Ecuador and Julian Assange, it seems that Fernando Villavicencio might just be one of the CIA's stool pigeons.

FERNANDO VILLAVICENCIO



Fernando Villavicencio

Fernando Villavicencio is a journalist, activist, and former union advisor for the oil industry who just so happened to also co-author one of The Guardian's articles published last month during their almost week-long smear campaign against Julian Assange and former President Rafael Correa. However, he's attacked these men in the past, his contribution to The Guardian hardly being his first rodeo. In 2010, his associates supported an attempted coup against Correa and then he and others sued Correa for the deaths and injuries that occurred during the uprising. In 2013, he forged the documents of an agreement between Ecuador and China, and in 2015, he published questionable and unverified documents about Assange and the security system at the Ecuador Embassy in London. Perhaps more notably, he has ties to Thor Halvorssen (there's that name...again), U.S.-funded NGOs, and the U.S. intelligence community.

With Julian Assange going on eighty days incommunicado and Ecuador's most recent and shocking statements about his [asylum](#), [liberty](#), and free speech, Villavicencio's ties call into question exactly what kind of game The Guardian and other media outlets were playing when they unleashed their international, coordinated attack against Assange last month and for whom were they playing it ?

2010 COUP ATTEMPT



Correa during 2010 coup attempt

"While none of the candidates will return the bilateral relationship to the halcyon days when then-president-elect Lucio Gutierrez declared himself our 'strongest ally in Latin America,' none of the top contenders would affect USG interests as thoroughly as Rafael Correa."

— U.S. Embassy in Quito, [2006 WikiLeaks cable](#)

Before Rafael Correa was even elected president of Ecuador in 2006, the U.S. government had concerns about his staunch loyalty to Ecuador's sovereignty and his repugnance for anything that remotely smelled like U.S. imperialism. And there was good reason to be concerned. Before the election he vowed to end Ecuador's ties to the IMF and World Bank, in 2009, he [refused](#) to renew the U.S. military's lease at the Ecuadorian military base in Manta, and in mid-2010, he [nationalized](#) the country's oil industry. It was only a matter of time before someone plotted a coup.

That day came on September 30, 2010, when rogue police and military officers took to the streets and over a number of facilities in Quito including a hospital, the [airport](#), and a news station, in protest of a new law they [believed](#) reduced police benefits. Correa went outside to [speak](#) with the protestors but was met with tear-gas and physical violence. After he was taken to a hospital he was held [hostage](#) until special military forces were able to retrieve him. In total, eight people were killed and two hundred seventy-four suffered injuries as a result of the uprising.

So how was this able to happen? For starters, police infiltration and oppositional parties' and individuals ties to U.S.-funded NGOs..

Police Infiltration



Former Head of Army Intelligence, Colonel Mario Pazmino (center)

In 2008, Ecuador's Ministry of Defence released a [report](#) detailing how the United States had infiltrated Ecuador's military and police intelligence agencies. According to the document, the agencies' financial dependence on the U.S. made the country "vulnerable" and undermined its ability to "formulate and implement sovereign policies..." Furthermore, because of U.S. funding the agencies were forced to report back to the U.S. as to how the funds were spent risking the "penetration of the Ecuadorian intelligence services."

U.S. dollars were not only spent on equipment, rations, intelligence operations, and payments to informants, but also to train Ecuadorian soldiers and officers. The report stated that the U.S. Embassy in Quito was directly paying some officers every month for things such as food, transportation, and clothing and that informal practices by their intelligence agencies had gone so far "as to commit crimes of criminal nature."

Also mentioned in the report was former Head of Army Intelligence, Mario Pazmino, who had been expelled in 2008 for collaborating with the CIA and concealing information that led to the [death](#) of FARC commander Raul Reyes. His death occurred during an illegal U.S.-led bombing within Ecuador's airspace on March 1, 2008. After the coup attempt, Correa accused Pazmino of having "very close" ties with the CIA and in 2015, [telesurtv.net](#) reported that he had coordinated with opposition lawmakers such as Lourdes Tiban in what may have been a second attempt to overthrow Correa.

[According](#) to Norwegian journalist Eirik Vold,

"...there is absolutely no doubt that the U.S. participated and played an important role in creating that sort of resistance within the security forces that was necessary for that violent, very violent and dangerous coup attempt to take place."

In response to the conclusions within the report, then-U.S. Ambassador Heather Hodges [stated](#), "We work with the government of Ecuador, with the military and the police, on objectives that are very important for security." She wouldn't comment on any intelligence matters.

CONAIE and the Pachakutik Party



Former Ecuadorian President Lucio Gutierrez

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) was founded in 1986, and is considered the country's largest indigenous organization. It represents over ten different indigenous groups and is composed of three regional federations. It's also known for its "organization of popular uprisings," but that's coming from Wikipedia and if you've been following [Craig Murray](#) you know that's not saying much.

The Pachakutik Party is considered the political wing of CONAIE and it aims to "advance the interests of a wide variety of indigenous peoples' organizations throughout Ecuador." Again, Wikipedia. And although some argue that the party has no affiliation with CONAIE despite its backing, a [U.S. cable](#) from the embassy in Quito described Pachakutik as the "sister movement" of CONAIE. Six months before the 2010 coup attempt, Stratfor analyst Reva Bhalla [wrote](#),

"(CONAIE) is calling on other social groups...to join in a protest movement against the government of Rafael Correa."

"When unified, CONAIE can be a powerful indigenous opposition force in Ecuador with the ability to seriously undermine the presidency...The focus of the CONAIE now is on recruiting additional social groups and on expanding the group's political reach at a time when Ecuador's opposition parties are eyeing an opportunity to exploit Correa's growing unpopularity."

Indeed, former Ecuadorian President Lucio Gutierrez who Correa pointed the finger at for the 2010 revolt, led CONAIE in a [successful coup](#) against then-president, Jamil Manuad, back in 2000 so this wasn't CONAIE's first rodeo either.

On the day of the 2010 coup attempt, Pachakutik released a [press statement](#) in which the party's leader, Clever Jimenez, denounced Correa as a dictator who had "violated the rights of public servants as well as society" and called on the "indigenous movement, social movements and democratic political organizations to form a single national front to demand the exit of President Correa."

And guess who was Jimenez's [advisor](#) at the time? Yup. Fernando Villavicencio.

Funding

According to [TelesurTV.net](#), almost all of the groups involved in the 2010 incident, including CONAIE and Pachakutik, were linked to U.S. agencies such as USAID and NED. Additionally, a National Democratic Institute (NDI) [final evaluation report](#) revealed that Pachakutik had received political training from the NDI's "Political Party Network" as early as 2005-2007. The Political Party Network program at the time was actually a \$210,000 USAID/NED-funded project.

ON THE RUN



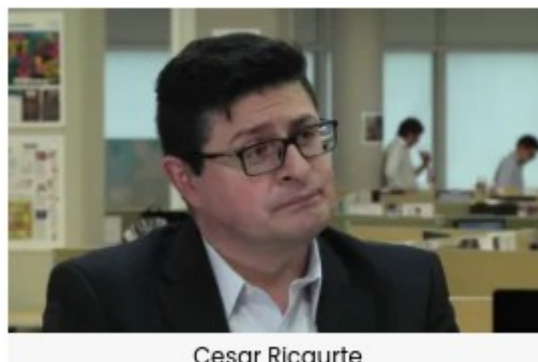
Clever Jimenez and Fernando Villavicencio

In 2011, Pachakutik’s National Assemblyman, Clever Jimenez, [filed](#) a criminal complaint with the Attorney General’s office asking them to investigate then-President Correa’s responsibility for the 2010 revolt. And no, I’m not even joking. According to Jimenez, Correa staged the entire bloody event and the deaths and injuries that followed, including those at the hospital in Quito that occurred while the military was trying to extract Correa, were entirely his fault. Jimenez went so far as to accuse him of promoting civil disobedience and perpetuating crimes against humanity.

In August, Jimenez’s close associate, Fernando Villavicencio, along with Carlos Figuero joined Jimenez’s complaint, [adding](#) that Correa had intentionally (and criminally) attacked a hospital. However, the men failed to produce enough evidence to initiate an investigation and in May, 2012, a judge [ruled](#) that their complaint was “malicious and reckless.”

Three months later, Correa filed a lawsuit against them for defamation. The three men were later [convicted](#) of libel and both Jimenez and Villavicencio received an eighteen-month prison sentence. During their [cassation hearing](#) on January 14, 2014, Villavicencio was nowhere to be found.

New York



Cesar Ricaurte

Villavicencio had fled to the U.S. days before his court case and according to his [book](#), “Sarayaku. La derrota del jabali,” while he was in the States he scheduled numerous meetings including one with media outlet Fundamedios and its co-founder, Cesar Ricaurte. Ricaurte is a fellow at the National Endowment of Democracy (NED) and there’s no denying that his news outlet is funded by NED because he’s listed on their [website](#) as, “co-founder and executive director of the NED-supported Andean Foundation for Social Observation and Study of the Media [Fundamedios].”

Note that the website says Ricaurte is “examining the Ecuadorean government’s systematic assault on freedom of expression, including the stigmatization of journalists, NGOs, and independent media,” and yet

he has yet to speak out on behalf of Julian Assange proving that sometimes the human rights issue is little more than a political one.

The [meeting](#) between Villavicencio and Fundamedios took place in New York at none other than Thor Halvorssen's Human Rights Foundation because why am I not surprised that he's involved in this somehow. In fact, shortly after the meeting, Halvorssen's foundation released a [statement](#) condemning the court's decision against Villavicencio.

In June, 2015, Julian Assange also released a [statement](#), this time about Fundamedios,

"I have researched the issue and discovered that the director of 'Fundamedios' has previously denounced my work and that of WikiLeaks."

"Fundamedios specializes in savaging the Ecuadorian government's attempts at breaking up Ecuadorian media ologopolies. Most of these ologopolies have traditionally been close to the U.S. government and have engaged in frequent acts of journalistic corruption... 'Fundamedios,' which is also funded by these same ologopolies simply has little credibility."

Assange went on to [report](#) that WikiLeaks cables revealed the director of Fundamedios, Cesar Ricaurte, was (still is?) an informant for the U.S. Embassy and that former Ambassador Adam Namm told El Telegrafo that Fundamedios "receives more than \$25,000 a month from USAID and other U.S. government bodies." Of course it should come as no surprise that Halvorssen's [foundation](#) came to Fundamedios' defense against attacks from Correa in January, 2016.

So how does any of this relate to The Guardian's smear campaign against Assange last month? For starters, Fundamedios was behind the creation and funding of [Plan V](#), one of The Guardian's main sources for their articles. So there's that. And I'm getting there.

Washington, D.C.



After New York, Villavicencio [travelled](#) to Washington, D.C. where he met with his "great friend," Ezequiel Vazquez. [Vazquez](#) is the founder of the Center for Investigative Journalism in the Americas ([CIJA](#)), a human rights activist, journalist, advisor to NGO's in Latin America, and a former associate at Otto Reich Associates, LLC. Otto Reich is a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, former U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, and a former senior staff member of the National Security Council. Among a whole host of other things, it's been [reported](#) that Reich was recruited by the CIA while still in college and that he was the mastermind behind the 2002 Venezuelan coup attempt.

In 2013, Max Blumenthal [wrote](#) about Reich and his associate Vazquez,

"Of all the enemies Correa has earned, some of his fiercest reside...in the conservative think tanks of Washington."

"Ezequiel Vazquez Ger, an Argentine-born economist, is among the most aggressive of Correa's antagonists"

Blumenthal also noted that in 2012-2013, both Vazquez and Reich had "honed in on Correa, assailing him for sheltering Assange while he cracked down on opposition media." The two men believed that Correa's decision to give Assange asylum should have been a "key reason" for the United States to refuse any future trade agreements with Ecuador [stating](#) that any renewed trade agreements would "allow Rafael Correa to continue undermining US foreign policy," as if U.S. foreign policy should have been Correa's top priority.

The other really interesting thing here is that Reich [sued](#) Venezuelan company Derwick Associates in 2013. Derwick is the same company that Thor Halvorsen has sued twice (the most [recent filing](#) was earlier this year against both Derwick and Fusion GPS) and that was included in his sworn [statement](#) to the Senate Committee during their Russiagate investigation,

"Former U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela Otto Reich was so fiercely targeted for defamation that he filed federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) lawsuit against Derwick in New York."

What that possibly has to do with Russiagate, who knows. What I do know is that Halvorsen's friend, [Alek Boyd](#), also attacked Derwick Associates and the company's association with Fusion GPS. Don't forget that Bill Browder, a good friend of Halvorsen's, went after Fusion GPS for FOIA violations in a [letter](#) he submitted to the Department of Justice.

For more details about Halvorsen, Boyd, Browder, and Russia, read my [previous post](#), "Russiagate Part One: The Story That Everyone Missed," because essentially what we have here is Fernando Villavicencio spending his time in the States with guys like Halvorsen and Reich's associate, Vazquez, after trying to take down then-President Correa.

Halvorsen, Browder, Boyd, Reich, Vazquez, Villavicencio...same people, same playbook.

Miami



(L-R) Tinsley Mortimer, [Pamela O'Connor](#),
Karen Hollihan

Villavicencio's last stop in the United States appears to have been Miami where he met with twenty-five "[compatriots](#)" and stayed with close friend, Karen Hollihan. Although it's been reported that Villavicencio was Hollihan's assistant, he described her as a relative in his book (unless my translation is wrong). At the time of Villavicencio's stay, Hollihan, an Ecuadorian of German-American descent, was a board member of an organization called the [Interamerican Institute for Democracy](#) (IID), a non-profit organization that fights for "democracy, human rights, and the values of liberty."

But here's the thing about this organization...

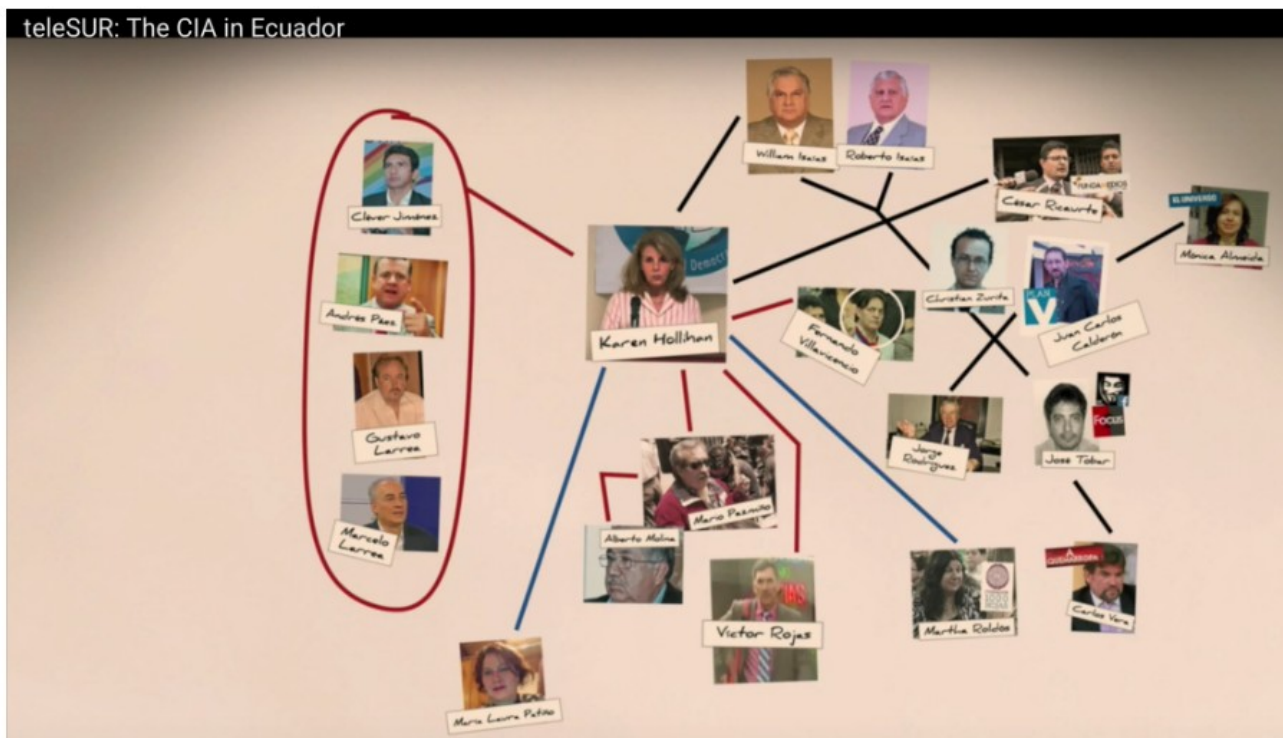
On October 11, 2010, former Ecuadorian Deputy Foreign Minister Kintto Lucas [reported](#) that the IID held an [event](#) with Venezuelan rightists and Ecuadorian opposition a week before the 2010 coup attempt to plot the revolt. The event was called "[Breakfast with Lucio Guitierrez](#)," (yes, that's the same former Ecuadorian president that Correa blamed for the coup) and attendees included disgraced former Director of Army Intelligence and CIA patsy, Mario Pazmino.

Less than two months after the revolt, the U.S. Congress, the IID, and other U.S. organizations like Heritage Foundation, the Hudson Institute, and the Center for Security Policy [sponsored](#) an [event](#) at the U.S. Congressional Visitor's Center entitled, "Danger in the Andes: Threats to Democracy, Human Rights, and Inter-American Security." Attendees at that event included Javier El-Hage, a representative of Halvorsen's Human Rights Foundation; Otto Reich; former Ecuadorian president, Lucio Guitierrez; and Joel Hirst, Council on Foreign Relations. I mean, come ON.

Six years later, TelesurTV.net ran a [story](#) and [documentary](#) about Hollihan being allegedly recruited by the CIA, possibly in an effort to restore the U.S. intelligence network in Ecuador after another [CIA agent](#) who

went by the code name “[Swat](#),” left the country. According to Telesurtv.net’s report, Hollihan developed a network of informants that included Mario Pazmino, Fernando Villavicencio, and Cesar Ricaurte, the director of Fundamedios.

Hollihan later sued Telesur but it appears she [withdrew](#) her complaint on March 15, 2017.



Last but certainly not least is Hollihan’s alleged ties to the Isaias brothers. A 2005 [WikiLeaks cable](#) from former Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney sums up the brothers nicely,

"William and Roberto Isaias, former chiefs of Filanbanco bank and among Ecuador’s richest men, fled Ecuador in 1999 after absconding with over \$100 million in government bailout funds. They used their ill-gotten wealth to buy safe passage from Ecuador and later pressured prosecutors to reduce criminal charges against them. Similar pressure tactics resulted in GoE-prepared extradition packages that were insubstantial and non-actionable by the Department of Justice. Proof of their financial shenanigans was sufficient, however, to permit the State Department to revoke their visas on money-laundering charges in 2003."

The cable provides perhaps the most detailed summary I’ve come across with regards to the brothers, their businesses, and their alleged crimes. As of today, they still reside in the United States after paying for safe passage out of Ecuador. There’s more to the story, however. A New York Times [article](#) reported that family members of the Isaias’ donated an obscene amount of money to U.S. political candidates including President Obama’s campaign, after which the Obama administration rejected Ecuador’s extradition request for the brothers.

The National Review also ran a [story](#) in 2014, detailing how a relative of the Isaias’ was able to essentially bribe her way into the United States. They reported,

"The woman, Estefanía Isaías, had been barred from coming to the United States after being caught fraudulently obtaining visas for her maids,’ the *Times* reports. ‘But the ban was lifted at the request of the State Department under former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton so that Ms. Isaías could work for an Obama fund-raiser with close ties to the administration.’

That fundraiser, Alfredo J. Balsera, head of Balsera Communications in Miami, is backing Clinton in 2016."

So that’s fun. And remember that story about Planned Parenthood selling baby parts? The Isaias family was allegedly involved in that, too, [purchasing](#) fetal tissue and cells from the organization and then turning around and selling them for profit. In a fairly grotesque article called “[Pay to Slay](#),” Operation Rescue reported,

"...the Isaias companies had no problem procuring on a regular basis tissue of aborted babies, including hearts, lungs, kidneys, brains, intestines, skeletal muscle and bones, from Planned Parenthood...U.S. companies and institutions were heavily price-gouged, while foreign entities got deep discounts..."
"The Isaias baby parts businesses shipped the remains of aborted American babies all over the world."

(Update: See also Orange County District Attorney [October 12, 2016](#) and [December 8, 2017](#) press releases.)

Operation Rescue also pointed out that the Isaias' business, DaVinci Biosciences, apparently experimented on people in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

I mean, what? Essentially Hillary Clinton let this billionaire family run amok in America, under protection no less, and yet somehow Julian Assange is the problem? Okay.

PART TWO

There's actually a second part to this story that needs to be written which includes forgery, hacked emails, Villavicencio's news site, Focus Ecuador (a source for The Guardian), recent events, and recent Guardian articles. But even if I didn't write one, the information in this post alone should make everyone question why in the world The Guardian would continue to use a source like Villavicencio who is obviously tied to the U.S. government, the CIA, individuals like Thor Halvorsen and Bill Browder, and opponents of both Julian Assange and former President Rafael Correa.

It's become impossible to believe that their smear campaign last month was entirely their idea and not at the behest of the U.S. government. But either way, The Guardian has proven itself as a media outlet essentially willing to openly push for the extradition, torture and/or death of fellow journalists and publishers like Julian Assange. Like I [asked](#) previously, "How in the fuck does anyone at the Guardian sleep at night?"

<https://jimmysllama.com/2018/06/07/11347/>