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American Enterprise Institute

The Perils of Populism: Hot Spots in Latin America

12:45 p.m. Registration

1:00 *Keynote Speaker:* Marisol Argueta, foreign minister of El Salvador
“The Challenges to Democratic Institutions in the Americas”

1:40 *Discussants:* Jaime Aparicio, former ambassador of Bolivia to the United States
Javier El-Hage, Human Rights Foundation

Moderator: [Roger F. Noriega](#), AEI

3:00 Adjournment

September 18, 2008

[Edited transcript from audio tapes]

Roger F. Noriega: -- Canciller Argueta de Barillas specializes in international relations, human rights, conflict resolution, and development. She was an adviser to the Salvadoran Foreign Ministry from 2004 to 2007, and general director for bilateral and multilateral foreign policy, in the ministry, from 1999 to 2004. She previously served as a representative to the United Nations and the Embassy of El Salvador here in the United States where she made many friends, some of whom are here today.

Canciller Argueta de Barillas also is a board member of the International Institute of Women and the Salvadoran Foundation for Seniors. She has been a coordinator of the International Conference of Middle-Income Countries and the Salvadoran representative for the Central-American Integration System.

Those of us who have worked or who currently work in U.S. Diplomacy also recognize that Canciller Argueta and her colleagues from El Salvador are part of a very elite and, unfortunately, very small club; we call them allies. In diplomacy, a colleague of mine once observed that the Salvadorans not only want to help; they know how to help. They are committed, principled professionals.

I want to acknowledge, as a U.S. citizen, that El Salvador has hundreds of its best young men serving in Iraq, alongside our troops, 300 of their men. Three hundred of those men are in Iraq today. They are professional, able soldiers worthy of their country. And five Salvadorans lost their lives doing their duty as they saw it. President Saca saw it this way in explaining his commitment, which has to be an extraordinarily tough decision, “We identify ourselves with liberty. We identify ourselves with the United States. We are partners. We are allies. And of course, a great part of this decision has to do with the belief that we are making a great contribution toward creating peace in Iraq,” and history will record that they did just that.

And it is precisely because the Salvadorans have struggled for freedom that they value it so much. It is because we stood with them that they now stand with us. And it is why Canciller Argueta is uniquely qualified to alert us today to the aggressive campaign being waged by our enemies to knock the pillars out from under democracy, right here, close to home. Please join me in welcoming our keynote speaker for this afternoon, Canciller Argueta.

Marisol Argueta: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm really excited to be here today and I'm especially thankful for my friend, Ambassador Roger Noriega for having invited me to be here with you this afternoon. We cherish the relation with Washington, as he mentioned, and we also have a very strong bond with this institution. Thank you very much for having me here today.

Let me -- allow me to shape out this discussion by briefly presenting you some ideas that I hope will set the tone for a fruitful exchange on the issue that we are going to discuss this afternoon. As you may know, during the last decades, Latin America has economically performed quite well. Economic growth has revived, healthy fiscal policies are in place, prudent monetary policies have shielded our currencies. Inflation is also under control.

Exports and markets for our products have diversified and practically healthy economies characterize the region. Overall, Latin America has been growing at a steady rate exceeding four percent from 2005 to 2007. Extreme poverty has been reduced. The region, overall, has seen an increase in human development as it is indexed by the United Nations. Fiscal stability has enabled governments to implement social policies that are aimed at improving health, housing, and education among our citizens.

On the political front, all but one country in the hemisphere qualifies as a democratically-elected government. Strong party systems have allowed parties from a broad political spectrum to come to power by fairly and freely winning presidential, municipal, and legislative elections. My own country, El Salvador, is a good example of such a political progress, as for us Salvadorans have been able to transform our country from a war-torn country into a peaceful and free nation, a functional democracy and a small, vibrant, and dollarized economy.

These transformations have allowed our country to become a reliable friend and ally of the United States of America. The entry into force of CAFTA-DR in March 2006, the signing of a compact with the Millennium Challenge Corporation in November 2007 for the development of the Northern region of El Salvador, U.S. economic assistance for reconstruction of the country after the two back-to-back earthquakes that destroyed our country in 2001, the granting of the temporary protected status that allows tens of thousands of Salvadorans to live and work legally in the United States are only a few examples that illustrate the close relations that exist between our two nations.

El Salvador is the only country in the Western Hemisphere that is a member of the coalition of the multilateral force fighting the war against terrorism in Iraq. The 11th rotation of Battalion Cuscatlán is currently deployed in Iraq and the 12th rotation is ready to be deployed soon. Our country remains committed to fight common threats with the United States and to contribute to peace and stability around the world.

Our country is also participating in peace missions in Lebanon as part of the U.N. Blue Helmets Mission and keeping peace forces in Haiti and in sub-Saharan countries in Africa. We are cooperating with the United States in combating drug trafficking in the region as El Salvador's international airport is one of the three forwarding operating locations known as FOLS in Latin America. We are also partnering in combating organized crime, gang activities, money laundering, and other forms of multi-lateral crime.

El Salvador serves also as headquarters of the International Law Enforcement Agency, ILEA, under regional headquarters of Interpol, and is looking forward to work together in programs related to the recently approved Merida Initiative. In this scenario, El Salvador is perhaps, if not the closest, one of the closest U.S. allies in the region. This is not a coincidence but the manifestation of the convergence of our two nations in the belief of democracy and the system of freedoms as the only means to attain prosperity and [indiscernible] in our development goals.

A contrasting situation to what we are seeing in many other parts of Latin America, where anti-Americanism has reached historic levels. One just needs to open any newspaper and read the latest headlines in Latin America to realize that the region is full of anti-American manifestations. Last week, two American ambassadors were ordered out of two South American countries where they were serving. And for another, his credential letter presentation ceremony that would have enabled him to exercise his duties was deferred.

Polls show declining favorable views in the U.S. among several countries in Latin America. Domestic failures, discontent and social unrest in their region are quickly distracted and blamed on the United States. The strong Latin American support for the U.S. after the 2000 terrorist attacks and their campaign against terror in Iraq has faded.

There exists also an increasing disenchantment with globalization under neo-liberal system. Latin Americans feel that the economic policies for the last 20 years put in place by governments have yet to deliver prosperity and equality. Moreover, many that are after the consolidation of peace and democracy in the region, economic and social benefits, have not arrived as promised.

We are therefore seeing the emerging of movements in leaders that want to revive old populist methods that have failed before. They call for the nationalization of country resources and services; state control of trade and production, and a collection of irresponsible and unsustainable subsidies. All is done in the name of their peoples and with a promise of a better future for all citizens regardless of their social condition.

To complicate matters even further, recently we have witnessed trans-Atlantic alliances that might turn the region into a new ground where the former Cold War adversaries may arm-wrestle to prove their military might. Even recent delicate international issues such as tensions in Kosovo, South Ossetia, or Abkhazia are now matters that become opportunities to accentuate ideological division in the Latin American region.

What has happened? What has gone wrong? This week, in an op-ed piece in a Salvadoran newspaper, a well-known columnist quoted analyst Roberto Artavia of INCAE, an illustration of what has occurred in Latin America. Artavia compares neo-populist countries in the region with a patient that has been prescribed a long-spectrum drug for 45 days and by the 20th day, on having had partial or no results at all, decides to quit taking the pills, and then the worst happens. To me this is very telling. Frustrated, a group of Latin American nations have decided to quit taking their prescribed medicines and have decided to change regardless of consequences just because they have felt that the urgent need to try some other quick-relief drugs and then instead of getting better, they really get worse.

But that has not happened by chance. There is a perception that the United States has neglected the region. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, quite understandably, the United States shifted its foreign policy priorities to other regions of the world. As many geopolitical analysts have pointed out, Latin America has been subsidizing U.S. foreign policy in other parts of the world. Such a neglect has created a vacuum that has been filled by demagoguery and by false hope. The cost of fuel has not helped either. High oil prices have allowed oil-rich countries in Latin America to develop initiatives that in the end increase fuel prices. Some countries have brought into these offers. Further, funds from these programs are diverted to finance left political parties.

Dear friends, the United States needs to do more. Friends and allies need to be treated differently. There are important issues such as national and atmospheric security, combating organized crime, illegal drugs, gangs, terrorism, and assets laundering and immigration, in which the U.S. needs to have a close collaboration with Latin America.

Take as an example the Merida Initiative. As earmarked, funds are insufficient for Central America. Sixty-five million dollars have been allocated for Central America and the Caribbean region to finance programs and projects to fight narco-traffic, smuggling and weapons, and the fight against gangs. Allocation of these resources should clearly reflect an individual cooperation response from each country in the region. Organized crime and drug trafficking recognizes no border, and to affect such problems, we must have a comprehensive and balanced approach to the region as a whole.

It is for us a contraction that while great importance is given to expanding the scope of that forwarding operating location in El Salvador; fewer resources are allocated in the form of new and better equipment to monitor crime in Central America.

As for immigration, the U.S. needs to quickly retake the issue in an integral matter. We were so discouraged to see the failure of the administration and Congress to agree on a comprehensive immigration reform package. The U.S. is home to more than a million Salvadorans. To us, immigration relief for every single one of them is a valued matter of social and economic security.

Deportations are also a worrisome issue. While Salvadorans work hard to send remittances to our relatives in El Salvador, their stability is threatened by the fear of increasing raids, making them victims to unscrupulous employers and human rights abuses. On the receiving side, our country increasingly faces the deportation of criminals that land free in our territory, having not committed crimes over there. From January to August 2008, the United States has deported 13,693 Salvadorans, out of which 4,299 have criminal records. We need to have a shared-responsibility approach. This is a problem for both our countries since many of these repatriated criminals quickly find their way back to the United States, creating a vicious circle and coming back through the revolving door.

The U.S. needs to engage more with the region. Americans need to pay more attention to what is going on in Latin America. Foes are grouping and getting stronger. **As you mentioned, Ambassador Noriega, allies are becoming fewer. In particular, the United States must pay close attention to what is happening in El Salvador and to the resulting geopolitical and national security consequences.**

The upcoming legislative and municipal elections in January 2009 followed by the next presidential elections in March 2009 will be, without any doubt, the closest electoral competitions in El Salvador's history. This election will be a battleground where two opposite visions of political thought will be again tested. This opposition party is a remnant, orthodoxy of the former guerilla. Some members of its leadership have been closely linked to ETA or to FARC.

Losing El Salvador will be a lose-lose situation for the security and national interest of both El Salvador and the United States. It will generate freedom-cutting measures. It will produce instability in the country and neighboring countries and it will have the potential of making El Salvador go back 30 years in history when Central America was in turmoil. As President Ronald Reagan said more than 25 years ago in a State of the Union Address, "Tonight, the security of the United States is at stake in El Salvador." These words remain in the minds of many of us that need to have more attention being paid to what is going on in Central America.

We have invited congressional delegations to come to El Salvador to watch the elections both in January and in March 2009 in order to observe the electoral processes and determine if elections are fair and free. I just had a meeting with the Secretary of the General of the Organization of American States, Dr. Insulza, who has also engaged in this process. We have also asked the United States Congress and the administration to support the renewal of TPS for more than 230,000 Salvadorans temporarily protected under that program. I'm going to see Dr. Rice this afternoon and this is one of the main issues that we are going to talk about.

Regardless of the U.S. election results, an immigration reform will help El Salvador to implement a successful governmental plan. The United States must be vigilant that El Salvador continues in the path of freedom, strong rule of law, respect of human rights, and economic modernization, avoiding populism, curtailing individual rights, and repressing political liberties including freedom of speech and freedom of press.

The United States must take seriously the risks and the threats to its security arising from an anti-democratic wave of leaders, whose sole interest is to provoke and damage the United States' image in the region and in the world. A U.S. foreign policy toward the region must be reassessed in the view of the growing anti-American sentiment and the installment of an increasing number of anti-U.S. governments in this backyard.

The United States and our country's need to establish a security balance in the region, not only from a political point of view, but also with the cooperation approach in another area such as immigration, trade, education, social development that involve the U.S. administration, Congress, multi-lateral institutions such as the OAS and the IDB. In that regard, we welcome initiatives such as the Growth of Opportunity Partnership of the Americas, and investing in agriculture to combat hunger, because these are the type of programs from the United States that could guarantee a security balance to confront populist ideas in the region.

Europe is a good example of hemispheric integration. Even though economic policies are implemented at both national and regional level, under the European Integration Treaty, the regional economic policies are considered a matter of common concern. Europe's GDP is 10,957 trillion. A group of 13 member countries have integrated even further by adopting a single currency, which is used now by more than a half of the European citizens. Europe is now strong. The Western Hemisphere under the leadership of the United States should follow this example with regional development policies aiming at integrating our Americas even more.

Dear friends, Latin America today faces a threat. The temptation of a quick-result Latin-American neo-socialism; some leaders call it differently. This is a weird concoction of country-tailored socialist, populist regimes whose common characteristics are getting to power by democratic means, the progressive illumination or weakening of institutions, the disillusion of legislatures, and constitutional reform to introduce endless presidential re-elections, so that leaders can rule timelessly and without any system of check and balances through the populist policies.

The only way to fight populism is with ideas. With stories of success that reveal the fallacies of a system that has proven to bring nothing but more poverty to our people. Those who have followed this expired prescription, as expected, have failed. El Salvador is now confronting its risk. The 2009 congressional and presidential elections in our country will be crucial. If power goes to the wrong hands, El Salvador may very well be the next populist failure in the hemisphere. I hope it is not. Thank you very much.

Roger F. Noriega: The foreign minister has agreed to answer some questions and I'll exercise my prerogative to ask the first question, denying Norm Bailey the traditional first question.

I had the pleasure of visiting Central America about a month ago, including El Salvador and also visited Guatemala and Honduras, and my colleagues went on Nicaragua and Panama, and we were also -- all three of us in El Salvador, were looking at the narcotics trafficking situation and the lawlessness accompanying the emergence of even stronger, more visceral strains of these illegal syndicates that have been pushed south by Mexico's efforts.

I think it is really extraordinarily important for us to recognize that first and foremost, you need political will to confront this criminality which has such a profound effect on our way of life and well being of this country, the United States, so we need strong friends and allies. With all due respect, I find the majority of the governments there really uncommitted to the fight, not even recognizing how tough it is.

El Salvador is definitely the exception. Those of us who do not think the elections have consequences and that we can work with whoever is elected should seize very clearly on the reality that the forward operating location in El Salvador is not something that the FMLN would support, and I will not ask you to comment on that. But the broader issue is to fight the narco-trafficking; you need the political will and institutions. So to what extent do you think narco-traffickers themselves and those that abet them in their own countries, for example in Venezuela, have an interest in seeing the denigration of democracy and institutions precisely to be creating free-fire zones for narco-trafficking?

Marisol Argueta: Well, there is definitely a link between the two issues. We have been very careful by offering El Salvador as the headquarters for all these international organizations and institutions to combat crime, precisely because we are aware of the threat that is posed by leaving institutions without the strength and the moral backing for them to be democratic, to continue to be effective in that fight. We are worried with our neighboring countries with the situation that has grown with respect to drug trafficking and money laundering. We have a very strong legal system that combats that but the same has not happened in the rest of the region.

Central America is definitely the road from South America to the United States for drug trafficking, and in that sense, we believe it is very important that the U.S. looks at friend countries as allies and give us resources. We have offered this space for the forwarding operating location but we do not have all the resources; we do not have all the technology to put it to work at its potential. That is definitely one of the issues that we are talking with the Ministry of Defense of El Salvador and that will be raised this afternoon with Dr. Rice as well.

Roger F. Noriega: Great. Thank you very much for that clear answer. You have the microphone? This gentleman here has the microphone. Please raise your hands; we will go to Norm Bailey and then Frank Calzone [phonetic]. Wait for the microphone please.

Norm Bailey: Thank you very much, and thank you Madam Minister for your remarks and I agree with you completely. Much more attention needs to be paid to the various threats to the security of the United States and to the Hemisphere than is being paid at the present time. My question has to do with whether you have some idea as to the reason why the Honduran government has decided to become part of the so-called Bolivarian Revolution in the Western Hemisphere?

Marisol Argueta: Well, we are quite disappointed and worried with that decision made by Honduras. As you know, Guatemala is following, possibly, that same path and even Costa Rica has announced some interest in following the same idea with Venezuela. As I mentioned in my speech, I think it is a very easy way of getting funds, of trying to reduce the impact of the price of oil in the countries. It is not a solution that we will be taking in the short term.

It is something that is going long term, but what is more worrisome, is that there is indebtedness for long term, and what happens? The countries that are giving these donations are not only

giving quick cash for fast projects for leftist governments, but are also in the long term becoming indebted with the country that will control the finances of Latin America in the end. We are trying to prevent the integration system of Central America to be destroyed by the interaction of countries foreign to Central America. It is one of the big challenges that we are facing. We are very small countries as you know and we portray ourselves as becoming a part of the globalization and becoming much more competitive as a region than individually.

So this is something that is really becoming a concern for our government. What we are practically trying to do right now is to concentrate in social development as part of the integration that has not yet developed, as the political area is probably going to be stagnated by these foreign actors. And at the same time, economic development has its own ongoing process. We believe stressing the impact of security of working together towards a common security regime, it is important, and social development is also important.

You know, there is going to be elections in Honduras next year and I believe, again, it is very important, the reaction or the policy that the United States exerts with Honduras. Hondurans, Nicaraguans, and Salvadorans are being protected by the TPS, by the Temporary Protected Status, and immigration benefits and we are hoping that Hondurans and Nicaraguans also have an extension of their temporary protected status. Otherwise, it would be very negative -- it would have a very negative impact on the whole region, if we see further deportations of Hondurans and Nicaraguans. **But a clear expression of a differentiated action should also be envisioned by the United States policies where you cannot treat allies in the same way as you treat friends.**

Frank Calzone: Señora Ministro, you mentioned about the regional outlook and my question, very briefly, is two for one. What can you tell us about the impact of the governments of Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cuba in this regional situation which is still developing? And two, you are going to be seeing Secretary Rice. If you had a chance to sit down with the President, you told us that some governments have changed, they no longer take the pills they are supposed to take, what would you tell the President what is wrong, what could be improved in his foreign policy towards Latin America?

Marisol Argueta: Well, I believe this is a matter of leadership and prestige, and as I mentioned, there is a vacuum. I think the American policies have shifted to other regions where there is more concern. I was shocked this morning when looking at the news about the bomb at the U.S. Embassy in Yemen, and it is understandable that there is a lot of attention being paid and a lot of resources allocated to fighting terrorism. But that should not be in lieu of what is not being done in Latin America.

What I mean is that they are not exclusive of each other. The U.S. has enough resources and enough vision to work and to fight its main concerns as defending the national interest but at the same time, to pay close attention to the risks that are being posed in the neighborhood. I do not believe that the extent of what is going on in Latin America should have happened if we had engaged in a different sort of common action with the United States.

That is one of the reasons I mentioned Europe. Look at the European model. They have, each one of the 27 countries in the European Union, different languages, different cultures, different ethnic backgrounds, and they are working together to build a block of countries that are healthy in its economics, that are working together in most of the security issues, they have a common immigration policy, and if we could see ourselves in the Western Hemisphere, in a similar path, I think that would make a very strong difference. We would close a space for ideological differences.

You can see in Europe the co-existing of socialist governments with conservative governments but all working with the same medium and long-term vision and that is what I think has failed in our hemisphere. We need strong leaderships. We need to establish an agenda of issues that are of common concern, security, immigration, economics, trade, and to have funds so that we can also work together in those smaller threats that are being an obstacle for our development. I think an integral re-assessment of the relations and a vision needs to be put in place.

Roger F. Noriega: Let me ask you, Madam Foreign Minister, what do you think the impact would be of Congress adjourning this year without approving the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, and how important do you think approval of that agreement would be to a new administration, setting out on a positive footing with Latin America?

Marisol Argueta: Well, again, that is another unclear and negative message that is being sent to Latin America. Colombia is together with El Salvador and with one or two other countries, the closest to the United States, and sending such a negative message is what is becoming so confusing and so negative in the relations. I think Congress has to sophisticate a little more the assessment of what the Free Trade Agreement with Colombia will mean. They need the Free Trade Agreement to be passed. They need it because it is a matter of security. Not only for Colombia. It is a matter of security for the United States.

It is a way of combating terrorism as well. And that is what it is partly un-understood in Latin America, how the U.S. Congress is not able to see what is clear to the rest of us. How it is so easily connected in Latin America as a way of responding to a country that is struggling, that is fighting with the U.S. against terrorism, with a president that is as popular as President Uribe who has also shown his commitment to work with democracy, to work with freedoms, and to work against all the challenges and risks that are being posed in Central America, and I would definitely send a message to Congress, I know they've been doing so many efforts.

Our Embassy here in Washington has also helped and supported the efforts of the Colombian government to pass this law and we just do not understand what is going in Congress. It seems that there is no understanding of Latin America. And I think the work of organizations as yours could be very important in placing Latin America clearly in the agenda of the U.S. Congress and administration.

Roger F. Noriega: We thank you for your contributing of that influence with your appearance today and your very clear message. Do you have time for one question or no?

Marisol Argueta: Yes, please.

Roger F. Noriega: Okay, I guess -- we've got -- do you have time for two questions?

Marisol Argueta: Yes, sure.

Roger F. Noriega: Okay. Back here with these two ladies at the table here.

Sara Skinner: 83.4 percent of Salvadorans do not support the war in Iraq and El Salvador sending troops, and yet the Saca administration has continued to send troops since 2003, and I know that the conservative block has continued to say it is to support -- it is an exchange in some ways for TPS or an MCC grant, yet Nicaragua and Honduras both enjoy the MCC grants as well as the TPS -- the renewal of their TPS thus far. So, I'm curious as to how the Salvadoran government and the ARENA presidential candidate, Rodrigo Avila, can continue to justify the deployment of Salvadoran troops to Iraq.

Marisol Argueta: Well, as you know, relations with countries are based on common interests and common values. In the case of our deployment of troops to Iraq, it is an issue of values and to the fight against terrorism. Our 12th Battalion is now working in reconstruction. We ourselves were benefitted by multi-lateral forces that helped us reconstruct the country after the conflict in the 1980's and it is a way of paying back, what we are doing. We feel very proud to be present in Iraq and we feel very proud to be helping that country reconstruct. As you know, there has been an intention to make the coalition smaller, and we would be ready to accompany the efforts as long as they are needed in Iraq.

Roger F. Noriega: It is an interesting point though because, I mentioned about principal leadership and that includes how you govern at home in addition to your foreign policy and whether you stand for anything in the world. And the wreck of the Nicaraguan government and the wreckage of the Honduran government leads me to believe that we should -- as you sort of intimate, we should review our MCC assistance to those governments, those corrupt governments. That's my personal opinion. Did you have a question?

Marisol Argueta: If I just may, excuse me, comment on your comment, and that is exactly one of the messages that we are trying to bring. The U.S. is not sending a clear message of recognizing the effort of a country that is fighting together for values, for the same principles than to others that are just -- let me say -- free-riders, just use the WTO acronyms, but in fact, that is what is a little disturbing and it is something that is not comprehended, that is not understood. With the Merida Initiative as I mentioned, they are allocating resources generally. **They're not making an intelligent allocation to individual countries that are responding better to the United States, and I think that is something extremely important to pay attention to.**

Roger F. Noriega: Thank you very much. Ma'am?

Female Voice: [indiscernible] with the increasing presence of Iran in the hemisphere [sounds like], has a very large embassy they now have in Nicaragua and their plans on [indiscernible] Nicaragua to the other, I was wondering if in El Salvador, what you see in terms of the remaining presence of [indiscernible].

Marisol Argueta: Thank you very much for your question. I think it is very relevant, and that is another issue that I did not touch on my intervention. But besides leaving our space ready in South America for submarines, that will be close to the United States, with regards to the Russian approach that is being made with Venezuela.

Let's look at Iran. That's another threat. The embassy of Iran in Nicaragua has more than 50 diplomats, and I received a call from the foreign minister of Iran about three weeks ago. He insistently called, we do not have diplomatic relations with Iran but I had to reply to his call, and what he mentioned is that he offered \$150 million as a fund for the development of Central America. I thanked him, of course, but we are not going to follow into that path. At least El Salvador, the current administration, is very clear on that. But while you are listening to that offer of Iran, of \$150 million, we are receiving -- the whole region \$65 million from the U.S. in terms of the Merida Initiative.

So I think that is another very clear example of how resources by the American administration and Congress should be analyzed and allocated in not only for which purposes but for who are these allocated. We are really concerned with the presence of Iran, especially because we have also worked together with Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador in a form of a common immigration ground. We would not be ready to allow the Salvadoran territory to be part of a terrorist scheme.

Roger F. Noriega: Thank you very much. I believe that is all in terms of questions. We want to thank you very much for your presentation. It was very illuminating and one of the things that we did not talk very much about the internal Salvadoran politics but I will just simply comment that there is a very intense contest going on there and where the many in El Salvador have, I think, let down their guard in terms of what the FMLN really means.

Even one of my Democratic colleagues was commenting, "Well, these people signed a peace accord and it is instructive that quite literally, the people that are running the FMLN in the day had nothing to do with signing the peace accords," and as matter of fact, the war is still raging in the form of functionaries -- really not functionaries, but leadership of the FMLN who are helping the FARC and manage its affairs and Lord knows what they are really doing.

So, I would hope that you would take back the message that they should recognize the incremental way in which Venezuelans said, "Well, look, Hugo Chavez can't really do that much harm." And when you let that person who held a gun to the former democratically-elected President's head, and you elect him president and turn your democracy over to the person, a coup-maker like that, do not be surprised what you get. And when you turn your government over to a group that has never renounced really or apologized sufficiently for the campaign of terror that it waged on its own people, do not be surprised what you get. So I hope that Salvadorans will exercise their characteristic wisdom and do the right thing, but I know voting in El Salvador [cross-talking] I'm staunchly committed to democracy in El Salvador.

Marisol Argueta: Thank you very much. **That's why it is very important that the U.S. message is not, "We will be able to work in the same way with whomever gets elected in El Salvador."** It will not be such.

Roger F. Noriega: Right. And my view is, if you are incapable of seeing the difference between good and evil, how do you know whether you are doing good? And I think our diplomacy needs to be willing to make some choices. Thank you very much.

Marisol Argueta: [cross-talking]. Thank you very much. Thank you everybody.

Roger F. Noriega: Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to start the next panel immediately after I collect my gift.

[Break 45:45-48:54]