

FOCUS LATIN AMERICA

US Official Warns El Salvador's President That Aid at Risk



SALVADOR MELENDEZ/ASSOCIATED PRESS

There is a growing concern among mainly Democratic lawmakers that El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele, seen here delivering a speech to the newly inducted members of the armed forces at Gerardo Barrios square in front of the National Palace in San Salvador, is taking his country down an authoritarian path.

by Joshua Goodman

A senior U.S. official quietly told El Salvador's government that anti-poverty assistance from Washington is at risk over President Nayib Bukele's defiance of his country's supreme court and congress, The Associated Press has learned.

The rare rebuke from the Trump administration — one of Bukele's biggest boosters — came in a May 29 letter to an aide of the president from Thomas Kelly, acting vice president of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, an independent U.S. foreign aid agency that has committed nearly \$300 million in grants to the small Central American country.

With Congress considering whether to extend a Sept. 9 deadline for spending the U.S. aid, the criticism reflects growing concerns among mainly Democratic lawmakers that Bukele is taking his country down an authoritarian path, such as his use of troops to intimidate legislators and his rejection of high court ruling against tough pandemic restrictions.

"Recent actions by the Government of El Salvador have raised questions about the government's commitment to MCC's eligibility criteria, in particular the Executive Branch's interactions with the other branches of government," Kelly's letter said. "Further concerning incidents relating to these criteria could risk negative consequences for our partnership, something we wish to avoid."

Kelly added that assistance from the MCC is contingent on "strict adherence to the rule of law and the protection of fundamental freedoms."

A copy of the letter was provided to AP by a U.S. congressional staffer on the condition of anonymity to disclose a private correspondence.

Bukele's press office did not comment in response to a list of questions about the letter.

The MCC in 2014 signed a compact with El Salvador to provide up to \$277 million to finance regulatory reforms, education and infrastructure improvements, with the goal of promoting economic growth and private investment in the country. El Salvador agreed to allocate an additional \$88 million for those efforts. It is one of the MCC's largest

commitments anywhere in the world and followed an earlier \$461 million U.S. aid package.

It's not clear how El Salvador addressed Kelly's private concerns, but there's no sign the MCC is looking to cut off Bukele's government, which has requested a six- to 12-month no-cost extension to carry out projects that have been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic. As of July 30, 74% of the funds donated by the U.S. had been spent, El Salvador's government says.

El Salvador is expected to seek new U.S. funding once the current assistance expires. But Democratic Party staffers in Congress say there is no support for it becoming the first partner country to develop a third compact with the MCC, which was established by Congress in 2004 as an agency that reports to the State Department but operates independently.

Tim Rieser, an aide to Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the MCC was established with the goal of raising the standard for foreign assistance.

To be eligible, a country must first pass an MCC "scorecard" that rates performance on 20 categories. In the 2020 scorecard, El Salvador ranked in the top quarter for political rights and top half for civil liberties, both third-party policy indicators, among 28 developing countries with similar income levels.

"MCC grants are supposed to be a reward for governments that meet objective criteria like battling corruption and respect for the rule of law," Rieser said. "Senator Leahy believes that if we ignore conduct like President Bukele's that violate those criteria it undermines the MCC's credibility."

Michael Kozak, acting assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, said last week that he was confident Congress would extend the compact for El Salvador and other countries where implementation has been slowed by the pandemic.

Joshua Goodman reports for the Associated Press. AP writers Marcos Aleman in San Salvador, El Salvador, and Christopher Sherman in Mexico City contributed to this report.



CITY OF DORAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

All residents, property owners and other interested parties are hereby notified of a **VIRTUAL COUNCIL ZONING MEETING** on **Tuesday, September 22, 2020 beginning at 10:00 AM**, to consider the following amendment to the Official Zoning Map of the City of Doral for **Second Reading**. The meeting will be held with the elected officials, administration and City staff participating via video conferencing.

Governor DeSantis' Executive Order Number 20-69 and extension 20-193 suspended the requirements of Section 112.286, Florida Statutes and the Florida Sunshine Law, that a quorum to be present in person, and that a local government body meet at a specific public place. The Executive Order also allows local government bodies to utilize communications media technology, such as telephonic and video conferencing for local government body meetings.

Public Comments: members of the public that wish to provide comments may do so by emailing the City Clerk at cityclerk@cityofdoral.com. Comments must be submitted with your name and full address by **Monday, September 21, 2020**. The comments will be circulated to the elected officials and administration, as well as remain as a part of the record for the meeting. If you wish to provide comments during the meeting for this hearing item, please email the City Clerk at cityclerk@cityofdoral.com by 12:00 pm on Friday, September 18, 2020 so that accommodations can be arranged.

The meeting will be broadcasted live for members of the public to view on the City of Doral's website (<https://www.cityofdoral.com/government/city-clerk/council-meetings>) as well as Channel 77 and Facebook Live.

The City of Doral proposes to adopt the following Ordinance:

ORDINANCE No. 2020-22

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DORAL, FLORIDA, APPROVING/DENYING AN AMENDMENT TO THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF DORAL FROM INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT (IC) TO OFFICE-1 DISTRICT (O-1) FOR A ±4 ACRE PARCEL OF LAND LOCATED AT 9455 NW 40 STREET ROAD, DORAL, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

HEARING NO.: 20-09-DOR-02

APPLICANT: Orbis Fortium, LLC (the "Applicant")

PROJECT NAME: Shelton Academy

LOCATION: 9455 NW 40 Street Road, Doral, Florida

FOLIO NUMBERS: 35-3028-015-0010 and 35-3028-015-0020

SIZE OF PROPERTY: ±4 acres

CURRENT FUTURE LAND USE MAP CATEGORY: Office and Residential (OR)

CURRENT ZONING DESIGNATION: Industrial Commercial District (IC)

PROPOSED ZONING DESIGNATION: Office-1 District (O-1)

REQUEST: The Applicant is requesting an amendment to the official zoning map of the City of Doral from Industrial Commercial District (IC) to Office-1 District (O-1).

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lots 1 and 2 in Block 1 of "Swiss Chalet Subdivision", according to the Plat thereof, as recorded in Plat Book 140, Page 79, of the Public Records of Miami-Dade County, Florida.

Location Map



Inquiries regarding the item may be directed to the Planning and Zoning Department at 305-59-DORAL.

Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes If a person decides to appeal any decisions made by the City Council with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings and, for such purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. This notice does not constitute consent by the City for introduction or admission of otherwise inadmissible or irrelevant evidence, nor does it authorize challenges or appeals not otherwise allowed by law. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person who are disabled and who need special accommodations to participate in this meeting because of that disability should contact the Planning and Zoning Department at 305-59-DORAL no later than three (3) business days prior to the proceeding.

Connie Diaz, MMC
City Clerk
City of Doral City of Doral