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## **Garcia Regains Presidency, Defeats Humala**

*by LADB Staff*

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In Peru's second-round presidential election on June 4, former President Alan Garcia Perez (1985-1990) won a new five-year term that begins July 28. The runoff pitted Garcia of the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) against retired Army Col. Ollanta Humala Tasso of the Union por el Peru (UPP). The two were the winners of the first round of voting April 9 (see NotiSur, 2006-05-05).

### *Garcia wins in Lima, loses rural areas*

Humala, facing an insurmountable lead by Garcia, conceded before Monday morning, June 5. He pointed out, however, that he had won in a majority of the country's regions. The size of Garcia's lead declined as the final tallying was completed from June 5-13. By the end of ballot counting, Garcia's lead was fewer than 700,000 votes, 5.25% of the valid votes, a drop from the 10-point lead that he had when Humala conceded defeat with three-quarters of the vote counted. The final count gave Garcia 6,965,017 votes and Humala 6,270,080, a difference of 694,937.

Almost 16.5 million Peruvians were able to vote and required by law to do so, but only 14,468,049 votes were cast, of which 157,863 were blank and 1,075,089 were nullified, leaving 13,235,097 valid votes. The count was completed June 13, less than 2 weeks after the balloting, and the margin between the two candidates was wide enough that there was much less dispute, delay, and suspense than in the first round, when the paper-thin margin between Lourdes Flores and Garcia delayed solid results for weeks. Voters from the highlands and less-populated areas outside Lima generally rejected Garcia, but Lima, home to about half of Peru's people, handed victory to Garcia by giving him a broad lead there.

Polls taken before the election had generally predicted Humala's loss, though some showed him very close to Garcia, while most ranged from eight to 16 points in Garcia's favor. Many Peruvians felt they had no good choice in the race, according to several analyses. Garcia's presidency is not fondly remembered, while Humala's extremism alienated him from many voters. "In economic terms, [Garcia's] government was the worst ever in Peruvian history," said Lima economist Fritz du Bois. "He has become by default the candidate of the business community, the markets, and the middle classes. Ollanta Humala's message was so aggressive and hostile to the private sector and hostile in general to the middle class here that they turned to Garcia."

In the first round, the discipline of the APRA machine appeared to give Garcia an advantage that Flores' Unidad Nacional (UN) lacked. Flores made a prodigious effort to visit all of Peru's nearly 200 provinces to compensate for her lack of a popular, well-organized base. The nationwide campaign may have helped, but it did not keep Humala and Garcia from surpassing her (see NotiSur, 2006-04-21). The other advantage of the Garcia campaign was that it was able to attack Humala on a number of his strong points. Where Flores would have been seen as a representative of business

elites, the social-democrat policies of APRA appealed to voters tired of constantly high rates of poverty who desire more redistributive economic policies.

### *Humala's party a force in the Congress*

The UPP will still dog Garcia in his term as president. After the election, Humala-allied deputies were the largest single force in the body, holding 45 of 120 seats. Garcia's APRA has 36 and the UN holds 17 seats. The party of exiled ex-President Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000), the Alianza por el Futuro, has 13 seats, and minor parties hold the remaining nine seats. Humala's coalition showed signs of weakness, however, when party spokesman Carlos Torres Caro said on June 12 that he would form a separate group to wage "constructive opposition." Humala had called on opposition parties to form an alliance to oppose the Garcia government. "We are obligated to take this patriotic decision to move aside," Torres Caro said at a press conference broadcast by Lima-based Canal N. "We don't back destabilization. We're going to be a decent and constructive opposition." Torres Caro was Humala's candidate for second vice president. It was unclear how many legislators Torres Caro would be taking with him.

The following day, Humala announced that it was only his former running mate who was splitting off and no others would leave the UPP coalition. One big challenge that will quickly confront the Garcia administration is the effect of a potential slowdown in economic growth rates throughout the region (see NotiSur, 2006-05-19). If the UPP can maintain unity and continue to build popular support, it may be able to capitalize on the difficulties that the Garcia presidency might face.

Outgoing President Alejandro Toledo disagrees that the economy will move downward, however, saying his fiscally austere policies that led to consistent economic growth but little reduction of poverty will pay off for the incoming president. "It fell to me to plant seeds, it will fall to the coming [president] to harvest," said Toledo in an interview with Argentine daily newspaper Clarin. Toledo appears to have left little political inheritance for his fellow party members to harvest, with his Peru Posible (PP) holding little or no national power and his ally in the ruling coalition, the Frente Independiente Moralizador (FIM), similarly enfeebled after infighting and corruption scandals broke the strength of the PP-FIM coalition (see NotiSur, 2003-12-12). Toledo must now face an anti-corruption tribunal regarding his party's alleged falsification of signatures during his 2001 campaign for president (see NotiSur, 2005-05-13).

A judge for the tribunal has called on the president to testify at a trial against his younger sister Margarita Toledo and 34 others for supposedly conspiring to inflate the number of signatures the PP presented to national electoral authorities.

### *Venezuela-Peru relations in doubt after insults traded*

Brutal campaigning marked the end of the campaign, with accusations from jailed spymaster Vladimiro Montesinos that Humala was a "pawn" of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. The Humala-Chavez allegation was the key strategy in the Garcia campaign, with the centrist ex-president baiting Chavez at every opportunity and stoking patriotic fervor within Peru. Garcia's stance convinced all the major newspapers covering the election, with headlines stating that

Humala's loss was a loss for Chavez's influence in the region. After the election, Garcia struck a conciliatory note, saying he was willing to talk with the Venezuelan government, though reconciliation seems in doubt at the time of publication.

Allegations that a leftmost candidate has ties to Chavez are also playing a role in Mexico's presidential campaign (see SourceMex, 2006-05-03), although veteran politician Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD) is much less vulnerable to such accusations than political newcomer Humala was. Humala also made a personal appearance with Chavez prior to the first round of voting and received loud, regular support from Chavez (see NotiSur, 2006-01-27). This ultimately forced Humala to backpedal in the final days of his campaign and call on the Venezuelan leader to stay out of Peru's internal affairs. He said he agreed with a May 31 statement by his party's spokesman, Carlos Tapia, that "Chavez can go to hell." Peru and Venezuela withdrew their ambassadors over the spat that began during the campaign.

Garcia described Chavez and Bolivian President Evo Morales as "spoiled children" and "historic losers" after they criticized Peru for signing a free-trade deal with Washington (see NotiSur, 2006-01-13).

Chavez called Garcia a "thief," saying he and President Toledo were "crocodiles from the same water hole." That remark prompted Peru to remove its ambassador from Caracas. Chavez said on June 12 that Venezuela's diplomatic relations with Peru would return to normal only if President-elect Garcia apologized for disrespecting his country. "The only way Venezuela could re-establish relations with Peru's new government is if the president-elect of Peru offers the required explanation and apology to the Venezuelan people," Chavez said. "He threw the first stone, I just responded."

Despite the Chavez-Garcia squabble, Garcia's win does not signify an end to the regional trend toward choosing more left-leaning candidates. The true conservative of the race, Flores, was not a factor after she lost in the first round. Furthermore, most prognosticators had predicted that she would have fared much worse against Humala than Garcia did.

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