

JOHN KERRY FINALLY MEETS A CLOSE ELECTION HE WANTS TO RECOUNT

The other day, Hugo Chavez' successor Nicolás Maduro beat opposition leader Henrique Capriles Radonski by 2% of the vote. In the days since, opposition figures have sown violence, claiming vote fraud.

Yesterday, Secretary of State Kerry encouraged a recount.

Mr. Kerry, in comments to a House committee, said, "We think there ought to be a recount." He added that he had not yet evaluated whether Washington would recognize Mr. Maduro's victory.

This, in spite of a leaked recording of a close Capriles advisor admitting that this result was a political triumph but an electoral defeat.

This, in spite of the fact that when Bush beat Kerry with precisely the same percentage of the vote in 2004 amid reports of (limited) electoral oddities, Kerry chose not to demand a recount.

On November 2, 2004, George W. Bush beat John Kerry 50.7 percent to 48.3 percent. Venezuela's foreign minister immediately (either that night or the day after) recognized the results: "we will hope that in this second mandate we can improve our relations."

Fast forward nine years, and Nicolás Maduro beats Henrique Capriles with 50.7% of the vote and the US refuses to recognize the result. "Look, we're just not there yet," said a State Department spokesman (who now works for—wait for it— John Kerry). "Obviously, we have nearly half the country that had a

different view. And so we'll continue to consult, but we're not there yet."

Most interesting of all is something James Clapper just said in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. In response to a question from Richard Blumenthal about whether there had been fraud in the election, Clapper said (my rough transcription):

There may have been some, but it's unclear whether it was of sufficient magnitude to merit recount. Right now it doesn't appear to be.

In other words, even the intelligence says, whatever fraud there was, it wasn't enough to affect the outcome.

At this point, the Administration's hesitation at recognizing Maduro and Kerry's support for a recount do nothing but stoke violence.

Which I can only assume is the point.