

Note to world leaders: The IOC isn't a sovereign state

dailycaller.com, March 13, 2010

If the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, is seriously thinking about running for the post of UN Secretary General, he probably can count on the support of the International Olympic Committee.

After all, Lula, like a lot of other world leaders — including United States President Barack Obama — traveled to Denmark last October to plead before the IOC delegates that Rio was the best place on earth to host the Olympic Games.

The International Olympic Committee liked Lula's pitch and gave Rio de Janeiro the 2016 event. Lula can count on the IOC's backing should he go in that direction; after all, the IOC is part of the United Nations and has a seat at the table. Obama went home and faced a barrage of criticism because he could not convince IOC delegates that Chicago was the best place to hold the athletic summit.

Most of the people who criticized Obama have no clue how the International Olympic Committee operates. Brazil was going to get the 2016 Games. Chicago was never a contender.

The International Olympic Committee is a global entity like no other that operates like a sovereign state and demands world leaders to treat the sporting group as a superpower with a political mandate. World leaders acquiesce to the group, falling all over themselves in an effort to please them. That is why Obama was in Copenhagen last October 2 pushing Chicago for the Games, and that is why Lula was there as well as political heavyweights from Japan (Toyko) and Spain (Madrid).

On March 15, the application bids files for the 2018 Winter Games are due, and three cities will battle it out. Annecy, France, Munich, Germany and PyeongChang, South Korea are in the hunt. In June, the IOC will have a short list of contenders and will announce the winner on July 6, 2011 for those Games. Perhaps an American TV contract will be in place by then. For all of the pomp and circumstances of the IOC, the group is nothing without American TV dollars, which is why there is no American TV deal in place yet for the 2014 Sochi, Russia and the 2016 Rio Games. The American TV networks will not commit billions yet with a soft advertising market.

But the IOC is so arrogant that the Canadian delegate Richard Pound virtually demanded Obama show up before IOC delegates in Denmark to genuflect before the group.

Local politicians have created slush funds or have raised taxes to pay down the debt incurred by building huge sports complexes for a two week sporting orgy that has left financial messes behind. American television network executives have filled IOC coffers with billions of dollars, and American corporations have thrown billions to put their logo next to the Olympic rings. Canada changed laws protecting Olympic sponsorship during the lead up to the 2010 Vancouver Games.

The Olympic aura is just too strong for political and business leaders who are attracted to the five interlocking rings like a magnet.

The International Olympic Committee spited women softball players globally by dropping the sport because the Americans women were too good and the IOC could not get Major League Baseball to shut down the season, like the National Hockey League does, and send baseball's very best players to the Olympics.

The IOC leaned on the United States Congress to make Major League Baseball change drug policies that were collectively bargained to suit Olympics needs. The IOC didn't care if baseball players were taking banned substances and some of those banned substances were legal in a number of players home countries like the Dominican Republic and Mexico; the IOC was bigger than Major League Baseball and flexed the group's collective muscle.

There seems to be just one organization that intimidates the IOC: FIFA, the governing body of football (soccer). Football's World Cup is a much bigger event than any Olympics, and the IOC knows that. FIFA calls the shots in football, not the IOC.

The International Olympic Committee now holds the same United Nations status as the Holy See or the Vatican. The United Nations is supposed to have sovereign states, and while Vatican City is a sovereign state that has diplomatic relations with other countries, the Vatican is a non-member permanent observer state, a status it gained on April 6, 1964.

The Holy See can attend United General Assembly sessions as well as the United Nations Security Council meetings and the United Nations economic and Social Council. The Holy See is allowed to speak before the General Assembly but cannot co-sponsor UN drafts or resolutions. The Vatican can also vote on international treaties. Popes have been invited to speak before the General Assembly, so it would not be a shock to see Rogge address the UN in a formal setting when the group opens the 2010 session next fall.

Since October 19, 2009, the International Olympic Committee has had virtually the same rights as the Holy See at the United Nations, as incredible as that might seem. Apparently the IOC is not allowed to vote on treaties, but as far as the United Nations is concerned, the IOC is a sovereign state. No wonder the IOC can demand that Lula, Obama and world leaders like then British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Russian President Vladimir Putin come before them and make them beg to host an Olympics as Blair did in 2005 and Putin in 2007. The IOC thinks it is more powerful than world leaders, and world leaders allow it.

The IOC is some sort of artificial royalty that now has United Nations status, just like the Holy See except the Holy See has an embassy in New York and the IOC has yet to open one up.

The International Olympic Committee is supposed to run the Summer and Winter Olympics along with the Paralympic Games. It is a sports body, that is all it is, yet diplomats have give IOC President Jacques Rogge and his cohorts a seat at the table.

The IOC, which has never been shy in demanding host countries build Olympic cities for its Games, almost immediately swung into action before the General Assembly as it got Canada to introduce the “Olympic Truce Resolution” asking UN members to promote peace during the 2010 Vancouver Games and the 2010 Vancouver Paralympics along with the Youth Olympic Games, which will be held in Singapore in August.

When John Lennon sang Give Peace a Chance in 1969, it was thought he lost his mind. Yet when the IOC presented the proposal before the General Assembly, it was adopted because the IOC presented it.

There is a partnership now between a private sports organization which acts like a government. Rogge in 2006 suggested to Italian authorities to let the IOC handle illegal drug possession in the Olympic Village in Turin because the possession of illegal, performance enhancing drugs (some of which are legal in parts of the world) should be an IOC matter and the IOC, not the Italian drug enforcement officials, should hand out punishments.

Perhaps the United Nations ought to convene the General Assembly and grill Rogge about the real value of the Olympics and how Australia, Greece, apparently Canada and in the future, England and Russia were fleeced by the group to the tune of billions of dollars. But that is not going to happen, the IOC is not going to have to answer any of those questions from their new diplomatic friends and there will never be any sanctions against the IOC because the IOC is not a sovereign state.

Yet somehow, the IOC has a seat in the world body in Manhattan.

Apparently the IOC and IOC delegates have been reformed and the days of corruption and bribery have been forgotten along with the IOC turning a blind eye to human rights violations in China in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The private organization, which has the same status as Vatican City, has been praised by diplomats because of the IOC’s contributions to the UN Millennium Development Goals in peace-building, education, gender equity, environment and the fight against HIV/AIDS. But the IOC did not come down on Canada for failing to include legally blind cross-country skier Brian McKeever on the country’s cross country skiing team. McKeever was passed over despite qualifying for the team and was on the alternate list. After all, Canada wanted medal winners on the podium and got some, including the Gold Medal in men’s ice hockey. But leaving McKeever off the team despite his qualifying by winning a 50-kilometer race is inexcusable for an organization that has UN “Special Observer” status, in part for allegedly living up to the UN Millennium Goals.

So much for the IOC equity policies.

The Paralympics event is underway in Vancouver with far less flash than the recently concluded Winter Olympics.

The IOC runs roughshod over governments with the promise of the Olympics, and world leaders respond by giving the sports governing body unprecedented respect, so much so that the IOC is part of the United Nations as a permanent observer.

The IOC is a private sports organization; it is not a sovereign state like Vatican City. Yet diplomats treat Rogge, his associates and the group like royalty.