

Witness directly involves the U.S. and Canadian-backed president of Honduras in the use of drug money for his campaigns

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People constantly ask: Why are so many Hondurans forced to flee home and country year after year?, When will the human rights and poverty situations improve in Honduras?

... when the U.S. and Canadian governments and hosts of global companies and banks maintain profitable economic, military and political relations with 10 years of drug-trafficking, repressive, exploitative governments in power in Honduras,
... when there is no oversight or accountability in the U.S. and Canada for our complicity with this violent, atrocious government.

Witness directly involves the president of Honduras in the use of drug money for his campaigns

By Jeff Ernst, 8 OCT 2019

<https://www.univision.com/univision-news/latin-america/witness-directly-involves-the-president-of-honduras-in-the-use-of-drug-money-for-his-campaigns>

(Articulo en espanol: <https://www.univision.com/noticias/america-latina/testigo-cooperante-implica-directamente-al-presidente-de-honduras-en-uso-de-dinero-del-narco-para-su-campana?cmpid=444222&hootPostID=47347fbf6dce3164f2b644a9937e136f>)

Confessed drug trafficker, Alexander Ardon, told the court on Tuesday in New York that he attended meetings with President Juan Orlando Hernández to discuss the use of drug money in his election campaigns. The younger brother of the president, former congressman 'Tony' Hernández, is on trial for large scale drug trafficking.

The prosecution's star witness, confessed drug trafficker and former mayor, Alexander Ardon, told the jury on Tuesday that he met several times with then presidential candidate Juan Orlando Hernández to discuss the financing of his election campaign in 2013 with drug money.

At a private meeting with the candidate in the capital, Tegucigalpa, Juan Orlando Hernández asked Ardon to finance his upcoming campaign in the department of Copan even though the mayor's name had been linked to drug trafficking in the media. In fact, Ardon said Hernandez told him he couldn't run for-election as mayor for the ruling National Party because of his alleged drug ties.

Nonetheless, the mayor said he spent \$1.6 million on the successful Hernandez campaign. "That money came from the proceeds of drug trafficking," he told the court.

The president's brother, 'Tony' Hernández, pleaded not guilty to charges related to drug trafficking, but the prosecution had accused him of leading "a sophisticated state-sponsored organization that distributed cocaine for years" and in the process made Honduras "one of the most violent places in the world."

The trial has captured national attention in Honduras, provoking protests calling for the resignation of President Hernández.

The president is an unindicted co-conspirator in the case. Last week the president's office issued a statement in which he rejected the prosecutor's allegations saying they were "100% false, absurd and ridiculous accusation... This is Alice in Wonderland crazy." He added that he his government had "bravely" taken on drug traffickers with "a transnational anti-crime strategy" that included extradition.

Meetings with El Chapo

On his second day of testimony, Ardón told the court that at a meeting in 2013 he told Tony Hernández that 'El Chapo' Guzmán wanted to meet him to talk regarding security arrangements for his cocaine shipments from Nicaragua to Mexico. Tony Hernández arrived armed with an AR-15 rifle and his personal weapon, an automatic pistol bearing the flag of Honduras and the name of President Juan Orlando Hernandez printed on the barrel.



Trial exhibit #203-R4 in [Tony Hernandez](#) drug trafficking case in New York: a weapon allegedly carried by the president's brother, embossed with Honduran flag and name of JUAN ORLANDO HERNANDEZ. Crédito: Southern District of New York/Univision

They met with 'El Chapo' 12 days later, in the Honduran town of El Espiritu. The traffickers were worried because the Honduran Congress had passed an extradition law in 2012 under pressure from the United States.

At that meeting, Tony Hernandez assured 'El Chapo' that if Juan Orlando Hernandez won "we won't be extradited," Ardon said. Guzman offered \$1 million in return for a guarantee of protection, to which Hernandez said he would think about it, Ardon added.

Three days later, Ardon said Tony Hernandez called to say he had spoken with his brother and that the answer was: "yes, we we'll take the million dollars." He added that he money was needed urgently as the election was only six or seven weeks away.

Soon after Ardon said he met with 'El Chapo' and Tony Hernandez around a table at Ardon's house in El Paraiso, the mayor's home town near the Guatemalan border, where the \$1 million was delivered to Tony Hernandez in plastic bags of cash, in bundles of \$50,000 and \$100,000.

Extraditions

Despite the alleged assurances from the Hernandez brothers, several traffickers, including members of the notorious Valle family cartel, began to be extradited and Ardon told the jury that 'El Chapo' grew upset as the Valles worked for him. Ardon said Tony Hernandez told him that the Valles had been arrested "because they had attempted to kill Juan Orlando Hernandez."

In 2015, Ardon said he met with the Hernandez brothers in Tegucigalpa at the offices of a state road construction entity, FondoVial. Ardon explained he was under pressure from 'El Chapo'. "Juan Orlando Hernandez said he wasn't bound to anyone and that if they wanted he would return the money," Ardon said.

Ardon said he met with Juan Orlando Hernandez again six months before the 2017 elections in which the president was running again in a controversial bid for a second term. Tony Hernandez said he needed \$500,000 dollars, Ardon said. He added that he spent another \$70,000 on bribes.

The prosecutor, Emil Bove, sought to clarify the nature of Ardon's meetings with the Hernandez brothers. "You told the defendant and Juan Orlando Hernandez about your drug trafficking, right?" he asked Ardon.

"Yes," he replied.

Cross examination

Ardon said he was not extradited and instead turned himself into the DEA in March this year after he was indicted in the United States on drug smuggling charges. However, he did not initially mention his dealings with the Hernandez family to prosecutors. "I held back that information because of fear of reprisals," he said, noting that his family still lives in Honduras.

In his defense, he also noted that he was initially facing a 40 year sentence for drug crimes, but had later admitted to his involvement in 56 murders, potentially greatly increasing his likely sentence.

Under cross-examination, Ardon came under attack for his crimes linked to drug trafficking. Hernandez's defense lawyer, Omar Malone, pressured him because he initially did not reveal his illicit treatment with the Hernandez after he was arrested and began cooperating with government prosecutors.

"Would an honest man kill 56 people?" asked Malone.

"No," responded Ardon, adding that he was telling the truth now.

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Since 1995, Rights Action funds human rights, environment and territory defense struggles and projects in Guatemala and Honduras; funds victims of repression and human rights violations, health harms and natural disasters; works to hold accountable the U.S. and Canadian governments, multi-national companies, investors and

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Keep sending copies of Rights Action information (and that of other solidarity groups/ NGOs) to family, friends and networks, politicians and media – always asking the question as to why our governments, companies and investment firms benefit from and turn a blind eye to poverty, repression and violence, environmental and health harms that caused the forced migrancy / refugee crisis in Guatemala and Honduras.

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- Breaking the Silence: www.breakingthesilenceblog.com;
- NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with People of Guatemala): www.nisgua.org;
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