

Pandora's Box of US & Canadian-backed Honduran drug-trafficking regime is wide open

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/pandoras-box-of-us-canadian-backed-honduran-drug-trafficking-regime-is-wide-open>

Juan Carlos “El Tigre” Bonilla, former head of Honduran Police and head of a death squad, was arrested on March 9. Now facing extradition to the US, he was charged in April 2020 by US prosecutors with drug-trafficking crimes working with the US and Canadian-backed “president” Juan Orlando Hernández and his brother Tony Hernández.



Juan Carlos “el tigre” Bonilla @ ABC news

US and Canadian corruption and impunity

When will US and Canadian political oversight bodies (Congress, Senate, Parliament; criminal prosecutors; the media!) properly investigate 12 years and 7 months of what should be illegal US and Canadian economic, military and political support for the military-backed, drug-trafficking regime of the ousted dictator Juan Orlando Hernandez, and top government associates such as Bonilla?

- Below: Background article by Karen Spring, Honduras Now

Bonilla's first extradition hearing was on March 9. The second one will be on April 8. InSight Crime reports on what Bonilla's arrest could mean for the ousted dictator Juan Orlando Hernandez. <https://insightcrime.org/honduras-organized-crime-news/arrest-former-honduras-top-cop-raises-stakes-for-embattled-ex-president/>

U.S. Indictment of “El Tigre” Bonilla: Just the Tip of the Impunity Iceberg

By Karen Spring, April 30, 2020

<https://www.aquiabajo.com/blog/2020/4/30/us-indictment-of-el-tigre-bonilla-just-the-tip-of-the-impunity-iceberg>

Today, the U.S. Justice Department, Southern District of New York indicted Juan Carlos “El Tigre” Bonilla Valladares on four counts of drug trafficking and related weapons charges. Bonilla Valladares is a former head of the Honduran National Police and a former Regional Police Chief of the western Department of Copan in Honduras.

According to the press statement announcing the indictment, “Juan Carlos Bonilla Valladares allegedly abused his official position to protect cocaine shipments and murder a rival drug trafficker as part of a conspiracy involving high-ranking Honduran politicians and members of the Honduran National Police.”

The indictment makes direct reference to President Juan Orlando Hernandez's involvement in drug trafficking. It outlines how Bonilla Valladares worked in coordination and on behalf of Tony Hernandez, the brother of current President Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH) and President JOH himself: “BONILLA VALLADARES corruptly exploited these official positions to facilitate cocaine trafficking, and used violence, including murder, to protect the particular cell of politically connected drug traffickers he aligned with, including [Juan Antonio “Tony”] Hernandez Alvarado and at least one of Hernandez Alvarado's brothers, who is a former Honduran congressman and the current president of Honduras referred to in the Complaint charging BONILLA VALLADARES as “CC-4.”

The press statement and indictment can be found [here](#)

Just the Tip of the Impunity Iceberg

For years, Bonilla has been the subject of controversy and faced public accusations of extrajudicial killings, torture, ties to drug cartels and organized criminal groups operating inside the National police, and corruption. His indictment for drug trafficking in the U.S. is only the tip of the iceberg.

Previous accusations against Bonilla show how he and the Honduran police are deeply involved in organized crime; how mechanisms to stop violations of the Honduran police do not function as they should; how impunity has reigned for years; and how investigations against those intertwined with the powerful and large-scale drug traffickers in Honduras, never ever advance.

Death-Squad Killings of Young People

In 2013, the Center for Economic Policy and Research (CEPR) published an [overview](#) of news articles from the Associated Press, Insight Crime, U.S. Government documents published by Wikileaks, that describe Bonilla's shady past.

All sources describe a 2002 investigation conducted by the former Chief of the Internal Affairs of the Honduran Police, Maria Luisa Borjas against Bonilla and other police officers, involved in "at least three killings or forced disappearances between 1998 and 2002." Bonilla was accused of killing Honduran youth. In 2002, Bonilla was charged with murder but was either found not guilty two years later or prosecutor's dropped the case before it went to trial.

Murdering Rival Drug Traffickers

One of the murders of a drug rival that Bonilla is allegedly tied to, was also [discussed](#) in Tony Hernandez's trial in New York in October 2019. The rival mentioned is Franklin Arita Mata, who was [killed](#) in July 2011 in an ambush of his bulletproof vehicle transporting the principal victim and three of his bodyguards.

The Honduran press [reported](#) on the 2011 incident writing that Mata's car was attacked by unknown individuals traveling in two vehicles. Furthermore, in response to the murder, Bonilla, as the Regional Police Chief responsible for the jurisdiction where the incident took place, told the press that various police teams would be sent to investigate.

Involvement In a Police-led Organized Criminal Death Squad

In 2014, Honduran journalist David Romero read a [testimony](#) on Radio Globo of an unidentified police agent that had worked alongside Bonilla. The police agent turned whistleblower outlined several crimes including torture, rape, and death squad killings involving Bonilla and several members of the Honduran police. The testimonies gave a lot of detail about specific murders committed by police-led organized criminal death squads that Bonilla was involved in.

In one of the many cases that the testimony outlined, was the rape of a young woman in the northern city of Choloma. In order to force the young woman's mother to help the police death squad locate "Amilcar El Renco," the woman was kidnapped, taken to an unmarked "security" house, and raped. The agent's testimony identifies the police agents involved in the incident, including "El Tigre" Bonilla, Egberto Arias Aguilar (former Police Commissioner, current location and position unknown), Eduardo Antonio Turcios Andrade ([named](#) in 2019 as head of the newly created Transportation Security Force (FUSET)), and Victor Lopez Flores (former Police Commissioner who [pleaded guilty](#) in U.S. courts for drug trafficking in 2017).

The agent also stated that the police-led organized criminal death squad had support from the Federal Bureau of Criminal Investigation (DNIC) and an Analysis section of the National Police.

Honduran media would later report that Cristian Amilcar Sierra, also known as "El Renco", who the police death squads were looking for in 2014, would be [murdered](#) in his home in Choloma in 2015 for allegedly being involved in the criminal activities of the gang "El banda de el Negro." "El Negro" is likely Carlos Arnoldo "El Negro" Lobo who was [extradited](#) to the U.S., worked with the Los Cachiros and the Sinaloa drug cartel, and later convicted in the U.S. for large-scale drug trafficking.

Act / Stir up the pot / Chip away

Keep sending copies of Rights Action information (and that of other solidarity groups/ NGOs) to family and friends, your networks, politicians and media outlets, asking: 'When will there be proper legal and political accountability for how our governments, companies and investment firms help cause, benefit from and turn a blind eye to corruption and impunity, and to poverty, repression environmental harms in countries like Honduras and Guatemala?'

- U.S. Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>
- U.S. House: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>
- Canadian Parliament: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>

Follow work of and get involved with other solidarity/NGO groups

- Honduras Now: <https://www.hondurasnow.org/>
- Honduras Solidarity Network: www.hondurassolidarity.org
- Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective: www.solidaritycollective.org
- Friendship Office of the Americas: <https://friendshipamericas.org>
- Alliance for Global Justice: www.afgj.org
- CODEPINK: www.codepink.org
- School of Americas Watch: www.soaw.org

Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)

To support land and environmental defender groups, and human rights and justice struggles in Honduras and Guatemala, make check to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

Credit-Card Donations: <http://rightsaction.org/donate/>

Donations of securities in Canada and the U.S.? Write to: info@rightsaction.org

Please share and re-post this information

Subscribe to Email Newsblasts: <https://rightsaction.org/subscribe>

<https://www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org>

<https://twitter.com/RightsAction>

<https://www.instagram.com/rightsaction>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/rightsaction>
