

Former Honduran President to face drug-trafficking charges in US Will there be any accountability for 12 years, 7 months of illegal US & Canadian support for the Honduran narco-state?

By Grahame Russell, Rights Action

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/former-honduran-president-to-face-drug-trafficking-charges-in-us>

On April 21, 2022, a plane with 6 DEA agents landed at the Toncontín airport, Tegucigalpa, Honduras. An hour later, they left with former President Juan Orlando Hernandez (“JOH”) on board, on their way to New York where he will face trial.

JOH became the 33rd Honduran extradited to the US to face drug trafficking and organized crime charges.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland: "Hernández is charged with participating in a corrupt and violent drug-trafficking conspiracy to facilitate the importation of tons of cocaine into the United States from 2004 to 2022. As is charged in the indictment, Hernández abused his position as President of Honduras from 2014 through 2022 to operate the country as a narco-state."

- Below: US Department of Justice press release; background articles

But there is, as John Perry writes (see article below), “a parallel story in which not only was JOH’s criminal activity ignored by successive US administrations, but his presidency was celebrated, first by [Obama](#) and then by [Trump](#). His rise to power began shortly after the [military coup](#) in 2009, when he became head of congress and then, in 2013, ran for president. He received a large share of \$1.2 billion offered by Washington to strengthen the region’s armed forces. The Obama-Biden administration chose to him as an ally in the war on drugs and Biden twice met JOH to back his efforts.”

The “Rot in Honduras” goes through to Honduras’ international partners



No way conceivable Juan Orlando Hernandez & narco-state associates would have taken power

In the US and Canada, will there be any truth and accountability, whatsoever, for the complicity of our governments that provided 12 years and 7 months of uncompromised political, economic and military support for military-backed narco-state headed by Juan Orlando Hernandez and the National Party – calling the leaders “democratic allies” for the entire time?

There is no way conceivable that Juan Orlando Hernandez and his narco-state associates would have taken power on June 28, 2009, the day of the military-coup that ousted the government of President Mel Zelaya, let alone remained in power until January 27, 2022, when President Xiomara Castro assumed power, but for the full and uncompromising support of the US and Canada.

To make matters worse, once the US and Canada 'legitimized' and began supporting the narco-state after the military coup, other governments and actors in the mis-named "international community" followed suit, namely: Spain and the European Community, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Inter-

American Development Bank, and a host of transnational companies and investors.

At a bare minimum, the US and Canadian justice systems should investigate whether criminal charges should be filed against our politicians and government officials - Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals - for 12 years and 7 months of full support for a regime that came to power via a military coup, and stayed in power via 3 sets of violent, fraudulent “elections” (2009, 2013, 2017) that were funded by for-service-payoffs from drug-traffickers.

Investigations must look directly at how the US and Canadian governments - principally the 'foreign policy' establishments, including embassies - lied about and/or covered up the extent of the systemic corruption, crimes and human rights violations caused by the Juan Orlando Hernandez/ National Party led regimes.

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Juan Orlando Hernández, Former President of Honduras, Indicted on Drug-Trafficking and Firearms Charges, Extradited to the United States from Honduras

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs, April 21, 2022

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/juan-orlando-hernandez-former-president-honduras-indicted-drug-trafficking>

Hernández Allegedly Partnered with Some of the Largest Cocaine Traffickers in the World to Transport Tons of Cocaine through Honduras to the United States. Juan Orlando Hernández, aka JOH, 53, the former President of Honduras, will make his initial appearance tomorrow, April 22, before Magistrate Judge Stewart D. Aaron in federal court in New York after being extradited today from Honduras.

A federal court unsealed drug-trafficking and weapons charges today in a superseding indictment against Hernández. The indictment charges that from at

least in or about 2004, up to and including in or about 2022, Hernández, the former two-term President of Honduras, participated in a corrupt and violent drug-trafficking conspiracy to facilitate the importation of hundreds of thousands of kilograms of cocaine into the United States.

Hernández allegedly received millions of dollars to use his public office, law enforcement, and the military to support drug-trafficking organizations in Honduras, Mexico, and elsewhere.

“The Justice Department is taking a comprehensive approach to protecting our communities and our country from violent crime,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. “The Department is committed to disrupting the entire ecosystem of drug trafficking networks that harm the American people, no matter how far or how high we must go.”

“Juan Orlando Hernández, the recent former President of Honduras, allegedly partnered with some of the world’s most prolific narcotics traffickers to build a corrupt and brutally violent empire based on the illegal trafficking of tons of cocaine to the United States,” said U.S. Attorney Damian Williams for the Southern District of New York.

“Hernández is alleged to have used his vast political powers to protect and assist drug traffickers and cartel leaders by alerting them to possible interdictions, and sanctioning heavily armed violence to support their drug trade. I commend the career prosecutors of the Southern District of New York for their tireless efforts to disrupt the entire illicit drug trafficking ecosystem, from street-level dealers to a former world leader, and everything in-between.”

“Today’s extradition clearly shows that the DEA will stop at nothing to pursue the most powerful political actors who engage in drug trafficking, violence, and corruption,” said Administrator Anne Milgram of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

“DEA’s multi-year investigation revealed that Juan Orlando Hernández, the former President of Honduras, was a central figure in one of the largest and most violent cocaine trafficking conspiracies in the world. Hernández used drug trafficking proceeds to finance his political ascent and, once elected President, leveraged the

Government of Honduras' law enforcement, military, and financial resources to further his drug trafficking scheme. This case should send a message – to all political leaders around the world that trade on positions of influence to further transnational organized crime – that the DEA will stop at nothing to investigate these cases and dismantle drug trafficking organizations that threaten the safety and health of the American people.”

According to the superseding indictment, Hernández protected some of the largest drug traffickers in the world, including his brother and former member of the Honduran National Congress, Juan Antonio Hernández Alvarado (Hernández Alvarado), aka Tony Hernández, from investigation, arrest, and extradition; caused sensitive law enforcement and military information to be provided to drug traffickers to aid them in transporting tons of cocaine through Honduras bound for the United States; directed heavily-armed members of the Honduran National Police and Honduran military to protect drug shipments as they transited Honduras; and sanctioned brutal violence.

As a congressman, then President of the Honduran National Congress, and finally the two-term President of Honduras, Hernández was allegedly paid millions of dollars in cocaine proceeds which he used to enrich himself, finance his political campaigns, and commit voter fraud while the people of Honduras endured conditions of poverty and rampant violence.

Since at least 2004, drug-trafficking organizations in Honduras have worked to receive tons of cocaine sent to Honduras from, among other places, Colombia and Venezuela, via maritime and air routes. These organizations then transited the cocaine westward in Honduras toward its border with Guatemala and eventually north to the United States.

During this time, members of this conspiracy transported more than 500,000 kilograms of cocaine through Honduras and into the United States. In order to ensure that these massive cocaine shipments safely passed through Honduras, the largest drug-trafficking organizations in the region obtained the support and direct protection of certain prominent Honduran public officials, including Hernández. In return, these traffickers paid millions of dollars in bribes to Hernández and other public officials.

As alleged, as a congressman and then President of Honduras, Hernández partnered with the former leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquín Guzman Loera (Guzman Loera), aka El Chapo, among other people. In or about 2013, as Hernández was campaigning to become president, he accepted approximately \$1 million in drug-trafficking proceeds from Guzman Loera. Hernández sent Hernández Alvarado and an associate, armed with machine guns, to collect the \$1 million bribe from Guzman Loera. In exchange, Hernández promised to continue protecting the Sinaloa Cartel's drug-trafficking activities in Honduras.

As alleged, in or about 2013 and 2014, Hernández partnered with violent and large-scale Honduran cocaine trafficker Geovanny Fuentes Ramirez. During multiple meetings between Hernández and Fuentes Ramirez, Fuentes Ramirez bribed Hernández for protection and security for his drug-trafficking activities. Hernández informed Fuentes Ramirez, in part, that Hernández wanted Fuentes Ramirez to partner with Hernández Alvarado, who was managing drug-trafficking activities in Honduras, and that Hernández was going to “stuff the drugs right up the noses of the gringos.”

In addition to Guzman Loera and Fuentes Ramirez, other prolific traffickers in Honduras and Guatemala provided Hernández with bribes from drug proceeds to support his political career in exchange for Hernández's protection and partnership in their drug trafficking. Hernández used these cocaine-fueled bribes to ensure his continued ascendancy in Honduran politics, including his election as President in 2013 and 2017. In connection with both the 2013 and 2017 elections, Hernández directed members of this conspiracy to bribe politicians and election officials with drug proceeds to ensure that Hernández won the presidency.

In 2018, Hernández Alvarado was charged in the Southern District of New York in connection with his participation in this conspiracy, and he was subsequently convicted after trial on Oct. 18, 2019. While Hernández Alvarado's case was pending, Hernández continued to coordinate closely with large-scale traffickers, including Fuentes Ramirez, who continued to pay Hernández bribes for protection.

Further, during Hernández Alvarado's trial, drug ledgers belonging to another former Honduran drug trafficker and co-conspirator, referred to in the superseding indictment as “CC-2,” were introduced into evidence. These ledgers

contained, among other things, notations with Hernández Alvarado's name and "JOH," Hernández's initials, along with corresponding entries reflecting large payments to Hernández and Hernández Alvarado. Approximately one week after Hernández Alvarado was convicted, prisoners armed with machetes and a firearm murdered CC-2 in a Honduran prison to prevent CC-2's potential cooperation against, among others, Hernández.

On Jan. 27, 2022, Hernández was charged in the superseding indictment and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

On Feb. 15, 2022, Hernández was arrested and detained by Honduran authorities at the request of the United States. The United States thereafter submitted a formal extradition request, which the Honduran Magistrate Judge granted. Hernández appealed the extradition decision to the Honduran Supreme Court.

On March 28, the Honduran Supreme Court denied his appeal. On April 6, the Ad Hoc Tribunal of the Constitutional Chamber of the Honduran Supreme Court determined Hernández's final appeal was inadmissible. On April 13, the Government of Honduras certified the completion of the extradition proceedings consistent with the previous court orders, resulting in Hernández's surrender to the United States on April 21.

Hernández is charged with three counts: (1) conspiring to import cocaine into the United States, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and a maximum sentence of life in prison; (2) using and carrying machine guns and destructive devices during, and possessing machine guns and destructive devices in furtherance of, the cocaine importation conspiracy, which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 30 years and a maximum sentence of life in prison; and (3) conspiring to use and carry machine guns and destructive devices during, and to possess machine guns and destructive devices in furtherance of, the cocaine importation conspiracy, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The DEA's Special Operations Division, New York Strike Force, and Tegucigalpa Country Office investigated the case. The Justice Department's Office of

International Affairs provided valuable assistance in securing Hernández's arrest and extradition.

This prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jacob H. Gutwillig, Michael D. Lockard, Jason A. Richman, and Elinor L. Tarlow for the Southern District of New York prosecuting the case.

The charges in the superseding indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Attachment(s):

[Download Juan Orlando Hernandez- Unsealed Indictment](#)

JOH's luck runs out, by John Perry

<https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2022/april/joh-s-luck-runs-out>

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland Delivers Remarks Announcing Charges Against Juan Orlando Hernandez, Former President of Honduras

Washington, DC, April 21, 2022

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-merrick-b-garland-delivers-remarks-announcing-charges-against-juan>

A triumphant day. A day of many tears

End of the U.S./Canadian-backed Narco-regime in Honduras

By Grahame Russell, Rights Action, December 4, 2021

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/a-triumphant-day-a-day-of-many-tears>

Reportajes en español

- <https://twitter.com/HondurasNow/status/1517244360655622144>
- <https://radioprogreso.net/aplicacion-movil/dia-historico-extraditado-joh/>
- <https://criterio.hn/adios-joh-el-grito-de-honduras-para-celebrar-la-extradicion-de-juan-orlando-hernandez/>

- <https://criterio.hn/joh-fue-extraditado-pero-dejo-montada-una-estructura-criminal-en-las-instituciones-del-estado/>

Other solidarity/NGO groups doing work related to Honduras

- School of Americas Watch: www.soaw.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

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