

Former Honduran president's lawyers to call Donald Trump, Joe Biden and Barack Obama to testify in favor of client

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/lawyers-to-call-trump-biden-obama-to-testify-in-favor-of-client>

Will they call on Steven Harper and Justin Trudeau to do the same?

From the date of the June 28, 2009 (US and Canadian-backed) military coup in Honduras, through to January 28, 2022, former President Juan Orlando Hernandez and the Nationalist party operated a military-backed “narco state” that maintained full military and economic with the US and Canada, that both rubber-stamped 3 sets of violent elections corrupted by drug-trafficking money (2009, 2013, 2017) and referred to President Hernandez as a “democratic ally” through to his last day in office.

Former president Hernandez's 'Dream Team' mounts a bold and sometimes bizarre legal defense

By David Adams & Jeff Ernst, 10 May 2022

<https://www.univision.com/univision-news/united-states/former-honduran-president-hernandez-legal-dream-team-new-york>

They call themselves a legal ‘Dream Team’ and plan to call Donald Trump, Joe Biden and Barack Obama to testify in favor of their client. That’s the opening salvo from the defense team of former Honduran president, Juan Orlando Hernandez, two weeks after he was extradited to stand trial in New York accused of operating the country as a “narco state.”

Hernandez is due to appear in court for the first time on Tuesday for his arraignment, where he is expected to plead not guilty to three counts of drug trafficking and illegal use of weapons.

Facing life in prison if convicted, Hernandez's legal team have gone on the offensive from day one, defending their client in the media as a hero in the war on drugs and bragging that they will achieve an historic victory in court.

In a statement to Univision, his lawyer Raymond Colon, said his client was innocent and "this prosecution is tantamount to a character assassination masquerading as a prosecution."

He accused the Justice Department of "a misguided crusade" against "the U.S. government's greatest ally in the 'War on the drugs'; based on fabricated evidence and the vengeance-venдетта of the very Narco-Delinquents that the President extradited while in office."

Two members of the defense team told Univision that Trump, Biden and Obama would be "compelled" to testify - as well as the former head of the CIA, Mike Pompeo - about the U.S. government's close collaboration with Hernandez during his eight years in office.

During a visit to the CIA headquarters in 2017, Hernandez's defense team says he was given boxes of National Security documents despite supposedly being under investigation for drug trafficking. "What a story. We will request all of these documents be admitted as evidence," said Jay Levy, a Florida-based rabbi who is working pro bono for the defense team.

Levy said he joined the defense team on behalf of New York Rabbi Aron Lankry, who is supporting Hernandez's legal fight in recognition of his championing of Israel at the United Nations in a historic vote in 2017 over international recognition of the disputed holy city Jerusalem as its capital. "We are doing this for what [Hernandez] he did for Israel," he said.

Lankry who has a synagogue in Monsey, a city just north of New York City, [was appointed by Hernandez as the chief rabbi of Honduras in 2019.](#)

Leading the defense's assault in the media is a colorful Dominican-American private investigator, Angel Martinez, who presents himself on YouTube as a top criminal defense expert.

"This case, gentlemen, this is going to be like a movie," he said in a 30-minute YouTube presentation in Spanish during which he laid out the defense strategy. "I'm the star here... I'm going to highlight modern investigation and shrewdness, how to present – and destroy - a witness... This is going to be monumental," he added.

Insults and a defamation law suit

Univision was unable to verify many aspects of Martínez's biography and claims of professional achievements, including undercover work with multiple U.S. government agencies.

But some of his own actions and statements have many questioning his tactics. Last week, Martínez filed a bizarre \$20 million defamation lawsuit in a New York court against Luis Redondo, president of the Honduran Congress, and Milton Benítez, a commentator and the current minister of communications in Honduras. Martínez accused them of spreading false information about him that was damaging his reputation.

The lawsuit itself, however, appears more defamatory than the supposedly false information it cites as evidence. Among many wild accusations, it accuses Redondo and Benítez of being members of a drug cartel directed by another former president, Manuel 'Mel' Zelaya, who is the husband of the current president, Xiomara Castro.

While Zelaya has been named in U.S. drug cases as being suspected of receiving payments from drug traffickers, he has never been charged with a crime, nor has he ever been named as a member of a drug cartel by U.S. law enforcement officials. Neither Redondo nor Benítez have been linked to drug trafficking. Martinez has separately accused a retired senior DEA official, Mike Vigil, of also spreading false information.

"It's absurd, ridiculous. If this is the best that they have, shame on them," said Vigil, a respected former head of international operations for the DEA who is often sought out by the media for his expertise. "Who in their right mind would hire this guy?" he added.

Univision confirmed that Martinez was hired by the office of attorney Raymond Colon in New York, who appeared in court to represent Hernandez at his initial appearance last month.

Martinez has compared the defense team assembled by Colon to the famous 'Dream Team' that successfully represented disgraced former American Football player OJ Simpson, who was acquitted by jury of murdering his wife in 1995.

"Hypocrisy" in the drug war

In a recent YouTube talk, [Martinez accused the U.S. government of "pure hypocrisy" in the war on drugs](#). He used maps to give a history lesson about Honduras' role as a trampoline for South American cocaine smuggled by the Sinaloa Cartel in Mexico, claiming that Hernandez bravely stood up to the traffickers, and was widely praised by U.S. officials for his cooperation.

"What is the message being sent in the war on drugs? That first the United States extracts all the juice out of you and then extradites you and sends to to prison," he added, saying the defense would introduce into evidence "all the trophies and decorations that have been given to this man."

To be sure, Hernandez was for several years considered a U.S. ally in the war on drugs and illegal migration, especially during the Trump administration. [DEA agents in Honduras began to suspect him of conspiring with traffickers](#) to finance his political campaigns following his election in 2013.

Hernandez has long defended himself as being the victim of vengeful drug traffickers and murderers who were extradited from Honduras to the United States during his government. While some of the witnesses have confessed to smuggling tons of cocaine and murdering dozens of victims, prosecutors say their testimony has been corroborated by other witnesses, as well as physical evidence.

"It's very common to use other traffickers to testify. You're not going to get a priest to testify against someone like Joaquin El Chapo Guzman (the jailed former head of the Sinaloa cartel). He's not going to have the kind of evidence you need," said Vigil. "The U.S. doesn't just take the word of narcos. It has to be corroborated. There are others who don't have criminal backgrounds," he added.

Legal experts say it's unlikely that a judge would allow the defense to call Trump, Biden or Obama. "The government will file a motion to quash any subpoena for them all on the basis of relevance," said criminal defense attorney Joaquin Perez, who represents a Honduran trafficker linked to the case.

He noted that in similar cases prosecutors have argued that it was like an accused bank robber claiming he was innocent and calling a bank manager to testify to all the times the defendant entered the bank without robbing it. "The fact that he was good for 23 hours of the day doesn't excuse him for the last hour when he was not," said Perez.

Government officials explained to Univision Noticias that few people in government would have known about the investigation of Hernández, particularly in its early stages.

"It doesn't surprise me that his lawyers are at least saying they'll call big name witnesses. Of course, it's a matter of record that we worked closely with Honduras during his tenure to reduce violence, purge the police, and extradite narcos," said one former senior U.S. government official.

"It's also clear that our political and foreign policy leaders weren't aware that he was under investigation," he added.

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