

## **Drug trafficking infiltration of all branches of U.S. & Canadian-backed Honduran regimes (June 27, 2009–January 27, 2022)**

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/drug-trafficking-infiltration-of-all-branches-of-honduran-regimes>

- Below: Article by Karen Spring, [spring.kj@gmail.com](mailto:spring.kj@gmail.com)

While the history of drug trafficking through Honduras predates 2009, more documentation is coming to light every day about how the U.S. and Canadian-backed military coup of June 27, 2009, brought to power 12 years and 7 months of the most corrupt and repressive (and pro-global business) regimes in the history of Honduras.

The incoming government of President Xiomara Castro has a ‘herculean task’ of cleaning out the corruption of 12 years and 7 months of Narco-Regimes that infiltrated Congress, the Judiciary, Police and Military, all while addressing the increased levels of impoverishment left behind by the U.S. and Canadian-backed ‘pro-global business’ regime.

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## **U.S. Trained Special Forces Involved in Drug Trafficking and Gangs in Honduras**

By Karen Spring, June 10, 2022, [spring.kj@gmail.com](mailto:spring.kj@gmail.com)

<https://www.hondurasnow.org/new-documents-highlight-u-s-trained-special-forces-involved-in-drug-trafficking-and-gangs/>

Documents released on June 9, 2022 by U.S. court mention that the former Honduran special police force, the COBRAS, worked with ‘Los Grillos’ criminal gang involved in drug trafficking and assassinations.

Members of the former Honduran elite police unit, the COBRAS, worked with the ‘[Los Grillos](#)’ criminal gang to steal drug money and shipments, according to newly released U.S. court documents.

Los Grillos, together with the special forces police unit are involved in selling and stealing drugs “through police operations” and according to Honduran press [reports](#), act as contract hitman.



U.S. Army Green Berets training TIGRES police  
Photo and article [here](#)

The U.S. DEA document (see below) dated July 13, 2016, was recently filed in the case against Ludwig Criss Zelaya Romero, a convicted drug trafficker and former Honduran police officer. Zelaya Romero is appealing his sentence after pleading guilty in April 2018 to conspiracy to import cocaine and use and carry firearms in connection with a drug trafficking conspiracy.

Zelaya Romero is one of a handful of ex-Honduran police officers accused in the drug trafficking case against Fabio Lobo, the son of ex-President Porfirio Lobo Sosa. Lobo is currently serving a 24-year prison sentence in the United States.

*[Porfirio Lobo was put into the Presidency by the Honduran elites soon after the U.S. and Canadian-backed military coup ousted the government of President Zelaya. U.S. and Canada immediately recognized ‘democratic legitimacy’ of Lobo’s government.]*

### **COBRAS’s Controversial History**

The COBRAs are a special police unit with a controversial four-decade history in Honduras. In the 1980s, they were linked to [forced disappearances](#) of community leaders and individuals identified as political dissidents in the context of Cold War rhetoric and U.S. policy in the Central American region.

Since the 2009 coup d'état in Honduras, the COBRAS have been linked to violent repression and [excessive use of force](#) against protesters.

In 2011, an arsenal of weapons including at least 300 light automatic rifles (FAL), 300,000 5.56 millimeter ammunition, and other police equipment [went missing](#) from the COBRAS police base (now known as the Special Forces base) in Tegucigalpa.

Several U.S. court documents have revealed that weapons in the possession of the Honduran police and military have been [sold or provided to](#) drug cartels operating in Honduras and Colombia.

### **U.S. Support for Honduran Special Forces – COBRAS and TIGRES**

In October 2017, the COBRAS special police unit was [absorbed](#) into the structure of the National Office of Special Forces (DNFE) of the Honduran National Police.

Also absorbed into the DNFE was the [U.S.-trained](#) and supported elite police force known as the Honduran Intelligence Troop and Special Security Response Group or “TIGRES” (Tigers in English).

On the streets of Honduras, special forces police wear uniforms with DNFE written on them, when previously, TIGRES and COBRAS were clearly distinguishable before the separate units that were fused together in 2017.

The TIGRES were proposed and then [created](#) by law in 2013 when Juan Carlos “El Tigre” Bonilla was head of the Honduran National Police.

Bonilla was recently [extradited](#) to the United States to face drug trafficking and weapons charged in the southern district of New York.

The United States not only extensively trained the TIGRES unit but the State Department by way of the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Office (INL) [contributed funding](#) for the construction and furnishing of a TIGRES complex in El Progreso, Yoro.

Like the COBRAS, the TIGRES have also been linked to human rights violations, and in 2017 in the midst of nationwide protests against electoral fraud, were used to [hunt and arrest](#) protesters.

### **Continued Links to Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime**

Despite years of efforts in Honduras to [clean up](#) all units of the National Police, Honduras' Special Forces continue to be linked to drug trafficking, rights violations, and organized crime.

In 2014, at least 21 members of the TIGRES were suspended after a police operation [carried out](#) in coordination with the DEA, stole \$1.3 million dollars. The money was found in buried sacks [during a raid](#) on a property owned by the powerful Valle Valle drug cartel in the western department of Copán.

Nine TIGRES police were later [tried](#) on charges of aggravated theft, abuse of authority, and stealing evidence. All were absolved in May 2016, but after an appeal process, the Honduran Supreme Court ruled in 2020 that the case must be retried. It's unclear the current status of the case.

Meanwhile, Obed Diblain Mencías Hernández, one of the TIGRES police involved in the 2014 incident, was arrested on a separate drug trafficking incident in October 2021. Mencías Hernández and eight other individuals – six of whom being police – were arrested while traveling with 19 kilograms of cocaine that had been confiscated and stolen from drug traffickers in the department of Colón.

The eight men and the ex-TIGRES police were stopped at a check-point, and [according to the Honduran press](#), got out of their vehicle “and identified themselves as National Police officials, saying they had participated in an operation and were traveling with an informant and a detained individual.”

The men told the police at the check-point that they had come from a clandestine landing strip, had seized the drugs, and would report it upon arriving to a nearby city. When the police investigated their claim, they found that they were lying, and the nine men were immediately arrested.

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