

Administrator Anne Milgram Remarks on Charging and Extradition of Juan Orlando Hernandez

Department of Justice Press Conference - April 21, 2022

(Remarks As Delivered)

Thank you, Attorney General Garland and US Attorney Williams. This case should send a clear message to any foreign leader who corruptly abuses their power to support drug cartels. If you take drug money for your election, if you accept drug cartel bribes, if you traffic deadly drugs, if you protect criminal drug cartels, if you turn the power of the state into a violent drug trafficking machine, if you allow violence and murder to flourish at the hands of the cartels, then the DEA will stop at nothing to hold you accountable for your crimes. If you think you can hide behind the power of your position, you are wrong.

The United States is in the midst of an unprecedented and devastating overdose epidemic. Every five minutes an American is dying of a drug overdose. The vast majority of the drugs that are killing Americans are not homegrown. They come from abroad. This epidemic is being driven by international drug cartels that profit from the sale of deadly drugs in American communities.

Today, the Department of Justice has unsealed charges against one Orlando Hernandez, the former president of Honduras, for drug trafficking and weapons possession. Hernandez campaigned on a simple promise to the Honduran people: that he would clean up political corruption and fight drug traffickers. But in reality, the indictment alleges that Hernandez did the opposite.

It alleges that he used the presidency to join forces with some of the largest and most violent drug trafficking organizations in the world. It alleges that Hernandez used drug money to finance his political rise. And once he was elected president, he used the government of Honduras's law enforcement, military, and financial resources to further his drug trafficking. The indictment alleges that Hernandez personally profited from cocaine sales, that he was personally involved in covering up Honduran drug trafficking schemes, going so far as to ensure that certain co-conspirators who he trafficked drugs with, would not be arrested or extradited.

The indictment alleges that hidden Hernandez repeatedly accepted bribes from cartel leaders, including a \$1 million bribe from El Chapo, the head of the Mexico based Sinaloa Cartel. That was prior to Chapo's conviction on drug trafficking charges in the United States. Sinaloa is

today one of the two Mexican criminal drug cartels responsible for the fentanyl flooding into the United States.

Thanks to the outstanding work of DEA agents, intelligence analysts and other DEA employees, Hernandez will now answer for his corrupt and violent acts. I want to thank all of the incredible men and women at DEA who worked tirelessly on this investigation. And in particular, DEA's Bilateral Investigations Unit at our Special Operations Division, which has led this investigation for many years. I also want to thank our Honduras Country Office and our New York Field Division for their important contributions to this effort. DEA is incredibly grateful to the Southern District of New York for their exceptional work on the prosecution of Hernandez. I am personally grateful to US Attorney Damian Williams, for his leadership on this matter and for our strong continuing partnership. DEA is also grateful to the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney General for their support, to the Office of International Affairs in the Criminal Division for their assistance with the extradition, and to the new administration in Honduras for its support of this extradition.

Across the world DEA is working to identify and dismantle the drug trafficking networks that are responsible for the deadly drugs coming into the United States. We will relentlessly pursue anyone -- drug traffickers, money launderers and heads of state --who threaten the safety and health of the American people. Thank you.

Read the [Department of Justice press release](#).