



Honduras Under Siege

By Roger F. Noriega and José Javier Lanza

As stepped-up counternarcotics policies in Colombia and Mexico have increased pressure on regional drug trafficking networks, organized crime syndicates have relocated operations to Central America, where law enforcement agencies and institutions are ill-equipped to withstand the onslaught. These multibillion-dollar gangs are making common cause with some local politicians who are following a playbook honed by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. The result in Venezuela was the birth of a narcostate, and similar dramas are playing out in Central America. Like Chávez, caudillos are using the democratic process to seek power, weaken institutions, and undermine the rule of law—generating turmoil that accommodates narcotrafficking. Making matters worse for Honduras is that left-wing activists abroad, in support of ousted president and Chávez acolyte Manuel Zelaya, are waging a very public campaign of outlandish claims seeking to block any US assistance to help the Honduran government resist the drug cartels. It is imperative that US policymakers vigorously support democracy, the rule of law, and antidrug programs in Honduras.

Central America is increasingly in the crosshairs of deadly organized crime syndicates that produce and transit illegal narcotics from South America to markets in the north. But one cannot understand the controversies surrounding these syndicates in Honduras today without first revisiting the 2009 crisis that saw the ouster of President Manuel Zelaya for his repeated challenges to the country's constitution and rule of law.

Zelaya, a wealthy landowner, had been elected in 2005 under the banner of the center-right, traditionalist Liberal Party. Three years into his term, however, and confronted with sagging poll numbers resulting from his inability to resolve myriad problems, he abruptly underwent an ideological about-face, aligning himself with then-Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez's radical left Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA).

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Aping the actions of confrontational populists like Chávez, Ecuador's Rafael Correa, and Bolivia's Evo Morales, who wrote new constitutions to increase their powers and eliminate term limits, Zelaya announced his intent to convene a

Key points in this *Outlook*:

- Drug cartels operating out of Colombia and Mexico are relocating to Central America in search of weaker law enforcement and corrupt politicians, and Honduras is a prime target.
- Political tensions have been escalating in Honduras since former president Manuel Zelaya's administration, creating a welcoming environment for violent and organized criminals, particularly narcotraffickers.
- To prevent the drug cartels from assuming more power, US policymakers must resist left-wing activists' attempts to block US aid and vigorously support democracy and antidrug laws and programs in Honduras.

constituent assembly to rewrite the Honduran constitution to lift the ban on reelection. In March 2009, he issued a decree ordering a popular vote in June 2009 as a precursor to a national referendum on convening a constituent assembly.¹

By 2011, Honduras had one of the highest homicide rates in the world, with 91.6 homicides per 100,000 residents.

However, because the Honduran Constitution prohibited popular votes and referenda to reform certain articles, including the form of government, national territory, presidential terms, and the prohibition on presidential reelection, Zelaya's effort met widespread opposition.² According to a Congressional Research Service report, "The legislature, the judiciary, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, evangelical groups, business associations, and four of the five political parties represented in the National Congress—including Zelaya's own Liberal Party—opposed the referendum."³ When the Court of Administrative Litigation ruled that the proposed referendum was illegal and banned any effort to promote it, a defiant Zelaya issued new decrees, including one that ordered the armed forces and media outlets to support his vote, now scheduled for June 28.⁴

As the June 28 vote approached, Zelaya continued to force a confrontation. A loyalist mob raided a military base where confiscated ballots had been sequestered, and Zelaya illegally fired the head of the armed forces when the military refused to support the poll. On June 25, the Honduran attorney general filed a criminal complaint against Zelaya and the Supreme Court issued a warrant for his arrest, carried out early on June 28.⁵ (Acting beyond court orders, the military flew Zelaya out of the country, which they later explained was to prevent any violence in the streets.) As established by the Honduran Constitution, the president of the Honduran Congress, Roberto Micheletti, a member of Zelaya's own party, assumed the presidency of the country.

Zelaya's removal from power caused great controversy in the region, most of it stoked by Chávez and like-minded leaders. They loudly denounced the purported *golpe* (coup) and demanded Zelaya's immediate return to power, while also engineering Honduras's summary expulsion from the Organization of American States.

The Obama administration, seemingly caught by surprise by Zelaya's ouster, sided with the Chávez-backed ALBA countries and initially echoed the call for his return. It canceled \$33 million in economic and military assistance to Honduras and revoked the visas of leading Honduran citizens who supported Zelaya's removal.⁶

On the charge that what occurred in Honduras was a coup, it bears noting that in an August 2009 analysis, the Law Library of the US Congress concluded that the Honduran Supreme Court indeed possessed the authority "to order the public forces to carry out an arrest warrant against a sitting president"; that the Supreme Court held a "proper, constitutionally mandated trial of the president"; and that "the Honduran National Congress properly approved articles of impeachment of the president as provided for by the Honduran Constitution."⁷

In the meantime, all manner of pressures were exerted on the interim Micheletti government to accept Zelaya back into the country. The interim government rebuffed those efforts as the country pressed ahead with regularly scheduled presidential elections for November 2009 as the legal and logical solution to the political crisis. On November 29, Porfirio Lobo of the National Party was elected president of Honduras with 56.6 percent of the vote.

Even before Lobo's election, Zelaya secretly reentered the country in September 2009 and holed up in the Brazilian Embassy in Tegucigalpa for 128 days before voluntarily leaving the country. He returned again in May 2011 and founded his new political party, LIBRE.

Post-Zelaya Disinformation Campaign

Although the majority of the Honduran people and the region have moved past the 2009 presidential crisis, a clutch of pro-Zelaya zealots in Honduras—supported by Venezuela—and dedicated left-wing activists abroad continue to stir the pot of polarization and confrontation in Honduras. Resurrecting Cold War-era rhetoric and railing about "US support for death squads," they savage the current government, Honduran "oligarchs," the United States, and even the Obama administration for introducing the violence afflicting the country today.⁸

In their eyes, Honduras's spiral into violence began with what they call the "military coup," which "unleashed a wave of violence against political dissent that continues to this day."⁹ According to one activist's hyperbole, "What difference does a coup make? Add up

the rampant corruption of the Honduran state, the crime it unleashed and perpetrates, and its ruthless repression of the opposition, and it's impossible to blame the crisis merely on drug trafficking and gangs; nor can organized crime and drug trafficking be separated from the criminal regime of Porfirio Lobo and the Honduran oligarchs."¹⁰ One activist describes life in Honduras under "repressive military-led rule" as thus: "You can drive by and shoot a teacher, an indigenous activist or a trade unionist, and nothing—nothing—will happen to you."¹¹

These activists seek nothing less than an immediate end to all US assistance for training and modernizing Honduran military and police forces—and accuse the Obama administration of breaking the law by providing such funding. "Why would the Obama administration be so stubborn as to deceive and defy Congress in order to support a death squad government in Honduras?" one columnist asked.¹²

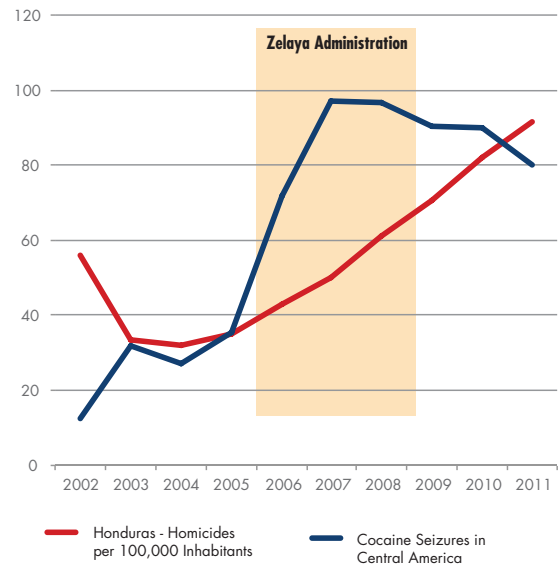
They mock the idea that US assistance can help support reform in Honduras, since "President Lobo and the Honduran Congress, themselves allegedly interlocked with the drug trade and organized crime, clearly lack the ability and political will to do so."¹³ Instead, they propose that the daunting task of ridding corrupt elements from the police and military should be undertaken by "the Honduran human rights community."¹⁴

The activists' ultimate goal is precisely what got former president Zelaya disqualified from public office in the first place: a new Honduran constitution, with "a complete reconstitution of the Honduran state from below, through a democratically composed constitutional convention, like those successfully undertaken in other Latin American countries in recent years."¹⁵ In Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, new constitutions were rammed through that undermined separation of powers, increased executive power, crippled the private sector, and gutted opposition rights. But before that can happen, the activists believe they must cripple the current government to pave the way for Zelaya's wife, Xiomara Castro de Zelaya, to win the next presidential election in November 2013.

Drugs and Violence

Despite what pro-Zelaya activists argue, current levels of violence in Honduras—as measured by homicide rates—are part of an escalating trend that began in the first year of the Zelaya administration (as figure 1 shows). In the three years prior to Zelaya's presidency, the nation

FIGURE 1
Comparison: Honduran Homicide Rate vs.
Central American Drug Seizures 2002–11



Source: Compiled with data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Homicide Statistics, www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/homicide.html.

averaged 33.6 homicides per 100,000 residents.¹⁶ Under Zelaya, the homicide rate increased at a yearly average of 8.8 homicides per 100,000 residents until, by 2008, the homicide rate had increased by 75 percent from the last year of former president Ricardo Maduro's term.¹⁷ Tragically, by 2011, Honduras had one of the highest homicide rates in the world, with 91.6 homicides per 100,000 residents.¹⁸

These statistics must be understood in the broader context of trends affecting the entire Central American region, where all countries have experienced substantial increases in their crime rates during the past decade. Even Panama, a less violent country, has experienced a 140 percent increase in its homicide rate over the past five years.¹⁹

Ascribing the current Honduran security crisis to "post-coup" political repression is a flagrant distortion of reality. The fact is, during the past decade, international narcotics trafficking organizations, pressured by stepped-up counternarcotics policies in Colombia and Mexico, have progressively shifted their operations to Central America, principally to the so-called Northern Triangle region that encompasses Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. In doing so, they have overtaken drug routes and access points traditionally managed by local drug

transporters and competed with rival transnational criminal groups for their control.²⁰

Today, the US State Department's 2013 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report estimates "87 percent of all cocaine smuggling flights departing South America first land in Honduras." It goes on to highlight the specific vulnerabilities of the country's remote stretches of Caribbean coastline due in large part to "limited state presence and weak institutional development" and the Honduran government's lack of "expertise, resources, and a complete legal framework to effectively counter the threat."²¹

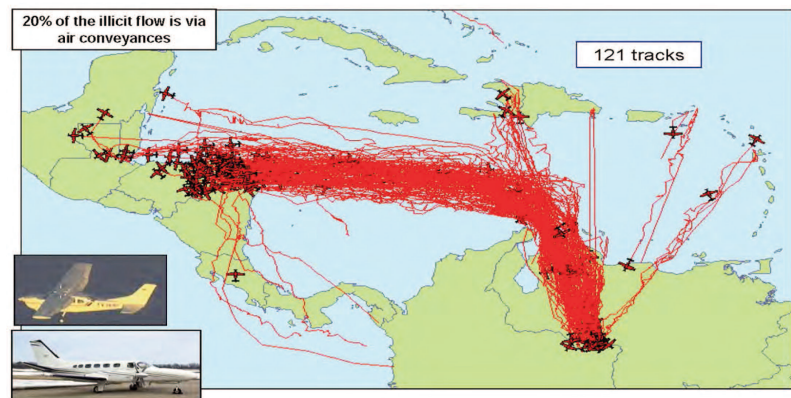
The report states that "criminal organizations in Honduras are ruthless, well-armed, well-funded, and logistically adept" and points to the increased presence of Mexican drug cartels taking advantage of Honduras's weak government presence and geographic location.²² The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime pinpoints "changes in cocaine trafficking flows, increased competition, and conflict relating to drug markets" as key factors to increasing homicide rates in Central America.²³

In short, the unfortunate reality for Honduras is that the country's law enforcement and judicial institutions are no match for transnational criminal organizations and the vast resources at their disposal. According to the US Southern Command, lucrative profits enable organized crime to increase operational capacity at a rate that far outpaces that of regional law enforcement and militaries.²⁴ Yet the fact that the majority of murders in Honduras have some relation to drug trafficking activities has not stopped activists from attempting to blame the Honduran government for carrying out politically motivated assassinations.

US Counternarcotics Support to Honduras 2009–12

US policy to support Honduras' drug-fighting efforts since 2009 has been one step forward, two steps back. The country's efforts to fight organized crime suffered a significant setback when the Obama administration suspended assistance in the midst of the 2009 crisis.²⁵ This sudden interruption of US assistance substantially diminished the country's ability to detect and intercept

FIGURE 2
US Government Radar Data on Cocaine-Bearing
Flights Departing from Venezuela



Source: Joint Interagency Task Force South, April 2012.

drug flights and shipments from South America, provoking an immediate increase in drug arrivals on the Honduran Caribbean coast.

By October 2009, Honduran drug-fighting authorities were overwhelmed by the volume of drug flights arriving, primarily from Venezuela.²⁶ (See figure 2.) In February 2010, authorities likened the country to an "unfenced pasture" because it had no ability or means to protect the country's airspace.²⁷ In October 2011, President Lobo met with US officials to urge more assistance, specifically radar technology and logistical and material support from the US military forces based in Honduras.²⁸

Meanwhile, in late 2011, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) of the Senate Appropriations Committee introduced language holding up 20 percent of the funds available for assisting Honduran military and police forces (around \$30 million) until the secretary of state certified that the Honduran government was protecting freedom of speech and due process and investigating military and police involvement in human rights violations.²⁹ To this day, Leahy is still holding up about \$10.3 million in aid.

Ultimately, in May 2012, a US radar system was installed in remote Puerto Lempira (gateway to the problematic Mosquitia region) to support a joint US-Honduran effort, "Operation Anvil," to deny "the use of the Central American littorals as transshipment routes for illicit drugs, weapons, people and bulk cash."³⁰

However, on May 12, 2012, shortly after joint military activities began, four Honduran citizens were killed during a midnight operation in this densely forested and sparsely populated region. Residents in the town of

Ahuas blamed US Drug Enforcement Administration agents for the incident, claiming “they were innocent villagers attacked without cause.” Human rights groups were quick to denounce the incident and demand that operations be suspended. (A surveillance video shortly thereafter revealed that Honduran forces opened fire after one of their boats was rammed by a larger drug trafficking vessel.³¹)

It is dangerous folly to believe Hondurans alone can remove the pernicious influences of drugs and criminality from their society.

On August 6, 2013, four people were killed in a confrontation in the locality of Belén Norte, part of the municipality of Brus Laguna in Mosquitia. Among the deceased were two Honduran citizens, a Mexican, and a Nicaraguan. The reason for their dispute: control over 700 kilos of cocaine.³² It is known that massive amounts of cocaine enter Honduras through the Mosquitia region; therefore it is utterly naïve to assume that its inhabitants do not assume a direct role in the lucrative unloading of planes, boats, and submarines and in the transport and protection of cocaine routes.

Yet, in August 2012, the Honduran military announced that the newly installed radar was being removed once again.³³ A US State Department spokesman said it was the result of two incidents that took place in July 2012, when the Honduran Air Force shot down two planes believed to be carrying drugs in violation of protocols in treaties between the two countries.³⁴

Following further consultations between the two countries to prevent further miscommunications, radar service was reestablished, but not before a public backlash in Honduras.³⁵ The Honduran national commissioner of human rights reported that just over a month after the United States removed its radar, there was an 89 percent increase in the violation of Honduran airspace by drug-carrying aircraft. Moreover, the country’s ombudsman said, “The United States is telling us . . . that Honduras is open for drug trafficking. We cannot remain in this miserable situation,” he said, “where we are begging the world’s biggest drug consumer to give us radar.”³⁶

Honduran military officials reported on October 14, 2012, that since the United States suspended its radar cooperation, an average of two drug flights per day

landed on the country’s Caribbean coast.³⁷ Honduran airspace was left unmonitored for a total of 97 days, until the United States resumed radar sharing that November.

When Vice President Joe Biden visited Tegucigalpa in March 2013, he promised, “The United States is absolutely committed to continuing to work with Honduras to win this battle against the narcotraffickers.”³⁸ However, critics of US policy remain active in the US Congress, pressuring the administration to halt its security assistance to Honduras. In May 2011, 87 Democrats in the House of Representatives called on then–secretary of state Hillary Clinton to suspend police and military assistance to Honduras “due to the lack of mechanisms in place to ensure security forces are held accountable for abuses.”³⁹ Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), then ranking member on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, sent two letters, in November 2011 and October 2012, raising questions about US security assistance to Honduras.⁴⁰

In March 2012, seven Democratic senators, led by Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), sent a letter to Clinton reminding her that US security assistance was contingent upon certification that Honduras was doing all it could to prosecute human rights violators.⁴¹ In January 2013, 58 House Democrats sent a letter to new Secretary of State John Kerry and Attorney General Eric Holder requesting a further investigation of the May 2012 incident at Ahuas.⁴² In March, 94 House Democrats signed a letter sponsored by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), again calling for a suspension of US security assistance to Honduras.⁴³ Finally, on June 17, a group of 21 senators sent a letter to Secretary Kerry asking for a review of aid destined for the Honduran military and police.⁴⁴

On July 25, 2013, a hearing on the human rights situation in Honduras before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the US Congress featured witnesses that again painted a woefully inaccurate and politically motivated version of Honduran reality. In particular, one witness attributing the current violence to extrajudicial killings and post-“coup” repercussions was Tirsia Flores Lanza, a former magistrate of the Court of Appeals in San Pedro Sula and the sister of President Zelaya’s former minister of the presidency, who has been accused of embezzling millions of dollars during the Zelaya administration.⁴⁵

If these efforts to deny security assistance to Honduras succeed, it will mean overwhelmed and poorly trained Honduran authorities will be left isolated in defending the

country against the very narcotraffickers responsible for the spike in violence in Honduras and elsewhere in Central America. Ironically, the one who stands to gain from this is Manuel Zelaya, whose reputed ties to narcotrafficking are notorious and who has done more than anyone to undermine Honduran institutions and the rule of law.

Conclusion

No one disputes that Honduras continues to face major challenges in confronting major drug trafficking cartels. Nor is there any doubt drug money has corrupted some officials or that poorly trained police and military officials have engaged in abusive behavior toward Honduran citizens.

However, it is inconceivable how the situation will improve if the United States denies assistance. In many ways, the situation resembles conditions in Colombia before the US-Colombia counternarcotics strategy Plan Colombia was initiated.⁴⁶ Skeptics asserted that drug corruption and criminality were so ingrained in the country that US assistance would merely abet those scourges. Yet years of political will on the part of Colombians and sustained US commitment and assistance have produced unprecedented gains in rooting out corruption, professionalizing security forces, confronting illegal groups, and improving the lives of all Colombians.

It is dangerous folly to believe Hondurans alone can remove the pernicious influences of drugs and criminality from their society. They desperately need outside assistance, and that can come only from the United States and like-minded allies such as Colombia, Mexico, and the European Union. Policymakers must not be distracted by efforts to impede cooperation in the service of a narrow political agenda.

Serious questions exist about whether the current public campaign by left-wing activists is about Honduran human rights or is a political strategy to make the country ungovernable and pave the way for the victory of Manuel Zelaya's wife in presidential elections this November. Ironically, rather than redressing the "wrong" committed when Zelaya was ousted in June 2009, a Zelaya victory may put the country back on the radical path toward a constitutional overhaul that puts the country at the disposal of narcotraffickers who see Honduras as an essential link in their smuggling chain.

Honduras faces numerous financial and operational handicaps in its current struggle against drug trafficking

and criminality. Ending human rights violations, drug corruption, and impunity in a country ravaged by drug violence are tasks that Honduras cannot achieve on its own. The United States must share responsibility for fighting the drug violence fueled by our citizens' insatiable demand for illegal narcotics. Abandoning Honduras to the criminals and radicals whose activities harm people in both countries would be illogical as well as immoral.

Notes

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2. "Honduras: consulta ilegal" [Honduras: Illegal Referendum], BBC Mundo, March 26, 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/spanish/latin_america/newsid_7965000/7965269.stm.

3. Peter J. Meyer, "Honduran Political Crisis June 2009-January 2010," Congressional Research Service, February 1, 2010, www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41064.pdf.

4. "Juzgado anula decretos del Ejecutivo para cuarta urna" [Court Nullifies Presidential Decree for Referendum], *La Prensa*, May 29, 2009, <http://archivo.laprensa.hn/vivir/index.php/Ediciones/2009/05/30/Noticias/Juzgado-anula-decretos-del-Ejecutivo-para-cuarta-urna->; "Encuesta tiene fines ilícitos: Fiscal General" [Referendum Has Illegal Aims: Attorney General], *La Prensa*, May 5, 2009, <http://archivo.laprensa.hn/content/view/full/195908>; "Juzgado de Letras Contencioso suspende la encuesta de junio" [Court of Administrative Litigation Suspendes June Poll], *El Herald*, May 27, 2009, <http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2009/05/28/Noticias/Juzgado-de-Letras-Contencioso-suspende-la-encuesta-de-junio>.

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8. Mark Weisbrot, "Will Obama's Legacy Be a Death Squad Government in Honduras?" *Huffington Post*, April 1, 2013, www.huffingtonpost.com/mark-weisbrot/honduras-death-squads_b_2992632.html.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Dana Frank, "Honduras: Which Side Is the US On?" *The Nation*, May 22, 2012, www.thenation.com/article/167994/honduras-which-side-us.

11. Dana Frank, "Ousted President's Return Doesn't Mean Repression Is Over," *The Progressive*, May 27, 2011, <http://progressive.org/mpfrank052711.html>.

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14. Dana Frank, "Honduras in Flames," *The Nation*, February 16, 2012, www.thenation.com/article/166313/honduras-flames.

15. Frank, "Honduras: Which Side Is the US On?"

16. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide*, 2011, www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Homicide/Globa_study_on_homicide_2011_web.pdf.

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19. "Posture Statement of General Douglas M. Fraser, United States Air Force Commander, United States Southern Command Before the 112th Congress," US House Armed Services Committee, March 6, 2012, 9, www.southcom.mil/newsroom/Documents/SOUTHCOM_2012_Posture_Statement.pdf.

20. For further reading see Cynthia J. Arnson et al., *Organized Crime in Central America: The Northern Triangle*, Woodrow Wilson Center, November 2011, www.wilsoncenter.org/node/19779; Steven S. Dudley, *Transnational Crime in Mexico and Central America*, Migration Policy Institute, November 2012, www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/RMSG-Transnational-Crime.pdf; Andrew Selee, Cynthia J. Arnson, and Eric L. Olson, *Crime and Violence in Mexico and Central America*, Migration Policy Institute, January 2013, www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/RMSG-EvolvingPolicyResponse.pdf; Eleanor Sohnen, *Paying for Crime: A Review of the Relationships between Insecurity and Development in Mexico and Central America*, Migration Policy Institute, December 2012, www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/RMSG-PayingforCrime.pdf.

21. US Department of State, 2013 *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, June 2013, www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2013/.

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23. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide*.

24. "Posture Statement of General Douglas M. Fraser."

25. As an example, security expert Steven Dudley points out the limitations faced by the Honduran police force in the Department of Olancho, which "has a total of 250 police officers to cover an area roughly the size of El Salvador and larger than the country of Belgium or the U.S. State of Maryland." See Dudley, *Transnational Crime in Mexico and Central America*, 3. Before Zelaya's ouster, the United States "lent its helicopters to the ill-equipped Honduran Air Force and provided the [Honduran] Navy with fuel and logistics for boat interception." See Frank Jack Daniel, "Aumentan vuelos de narcos a Honduras tras el golpe" [Drug-Bearing Flights to Honduras Increase after Coup], *Noticias Terra*, October 14, 2009, http://noticias.terra.com/noticias/ENTREVISTA_Aumentan_vuelos_de_narcos_en_Honduras_tras_el_golpe/act1995255.

26. The chief of the country's antinarcotics police (who would be murdered three months later) declared that "almost all of the drug planes recently found in Honduras were licensed in Venezuela and piloted by Colombians." This caused the interim government to complain that the presence of Venezuelan drug planes had become "intolerable," blaming the Chávez regime's implicit cooperation with organized crime and the United States' unwillingness to collaborate with Honduran counternarcotics in the detection of aircraft arriving from South America with drug shipments. See "Honduras protestará ante Venezuela por aviones con supuesta droga" [Honduras Will Protest before Venezuela as a Result of Alleged Drug Flights], *El Universal*, October 21, 2009, www.eluniversal.com/2009/10/21/chon_ava_honduras-protestara_21A2929371.shtml; "Mafia venezolana invade Honduras con drogas" [Venezuelan Mafia Invades Honduras with Drugs], *El Herald*, March 31, 2009, <http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/content/view/full/89937>; Daniel, "Aumentan vuelos de narcos a Honduras tras el golpe."

27. At the time, former minister of security Oscar Alvarez confirmed the existence of 250–300 flight routes operated by narcotraffickers from Venezuela to Honduras. Alvarez added that many of these routes were directly managed by Mexican drug cartels that had recently begun to operate in Honduran territory. See "Álvarez confirma investigación sobre narcos" [Alvarez Confirms Investigation about Narcos], *La Prensa*, February 17, 2010, <http://archivo.laprensa.hn/Apertura/Ediciones/2010/02/18/Noticias/Alvarez-confirma-investigacion-sobre-narcos>.

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30. “Posture Statement of General Douglas M. Fraser.”

31. Tom Shanker and Charlie Savage, “Video Adds to Honduran Drug Raid Mystery,” *New York Times*, June 22, 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/06/23/world/americas/video-adds-to-mystery-of-drug-mission-in-honduras.html. As early as February 2012, US surveillance videos had corroborated the involvement of impoverished inhabitants of the Mosquitia region in the transshipment of drug cargo through the area’s vast waterways. See “Video capta a narcos descargando droga en territorio hondureño” [Video Captures Narcos Unloading Drugs in Honduran Territory], *El Heraldo*, February 13, 2009, www.elheraldo.hn/Secciones-Secundarias/Unidad-Investigativa/Video-capta-a-narcos-descargando-droga-en-territorio-hondureno. An unnamed US official told the *New York Times*, “There is nothing in the local village that was unknown, a surprise, or a mystery about this. . . . What happened was that, for the first time in the history of Ahuas, Honduran law enforcement interfered with narcotics smuggling.” See Damien Cave, “Anger Rises after Killings in U.S.-Honduras Drug Sweep,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2012, www.nytimes.com/2012/05/18/world/americas/united-states-says-no-dea-agents-took-part-in-honduras-shootout.html.

32. “Enfrentamiento deja cuatro muertos en La Mosquitia de Honduras” [Confrontation Leaves Four Dead in the Mosquitia Region of Honduras], *La Prensa*, August 6, 2013, [www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/Policiales/Enfrentamiento-deja-cuatro-muertos-en-La-Mosquitia-de-Honduras#.UhlJLpr_vz\]w](http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/Policiales/Enfrentamiento-deja-cuatro-muertos-en-La-Mosquitia-de-Honduras#.UhlJLpr_vz]w).

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35. “EUA reanudara señal de radar aéreo a Honduras” [US Will Resume Radar Sharing with Honduras], *La Prensa*, October 26, 2012, www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/EUA-reanudara-senal-de-radar-aereo-a-Honduras; “Lisa Kubiske: pronto será reestablecido el radar” [Lisa Kubiske: Radar Service Will Soon Be Reestablished], *La Prensa*, September 12, 2012, www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Tegucigalpa/Lisa-Kubiske-Pronto-sera-restablecido-el-radar; “US Resumes Radar Sharing with Honduras,” *Associated Press*, November 22, 2012, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/us-resumes-radar-sharing-honduras>.

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38. The White House, Office of the Vice President, “Joint Statement to the Press by Vice President Joe Biden and Honduran President Porfirio Lobo Sosa,” March 6, 2012, www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/03/06/joint-statement-press-vice-president-joe-biden-and-honduran-president-po. Much of the security assistance provided to Honduras comes under the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), a multifaceted program supporting law enforcement and judicial reform and social programs to support civil societies. Funding for CARSI between fiscal years 2008 and 2012 amounted to \$496 million. For FY 2013,

the administration requested an additional \$107.5 million and for FY 2014 \$161.5 million, representing a 20 percent increase over fiscal year 2012 levels. See US Department of State, "Central America Regional Security Initiative," www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/carsi/.

39. Letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton from 87 Democratic representatives to the US Congress on security force abuse in Honduras, May 31, 2011, www.democracyinamericas.org/pdfs/Letter_on_Honduras_87_US_Congress_members.pdf.

40. Letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton from Howard L. Berman, ranking member of the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, November 28, 2011, www.justforeignpolicy.org/sites/default/files/11-28-11.%20Letter%20to%20Secretary%20Clinton%20re.%20Human%20Rights%20in%20Honduras.pdf; Letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton from Howard L. Berman, ranking member of the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, October 2, 2012, www.friendshipamericas.org/sites/default/files/Letter%20to%20Secretary%20Clinton%20-%20Honduras%20-%20Oct%202012.pdf.

41. Letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton from seven Democratic senators on human rights violations in Honduras, March 5, 2012, www.justforeignpolicy.org/sites/default/files/3.5.12_Mikulski_Letter_to_State_re_Honduras.pdf.

42. Office of Representative Hank Johnson, "Rep. Johnson, 57 Colleagues Call for Investigation into DEA-Related

Killings in Honduras," press release, January 30, 2013, <http://hankjohnson.house.gov/press-release/rep-johnson-57-colleagues-call-investigation-dea-related-killings-honduras>.

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45. "Citado Enrique Flores Lanza por otra acusación" [Enrique Flores Lanza Is Summoned as a Result of Another Legal Accusation], *El Heraldo*, September 9, 2011, <http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2011/09/07/Noticias/Citado-Enrique-Flores-Lanza-por-otra-acusacion>.

46. For more information on Plan Colombia, see <http://bogota.usembassy.gov/plancolombia.html>.