

# How America Destroyed Honduras

## **We hijacked their economy**

(The Conversation) “As historian Walter LaFeber writes in “Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America,” American companies “built railroads, established their own banking systems, and bribed government officials at a dizzying pace.” As a result, the Caribbean coast “became a foreign-controlled enclave that systematically swung the whole of Honduras into a one-crop economy whose wealth was carried off to New Orleans, New York, and later Boston.” By 1914, U.S. banana interests owned almost 1 million acres of Honduras’ best land. These holdings grew through the 1920s to such an extent that, as LaFeber asserts, Honduran peasants “had no hope of access to their nation’s good soil.” Over a few decades, U.S. capital also came to dominate the country’s banking and mining sectors, a process facilitated by the weak state of Honduras’ domestic business sector. This was coupled with direct U.S. political and military interventions to protect U.S. interests in 1907 and 1911.

Such developments made Honduras’ ruling class dependent on Washington for support. A central component of this ruling class was and remains the Honduran military. By the mid-1960s it had become, in LaFeber’s words, the country’s “most developed political institution,” – one that Washington played a key role in shaping.”

## **We set up a military there**

(The Conversation) “As part of its effort to overthrow the Sandinista government in neighboring Nicaragua and “roll back” the region’s leftist movements, the Reagan administration “temporarily” stationed several hundred U.S. soldiers in Honduras. Moreover, it trained and sustained Nicaragua’s “contra” rebels on Honduran soil, while greatly increasing military aid and arm sales to the country.

The Reagan administration also played a big role in restructuring the Honduran economy. It did so by strongly pushing for internal economic reforms, with a focus on exporting manufactured goods. It also helped deregulate and destabilize the global coffee trade, upon which Honduras heavily depended. These changes made Honduras more amenable to the interests of global capital. They disrupted traditional forms of agriculture and undermined an already weak social safety net.

The 2009 coup, more than any other development, explains the increase in Honduran migration across the southern U.S. border in the last few years. The Obama administration has played an important role in these developments. Although it officially decried Zelaya’s ouster, it equivocated on whether or not it constituted a coup, which would have required the U.S. to stop sending most aid to the country.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in particular, sent conflicting messages, and worked to ensure that Zelaya did not return to power. This was contrary to the wishes of the Organization of American States, the leading hemispheric political forum composed of the 35 member-countries of the Americas, including the Caribbean. Several months after the coup, Clinton supported a

highly questionable election aimed at legitimating the post-coup government.”

### **We stood by as criminal cartels took over**

(The Conversation) “Since the coup, writes historian Dana Frank, “a series of corrupt administrations has unleashed open criminal control of Honduras, from top to bottom of the government.” The Trump administration’s recognition, in December 2017, of President Juan Orlando Hernández’s re-election—after a process marked by deep irregularities, fraud and violence. This continues Washington’s longstanding willingness to overlook official corruption in Honduras as long as the country’s ruling elites serve what are defined as U.S. economic and geopolitical interests.

Organized crime, drug traffickers and the country’s police heavily overlap. The frequent politically motivated killings are rarely punished. In 2017, Global Witness, an international nongovernmental organization, found that Honduras was the world’s deadliest country for environmental activists.”

### **Even after we found out it was illegal**

(BBC) “The Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission has concluded that the removal from office of former President Manuel Zelaya was a coup. It said the move was illegal and not a constitutional succession as some of Mr Zelaya’s opponents said. The Commission investigated the events of 28 June 2009, when Mr Zelaya was forced into exile in Costa Rica. The crisis was triggered by Mr Zelaya’s refusal to cancel a referendum linked to presidential term limits.

The chair of the Commission, former Guatemalan Vice-President Eduardo Stein, presented the report to current Honduran President Porfirio Lobos, Head of the Supreme Court Jorge Rivera Avilez and Secretary General of the Organization of American States Jose Miguel Insulza in the Honduran capital Tegucigalpa. The Commission identified Mr Zelaya’s decision to press ahead with the referendum on constitutional change as “a point of no return” in the crisis.

His critics said the move was aimed at removing the current one-term limit on serving as president, and paving the way for his possible re-election - a charge he repeatedly denied. The consultation was ruled illegal by the Supreme Court and Congress.

“When Mr Zelaya insisted the consultation go ahead, Congress voted to remove him for what it called “repeated violations of the constitution and the law”. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission said Mr Zelaya, 58, had manoeuvred himself into a corner, where he lacked the support of Congress, the Supreme Court, and even his own party. The Commission said Mr Zelaya broke the law when he disregarded the Supreme Court ruling ordering him to cancel the referendum. It said therefore both Mr Zelaya and those who ousted him bore responsibility for his forced removal from office.”

## Sources

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