



Honduras Partners with Central American Neighbors and the U.S. to Fight Gang Violence

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The Honduran government is tackling violence and going after gang leaders with renewed vigor following a meeting last week with top law enforcement officials from the United States, El Salvador, and Guatemala.

Honduran Prosecutor General Óscar Fernando Chinchilla, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions, El Salvadorian Prosecutor General Douglas Arquímedes Meléndez Ruiz, and Guatemalan Prosecutor General Thelma Esperanza Aldana convened in El Salvador to discuss how to better battle organized crime in the three Central American countries, collectively known as the Northern Triangle.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández celebrated the gathering as a step toward quashing the “illegal, disruptive, and violent gang networks in the Northern Triangle.” “In the fight against organized crime,” he said, “Northern Triangle countries can accomplish a lot more together than alone.”

A topic of particular focus was Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, a multinational street gang that has committed heinous crimes in both Central America and the United States.

“Attorney General Sessions praised Prosecutor General Óscar Chinchilla for his efforts in the fight against MS-13, such as Operation Avalancha,” U.S. Chargé d’Affaires in Honduras Heide Fulton tweeted.

Under the leadership of the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Transparency and Anticorruption and the Technical Criminal Investigation Agency

(ATIC), Honduras has made significant progress suppressing gang violence.

In February 2016, ATIC arrested several MS-13 gang leaders and seized over 1,500 MS-13 assets -- including 43 residences, 61 land plots, 17 businesses, and over 1,400 vehicles. In October 2016, the Honduran government searched over 60 properties in San Pedro Sula, an MS-13 hotspot. Last month, the government weakened the gang’s financial arm by arresting a notorious MS-13 drug trafficker and money launderer.

“When it comes to addressing violence, Honduras is setting an example for its Northern Triangle neighbors,” President Hernández stated.

The meeting attendees also discussed strengthening extradition relationships between their countries. Honduras has surrendered 15 Honduran nationals to be tried in the United States and is planning to send three more.

“When it comes to addressing violence, Honduras is setting an example for its Northern Triangle neighbors,” President Hernández stated. “We must continue to work with the United States to tackle gang violence. That is only way to defeat an enemy that does not respect national borders.”