

US-Trained Honduras' Tigres are Hunting Down Anti-Govt Protesters

One of the poorest countries in Latin America, Honduras is now also among the region's most violent and crime-ridden countries, due in part to its role as a strategically important transit nation for the transnational drug trade, as well as macroeconomic shifts, endemic poverty, corruption and political turmoil. Estimates vary, but between **140 and 300 tons of cocaine** are believed to pass through the country each year.

In recent years, transnational criminal groups, particularly Mexican cartels, have expanded their presence in Honduras.

The 2009 coup that ousted President **Manuel Zelaya** and caused international outrage also exacerbated instability in the country. **Colombian drug trafficking gangs changed their routes to Honduras just days after the coup** and turned it into the principal point for handing cocaine over to Mexican cartels.

And now, U.S-trained Honduran military is hunting down anti-government protesters in **Honduras**. Against Honduran law, U.S.-trained and supported special forces agents, **TIGRES**, have been conducting overnight raids to arrest people.

"They arrived at three in the morning," a woman's whose home was recently raided and her husband arrested told the Intercept. "My kids were frightened and crying."

The Honduran Secretariat of Security said the arrests were made within the legal course and arrest warrants were issued, along with a prosecutor on spot, and were carried out within the hours allowed by the law.

Per the country's law, search warrants can only be executed between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., but ever since protests against the right-wing incumbent, Juan Orlando Hernandez's which have thrown the country in chaos, numerous cases of night-time raids by the security forces have been reported.

In protests against Hernandez, so far, nearly 35 protesters have been killed by the security forces and others, with hundreds injured, and over 1,000 detained. At least 22 people are reported to be behind bars throughout the country on protest-related charges, according to the Intercept.

According to a report by the Washington Office on Latin America, **WOLA**, it was revealed that operations carried out by U.S. forces like the Green Berets, the Navy SEALs, and the Army Rangers, tripled in Central America between 2007 and 2014.

The report which analyzed a trove of U.S. state department documents obtained through Freedom of Information Act, **FOIA** request, also stated that in 2007, some 560 foreign troops were trained by 12 **JCET** members as part of the U.S. **Joint Combined Exchange Training**, with most of these operations being carried out in Latin America, including Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Of the 21 registered training events, Honduras attended the largest numbers, occurring between 2011 and 2014, a period marked with "serious allegations levied against Honduran security forces—murder, torture, rape, and extortion—went uninvestigated and unpunished," Sarah Kinosian and Adam Isacson, who co-authored the **WOLA** report also said in the report.

"During **JCET** training, US forces in Latin America held joint military drills with local forces and taught combat skills, intelligence gathering and riot control techniques, the documents state. At the same time Americans familiarized themselves with the countries they worked in "with a minimal footprint," learning local languages, culture, and terrain," the report detailed.

"With civil affairs and psychological operations among their chief missions, their purpose is as political as it is military," the report stated. "[JCET] activities often enhance US influence in host countries."

Aside from Latin America, the **United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)** reach and influence could be found in countries such as Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China, which the **USSOCOM**'s commander, Raymond A. Thomas, justified in a 2017 statement saying they had "identified five current and enduring threats in the new **National Military Strategy (NMS)**."

"Although constituting only 2% of the Department's budget and about 2% of its manpower, as a Combatant Command with global responsibilities, **USSOCOM** plays a critical role in the campaigns against each of these," Thomas added.

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GAZA KILLINGS PREMEDITATED



15 Palestinians were killed on March 30, and an estimated 1,400 more were injured as Israeli soldiers used live ammunition, drones firing tear gas and even artillery along the Gaza-Israel boundary. A speaker for the Israel Military tweeted afterwards "Yesterday we saw 30,000 people; we arrived prepared and with precise reinforcements. Nothing was carried out uncontrolled; everything was accurate and measured, and we know where every bullet landed." A copy of the Tweet was made by the human rights group B'Tselem after the military deleted it.

These thousands of Gaza protesters were answering an activist's call to embrace civil disobedience by demonstrating close to the border fence, an area defined by the Israel Defense Forces as a closed military zone. According to plans first sketched out on Facebook by the independent Gazan activist Ahmed Abu Artesha, the rally on Friday marked the start of a six-week campaign, called The Great Return March, intended to culminate on May 15, as Israel celebrates its 70th birthday and Palestinians mourn the Nakba, or "Catastrophe." Dozens of respected historians and journalists including Israelis such as Ilan Pappe and Gideon Levy have documented the coordinated military attack on hundreds of age-old Palestinian villages in 1948 as the onset of a calculated project of ethnic cleansing that continues unabated today. As part of the campaign, the writer Enas Fares Ghannam explained on the Gazan website **We Are Not Numbers**, "Palestinian refugees living in Gaza will set up tents near the border and move gradually — and peacefully — closer."

Although the Israeli military deployed snipers along the fence, and declared their plans to use live ammunition against what it described in advance as, "violent riots planned throughout the Gaza Strip," Palestinians were dismayed by reports in the Israeli and international press calling the use of deadly force against unarmed demonstrators the result of "clashes." Witnesses insisted that while some rocks were hurled in the direction of the border fence during the day, Israeli forces had initiated the violence.

"The scheduled marches are overseen by a national committee," explained Basem Naim, a former Palestinian Minister of Health and Gaza resident, "which represents all Palestinian forces and factions as well as civil society and independent Palestinian figures and supporters. The Committee has circulated numerous publications and directives for participants in the marches, which emphasize the peacefulness of this particular movement and the need to avoid violence or any provocative escalation by Israel. The Committee has also designated various on-site representatives to oversee our collective efforts and to ensure that our message is heard through powerful and peaceful means."

"Notwithstanding our best efforts we full well expect provocation by Israel during our protests and will do all that we can to ensure its inflammatory efforts will pass without any response. This fear proved to be reality when Israel unleashed hundreds of rounds of live ammunition and canisters of tear gas at first sight of peaceful demonstrators armed with nothing more than their voice and self-determination."

"Given a long and well documented history of violence in furtherance of the occupation, Palestinians have a well-founded fear that despite the peaceful nature of these marches, Israel will use them as a pretext to kill and injure more of our people. Nevertheless, we will not be deterred by Israeli aggression as we exercise our fundamental rights to resist and to demonstrate so as to ensure that the path for our children will lead to a better, just and equal future."

United Nations Secretary-General

António Guterres has called for an independent and transparent investigation into clashes at the Gaza fence on Friday between Palestinians participating in the 'Great Return March' and Israeli security forces which resulted in at least 15 deaths and a large number of injured.

The UN chief's call for a probe came as the Security Council convened an emergency meeting so its members could be briefed on the deadly incidents.

Israel's defense minister has rejected United Nations and European Union calls for an investigation into the killing.

The United States blocked a draft UN Security Council statement urging restraint and calling for an investigation of clashes on the Gaza-Israel border. The proposed statement, which called for an "**independent and transparent investigation**" of the violence, and called for "...respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law, including protection of civilians..." and it reaffirmed the right to peaceful protest.

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