

# *Honduran president welcomes U.S. Southcom leader to Tegucigalpa*

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Tegucigalpa, June 24 (RHC)-- Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH) welcomed the United States Southern Command (Southcom) leader Craig Faller, who was accompanied by a Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force. The group convened in Palmerola, a U.S. military base located in Honduras about 75 km north of the nation's capital of Tegucigalpa.

"It is good to know that we will have the support of this group of Marines, especially when we have to face a series of disaster-related problems due to climate change," Hernandez said regarding the arrival of 300 troops.

According to information from the Honduran presidency, the U.S. Marines will develop a multinational maritime task force with the stated intention to improve the Central American response to natural disasters in the region.

Guatemala and Honduras in particular have both suffered a mix of severe droughts and heavy flooding over the past year, likely due to climate change, that have resulted in deaths and impacted these nations' agriculture sector and the small farmers who produce the majority of their food. These respective

governments have largely failed to mitigate the results of the extreme weather, or offer meaningful solutions to small farmers.

The admiral said that they will execute several so-called "humanitarian assistance projects" in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras over the next six months.

The arrival of the Southcom admiral and his troops comes amid a deep political crisis in Honduras that escalated in April when teachers and doctors initiated protests against a law they said would privatize and further weaken the nation's education and healthcare services. Though JOH later repealed the law, protests have continued calling for his ouster.

Many across the nation have been calling for the president's removal since before he was declared winner of the 2017 elections pointing to several corruption investigations against the leader dating back to when he led the legislator, and that he and his government allies rigged the ballots to place the incumbent back in the presidential palace nearly two years ago.

This past week even members of the militarized National Police force joined protesters, saying they would no longer repress the demonstrators, three of whom have been killed and over 30 injured, according to teleSUR correspondents in Honduras. The police are also demanding better working conditions. The administration responded with putting the Military Police on the streets.

One organizer of street protests against the Honduran president told reporters: "The U.S. Southern Command has deployed 300 Marines from the U.S. on Honduran soil under the pretext of 'preparing for natural disasters.' Funny how this comes as thousands continue to protest the right-wing government of Juan Orlando Hernández, a U.S. puppet."

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