

# *Central America Forms 'Elite Security Group' to Fight Crime*

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San Salvador, August 25 (RHC)-- Three Central American presidents have announced that they are forming a joint force to combat gangs and organized crime. The initiative by El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras will be implemented in September, Salvadoran President Salvador Sanchez Ceren said at a news conference after a meeting with his counterparts the capital, San Salvador.

Police and soldiers from the three countries will patrol border zones to fight arms and drug smuggling, as well as the movement of criminals, he said.

Sanchez Ceren, Guatemala's Jimmy Morales and Honduras's Juan Orlando Hernandez also agreed to continue exchanging intelligence on criminal groups and to speed up the extradition process between their countries.

The new unit -- called the "Elite Security Group" -- was suggested earlier by Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, who has massively enhanced military involvement in policing matters related to citizen security, which has been widely criticized by civil society organizations.

Between 2012 and 2014, Honduran soldiers were accused of being involved in at least nine murders, over 20 cases of torture and about 30 illegal detentions, according to data compiled by Reuters. Guatemala and Honduras have also been embroiled in controversies involving corruption and human rights abuses within their police and military forces.

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