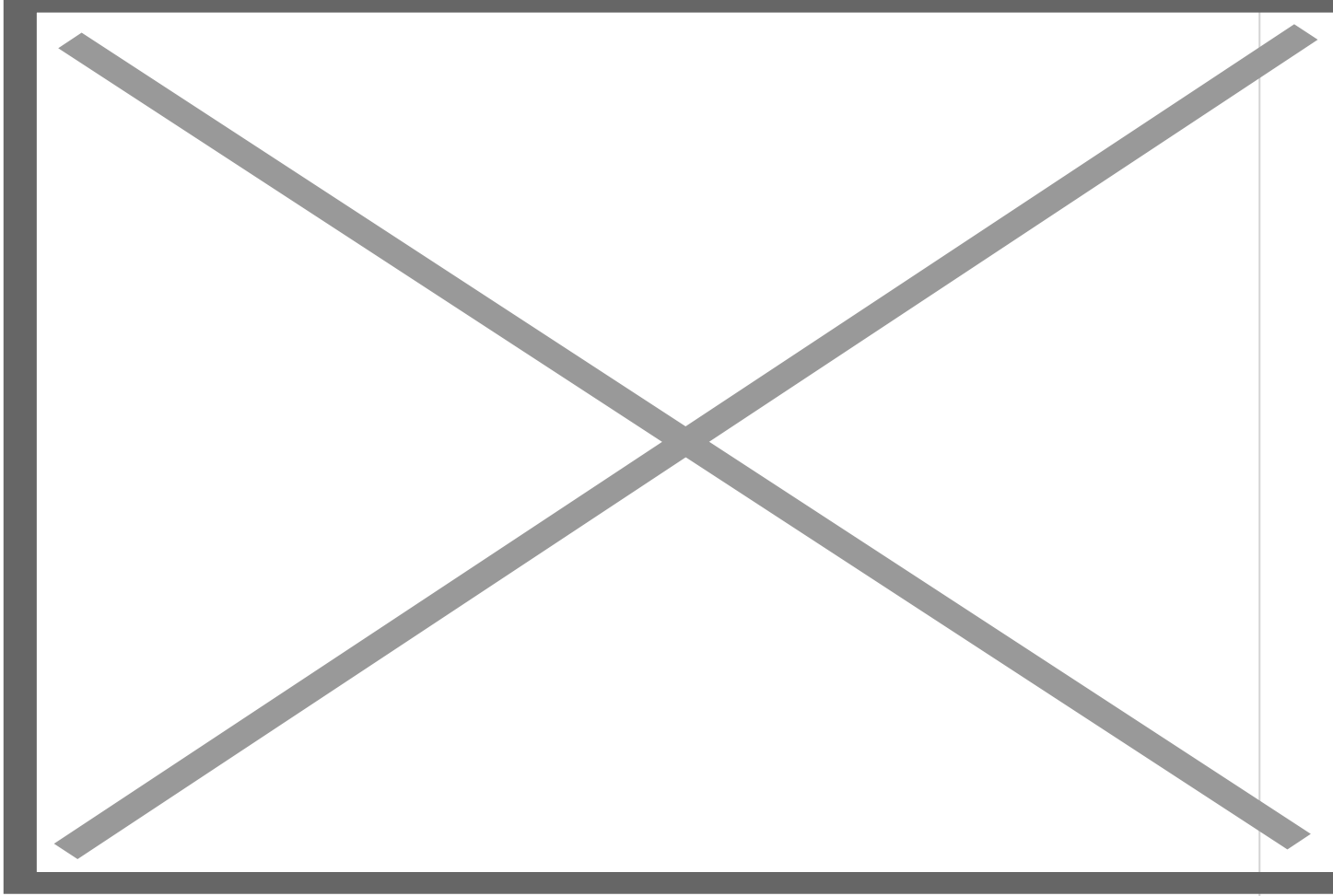


Court records show Honduran president target of U.S. investigation

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New York, February 9 (RHC)-- U.S. prosecutors are investigating Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, according to a new court filing seen by the Reuters news agency, piling pressure on a leader who prosecutors have already accused in court of participation in the nation's bloody narcotics trade.

In a court document filed in the Southern District of New York in the case of Geovanny Fuentes Ramirez, an alleged Honduran drug trafficker, U.S. federal prosecutors said Hernandez himself was the target of an investigation, along with other “high-ranking officials.”

Last month, U.S. prosecutors said in a court filing related to the same case that Hernandez had by 2013 “accepted millions of dollars in drug-trafficking proceeds and, in exchange, promised drug traffickers protection from prosecutors, law enforcement, and [later] extradition to the United States.”

The Honduran president has been a key U.S. ally in Central America and the investigation could complicate the Biden administration’s efforts to invest \$4 billion in the region, including in Honduras, to address the root causes of migration.

The prosecutors also said that assistance from the Honduran government in ongoing investigations “has hardly been forthcoming”, accusing the Honduran government of providing “limited records” and not honouring extradition requests for potential witnesses against the president.

Hernandez’s name has frequently appeared in US court filings against Fuentes Ramirez, as well as in a successful drug-trafficking case against the president’s brother, Tony Hernandez.

Previous court filings also show that, around 2013, the US Drug Enforcement Administration began investigating Hernandez and others for drug trafficking and money laundering. The filing appeared to be the first confirmation from U.S. prosecutors that the Honduran president was currently under investigation.

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