



Honduran Government Issues Arrest Warrants for Corrupt Members of Congress

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TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras, Dec. 13, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- This week, the Honduran Prosecutor's Office, in conjunction with the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras, or MACCIH, issued warrants for the arrests of five current members of the Honduran National Congress on charges of illegally appropriating government funds for personal use.

The Prosecutor's Office identified these individuals through joint cooperation with MACCIH's Special Unit for Prosecutions against Impunity and Corruption, or UFECIC-MACCIH.

In a joint press release, the Prosecutor's Office and UFECIC-MACCIH said that the five officials requested public money for the National Association of Honduran Neighborhood and Community Producers and Industries, or ANPIBCH, a non-governmental organization that uses government funds for social improvement projects. They then embezzled those public funds via 15 checks drawn directly from the NGO's bank account.

The Prosecutor's Office and UFECIC-MACCIH said that ANPIBH received 3.3 million lempiras -- more than \$139,000 -- from the Honduran Secretariat of Finance on December 14 and 21, 2015. In total, the NGO received 8.3 million lempiras -- more than \$350,000 -- in public money.

Last month, Geoffrey Darío Guzmán Tobar, the Libre candidate for mayor in the municipality El Paraíso, Copán, was arrested and extradited to the United States on charges of drug trafficking by Honduras's National Inter-Agency Security Force, or FUSINA.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández has reaffirmed his efforts to fight organized crime. Since taking office in 2014, the Hernández administration has extradited a total of 17 drug traffickers to the United States. According to Honduran outlet El Heraldo, the Honduran Supreme Court finalized the latest extradition yesterday. Arnulfo Fagot Máximo is being sent to the United States on charges that he funneled drugs into North America.

The Hernández administration jointly founded MACCIH with the Organization of American States in 2016 as part of an effort to eradicate corruption from the Honduran government. President Hernández also launched the *Special Commission for the Purging and Reform* of the National Police in 2016, which has removed more than one-third of the national police for various crimes, including corruption.

President Hernández's efforts to reduce corruption and transnational crime have helped reduce Honduras's homicide rate by nearly 50 percent since he took office.