



# Council on Hemispheric Affairs

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HONDURAN PRESIDENT'S WASHINGTON VISIT TO HIGHLIGHT  
U.S. HYPOCRISY IN "WAR ON DRUGS"

During his visit to Washington today, Honduran President Rafael Callejas undoubtedly will not be assaulted by any criticism from the Bush administration with regard to his country's major involvement in the international narcotics trade, specifically concerning the drug trafficking activities of some of his most senior military officers.

The United States spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually on its Andean crop eradication and militarized interdiction strategy, and recently announced that it would construct more anti-drug bases in Peru to interdict cocaine paste being shipped out of the country. But it still chooses to hypocritically ignore well-documented charges of flagrant trafficking offenses by the Honduran military, largely because of the close ties developed by the Reagan administration with Tegucigalpa during the contra war against the Sandinistas.

A broadcast by Radio America in April 1988 reported that Deputy National Security Advisor and former ambassador to Honduras John Negroponte had delivered a letter in March of that year, signed by Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams, to then-Honduran President Jose Azcona, which offered not to publicize evidence of drug running activities in the possession of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, regarding five key Honduran colonels, if drug lord Juan Ramon Matta, a Honduran national, was turned over to U.S. authorities. The handing over of Matta represented a blatant violation of the Honduran constitution since no extradition treaty existed between the two countries. The five colonels included the Minister of Defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the commander of the Navy.

While today's discussion likely will focus on the pressing issue of contra demobilization and Washington's vital economic and military aid program to the impoverished nation, the Bush administration no longer can ignore the involvement of senior Honduran officials in drug trafficking.

The Reagan and Bush administrations' self-serving manipulation of Honduras, a main pillar in Washington's anti-Sandinista Central American policy, and their traditional contempt for Honduran sovereignty, has helped to convert a relatively peaceful society into one characterized by mounting human rights abuses, state-endorsed drug trafficking, internal conflict, media restrictions and increasingly tense political strife.

President Callejas will return a wiser, if sadder and poorer, man to his country because he must realize that Honduras is about to revert to its traditional backwater status in U.S. diplomacy, since there is no longer any fat in the U.S. foreign aid budget to allow for anything more than a phase-back of U.S. funding.

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