

The Ex-President Whom Trump Plans to Pardon Flooded America With Cocaine

[nytimes.com/2025/11/29/nyregion/honduras-hernandez-drug-trafficking.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/29/nyregion/honduras-hernandez-drug-trafficking.html)

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He once boasted that he would “stuff the drugs up the gringos’ noses.” He accepted a \$1 million bribe from El Chapo to allow cocaine shipments to pass through Honduras. A man was killed in prison to protect him.

At the federal trial of Juan Orlando Hernández in New York, testimony and evidence showed how the former president maintained Honduras as a bastion of the global drug trade. He orchestrated a vast trafficking conspiracy that prosecutors said raked in millions for cartels while keeping Honduras one of Central America’s poorest, most violent and most corrupt countries.

Last year, Mr. Hernández was convicted on drug trafficking and weapons charges and sentenced to 45 years in prison. It was one of the most sweeping drug-trafficking cases to come before a U.S. court since the trial of the Panamanian strongman Gen. Manuel Noriega three decades before.

But on Friday, President Trump [announced that he would pardon](#) Mr. Hernandez, 57, who he said was a victim of political persecution, though Mr. Trump offered no evidence to support that claim. It would be a head-spinning resolution to a case that for prosecutors was a pinnacle, striking at the heart of a [narcostate](#).



Outside Manhattan's federal courthouse, Hondurans celebrated the conviction of the former president. Credit...Eduardo Munoz/Reuters

The president's two-week trial in Manhattan, and those of his associates before it, offered a glimpse into a world of corruption and drug running spanning several countries. Bags of cash, a machine gun with Mr. Hernández's name emblazoned on it, and bribes from the drug lord Joaquín Guzmán, the Mexican kingpin known as El Chapo, featured heavily.