



U. S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration

www.dea.gov

Springfield, VA 22152

JUL 29 2013

Dear :

This responds to your letter to the Attorney General dated January 30, 2013, regarding the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) role in Honduras in May 2012. This is an issue taken very seriously by both DEA and the United States Department of State (DOS). Please be assured DEA and the DOS have been in regular contact with the relevant Congressional Committees regarding the overall operation in Honduras and, in particular, the events of May 11, 2012.

According to the Joint Interagency Task Force-South, approximately 95 percent of the cocaine from South America destined for the United States transits the Central America/Mexico corridor, and approximately 20 percent leaves South America via air. Of that amount, an estimated 95 percent of *all* cocaine smuggling flights departing South America first land in Honduras. In particular, Northeastern Honduras remains highly vulnerable to drug-trafficking organizations due to its remoteness, limited infrastructure, lack of state presence, and weak law enforcement institutions. The Gracias a Dios/La Mosquitia region is a primary landing zone and transshipment point for drug trafficking, one which provides a vital nexus for drug-carrying flights, maritime vessels, riverine traffic, and land movement. The increased flow of cocaine to and through Honduras and the accompanying transnational organized crime elements exacerbate the nation's rising rates of crime and violence.

DEA, as the lead U.S. agency responsible for coordinating drug enforcement activities worldwide, regularly provides counter narcotics assistance to foreign governments in collaboration with the DOS. DEA's involvement in Honduras, which began in 1981, includes providing training and technical assistance to Honduran law enforcement institutions and officers including rule of law training to root out abusive and corrupt personnel thereby further institutionalizing respect for human rights in the Honduran criminal justice system. These efforts began long before the actual commencement of operations in Honduras and remain ongoing throughout and following any operational deployments. By establishing standard operating procedures, DEA agents and their counterparts maximize the safety of all involved personnel and provide a reference for after-operation evaluation and improvement. Examples of this training include helicopter-borne operations, medical care, vehicular interdiction, marksmanship, night vision goggle usage, GPS navigation, radio communication procedures, evidence collection, arrest procedures, and Honduran law. Also included are interactive firearms and situational judgment live fire exercises designed to

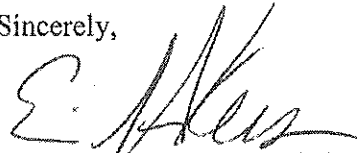
simulate shoot and do not shoot situations. These exercises are designed to demonstrate and reinforce the appropriate use of deadly force, among other topics.

The Government of Honduras (GOH) requested additional DEA counter narcotics training and assistance in March 2012. The resulting interagency effort, as notified to Congress, came to be known as "Operation Anvil," which began on April 14, 2012 and was scheduled to last three months. It was designed to disrupt suspected drug transportation flights into the Gracias a Dios region (northeastern tip) of Honduras. DEA's Honduran partners during Operation Anvil were all members of the Honduran National Police's Tactical Response Team (TRT), a group that is vetted, trained, and mentored by DEA.

On May 11, 2012, the Honduran TRT, supported by DEA FAST, were recovering over 400 kilograms of cocaine when there was an exchange of gunfire between suspected drug traffickers and Honduran TRT members. Although no injuries were confirmed nor injured persons identified immediately after the shooting, media reports and a report subsequently issued by the GOH stated that two men and two women were killed on May 11, 2012. The GOH report also determined that neither of the female decedents was pregnant, and that no DEA FAST members fired their weapons during the May 11, 2012 incident. According to the DEA's Office of Inspections' internal review, no DEA FAST members fired their weapons during the May 11, 2012 incident. Contrary to media reports referenced in your letter, all operations conducted under Operation Anvil were led by the GOH, with support from DEA and DOS. All operations are planned, coordinated and executed with input and agreement from DOS, DEA and the GOH.

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this, or any other matter.

Sincerely,



Eric J. Akers, Deputy Chief
Office of Congressional & Public Affairs