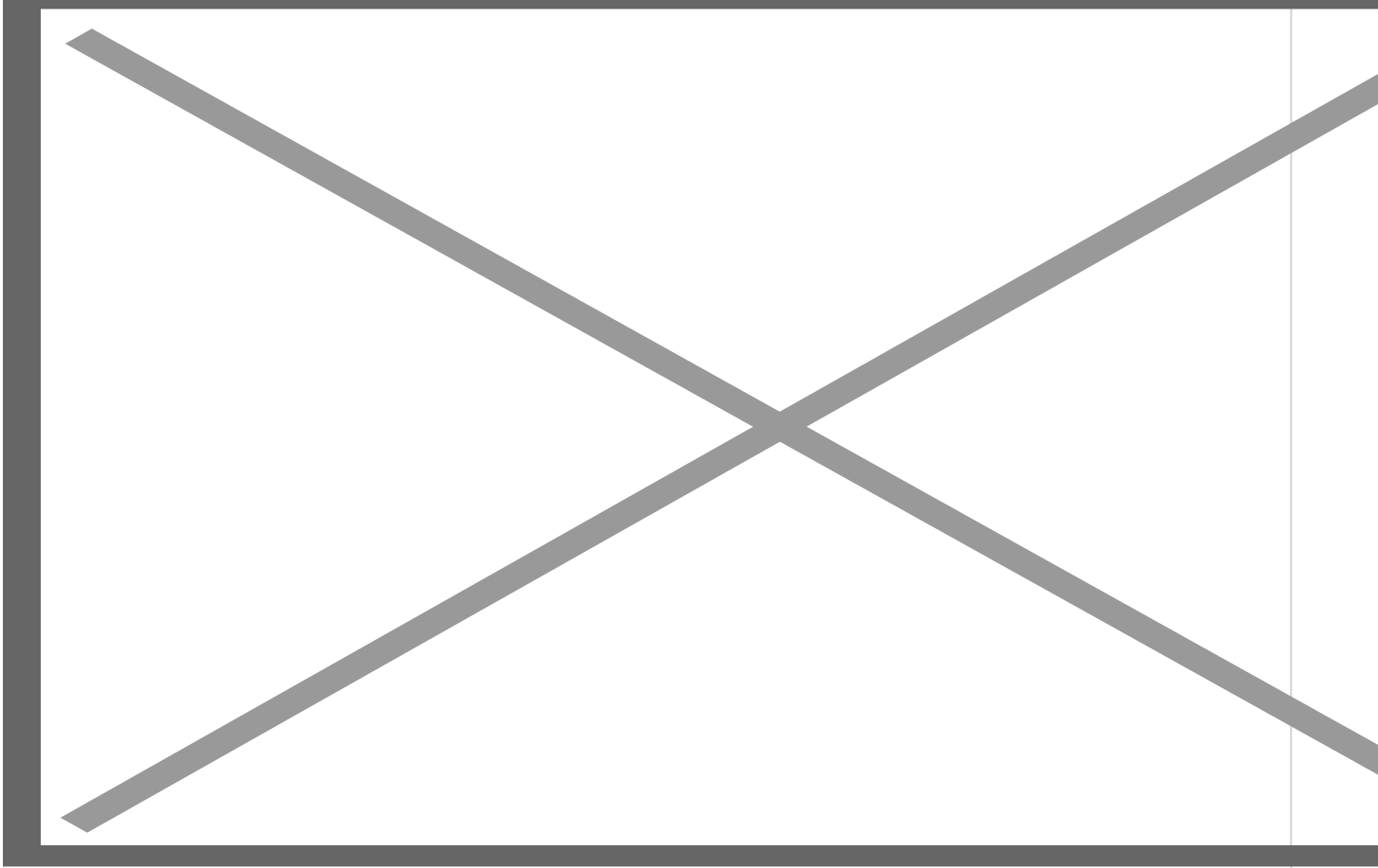


Honduran judge orders provisional detention of former president Juan Orlando Hernandez

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Juan Orlando Hernández attended Tuesday's court hearing under heavy security measures, the former president arrived wearing a bulletproof vest and handcuffed hand and foot. | Photo: EFE

Tegucigalpa, February 17 (RHC)-- Former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez arrived at his first extradition hearing in Tegucigalpa on Wednesday in handcuffs and shackles, as the United States is seeking to bring him into the country to face drug-trafficking charges.

A scuffle broke out between duelling crowds in front of the justice ministry where Hernandez's hearing took place in the capital, including pushing and shoving as well as rock-throwing. Police intervened and quickly separated the protesters.

"You are not alone! There is a great political party that supports you," one supporter of Hernandez's right-wing National Party (NP) told local broadcaster TSI, while backers of the leftist Libre Party that recently ousted the NP from power celebrated his fall from grace.

Hernandez, 53, governed the Central American nation for eight years until last month and now faces a U.S. extradition request issued on Tuesday that seeks to force him to face drug-trafficking charges in U.S. courts. The presiding judge – whose name authorities are withholding for his protection – informed Hernandez on Wednesday of the claims made against him by the U.S. so that he can present a defence.

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