

Treasury Sanctions Nicaraguan National Police and Police Commissioners Involved in Human Rights Abuse



March 5, 2020

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) today designated the Nicaraguan National Police (NNP), the primary law enforcement entity in Nicaragua, for its role in serious human rights abuse in Nicaragua. Additionally, OFAC designated three NNP commissioners, Juan Antonio Valle Valle, Luis Alberto Perez Olivas, and Justo Pastor Urbina, for their involvement as senior officials of the Government of Nicaragua and leaders of the NNP. OFAC’s designation is directed at the NNP as an institution responsible for human rights abuses in Nicaragua.

“The Ortega regime has utilized the Nicaraguan National Police as a tool in its campaign of violent repression against the Nicaraguan people,” said Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin. “Treasury is committed to holding accountable those who seek to silence pro-democracy voices in Nicaragua.”

The blocking sanctions apply to the NNP as an entity, as well as to the three named NNP commissioners designated today, and not to individual, non-designated NNP police officers.

The NNP is being designated pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13851, “Blocking Property of Certain Persons Contributing to the Situation in Nicaragua,” and the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (NHRAA). Juan Antonio Valle Valle, Luis Alberto Perez Olivas, and Justo Pastor Urbina are being designated pursuant to E.O. 13851 and the NHRAA.

OFAC has taken previous actions against NNP officials involved in targeted significant acts of violence or human rights abuse. Most recently, on November 7, 2019, OFAC designated Deputy Director General Ramon Antonio Avellan Medal pursuant to E.O. 13851 and the NHRAA for being a current official of the Government of Nicaragua and for being the Deputy Director General of the NNP, who engaged in serious human rights abuse in Nicaragua. Additionally, on July 5, 2018, OFAC designated Director General Francisco Javier Diaz Madriz pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13818, “Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption,” which builds upon and implements the Global Magnitsky Human Rights

Accountability Act sanctions and targets perpetrators of serious human rights abuse and corruption.

NICARAGUAN NATIONAL POLICE

The NNP is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13851 for being responsible for or complicit in, or having directly or indirectly engaged in, serious human rights abuse in Nicaragua. The NNP is also being designated pursuant to the NHRAA for being responsible for or complicit in, or responsible for ordering, controlling, or otherwise directing, or having knowingly participated in, directly or indirectly, significant acts of violence or conduct that constitutes a serious abuse or violation of human rights against persons associated with the protests in Nicaragua which began on April 18, 2018.

The NNP is responsible for using live ammunition against peaceful protesters and participating in death squads, as well as carrying out extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and kidnappings.

Since the start of political unrest in 2018, the NNP and parapolice have conducted kidnappings and targeted executions of opposition political leaders. According to public statements from senior NNP officials, the parapolice, a volunteer paramilitary group that are often comprised of plain clothed NNP officers, operate at the direction of the NNP with impunity. In July 2018, the NNP and parapolice conducted “Operation Clean Up” to crackdown on protesters and dismantle road barricades, which resulted in roughly 100 deaths.

JUAN VALLE VALLE

Juan Valle Valle (Valle Valle) is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13851 for being or having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua and for being a leader of the NNP, an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in serious human rights abuse in Nicaragua. Valle Valle is also being designated pursuant to the NHRAA for being a leader of the NNP, an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in significant acts of violence or conduct that constitutes a serious abuse or violation of human rights against persons associated with the protests that began on April 18, 2018. Valle Valle is the Chief of the NNP’s Department of Surveillance and Patrolling, which has systematically restricted the freedom of movement and expression of Nicaraguans living in Managua, Nicaragua. In 2019, Valle Valle was responsible for directing the harassment against individuals sheltered in the Metrocentro shopping center in Managua, Nicaragua.

LUIS ALBERTO PEREZ OLIVAS

Luis Alberto Perez Olivas (Perez Olivas) is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13851 for being or having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua and for being a leader of the NNP, an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in serious human rights abuse in Nicaragua. Perez Olivas is also being designated pursuant to the NHRAA for being a leader of the NNP, an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in significant acts of violence or conduct that constitutes a serious abuse or violation of human rights against persons associated with the protests that began on April 18, 2018. Perez Olivas is the Chief of the NNP's Judicial Assistance Directorate, and Director of El Chipote prison. El Chipote is a prison known for abusive practices where human rights organizations have recorded serious human rights abuses since April 2018. There have been allegations of torture, rape, electrocution, lacerations with barbed wire, strangulation, and beating with steel tubes. A demonstrator held at El Chipote stated that masked men hung him from the ceiling and beat him with baseball bats, tubes, and guns for two days. Afterward, the demonstrator stated that he was taken to a masked man who he recognized by voice and build as Perez Olivas, who forced him to film a confession implicating other protesters.

JUSTO PASTOR URBINA

Juan Pastor Urbina (Urbina) is being designated pursuant to E.O. 13851 for being or having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua and for being a leader of the NNP, an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in serious human rights abuse in Nicaragua. Urbina is also being designated pursuant to the NHRAA for being a leader of the NNP, an entity that has, or whose members have, engaged in significant acts of violence or conduct that constitutes a serious abuse or violation of human rights against persons associated with the protests that began on April 18, 2018. Urbina is the Commissioner of the NNP's Special Operations Division, which continues to play a central role in the repression throughout the country.

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of the three individuals and the entity that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons, and of any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, 50 percent or more by the designated individuals and entity, are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all dealings by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of persons who are designated or otherwise blocked.

Concurrent with these designations, OFAC is issuing Nicaragua-related General License No. 1, authorizing the conduct of the official business of the U.S. Government, and General License No. 2, authorizing the wind-down of transactions involving the NNP, including the processing of salary payments from the NNP to its employees, through 12:01 a.m. eastern daylight time, May 6, 2020.

Identifying information related to today's action.

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