



SITREP

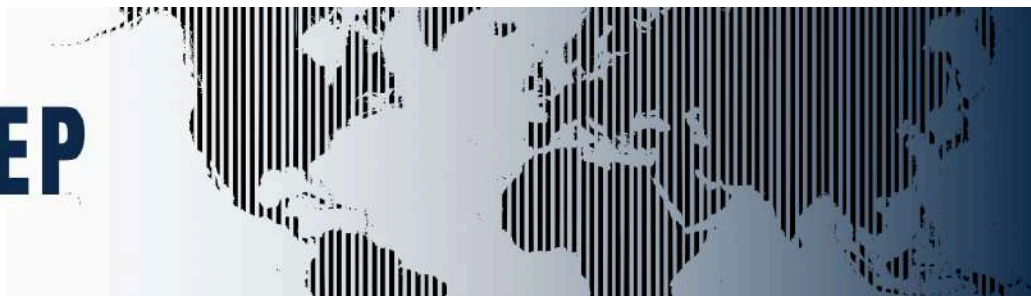


Photo: AFP/Pedro Pardo

Central American Caravans

By Joseph M. Humire | December 2018

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OVERVIEW

SFS researchers traveled to Guatemala in late October 2018 and studied the movement and composition of the recent Central American caravans. The following Situation Report reveals some of our findings, documenting the several irregularities, such as the Irregular Migrants (I/M) and the Special Interest Aliens (SIA) moving within and around the various caravans. And describes the political objectives of some of the NGOs that steered the caravans along a specific route. This report is a threat assessment as to how this form of strategic engineered migration functions to “weaponize” the most vulnerable in any society—undocumented migrants.



Starting in mid-October, more than 8,000 migrants from Central America began their journey through Guatemala and Mexico en route to the U.S. southwest border. The migrant's motivations were reported as escaping gang violence and poor economic conditions in their home countries, namely Honduras and El Salvador. The timing of the caravans, a few weeks before the U.S. midterm elections, fanned concerns that there could be other motivations behind this irregular form of migration. The initial group of 160 migrants that formed on October 12 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, quickly grew into the thousands as it crossed the border into Guatemala. This rapid growth and specific movement in Guatemala and Mexico suggest that the Central American caravans are more than just a spontaneous flow of mass migration to the United States. It is a strategic engineered migration¹ that is highly organized and specifically aimed at weakening border security and disputing national sovereignty.

SNAPSHOT

By the end of October 2018, there were at least five (5) caravans with approximately 8,000 migrants congregated in Tijuana, Mexico on the U.S. southwest border.² The caravans are large-scale mass movements of migrants crossing through a series of transit points, checkpoints, and border crossings in an organized fashion. In less than two weeks, caravan one or "C1" passed through three countries and two border crossings, clearing Guatemala in just four (4) days. The week after, caravan two or "C2" caught up to C1 in southern Mexico to march together towards Mexico City. The following caravans "C3", "C4", and "C5" seemed to congregate in Guatemala City before jointly moving to the Guatemala-Mexico border and onwards to the U.S. border. Moving large distances, 468 kilometers through Guatemala, as one large mass movement is extremely difficult.

SFS researchers closely observed the caravans in late-October as they transited Guatemala into Mexico and saw that each caravan moves in a highly organized fashion similar to a military convoy, segmented into three groups:³

1. The first group, the "advance party," acts as a scouting element for the other groups and moves between 24 and 48 hours ahead of the main body. Some members of the advance party surveil the territory, take pictures and record videos, to report back to the other groups on terrain, weather, security, and other local conditions. WhatsApp groups are the main form of communication from the advance party to the two other groups.
2. The second group, the "main body," is the largest. This is the group that requires the most logistical support and can disperse at times as the caravan moves from one border crossing or checkpoint to another. This group is where you will find most of the media coverage.
3. The third group, or "rear party," trails the main body by around 24 hours and uses vehicles to reach the transit points and checkpoints. It is the rear party that is harboring the extra-continental migrants and Special Interest Aliens (SIA) from Asia and Africa.



Members from the four caravans are currently in Tijuana. Their prior movements are detailed, here: Caravan 1 (C1) was comprised of approximately 4,000 migrants that left Honduras on October 12. The first caravan was the largest one. At its peak, it numbered around 7,000 migrants, but dwindled down to somewhere between 4,000 – 6,000 migrants as it reached the U.S. border. The caravan split into smaller groups just before Mexico City on their trek north. The government of Queretaro said via Twitter that 6,531 migrants had moved through the state between Friday, November 9 and Saturday, November 10. This caravan group is made up of mostly migrants from Central America, largely from Honduras, and includes more women and children than other caravans.



Caravan 2 (C2) is made up of approximately 1,500 migrants that left Honduras on October 21. This second caravan left from Comayagua, Honduras.⁴ It started as a group of 350 migrants. The caravan grew as it reached the Guatemala/Mexica border on October 29. The size of this caravan was estimated at 3,000 migrants.⁵ Reports state that on November 2, in Mapastepec in Chiapas state, 153 migrants were detained.⁶ This caravan was reported to be 200 miles behind the first. It is likely C1's week-long break in Mexico City gave this caravan time to catch up and create a larger caravan from the remnants of each.

This caravan (C2) has more Military Aged Males (MAM) than the previous one and has been reported as more violent by Mexican and Guatemalan police.⁷ Guatemala's Interior Ministry said Guatemalan police officers were injured when the migrant group broke through border barriers on Guatemala's side of the bridge. Mexico authorities said migrants attacked its agents with rocks, glass bottles, and fireworks when they broke through a gate on the Mexican end but were pushed back, and some allegedly carried guns and firebombs. Some of the



migrants had gasoline bombs made of soda-drink bottles, and improvised PVC pipes to launch fireworks or other projectiles. Mexico's Interior Department (MX) said in a statement that two Hondurans ages 17 and 22 were arrested Monday, October 29, when one of them tried to shoot at police in the town of Ignacio Zaragoza, near the Ciudad Hidalgo border crossing. It said the Glock failed to fire, and no agents were injured.⁸



Photo: AFP

Caravan 3 (C3) is comprised of almost 2,000 migrants that left Honduras on October 28.⁹ This caravan was formed in Olancho, a department on the eastern side of Honduras.¹⁰ The caravan made it to Ciudad Hidalgo, right across the Guatemala/Mexico border on Wednesday October 31. Their estimated size was 2,000 migrants at its peak.¹¹

Caravan 4 & 5 (C4, C5) is made up of 2,500 migrants from El Salvador that left October 28 and October 31. The caravans leaving El Salvador were the last to join the caravan phenomenon. Between 300-500 migrants left San Salvador on Sunday, October 28. The group crossed into Guatemala later that night through the La Hachadura Point of Entry.¹² A group of 1,000 migrants from this caravan crossed the Suchiate River on Friday, November 2 into Mexico.¹³ This movement was planned on several WhatsApp and Facebook messaging platforms, with another group that planned to leave El Salvador on Wednesday, October 31.¹⁴ This caravan numbered 2,000 migrants when it left the capital city, San Salvador.



There are several irregularities with these Central American caravans that suggest it is not a spontaneous movement nor a regular form of mass migration. The rate of migration to the U.S. from Central America has been increasing steadily since 2014 but the caravans are a more organized phenomenon unrelated to the regular pendular flow of migration.¹⁵ Based on SFS field research in Honduras and Guatemala, the two most important takeaways about the Central American caravans are:

- 1) There are subversive elements mixed within the Central American caravans compromising its integrity,¹⁶ This includes extra-continental migrants from South Asia and Africa, and possibly some from the Middle East.
- 2) There is a high level of logistical organization around the composition of the Central American caravans. Moving along a specific route developed by NGOs, some of which have more political objectives than a humanitarian mission.

These findings suggest that the Central American caravans are a form of strategic engineered migration unrelated to the regular migrant flow from these countries. The irregularities discovered when researching the caravans compromise the integrity of the majority of the migrants and expose them to additional risks. This report details these irregularities and provides evidence as to how the Central American caravans are politicized through local actors engaged in high levels of disinformation aimed at weakening border security and disputing the national sovereignty of the United States and its regional partners.



COMPROMISED INTEGRITY

There has been major misreporting by the media regarding the presence of Irregular Migrants (I/M) and Special Interest Aliens (SIA) in the Central American caravans. SIA originate from countries that “have shown a tendency to promote, produce, or protect terrorist organizations.”¹ In the last decade, the total number of apprehensions of undocumented migrants from Mexico crossing the U.S. southwest border has decreased to the lowest levels since 1971. Meanwhile the number of Other Than Mexican (OTM) apprehensions has increased, with the number of SIAs growing at a commensurate rate.¹⁷

This unprecedented growth prompted Former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson to send an urgent memo to several U.S. border security authorities in June 2016. The subject of the memo was “Cross-Border Movement of Special Interest Aliens” and it proposed the immediate creation of a “multi-DHS Component SIA Joint Action Group” with a concrete plan to confront this threat. Todd Bensman, of Center for Immigration Studies, reports that “the cross-border migration of people from Muslim-majority nations, as a trending terror threat, has gone missing during contentious national debates over President Trump’s border security policies and wall.”¹⁸

The SIA phenomenon is not new but has increased in recent years, while visibility and “SIA-countering” plans have stalled. The Department of Homeland Security just announced publicly that Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) has apprehended 3,028 SIA in FY2018 compared to 1,105 SIA in FY2017. Honduran and Guatemalan immigration authorities have started to classify irregular migrants since May 2017. According to Honduras National Institute of Migration, they detected 3,861 irregular migrants and SIA who passed through their country in 2018. This is relevant in that SIA have established new routes that other migrants can use to transit through Central America.

In the case of the caravans, Guatemalan officials detected no fewer than 157 extra-continental irregular migrants from 13 countries in Africa and South Asia transiting through Guatemala from October 20-24, 2018, a timeline that coincides between the first (C1) and second (C2) caravans from Honduras. This includes at least 17 SIA from three (3) designated countries: Eritrea, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The data is displayed below, with an asterisk denoting SIA countries.¹⁹

¹ SIAs are classified as a subcategory under Other than Mexican (OTM) undocumented migrants by the Department of Homeland Security, and are citizens of 35 countries that could represent a terrorist threat: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, UAE, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.



I/M and SIA transiting through Guatemala

Country	May 8 – June 23	October 20 – 24
Afghanistan*	1	0
Angola	9	3
Bangladesh*	3	3
Cameroon	63	45
Congo	7	40
Cuba	7	11
Eritrea*	25	12
Ethiopia	1	1
Ghana	8	3
Guinea	0	4
Haiti	14	24
India	14	0
Nepal	21	1
Pakistan*	9	2
Sierra Leone	0	3
Somalia*	1	0
Sri Lanka	0	2
Togo	1	0
Venezuela	0	3
Yemen*	5	0
Total	189	157

** foreign nationals designated as Special Interest Aliens (SIA) by DHS*

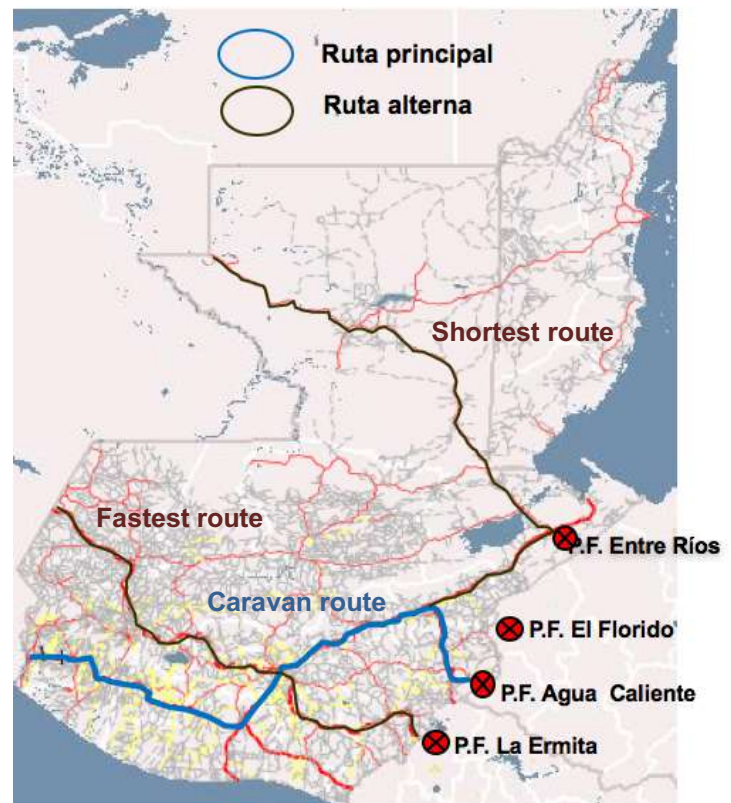
According to SFS field research in Guatemala, many of the Central American migrants within the caravans complained that I/M and SIA received preferential treatment, moving ahead of the lines at the migration centers and traveling quicker through checkpoints and border crossings. Some of the Central American migrants in the caravans also suggested that the SIA have additional financial support when they reach migration centers.

While none of the registered SIA detected within the caravans come from the Middle East, it is important to emphasize the extreme difficulty in verifying the true identities of these irregular undocumented migrants. There is a precedent where SIA migrants have concealed their identities from Guatemalan authorities.

On April 22, six months before the caravans, a group of five (5) self-identified “Pakistanis” entered Guatemala at the same Point of Entry as the caravans: Agua Caliente, from Honduras. They were taken to Guatemala’s main migration center, known as an “Albergue” located in Zone 5 of Guatemala City, and processed on April 23. All five “Pakistanis” were Military Aged Males with vocational professions, stating intentions of going to the U.S. to seek asylum as their final destination. None had travel or identification documents. During their screening at the migration center, DHS/ICE assisted Guatemala’s National Police by conducting a Third Agency Check (TAC) with biometric screenings, which discovered that these migrants were not Pakistani but in fact were Palestinian. On May 2, a suspicious terror alert was issued against the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala City, only ten days after the Palestinian SIAs arrived in Guatemala. This was relevant in that month’s earlier President Jimmy Morales announced that Guatemala was moving its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a move scheduled for mid-May that caught the ire of Hamas, the Palestinean terrorist group. Thankfully, nothing happened and the Palestinian SIAs left Guatemala on May 12 through the Tecun Uman Point of Entry into Mexico, the same border crossing used later by the caravans.

WHY THIS ROUTE?

The primary route that the caravans took in Guatemala passed through two formal border crossings: *Aguas Caliente* | *Esquipulas* between the Honduras and Guatemala border; and *Tecun Uman* | *Ciudad Hidalgo* between the Guatemala and Mexico border. There are several other routes from Honduras to Guatemala that the caravan could have taken that are shorter and faster to Mexico. The shortest route from San Pedro Sula (Honduras) to Mexico goes through the *Entre Rios* Point of Entry into Guatemala and then goes through the *El Ceibo* Point of Entry into Mexico. This is also a popular human smuggling route with many alternate border crossings through *Parque Nacional Sierra Del Lacandón*. This is technically the shortest route from Honduras to Mexico measuring at slightly more than 410 kilometers.²



² For a detailed [Route Survey](#), read the SFS report produced by independent Threat/Risk Analyst, Ross Armstrong

Drug trafficking is also a major problem in Central America establishing several clandestine routes through Guatemala moving parallel to the Pan-American Highway. Whether by air, land, or sea most of the cocaine trafficking routes in Guatemala pass through alternate border crossings known as “*puntos ciegos*” that are scarcely monitored by Guatemalan and Mexican authorities. These routes generally rely on speed to bypass local authorities, thus, enter Guatemala from *La Ermita* Point of Entry passing through *El Amatal San Cristobal La Frontera* and traveling along the Pan-American Highway.

Interestingly, the initial and largest Honduran Caravan traveled through Guatemala in just four days from October 16 to October 20 through neither the shortest, most frequently traveled migration route (from *Entre Rios* to *El Ceibo* as seen in the Map) or the fastest route along the Pan-American Highway (from *La Ermita* to *La Mesilla* as seen in the Map). The Honduran Caravan took an alternate route that had previously been established in Guatemala for moving Special Interest Aliens (SIA) and other Irregular Migrants (I/M) from *Aguas Calientes* to the *Tecun Uman* border crossings. This route was chosen precisely because of its wealth of infrastructure, NGO bases, and populous towns.

SIA Route

The route taken by the Honduran Caravan is a known SIA route used as recently as this past May/June 2018 when at least 189 irregular migrants from South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, moved through this same route from Honduras to Mexico. Within this group were at least 45 Special Interest Aliens (SIA) of which, at least five (5) hid their true identity to Guatemalan migration authorities.

This route, while not the fastest or shortest, offers the most by way of NGO presence, infrastructure, and populous city centers. Most infrastructure is localized in the southern part of Guatemala. The SIA route passes through many developed towns including: Esquipulas, Chiquimula, Zacapa, Guatemala City, Villa Nueva, Amatitlán, Escuintla, Retalhuleu, Coatepeque, and Tecun Uman. Developed towns offer protection in the form of food, water, and shelter, but also a way to blend in. Traveling through populous areas also gives organizing entities a chance to coordinate with local NGOs and groups present in these towns.





KEY POLITICAL ACTORS

The migrant caravans from Central America not only have a high-level of logistical organization but also appear to have coordinated messaging coached by key actors whose mission is less humanitarian and more political. The political messaging coming from the caravans is equally as important as its logistics, amplifying a specific narrative to reach a larger international audience. The political messaging of the migrant caravans is linked to the non-governmental organization—Pueblo Sin Fronteras—which translates to “People Without Borders,” whose members "stand in permanent solidarity with displaced peoples" and advocate for open border policies. Migrant caravans have also been a common theme at various socialist political forums in Latin America in recent months, with leftist Latin American leaders expressing solidarity with the theme of mass migration and open borders.

Pueblos Sin Fronteras

Pueblo Sin Fronteras is an organization created “in solidarity with displaced peoples.” Its origins are murky- some reports state it was created in 2008 by Roberto Corona at Southern Methodist University,²⁰ its Facebook page states the organization began in 2010,²¹ and its website says Pueblo Sin Fronteras has been “reaching out” to migrants for more than 15 years.²² According to the website, the organization accompanies migrants on their journey providing shelter, humanitarian aid, and legal advice. Pueblo Sin Fronteras has published several statements during various marches advocating for policy change in the U.S. and Mexico toward open border policies, posting flyers for workshops to inform migrants on the asylum process, while also tracking their media appearances:

Please get in touch at refugeecaravan2017@gmail.com

RECENT MEDIA COVERAGE SUMMARY

In English

- [Mother Jones, May 1](#)
- [Breitbart News, May 7](#)
- [NBC Los Angeles, May 8](#)
- [PRI, May 8](#)
- [KPBS, May 10](#)
- [Mother Jones, May 12](#)

In Spanish

- [EFE, May 6](#)
- [Univisión, May 7](#)
- [Zeta, May 7](#)
- [Frontera, May 8](#)
- [EFE, May 8](#)
- [UnoTV, May 9](#)



THANK YOU!

Refugee Caravan 2017

The organization's website is vague. It explains they are "a volunteer collective of friends" and donations made to Pueblo Sin Fronteras reportedly do not pay salaries or administrative fees, so it seems there are no paid employees.²³ Membership in the organization is also very vague; it is mostly based on volunteerism. According to several independent media sources the following people have been associated with the organization under differing roles: Bartolo Fuentes, Alex Mensing, Irineo Mujica, Roberto Corona, Denis Omar Contreras, Rodrigo Abeja, Gina Garibo, Leo Olson.²⁴



Pueblo Sin Fronteras is most well-known for its involvement in migrant caravans and has been encouraging mass migration since its inception, but the group did not gain notoriety until President Donald J. Trump began tweeting about the caravan in April 2018.²⁵

The first caravan, in March/April 2018, was organized by Pueblo Sin Fronteras. The organization posted flyers and held meetings in Tapachula city parks to organize. At its peak, it numbered around 1,500 migrants from mainly El Salvador and Honduras, as reported by Alex Mensing. By the time this caravan reached the U.S. border in late-April 2018 at Tijuana, there were around 300 migrants.²⁶ Irineo Mujica and Leo Olsen were some of the specific organizers of this caravan.

The next caravan launched in October 2018. This caravan was significantly larger than the caravan in March/April 2018 (snapshots of the makeup and size of this caravan are detailed in this SITREP). Many Pueblo Sin Fronteras volunteers, such as Abeja and Contreras, were embedded with the caravan, but did not admit to organizing or being its leader.²⁷ Pueblo Sin Fronteras founder, Roberto Corona, said the group stopped organizing after the March/April 2018 caravan.²⁸

However, Bartolo Fuentes, a volunteer with the caravan, was detained in Guatemala and deported on October 17 back to Honduras for failing to fill out the customs form.²⁹ He has been accused of inciting the caravan and promoting the mass movement of irregular migration under false pretenses. Irineo Mujica, associated with Pueblo Sin Fronteras, was arrested 18-OCT outside of Ciudad Hidalgo for obstructing authorities.³⁰

The organization has recently faced harsh criticism. A prominent Mexican migrant activist, Alejandro Solalinde, said the caravan is “helping Donald Trump say there is an invasion,” justifying stricter immigration laws. Solalinde continues remarking that “Pueblo Sin Fronteras cheated the migrants; they told them lies that once they arrived at the border, everything would be very easy.”³¹

The press coverage on this caravan prompted the organization to release a statement on November 26 claiming:

“Pueblo Sin Fronteras has been the object of multiple critiques and declarations that discredit the work we have done for years, and especially our accompaniment of this Exodus. These declarations are irresponsible and by criminalizing and defaming us they increase the risks faced by all human rights defenders. Far from encouraging migrants to pursue life in the United States as their only option, we have made a sincere effort to provide accurate information about the opportunities that exist in Mexico for people who would probably suffer under the punitive asylum system of the United States, which systematically deprives asylum seekers of their liberty, separates families, and often deports people to their death.”³²

While Pueblo Sin Fronteras claims to be protecting the migrants, the LA Times reported that the organization “ferried immigrants illegally from Guatemala into Mexico and have repeatedly led migrants into direct confrontations with law enforcement.”³³ One migrant also confirmed that on the journey, volunteers in vests guided the group, but since arriving in Tijuana they have been absent.³⁴



Pueblos Sin Fronteras is part of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network. Pueblo Sin Fronteras' website says they work in close cooperation with, and take their donations through, Freedom for Immigrants, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in California, but do not receive money from any government, corporation, or political group. According to Influence Watch,³⁵ a project of Capitol Research Center, Pueblo Sin Fronteras (or a separate, but related branch) works with La Familia Latina Unida³⁶ in Chicago and Centro Sin Fronteras, an organization created in 1987 by Emma Lozano to initially fight school overcrowding in Chicago and eventually became involved in fighting deportations. Influence Watch states Centro Sin Fronteras organized La Familia Latina Unida in 2001.³⁷ Both organizations share an address with the Lincoln United Methodist Church in Chicago. Pueblo Sin Fronteras has also worked on caravan organization with the coalition CARA Family Detention Pro Bono Project, which includes Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLIN), the American Immigration Council (AIC), the Refugee and Immigration Center for Education and Legal Services (RICELS) and the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) – thus the acronym CARA; as reported by WND.³⁸

Bartolo Fuentes



Bartolo Fuentes was arrested in mid-October during the migrant caravan. Guatemalan authorities detained Fuentes on October 16 for failing to comply with customs procedures upon entering the country. He was deported on October 17 to Honduras where Former Honduran President Manuel Zelaya was waiting at the airport. Zelaya remarked he was there to assess the situation and discover why Guatemala "persecuted him, simply for helping Honduran migrants [because] there's no crime in that." Honduran Minister of Foreign Affairs, María Dolores Agüero, accused Fuentes of promoting irregular migration for several years

under false promises.³⁹ Bartolo Fuentes stated in an interview with CNN en Español that the Honduran government was giving him a kind of superpower and looking for a scapegoat instead of realizing the terrible tragedy occurring in Honduras.⁴⁰



Bartolo Fuentes was elected to the Honduran Congress in 2013, representing the LIBRE political party.⁴¹ He is also known for being a socialist activist and continues to advocate through journalism and political engagements. He is editor and director of the magazine *Vida Laboral* and of the website *Honduras Laboral*, focused on labor and human rights issues; he also hosts a radio show called “Without Borders.”⁴² Fuentes attended and spoke at the ALBA Movimientos Mesoamericanos Forum in October and attended several other marches and protests.

Fuentes often uses his social media platforms for advocacy, most recently his feed was filled with caravan posts, ads, and messages of support.⁴³ The San Diego Union-Tribune reported that Fuentes posted about the October caravan, stating the location of departure from San Pedro Sula and the destination to Mexico. The Tribune stated “the flyer he posted went viral and was featured on Honduran news. It was this flyer that prompted many of the thousands in the caravan.”⁴⁴ This poster seen here was shared over 200 times on Bartolo Fuentes Facebook page.⁴⁵



Political Forums

The Central American caravan’s ideological support network is linked to international gatherings in Latin America of socialist leaders and groups, like the Foro São Paulo meeting in July in Cuba, an international seminar in August in Bolivia, and the Foro Mesoamericano in October in Honduras. All these political forums helped shape an international narrative of open borders prior to the Central American caravans surging north in October 2018. Many of these forums had declarations characterizing migration controls and border security as inhumane going against the human rights of migrants. Former Honduran President Manuel “Mel” Zelaya and other populist leaders were present at all of the forums.

On October 25-27, the Foro Mesoamericano/ALBA Movimientos was held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The event was attended by 380 national delegates and more than 70 international participants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, and Brazil. The final event statement expressed solidarity with the migrant caravan and acknowledged the volunteers who helped along the route, remarking that “no wall can stop hunger and the thirst for social justice.”⁴⁶

MESA DE PARTIDOS POLÍTICOS

FORO MESOAMERICANO ALBA MOVIMIENTOS
25, 26 Y 27 DE OCTUBRE
UNAH, TEGUCIGALPA

VIERNES 26 DE OCTUBRE

» 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 m.
Mesa de discusión Fuerzas Políticas Realidad de la Región, relación con los movimientos y estrategias para construir proyectos políticos en favor de las mayorías.

» 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
La Caravana Migrante, perspectivas políticas de Honduras, El Salvador y Guatemala

SÁBADO 27 DE OCTUBRE

» 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 m.
El Partido Libre y su proceso de construcción en la principal fuerza política de oposición al régimen.

PONENTES

Diputada Scherly Ariaga
Experiencia en la política electoral y lucha al interior del Congreso Nacional.

Ex Diputada Beatriz Valle
Cómo le ganamos al debate al régimen y cómo construimos nuestra identidad política día a día.

Secretaria del Partido Libre Risel Mancada
La tarea de construir un Partido Político no tradicional ni bipartidista en Honduras: logros, retos y metas.

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On August 7-9, 2018, the Ministry of Government in Bolivia hosted the 3rd International Seminar in Latin America at the Casa Blanca Hotel in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The conference titled “Latin America in Dispute: Alternatives to the Conservative Restoration and Imperialist Offensive,” was well attended with more than 100 participants from approximately 12 countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Chile, Cuba, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Senegal, Syria, and the Palestinian territories.⁴⁷



On July 15-17, the XXIV Foro São Paulo (FSP) summit was held in Havana, Cuba. This international seminar was attended by members of 20 Latin American countries. One of its main goals was to fight for a world without borders, where mass migrations are not seen as criminal.⁴⁸





THREAT ASSESSMENT

Most of the migrants in the caravans come from displaced and poor populations in Central America who are marginalized in society. Naturally, however, these populations are vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation from subversive actors with political agendas as well as unknown elements embedded within the caravans. One of these elements are Special Interest Aliens (SIA) and other irregular migrants from South Asia, Africa, and possibly the Middle East, comprising the integrity of the caravans and elevating the risk to the other migrants. A small subgroup within the caravans appears to be aimed at causing disruption and violence at border crossings to create a chaotic atmosphere for border security officials.

This has been demonstrated within the caravan: 26-year-old Honduran Henry Díaz Reyes died in a border clash on October 29 when migrants of the second caravan broke down the barriers between Tecun Uman and Ciudad Hidalgo border crossings.⁴⁹ He died shortly after being shot in the head with a rubber bullet. This occurred during the arrival of Caravan 2 to the Guatemala/Mexico border.

As the caravan traveled across the bridge between Guatemala and Mexico, migrants attacked police authorities with bottles and rocks, while many were reportedly carrying homemade bombs. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen stated "in some cases that the limited number of women and children in the caravan are being used by the organizers as "human shields" when they confront law enforcement," like the confrontation at the Guatemala/Mexico border.⁵⁰ Violence continued in Tijuana on November 25 when peaceful protests turned into a charge for the border. Several hundred migrants rushed the border, cut holes and scaled the border fence, and hurled rocks at agents.⁵¹ U.S. authorities responded using tear gas and closed the San Ysidro port of entry for 4 to 5 hours.

Many in the mainstream media have characterized the Central American caravans as regular migration aimed at seeking asylum in the United States or Canada. This is a limited perspective that does not explain the timing of the SIA, the route selected, or the high level of logistical organization needed to move mass migrants across borders in an efficient manner. The caravans reflect a form of strategic engineered migration that is being weaponized by anti-American political actors in Latin America who aim to destabilize the region by provoking border conflicts. An unidentified subgroup within the caravans seems geared to not cross the border but provoke the U.S. military, police, and border patrol into hostilities, as evidenced in Tecun Uman and Tijuana. The goal is to delegitimize the Trump administration by provoking a border conflict and a humanitarian crisis, weeks before the U.S. midterm elections.

SFS suspects that the caravans from Central America, force-marching through Guatemala and Mexico to the U.S. southwest border, are part of a larger effort by regional and extra-regional state and non-state actors destabilizing borders. It is likely that this strategy will be repeated in the future as instability and poverty increases in Nicaragua, Venezuela, Haiti, and the Northern Triangle of Central America. And as other mass migration phenomenon increases, namely the Venezuelans and Haitians who have the largest number of migrants/refugees flowing through the Western Hemisphere.



NOTES

¹ The term “Strategic Engineered Migration” was first used by Kelly M. Greenhill, a professor from Tufts University in the journal article “*Strategic Engineered Migration as a Weapon of War.*” *Civil Wars*, vol. 10. no. 1. (March 2008): 6-21

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