

## Nation Building Comes to Honduras

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**By Christopher Preble**

**S**unday's *New York Times* featured a front-page [article by Thom Shanker](#) on the United States

military's presence in Central America. In Honduras, American Special Forces operate out of three outposts—modeled on forward bases in Afghanistan and Iraq -- providing support to Honduran Special forces. Six-hundred US troops operate across Central America and try to maintain a “discrete footprint” and do not, it seems, engage in many offensive operations. Nonetheless, the ease with which US military personnel can be deployed practically anywhere is disturbing (though not surprising, given our recent experience). That some simply presume a need for having the US military deploy to the jungles of Honduras is equally troubling.

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*“By countering transnational organized crime, we promote stability, which is necessary for external investment, economic growth and minimizing violence,” Colonel Brown said. “We also are disrupting and deterring the potential nexus between transnational organized criminals and terrorists who would do harm to our country.”*

According to Colonel Brown, the US military has deployed to Honduras to encourage foreign companies to invest there. It is hard to square this with the military's core mission to “provide for the common defense.” Some in Washington still perceive a connection between economic development, drug eradication, and US national security. But the most recent scholarship has largely debunked the belief that Americans must build/rebuild foreign countries in order to be secure here at home.

It isn't enough to learn lessons from our recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is equally important that we learn the right lessons. Until we do, it appears we are doomed to repeat our nation-building follies again and again. (5/10/12)