

Treasury Sanctions Nicaraguan Officials Enabling the Murillo-Ortega Dictatorship's Repression

Today, the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned five Nicaraguan government officials who lead the principal financial, communications, and military agencies that enable Nicaragua's Murillo-Ortega dictatorship to repress its people. The individuals sanctioned include the Director and Deputy Director of Nicaragua's Financial Analysis Unit, the Minister of Labour, the Deputy Director General of the Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Postal Services, and the head of the Nicaraguan Army's Directorate of Military Intelligence and Counterintelligence.

"The Murillo-Ortega dictatorship has continued its domestic and international campaign of repression and tyranny to intimidate, stifle, and undermine peaceful political opponents and dissenters," said **Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent**. "We will continue to hold the dictatorship to account and to amplify the Nicaraguan people's aspirations for freedom and justice."

WEAPONIZATION OF THE FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT

The Murillo-Ortega dictatorship has instrumentalized laws related to anti-money laundering and the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) to increase its capacity for political repression against opponents. The functional autonomy of Nicaragua's Financial Analysis Unit (UAF), the main entity of the AML/CFT system in Nicaragua, is chaired by two active officers of the Nicaraguan Army and the National Police who are loyal to Co-President Ortega. This allows the Nicaraguan regime to control and use the institutions in charge of preventing and prosecuting money laundering to persecute political opponents and to benefit its allies and interests.

The UAF's lack of autonomy undermines the independence and integrity of the system and contributes to impunity in cases of corruption and money laundering. The UAF maintains a constant monitoring of the inflows of money from abroad, with the aim of blocking any type of financing to the activities of peaceful opposition organizations and independent civil society. The UAF has been responsible for liquidating the assets of political dissidents, political prisoners, and nongovernmental organizations without any legal basis.

Retired Major General **Denis Membreno Rivas (Membreno)** and former Police Chief Commissioner **Aldo Martin Saenz Ulloa (Saenz)** have served as the Director and Deputy Director, respectively, of the UAF since its creation in 2012. Today, OFAC designated **Membreno** and **Saenz** pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13851, as amended by E.O. 14088, for being officials of the Government of Nicaragua or having served as officials of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007.

LABOR RIGHTS ABUSES AND UNFAIR COMPETITION

As detailed in the October 25, 2025, Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) report on Nicaragua's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Labor Rights, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Rule of Law, Nicaragua, through its acts, policies, and practices, has exploited its own workers. This exploitation at the hands of the Ministry of Labor has resulted in unfair conditions of competition, confiscated the property

interests of domestic and foreign religious institutions and U.S. persons or businesses, and created a high-risk environment for U.S. companies investing and conducting business in Nicaragua.

Johana Vanessa Flores Jimenez (Flores) was appointed the Nicaraguan Minister of Labor in August 2025. Today, OFAC designated **Flores** pursuant to E.O. 13851, as amended, for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007.

REGIME'S SURVEILLANCE APPARATUS

The Nicaraguan Institute of Telecommunications and Postal Services (TELCOR) is the regulatory body for telecommunications and postal services. TELCOR functions under the direction of the Murillo-Ortega dictatorship as a central component of a broad surveillance and intelligence apparatus used to monitor and control social media, the press, and other forms of expression. In 2024, the enactment of the General Law on Convergent Telecommunications granted TELCOR extensive authority to collect private data, intercept communications, and geolocate individuals within Nicaragua. This legislation further strengthened TELCOR's oversight and control of social networks and media.

Additionally, TELCOR's director general, Nahima Janett Diaz Flores (Diaz), reportedly oversaw so-called "troll farms" that engaged in harassment, defamation, and cyberattacks against political opponents. On January 9, 2022, OFAC designated Diaz pursuant to E.O. 13851, as amended, for being an official of the Government of Nicaragua or having served as an official of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007.

Celia Margarita Reyes Ochoa (Reyes) has been the deputy director general of TELCOR since 2023.

The Nicaraguan Army's Directorate of Military Intelligence and Counterintelligence (DICIM) is considered one of the most opaque and powerful structures of the Nicaraguan Army. DICIM is responsible for the Nicaraguan Army's internal and external surveillance as well as coordinating with police and state security agencies to ensure at all costs that there is no opposition to the regime. The DICIM is central to monitoring protesters, journalists, human rights defenders, and retired military members considered disloyal. Major General of the Nicaraguan Army **Leonel Jose Gutierrez Lopez (Gutierrez)** headed the DICIM for more than a decade.

Today, OFAC designated **Reyes** and **Gutierrez** pursuant to E.O. 13851, as amended, for being officials of the Government of Nicaragua or having served as officials of the Government of Nicaragua at any time on or after January 10, 2007.

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of the designated or blocked persons described above that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, individually or in the aggregate, 50 percent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked.

Dated 26 February, 2026

