

**HAITI: NEXT STEPS ON THE
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN
HEMISPHERE, TRANSNATIONAL
CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY,
DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS,
AND GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES

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FIRST SESSION

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HAITI: NEXT STEPS ON THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

THURSDAY, JULY 27, 2023

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
TRANSNATIONAL CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY,
DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES;
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Tim Kaine presiding.

Present: Senators Kaine [presiding], Cardin, and Rubio.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TIM KAINE, U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA

Senator KAINE. Good morning. This hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues will come to order.

It is a pleasure to welcome our distinguished panel of government witnesses for this important hearing on Haiti. I want to thank the ranking member, Senator Rubio, and his team for his help in crafting this hearing.

I am proud of the work that we have done together over a number of years on Latin American and Caribbean issues during our time in the Senate together and there is much more to be done.

The focus of today's hearing is on the security crisis in Haiti and the next steps in potential international response.

In July 2021, President Jovenel Moïse was brutally assassinated in his home. A month later a magnitude 7.2 earthquake devastated the country still in recovery from the 2010 earthquake that killed over 200,000 people.

Since then, criminal gangs have been fomenting terror and violence in the country, leading interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry to formally request international help last October.

In the meantime, Haitians continue to suffer from reprehensible, brutal violence perpetuated by gangs who are backed by business and political patrons in Haiti.

Homicides in the country have risen sharply, increasing by over 35 percent between 2021 and 2022. Kidnappings have more than doubled as gangs fight over territory. Gangs have used collective

rape and other horrific gender-based violence against women, children, and the elderly.

The violence has been compounded by natural disasters, leading to a humanitarian crisis where nearly 5 million Haitians are facing acute levels of hunger. Haitian Government agencies face difficulties addressing these challenges including cholera because vulnerable neighborhoods have been choked up by gangs fighting for territory.

Understandably, Haitians are desperate to escape this violence, fleeing to neighboring countries throughout the region in increasing numbers and to the United States.

Just in the last few days we have seen scenes of Haitians fleeing neighborhood violence and gathering at the U.S. Embassy in Haiti because they feel like they have nowhere else to go if they want to be safe.

At the center of violence, we have to acknowledge, is an illegal flow of American firearms into Haiti. We see reports of the Haitian National Police, who the U.S. Government have long supported, being consistently outgunned by Haitian gangs.

Federal law enforcement agencies have described the recovery of sophisticated weapons destined for Haitian ports—50 caliber sniper rifles, belt-fed machine guns. Tragically, it is no surprise that the number of Haitian police officers being killed has only increased since 2019.

We have to acknowledge that firearms trafficking is a problem not just in Haiti, but in other parts of the Caribbean, Mexico, and throughout the hemisphere. It is no coincidence that countries in the region have some of the highest rates of homicide in the world.

The violence unleashed by firearms trafficked out of the U.S. destabilizes the Western Hemisphere and it also increases the pressure for irregular migration.

I am pleased to see that the Biden administration named the creation of a coordinator for Caribbean firearms prosecutions within the Department of Justice in June, and in the Senate, Senator Rubio and I have introduced the *Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Authorization Act*.

We are also both co-sponsors of Chairman Menendez's *Haitian Criminal Collusion and Transparency Act*. These pieces of legislation would help strengthen regional security cooperation in the Caribbean and sanction political and business elites who empower gangs in Haiti.

For those interventions to work, security needs to be reestablished, first, alongside a Haitian-led solution to the political crisis. As recently as this month, U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres reiterated his call for a robust international security presence in Haiti.

I am interested in hearing from our witnesses from both the Department of State and USAID on its latest discussions with international and multilateral stakeholders on this front.

I am also interested in hearing about the U.S. efforts to support Haitian people through humanitarian aid.

Let me now turn it over to my ranking member, Senator Rubio, for his remarks, following which I will introduce our panel.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO,
U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA**

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this and thank you both for coming.

Haiti right now is a complete disaster. This is as bad as it has ever been and I followed it not just because south Florida where I live is an enormous Haitian-American community 650 miles from Miami, it is—everything that happens there is both heartbreaking and at the same time has a direct impact on the state of Florida and ultimately on the country.

I think it is about as bad a situation as any on the planet. It does not get the attention I believe it deserves, but I know a few places on Earth right now that are confronting the challenges that they are facing, and despite Haiti's long history of problems and challenges this is probably—and I can be corrected, but this is probably as bad as it has been in a long time.

Sixty percent of the country is controlled by gangs. When the most powerful person in your country is nicknamed “Barbecue,” that is not a good thing, okay, and it is 60 percent of the country that is controlled by gangs led by people like that guy.

Seventy-five percent of its major cities controlled by gangs. I think it was last year that they seized the Varreux Port and denied—people could not get water. They could not get fuel. They could not get medicine. They could not get—just unbelievable that would happen.

They have not had an election since 2017. There is not a single democratically-elected leader in the entire country. Then you think about the impact it has had on migration. I think in 2023 alone, the Coast Guard just this year has intercepted 7,400 people and those are the ones that live long enough to be intercepted.

We do not know how many people have died in that path, but we know many have, and that does not count those who are stranded in the Bahamas and other places, as well.

Since 2020, 146,000 migrant encounters, albeit some obviously coming from third countries where maybe they were working construction. The work dried up and then they made their journey here as well, but also a very dangerous voyage.

Look, the talk has been about an international force. The truth of the matter is the last one that was there did not end very well. They brought cholera. They were accused of abuses against the population including sexual abuse.

I understand the reluctance of countries from around the world in getting engaged in this endeavor.

Frankly, we spend a lot of time thinking about—we filed our bills together. We have the *Haitian Criminal Collusion Transparency Act* that Senator Menendez and I have filed.

Senator Warnock and I introduced the *Haitian Economic Lift Program Extension Act* to ensure that the trade benefits are extended to 2035, but as we—I do not want to pretend that I have an answer in my back pocket here over how to solve this problem. This is a really difficult Rubik's cube to line up. There is a lot of problems going on. Some are historic and long standing. Some are more recent.

There is the whole structure of their government. It is not on us to structure their government, but they tried to marry up this French and American system and ended up with a system of government constitutionally that I think is flawed by design and has contributed somewhat to some of this.

Security is something everybody agrees you have to have before anything else is possible, but you got a significant percentage of the national police are applicants currently waiting for the parole program that the Biden administration has created.

That is never a good sign when the people that are supposed to be doing that believe their best option is to leave the country.

I think as much as anything else in today's hearing, and I know it is an unfair question in many cases, but asking what is the Biden administration's plan or view of what the solution here is.

I know there has been some efforts at the U.N. Security Council and so forth because, frankly, I am at a loss for understanding what the—this is not a blame assignment.

This is sort of a testament to the intricacy of this problem, how difficult it is. What is the way forward? Because it is having an impact on the United States. This is not halfway around the world. This, as I said, is not far from Florida and the southeast United States.

I appreciate you coming in to answer this very difficult question, at least begin to get a sense of what the outlines are of what the way forward is and what we can do, what the United States can do, to be a part of a solution, some ray of hope in what otherwise continues to be an escalating disaster.

As a side note, I did want to mention both to the witnesses and to the chair that the Appropriations Committee is meeting. We have four votes today. They do not let you vote by proxy for the bills, so you may see me run out.

Luckily, it is in the same building. That is the good news. The bad news is it is at 10:45, but as soon as I am done with those votes I will get back here if we are still in session.

Thank you for coming and thank you for holding this.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Rubio. Let me now introduce our witnesses.

Brian Nichols is the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the State Department.

He previously served as U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe and before that, Ambassador to Peru, and previously was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Also served as our DCM in Colombia.

In May, President Biden nominated Secretary Nichols to the rank of Career Ambassador, which is the highest rank in the Foreign Service.

Marcela Escobari is the Assistant Administrator for the Bureau of Latin America and the Caribbean at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Ms. Escobari previously served in this role in 2016 during which time she helped reinforce U.S. support for Peace Colombia, mobilized humanitarian response to the disaster to the response points

of Hurricane Matthew in Haiti, and also supported efforts to deliver humanitarian aid in Venezuela.

Prior to her government service, Ms. Escobari was a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and executive director of the Center for International Development at Harvard University.

It is great to have you both with us today. I would like now for each of you to offer your opening statements beginning with Secretary Nichols.

Before you start, the Assistant Secretary Todd Robinson was invited to join us today, but was unable to talk about some of the security dimensions of this challenge. He has, however, submitted a written statement that I will include as part of the record.

[EDITOR'S NOTE.—The information referred to above can be found in the "Additional Material Submitted for the Record" section at the end of this hearing.]

With that, Secretary Nichols, we will begin with you.

STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN NICHOLS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE, WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Mr. NICHOLS. Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding our efforts to address the security and humanitarian crisis in Haiti.

We remain committed to supporting the Haitian people's right to a democratic, peaceful, and prosperous future. The Haitian people must determine their own future through dialogue and elections.

We will support them to do so, working with them, our international partners, and members of Haiti's dedicated diaspora to support Haitian-led efforts to create a better future for the country.

To do so, we support the process of political reconciliation. We train and equip Haiti's police. We also have significantly increased our efforts to implement financial and visa restrictions to promote accountability for those who seek to destabilize the country.

We provide development and humanitarian assistance. We encourage private sector-led growth and we seek to mobilize international security assistance for Haiti.

Haiti remains a top priority for President Biden, for Secretary Blinken, and for me. My colleagues from across the interagency and I have visited Port-au-Prince numerous times. We are in daily contact with Haitian stakeholders and the diaspora in the United States, as well as the region.

Gang activity including targeted sexual violence, recruitment of minors, widespread kidnappings, and sniper style killings of neighborhood residents plagues the Haitian people.

Gangs also hamper the Haitian Government's ability to deliver public services and combat poverty. As we work with our partners to urgently respond to Haiti's request for a multinational force to support the Haitian National Police, we intend, with congressional support, to allocate more than \$120 million to strengthen police capacity.

This funding will strengthen the Haitian National Police's counter gang unit through recruitment and training, technical as-

sistance, and equipment. Since 2021, we have donated 100 vehicles, more than 1,000 sets of protective equipment, 37,400 meals ready-to-eat, and additional equipment for the counter gang intervention unit.

Our funding will also improve Haiti's overcrowded and deteriorating prisons both by building infrastructure and by implementing health programs to stem cholera outbreaks. We are also working with DHS to establish a transnational criminal investigative unit within the police. This will enable us to partner better with Haiti to investigate and prosecute transnational crimes with a U.S. nexus.

Our financial sanctions and visa restrictions have a chilling effect on political and economic elites who finance gang leaders and foment the ongoing crises in Haiti.

The United States has imposed visa restrictions and financial sanctions on more than 50 individuals involved in street gangs, other Haitian criminal organizations, drug trafficking, significant corruption, or gross violations of human rights. We have designated more people than any other country.

In addition, we continue to press other nations and international institutions to follow suit. The United States proudly co-sponsored with Mexico the U.N. resolution creating a new sanctions regime for Haiti, the first within the Western Hemisphere.

On July 14, with U.S. support, the United Nations Security Council unanimously renewed the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti.

The United States also supports the Haitian people as they forge a path for their country's democratic governance and development including through the *Global Fragility Act*. The Act allows us to build long-term solutions with Haitians while we address today's acute multi-dimensional crisis.

We encourage Haiti's political, economic, religious, and civil society actors to work together to resolve Haiti's political and security challenges. The United States supports the Caribbean community—CARICOM—in its efforts to encourage a Haitian-led political dialogue, a process brokered by former prime ministers from the region.

On July 6, I joined Secretary Blinken in Trinidad and Tobago where he urged Prime Minister Henry to negotiate in earnest with other political forces to achieve a broader political consensus leading to elections as soon as possible.

Haiti has made important progress in resolving its political impasse over the past year, but more must be done and urgently.

We welcome the creation of the High Transition Council in Haiti, which is crucial for restoring democratic order and improving security. An even broader and more inclusive leadership structure will provide greater confidence to all Haitians.

On the economic front we strongly support the *HOPE* and *HELP Acts*. During this critical time, producers and investors in Haiti, those they do business with, and the workers upon whom they rely, need certainty about the uninterrupted continuation of the *HOPE/HELP* preferences.

The garment sector, created, largely, thanks to the *HOPE* and *HELP Acts*, accounted for approximately 90 percent of Haiti's ex-

ports, employed more than 34,000 Haitians, and supported more than 205,000 Haitians in 2022, but in the past year, some garment manufacturers have closed their factories and laid off workers, decisions made in part because of uncertainty about whether Haiti will continue to enjoy these preferences.

We must continue to support economic growth, job creation, and investment where possible. Equally important, we must leverage the enormous talents and expertise of the Haitian diaspora who remain critical to a brighter, more stable, and secure Haiti.

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nichols follows:]

Prepared Statement of Mr. Brian Nichols

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ical, economic, religious, and civil society actors, to work together to resolve Haiti's political and security challenges.

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On the economic front, we strongly support the *HOPE* and *HELP Acts*. During this critical time, producers, and investors in Haiti, those they do business with, and the workers upon whom they rely, need certainty about the uninterrupted continuation of the *HOPE/HELP* preferences. The garment sector—created largely thanks to the *HOPE* and *HELP Acts*—accounted for approximately 90 percent of Haiti's exports, employed more than 34,000 Haitians, and supported more than 205,000 Haitians in 2022. But in the past year, some garment manufacturers have closed their factories and laid off workers—decisions made in part because of uncertainty about whether Haiti will continue to enjoy those preferences. We must continue to support economic growth, job creation, and investment where possible.

Equally important, we must leverage the enormous talents and expertise of the Haitian diaspora, who remain critical to a brighter, more stable, and secure Haiti.

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Ms. Escobari.

STATEMENT OF HON. MARCELA ESCOBARI, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. ESCOBARI. Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, thank you for the opportunity to testify about USAID's work in Haiti.

When I went to Haiti earlier this year I saw, as many of you have, the situation on the ground. Gang violence is leaving Haitians vulnerable to horrific crimes. The staff at our mission live with that reality day-to-day, especially our courageous Foreign Service nationals who have in some cases been displaced from their homes or even been victims of kidnapping, but our staff has kept going because they know that our work is making a critical difference in the lives of the Haitian people. Our budget of more than \$150 million a year supports economic, health, and governance work that we have adapted to the security situation.

We have also amped up our humanitarian response. USAID has provided an additional \$112 million just in FY23 to respond to acute needs. We are providing clean water, food, and medical supplies.

We responded quickly to the cholera outbreak and are supporting survivors of gender-based violence. We are reaching hundreds of thousands of people a month with food assistance and have helped bring nearly 20,000 people out of famine-like conditions in Port-au-Prince.

We also continue building the foundations for long-term stability in Haiti. Over the last 10 years, USAID's investments in food security have helped over 100,000 farmers adopt new technologies, gen-

erating nearly \$30 million dollars in new sales and supplying local markets.

We have invested in promising Haitian companies who now sell products like peanut butter, moringa, and limes to stores across the U.S. and Canada. These investments have meant new jobs and growing incomes.

USAID has also made strides in fortifying the country's water system, which are foundational for progress in every other sector from health to economic growth.

We have helped set up 22 micro utilities that are now fully functional with water meters and data tracking devices that can tell you when water is cut off or disrupted in case of natural disasters.

Most importantly, these investments have provided reliable drinking water to over 320,000 Haitians and are self-sustaining. Some things are working in Haiti.

Improving health outcomes is also a major focus for USAID. Our partners operate more than 160 health clinics. Forty percent of people who access health services in Haiti do so in a USAID-supported clinic. We vaccinate 76,000 kids every year—50 percent of all fully vaccinated children in Haiti.

The years we have spent strengthening the Ministry of Health and investing in public health infrastructure proved invaluable in containing the most recent cholera outbreak, but as our staff in Haiti know, protecting those gains and making further progress will require significant improvements in security. USAID and INL have joined forces in addressing gang violence in some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince.

Just last month, USAID launched a \$12.5 million program to support community policing, provide life skills to at-risk youth, and help the government of Haiti provide social services to survivors of violence.

We recognize that we can and should continue to protect livelihoods. Joblessness puts families further at risk and contributes to insecurity. Vice President Harris has signaled the Administration's strong support for the extension of HOPE/HELP trade preferences. This certainty will keep jobs in Haiti and preserve and even grow the labor-intensive textile sector.

Business is still possible in Haiti. Just last month, we helped broker a \$4.5 million equity investment between two Haitian companies to expand a unique leasing model for solar energy.

Despite the challenges, USAID programs are not only responding to acute needs, but also contributing to long-term stability and that includes supporting institutions, including those that will lead to elections that Haitian people can trust.

To make sure that Haitians can participate, we are helping distribute more than 2 million national identity cards that Haitians can use to access services like banking services, but also to be able to vote.

Thanks to our team in Port-au-Prince, our partners on the ground, and the generosity of this Congress, we believe that not all is lost in Haiti, but there is more left to lose and more will be lost if we do not continue to back these critical efforts.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.
[The prepared statement of Ms. Escobari follows:]

Prepared Statement of Ms. Marcela Escobari

INTRO

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, distinguished members of the Subcommittee—thank you for the opportunity to testify and to speak with you today about USAID’s work in Haiti at this critical time.

CURRENT SITUATION

When I went to Haiti earlier this year, I saw—as many of you who have visited have seen—that the situation on the ground is dire. Gang violence is on the rise and the Haitian National Police is struggling to curtail it, leaving Haitians vulnerable to heinous atrocities.

The staff at our Mission live with those day-to-day realities, especially our courageous foreign service nationals. Their neighborhoods are overrun with violent gangs. Some have been kidnapped themselves or had family members kidnapped for ransom.

But whenever I speak with them, they make it clear that “all is not lost in Haiti”—and that they are willing to face these risks because they know their work is making a difference. And it is.

Our budget of more than \$150 million a year supports economic, health and governance work—and we have continued to pivot those investments for maximum impact as the security situation changes. We have also amped up our humanitarian assistance to meet growing immediate needs.

IMPACT OF HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

USAID has provided more than \$110 million in life-saving humanitarian assistance to Haiti since the start of fiscal year 2023. And since the stand-up of our humanitarian Disaster Assistance Response Team, or DART, last October, USAID’s Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance has provided clean water, medicine and medical supplies to communities affected by violence. We have responded to new cholera outbreaks. We are supporting survivors of gender-based violence. And we are responding to widespread food insecurity with food assistance that reaches hundreds of thousands of people a month and has helped to bring nearly 20,000 people out of famine-like conditions.

BUILDING LONG-TERM STABILITY

And we continue working to make the country more food secure long-term. USAID investments have helped over 100,000 farmers adopt new technologies over the last 10 years and generate nearly \$30 million in agricultural sales.

USAID has catalyzed equity investments in promising Haitian companies, leveraging \$28 million since 2018. For example, we provided support to Acceso Haiti which works with smallholder farmers to boost their production and aggregate their output to help them bring products like Lavi Spicy Peanut Butter to grocery stores in the U.S. and Canada. With USAID support, Acceso is working to expand its network of farmers, double farmers’ yields and incomes, and connect new crops, like mango, lime, and moringa, to new markets.

USAID has also made strides in fortifying the country’s water and sanitation systems, which are foundational to making progress in every other area from health to economic growth. We’ve helped re-establish 22 micro-utilities, improve their technical capacity, identify leaks, install meters so they can collect and share data—including in the wake of natural disasters—and generate revenue. Three of those 22 utilities have already mobilized over \$70,000 in domestic revenues.

These types of USAID investments have helped increase access to reliable, potable water service for over 320,000 people in Haiti since 2018. And our investments in sanitation management—which help ensure waste doesn’t pollute water sources—have increased sanitation services for over 78,000 people.

Improving health outcomes across the country is also a major focus for USAID. With USAID support, our partners operate more than 160 health clinics, which account for 25 percent of the health services provided in the country. We vaccinate 76,000 kids every year. Since 2022, one in every two fully vaccinated kids in Haiti were vaccinated with USAID support. That’s critical to long-term health in the country.

The years we’ve spent strengthening the health system, operating public health education campaigns, bolstering data gathering capabilities and operationalizing failed water utilities proved invaluable during the most recent cholera outbreak. The 2010 outbreak saw more than 10,000 people lose their lives to cholera. The

years we spent building up the Ministry of Health and public health infrastructure meant that during the most recent outbreak in October 2022, the Ministry was able to limit the number of deaths to 800. That kept this outbreak's fatality rate under the World Health Organization's standard of 1 percent.

LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS REQUIRE SECURITY

But as our staff in Haiti know, protecting those gains and making further progress toward long-term solutions will require significant improvements in security.

So, we continue to simultaneously address the urgent needs of the moment and build a path to long-term stability. Under the *Global Fragility Act* we have created a 10-year plan that allows us to better coordinate our development work with our interagency partners' efforts to meet Haiti's security goals.

USAID and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) are more aligned than ever, designing joint programming to address gang violence. While INL provides support for the Haitian National Police, USAID is doing our part on citizen security.

Just last month, USAID signed a 3-year award with an initial investment of \$12.5 million to reduce violence and strengthen security in gang-controlled neighborhoods in Port-au-Prince, focusing on: implementing community development activities and, assisting the Government of Haiti to provide social services for at-risk populations and survivors of violence. These services include supporting at-risk youth with psychosocial services, life skills, and help finding jobs and livelihoods outside of joining a gang. This approach recognizes that police can't solve this problem on their own and is based on proven models implemented across the world, from Los Angeles to San Pedro Sula.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

We recognize that we can and should work to protect livelihoods, even in the current security environment. Joblessness puts families further at risk and contributes to insecurity.

Vice President Harris has signaled the Administration's strong support for the extension of the HOPE/HELP trade preferences program, which will keep jobs in Haiti. At this critical time, producers, investors, clients, and workers in Haiti need certainty about the continuation of HOPE/HELP. Maintaining this program will be essential in preserving and growing the labor-intensive textile sector.

At USAID, our work to create economic opportunities continues across the country. For example, we recently brokered a \$4.5 million equity investment between two Haitian businesses to expand and accelerate a solar energy company's unique solar leasing model for residential, commercial and industrial customers.

POLITICAL SECURITY

Despite the challenges we face, USAID continues working to ensure our programs not only operate in the short term, but really take root, so they can contribute to long-term stability when the security situation improves.

That includes supporting institutional improvements, like national identification cards Haitians can use to vote and to access banks and other services. To make sure people everywhere can get these cards, USAID is partnering with the Organization of American States to distribute 3 million cards throughout the country.

We stand ready to use our convening power to help Haiti move toward democratic elections. USAID recently launched a new elections-support program to work with Haitian institutions and civil society to take concrete steps forward, including: creating a realistic electoral calendar; developing security plans for voting; and supporting Haitian efforts to carry out constitutional and electoral reforms.

CONCLUSION

Thanks to our incredible staff and partners on the ground, and the generosity of this congress, our local staff are right: "all is not lost in Haiti." But there is more left to lose—and more will be lost—if we don't continue to back these critical efforts across the country.

I thank this subcommittee for its ongoing support, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator Kaine. Thank you, Assistant Administrator Escobari. We will begin a round of questions.

Secretary Nichols, I will start. The title of this hearing is “Next Steps on the International Response,” and so I would like to begin there.

We have barely scratched the surface in all of our opening comments about the depth of the challenge. To that end, what can the Department now share publicly regarding a potential international, multinational force in Haiti to assist with security?

Talk a little bit about what we are doing as a Department and also share discussions that you can with respect to the U.N. Security Council or our international partners.

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We have been working intensively on this for as long as I have been in this position, and the most recent activities have been the renewal of the U.N.’s office in Haiti and in that resolution that was renewed earlier this month, it called on the Secretary General to provide recommendations for more that could be done to address the security situation in Haiti within 30 days of the passage. August 15 would be the deadline for that report.

Senator KAINE. Just as we are having a dialogue here, that was notable because that is the U.N. Security Council resolution, unanimous vote of countries such as Russia and China, that sometimes are not with us on these. They worked together with us on this initiative and that is at least a positive sign, correct?

Mr. NICHOLS. That is correct, Mr. Chairman, and we continue to consult with fellow council members, both permanent and elected, with key peacekeeping contributors around the world.

Assistant Secretary Robinson is doing that right now. That is why he could not be with us today. He is continuing those conversations.

We talk to potential contributors to a multinational force, which we consider the fastest deploying solution and specifically responsive to the request from the Haitian Government, as we contemplate other solutions that could include some type of assessed peacekeeping operation in the future.

We believe it is urgent to get forces on the ground that can support the Haitian National Police as they carry out missions specifically targeting the gangs that prey on the Haitian people.

Senator KAINE. The challenge with the multinational force idea has been that—I think you have done a good job in identifying not only the United States, but other nations that are willing to participate if it is scoped correctly.

It has been hard to get a nation to agree to lead it and that—Senator Rubio referred to this in his opening statements—and there are many reasons for that.

Some nations have histories with Haiti that would make them leading a challenge because of historical challenges, and also the history of other peacekeeping or multinational efforts in Haiti have had their own challenges that makes some skittish about taking the lead.

What are lessons learned from past multinational efforts or peacekeeping operations that we should keep in mind as we are trying to approach this particular formation of a multinational effort?

Mr. NICHOLS. Well, I think having a focused narrow scope for the operation. The security situation in Haiti is very much differentiated by where you are in the country. The situation in Port-au-Prince, the capital, is extremely bad. It is something that requires urgent assistance.

Other parts of the country, the situation is substantially better. A force needs to provide security around key infrastructure sites. The ranking member referred to the seizure of the Varreux fuel terminal late last year as one incident.

We need to protect sites like that so that the Haitian National Police can interact with the populace and provide security. We also need to grow the police force in tandem with the deployment of a multinational force.

Senator KAINE. Let me ask you one more question and then I will cede to my colleague. I might have some more USAID questions in a second round for you, Ms. Escobari.

You mentioned that in Trinidad and Tobago, Secretary Blinken urged interim Prime Minister Henry to engage in good faith dialogue with all sectors of Haitian society to look at a next political chapter.

My Haitian-American diaspora community in Virginia has been very critical. I will not say it is monolithic as a criticism, but there has been significant criticism of the interim Prime Minister's lack of willingness to engage broadly with all sectors of Haitian society as we talk about a next political chapter.

What has been your observation thus far, Secretary Nichols, about the efforts being made by the Prime Minister to do what Secretary Blinken has encouraged him to do?

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Prime Minister traveled to Jamaica under CARICOM auspices, met with a diverse section of political and social stakeholders from Haiti in offsite conversations.

Those were under the auspices of three eminent former prime ministers from other Caribbean countries. Those conversations have continued in Port-au-Prince. That is a positive step.

He has offered to not seek reelection or seek election, I should say, as well as his cabinet, which is an important guarantee for the process.

He needs to expand the political representation in his cabinet and, frankly, I think the High Transition Council should be expanded to include other political forces.

There was robust debate within Haiti over how you would do that. The December 21 agreement that he and many of those who view him more favorably have signed does not provide for an expansion of the High Transition Council. That is a point of significant debate within the country, but a broad national effort to take the country to elections as quickly as security will allow is vital.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. I will yield to my colleague, Senator Rubio.

Senator RUBIO. Well, just on that point of security, so I think we all would hope to see a Haiti that has a prosperous economy that provides opportunities and a functional government.

I think a precondition to both of those things being possible—you are not going to drive investment in the country without security

and I do not know how you hold elections, given the current security situation.

Security is first and foremost, and that is a really tough one to deal with. Number one, the argument for a multinational force, which is what the Administration and others have been supportive of, is not unanimous either among all political actors inside of Haiti, correct? There are many who are against that as a solution.

Mr. NICHOLS. The—

Senator RUBIO. There are some, I should—yes.

Mr. NICHOLS. I have spoken with scores of Haitians in Haiti and members of the diaspora. I would say that opinions toward a multinational force have evolved over time and people that I talk to who were against that 18 months ago are now very supportive of that.

The guarantee that they want is this will not be used as a way to maintain the Prime Minister in power indefinitely, and I think that we have ample assurances from him directly to the Secretary of State and to other actors in the country that he will not remain in power and that his goal is to hold an election.

We need to have that security, as you rightly state, to be able to do that.

Senator RUBIO. Under what auspices? For example, I guess the August 15 deadline is for the U.N. recommendation on what the steps forward are through the Security Council. Have the Chinese expressed opposition to international force inside of Haiti to provide security?

Mr. NICHOLS. I want to be careful in characterizing another country's position, but they have expressed concerns about how any future effort would be different from the MINUSTAH effort that lasted for 13 years.

They did support the resolution that passed earlier this month and they have said they would like to see the text of the recommendations from the Secretary General and what a resolution says before presenting a final opinion.

Senator RUBIO. Which countries have expressed an openness? For example, the Kenyans—are they a potential partner or a lead in a peacekeeping effort?

Mr. NICHOLS. They are. Secretary Robinson is—has just departed from Nairobi and we have talked to them. They are one of the leading contributors to U.N. peacekeeping and multinational operations around the world.

We have talked to many other countries as well. One of the things I think it is important to focus on is that while we may be asking a specific country to be the lead, we envision this as a multinational force with members from this hemisphere, from developed and developing countries, with different levels of skill sets that they would bring to bear to the problem.

Senator RUBIO. Yes. I guess the reason why I ask about that is just it is historically the U.N., the U.S., Canada, others have come under criticism in the past for these efforts for a lot of reasons—the 13 years or whatever may have happened during that time, other incidents that happened during those interventions for peacekeeping purposes.

I think it is—that has made it more difficult to get the Canadians or the French or anybody to be excited about this. I am glad

to hear that some countries have expressed. What about in the Caribbean?

Mr. NICHOLS. CARICOM member states have stated publicly their willingness to participate in a multinational force. Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and The Bahamas have all publicly said that they would be willing to participate. Other countries in the Caribbean as well.

Interestingly, some of the smaller Caribbean countries do have Creole speakers and that could be an important resource for a multinational force for interpretation and translation.

Senator RUBIO. The issue here is not finding nations that potentially are willing to be contributors. The issue is finding a nation willing to say, and will be the lead on command?

Mr. NICHOLS. Yes, sir. That has been the challenge that we face.

We believe that we are making progress in that area and it is vital to do so, and I would note that any country that does take the lead, I am confident will enjoy support from other key peacekeeping contributors as well as from the United States, from Canada, from France, in terms of supporting their efforts.

Senator RUBIO. My last question, and I apologize again because an appropriations vote is coming up here in a few minutes.

On the security assistance we are providing now, the training mission, the equip and train and so forth, what is more detail? Obviously, the training occurring in country, out of country. Obviously, part of that involves retention. All of the security workforce there faces the same challenges that our locally employed—our local employees at the mission would confront.

They have the same housing challenges, security challenges, and the like. I—and obviously it is telling when you have a substantial percentage of those in the current security forces looking to leave the country.

If you could describe a little bit more about how that program is functioning. Where are we doing with the training in-country, how is that—and, obviously, is recruitment a part of that as well?

Mr. NICHOLS. Absolutely, sir. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement has 14 subject matter experts embedded within the Haitian National Police that are providing training and assistance within the police.

Alongside that, there are United Nations political officers, actually two of them right now, who are also providing training within the police.

We work with the police to recruit, to vet, to train at the police academy in the Port-au-Prince area, as well as some other facilities, as well as programs to develop their anti-gang unit, their transnational criminal investigative unit, their sexual gender-based violence unit, the inspector general function, which is like their office of professional responsibility to ensure that bad actors are identified and removed from the police force.

We have had conversations with the police around their growth plans, their maritime operations with the Haitian Coast Guard, which is associated with the police.

We also provide assistance to maintain and equip Coast Guard vessels within Haiti. In addition to the United States, other countries provide assistance to the Haitian National Police. Mexico,

France, Brazil, Canada, just to name a few, have provided training both within Haiti and outside of Haiti to the police.

I can continue if you like.

Senator RUBIO. Pretty comprehensive. That was comprehensive. I appreciate your answer on it. I apologize. I will come right back after I—great—after we vote on those things.

I was trying to think of any of the appropriations bills we are going to vote on, have to do with the funding for any of this, but we already did that last week.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Senator Rubio. I will have a series of questions.

I want to stick with you for a minute, Secretary Nichols. As I mentioned in my opening remarks, Senator Rubio and I have introduced the *Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Authorization Act*. It is bipartisan.

We believe we have a—we are on a good path on this. We were trying to get it connected to the *National Defense Authorizing Act*. I am not sure we are going to be able to do that, but I wanted to ask you a question about Assistant Secretary Robinson. We have referenced him during this hearing. He was unable to join today for the reasons that you described.

Our federal law enforcement agencies are focused on firearms trafficking, and can you briefly describe what the Department's role is in combating firearms trafficking to Haiti and the Caribbean region?

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Department of State has supported, alongside with the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, and the Department of Justice, the creation of the transnational criminal investigative unit within Haiti.

There is also the gun crime investigative unit in Port of Spain, Trinidad. We are providing training and access to the eTrace software platform that allows police officers anywhere in the world to trace the serial numbers of weapons found at crime scenes for investigative purposes.

You referenced in your opening statement, Mr. Chairman, the new coordinator position within the Department of Justice, which we think is going to be a very important tool in aiding prosecutions of straw purchasers.

The bipartisan *Safer Communities Act*, which this body passed—and thank you very much for that—provides important tools that allows us to prosecute straw purchasers of weapons that are used in crimes overseas who have the knowledge or expectation that the guns that they purchase would be used in a criminal activity.

We have, I think, made important progress in attacking the gun trafficking into the region, but there is much, much more work to be done, and as you rightly signaled, this is a vital task for this Administration and our partners around the region, and I know, sir, that you personally heard this from our partners during your trips and participation in the Summit of the Americas.

Senator KAINE. Again and again, I have heard this all throughout the region. You referenced earlier the U.N.-integrated office in Haiti, which I think is referred to as the BINUH, and the fact that the Security Council extended its mandate by a year.

Share a little bit about what that integrated office does. What is the scope of their work?

Mr. NICHOLS. They coordinate the United Nations country team activities in Haiti, so all of their specialized agencies. They provide political mediation and intervention. They have dedicated police officers who provide training within the Haitian National Police as well as some of their own site security.

The number of police officers in the mission actually nearly doubled in the renewal of the resolution so they will be able to do more things around training. The coordination of humanitarian efforts in Haiti, not just within the U.N. country team, agencies like World Food Programme or UNICEF also extends to other donors as well, and Assistant Administrator Escobari could tell you about how they work with BINUH in that regard.

Senator KAINE. Excellent. You mentioned in your testimony, Secretary Nichols, the role of the Haitian diaspora in the United States and I think that is an intriguing reference that there is a significant diaspora in the DMV, in this region. Senator Rubio talked about the diaspora, very significant in south Florida.

Talk a little bit about how you see the role of the Haitian diaspora—Haitian Americans—in assisting a transition to a better chapter in the life of the country.

Mr. NICHOLS. The Haitian diaspora—I have met with them in Miami, I have met with them here in this area, I have met with them in New York, virtual meetings from people—with people around the country—they are an incredibly talented group—as you well know, business leaders, doctors, lawyers, dentists—and they want to help Haiti.

They have economic resources. They have professional skills. Historically, we have worked with Haitian-American police officers to support the Haitian National Police in the past.

The ability of that community to provide assistance depends also on the security situation in Haiti. It has to be safe for them to travel there and work with Haitians in-country around the broad areas of development, and we are proud to have Haitian-Americans who work in the State Department and even on the Haiti account. This is very important for us.

Senator KAINE. Excellent.

I want to switch to humanitarian issues, Assistant Administrator Escobari. In my opening comments, I mentioned the fact that this latest spate of political unrest and violence following the assassination of the President, shortly following was an earthquake.

There have been even more recent challenges. Flooding and earthquake just in June of this year led to 55 deaths, but left more than 13,000 people homeless, and the U.N. indicated in a March 2023 report that gang violence had displaced at least 160,000 people.

The magnitude of this challenge is very striking, but your point was there are some good things going on. I thought the statistics that you referenced about the health care system, the percentage of Haitians that receive health care in clinics that have been supported by USAID, the work that is done between USAID and the Haitian Government on health care facilities, I thought those were very powerful.

How are these health care facilities operating in an environment where the gangs control so much of the country? Are health care clinics kind of viewed as safe spaces where the gangs have not overly interrupted their work or are you seeing significant restrictions of the work of these facilities because of gang violence in the country?

Ms. ESCOBARI. Thank you, Senator, for your question and your enduring support of Haiti.

Health is probably the place where we are strongest in USAID. There is over 160 clinics that are run with support from USAID and 90 percent of them are currently operational, and I think it is because of a mix of the things that you talked about.

A lot of our partners come from those communities, work in those communities, and serve those communities. I think that everybody is motivated to keeping them open more so in the current circumstance, and they provide everything.

They provide primary health. They were instrumental during the cholera outbreak. They are the first point-of-contact on response to gender-based violence.

They are really integral to these communities and have been—have remained open even in the worst moments.

Senator KAINE. Are these facilities part of the government public health network or are they facilities run by NGOs and nonprofit organizations?

Ms. ESCOBARI. There is a mix, but our—most of our support is supporting the Ministry of Health in Haiti and this has been investments for the last 10 years to not only build the capacity of the ministry and build that public health infrastructure, those norms for people to know how to respond to cholera, and really all of that investment has come to fruition in these institutions that were able to respond and the government was able to respond during the recent cholera outbreak in October and really keep that at the WHO 1 percent fatality.

Eight hundred people have died of cholera in that recent outbreak.

Senator KAINE. Just—and just—

Ms. ESCOBARI. After 2010, it was 10,000. I am just saying there is a big difference in how the government was able to respond to the crisis.

Senator KAINE. Right. The U.S. investment along with other partners in this public health infrastructure connected to the Ministry of Health that began a decade ago was absolutely critical during COVID, for example.

Before that, there might have been one-off clinics or people running health institutions, but not a robust public health infrastructure under the Ministry of Health. The creation of that architecture has helped with cholera, helps with the pandemic—

Ms. ESCOBARI. HIV. Yes.

Senator KAINE. —helped under the HIV—helps under the current situation.

Describe a little bit, because I think it is hard to wrap our head around the fact there is not a functioning democratic government in this sense. There is no elected official in Haiti right now who has

a mandate. There have not been elections that have led to people serving terms pursuant to a mandate.

How does the Ministry of Health maintain itself? I mean, how does it fund the clinics? How does it provide security to the clinics so that gang violence does not interrupt it? Describe that a little bit.

Ms. ESCOBARI. Yes. USAID works in very complicated places. We work in South Sudan. We work in war zones in Ukraine, and we have learned to work with the partners that we have.

In Haiti—and many times we work at the level of the community and we work with the institutions and the civil servants that exist and with partners that want to work with us and we have found that, and I have met with the Minister of Health when I was there in January.

They are partners in the provision of health care in responding to the emergencies and we have found partners like that in other institutions, and when we find those partners we double down on strengthening them irrespective of sometimes the instability at the national level.

Senator KAINE. I focus on the health issue because I think Senator Rubio correctly pointed out that before you get to significant economic activity, investment, or new elections you have to have a base of security and I would argue that a functioning health care system is another one of these preconditions.

Of all the things that we could do while we are looking for that next step forward, hopefully, with a multinational force to provide security assistance doing what we can do to continue to train police and maintain through our assistance this functioning health care network, those are the two preconditions that if all else is not working, we have to make sure that those things work because those will be the foundation upon which a political resolution will have to be built.

I encourage USAID in that effort and I think you are right, that of all the work that USAID does in Haiti and maybe many other countries that the health care work is probably the foundational work that is the most important.

Let me ask you this. The GAO released a report in March that recommended that USAID and State improve the management and assessment of reconstruction activities.

It looked at USAID's post-2010 earthquake investments and found that despite efforts of USAID to increase partnership with local entities to manage funding—and that is a capacity building as well as a service delivering value—the U.S.-based partners implemented the majority of the USAID reconstruction activities rather than local partners and received most of the funding obligated between 2010 and 2020.

What might we do to—in reconstruction activities? Now we are talking outside the healthcare space, other kinds of civil society reconstruction activities. What might we do to increase localization efforts as a way of both delivering services and building capacity?

Ms. ESCOBARI. Thank you, Senator. As you know, renewing our commitment to localization is part of our priority throughout the agency.

Senator Kaine. Right. Ambassador Power has stated that we should be doing 25—a minimum of 25—

Ms. ESCOBARI. Of 25 percent—

Senator Kaine. —percent of assistance going through local partners by 2024 throughout the USAID portfolio.

Ms. ESCOBARI. She often says that even 25 percent seems low when we think that our major mission is to really create capacity in the places that we work in. That is important for the agency and it is still important and a priority for Haiti, even though we do have to acknowledge that localization involves more staff, more people, more money, which is challenging. All of those are challenging in Haiti.

Despite those challenges, actually Haiti had made a huge improvement just last year in doubling the percentage of funding that went to local partners from 10 percent to 22 percent from FY21–22.

We have established a new partner engagement unit within our mission to be able to work with civil society and really not only help them do their functions, but also work with them to help them work with us.

We know we are sometimes an onerous organization because we have to account for every dollar of taxpayers and we do so, but we are working to train those organizations to work with us and we are making progress.

Senator Kaine. Let me explore just one example during your opening testimony. I am curious as to how this is being localized.

You talked about USAID investments in micro utilities for clean water access and possibly other utility service for hundreds of thousands of Haitians and you used the phrase in your testimony that these investments were self-sustaining. Are these utility investments being done with local partners?

Ms. ESCOBARI. Well, these are run by communities. This is what—what we want to bring is institutionalization, that these utilities can not only provide services, but that people are willing to pay for them and that is what we have seen in these micro utilities is that they are not only functioning, providing drinking water, but they have a water meter.

They have the capacity for people to pay online. They have gone from really receiving nothing and being bankrupt to three of them, I think, have received over \$70,000 in revenue. They are self-sustaining.

Same with sanitation and water management, which is really making a difference. Haitians are willing to pay for services if they are provided and what we have done is help those be managed at the community level.

Senator Kaine. Thank you.

Secretary Nichols, I was in the Dominican Republic in October and met with Prime Minister Abinader and we talked about the Haitian-Dominican border and some of the challenges, the percentage of births in Dominican hospitals that are to Haitian women who have fled across the border because they do not have any option that they find acceptable in Haiti. That is a good thing that they have this option in the Dominican Republic. Yet, it does create its own set of challenges.

Talk to me a little bit about the Haiti-Dominican Republic relationship. Dominican Republic is a good ally of the United States. They are also a pro-democracy nation, having formed the Alliance for Development and Democracy in the region.

Talk a little bit about Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Now, in the past there have been challenges, court cases in the Dominican Republic and other efforts that were seen as sort of trying to close off or reduce the historic sense of welcome that Haitians have found there, but talk a little bit about the current state of the relationship.

Mr. NICHOLS. The Dominican Republic has been very vocal in their demanding, exhorting the international community to support Haiti.

They have stressed that the global responsibility to help the Haitian people is something that they—they are focused on the value. The Dominican Republic hosts thousands and thousands of Haitians as well as many hundreds, thousands more people who have historic or ethnic roots to Haiti.

They have provided training and assistance to the Haitian Government over time. President Abinader, Foreign Minister Alvarez, in our conversations with them repeatedly stressed the importance of providing assistance to Haiti.

The future of the island of Hispaniola depends on a prosperous and successful Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as prosperous and successful as it is, will become even more so. They need to have a neighbor that is stable and prosperous as well.

I just note that we are very honored—I am proud to hand over the chair of the summit coordination process for the Summit of the Americas to the Dominican Republic, which will host the next Summit of the Americas.

As you alluded to, they have been very committed to strengthening democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and private sector-led growth in our region. We consider them a valuable partner.

Senator KAINE. Excellent. Well, one of the things we can do—let me finish up with a question to both of you, the kind of wrap-up question unless other colleagues come, and that is what would you ask of Congress right now to enable you to do the work you need to do in Haiti? What can we be doing that would be more helpful?

I will give you one answer. We had a really good hearing yesterday with ambassadorial nominee Hankins to be the Ambassador to Haiti. It is always better to have a confirmed ambassador.

Ambassador Hankins has served in Haiti earlier in his career, understands the situation, anxious to get back. We have had a little bit of a slowdown in some of the ambassadorial confirmations, particularly in the hemisphere, and I have done a lot of work with my colleagues to free up a number of them.

I think getting a confirmed ambassador in Haiti is something that would be a very important step for the Senate to take, but in addition to that, how about each of you take some time as we conclude and offer any additional comments you would have about things we can do to be helpful?

Mr. NICHOLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Obviously, I agree wholeheartedly with the importance of confirming Dennis to be our Ambassador in Port-au-Prince. Beyond

that, the renewal of HOPE and HELP legislation will be incredibly valuable to provide economic stability and economic growth for Haiti.

I believe that we are currently well-positioned to provide resources for a multinational force in Haiti, but this body's continued generosity in supporting our efforts to aid the Haitian people and provide security in Haiti are vital and I thank you for your leadership on that and for this body's willingness to support that generously.

The final note that I would make is, broadly, in our efforts to promote greater stability and security in challenging places around the world, resourcing our colleagues in diplomatic security to ensure that our people can be safe wherever they are in the world is very important.

Thank you for your support, which has been steadfast in that area, as well.

Senator KAINE. Virginia is home both to the training facility for the Marine security guards who provide security to embassies, but also the State Department Foreign Affairs Security Training Center in Southern Virginia.

We care very, very deeply about keeping our folks safe and are proud to host the security training facilities in the Commonwealth.

Administrator Escobari, how can we be more helpful?

Ms. ESCOBARI. Thank you so much, Senator, for that question.

Let me reiterate what my colleague said. HOPE/HELP right now would be extremely valuable. You are correct that there are certain things that are needed that are basic. Security is one of them. Health is one of them.

Things are still happening in Haiti. The worst of the violence is happening in Port-au-Prince. We work in the north and the south where people are still exporting their goods they are producing. One in every two jobs are in agriculture.

People need those jobs, and the textile sector has employed at some point over 50,000 people. They work within free trade zones where they have some protection of institutionality, and I think those investors are making those decisions now and your commitment to the continuation would send a really strong signal.

The second thing would be engaging our continued—to bring attention, like, with this hearing to our international partners and the importance of them joining us.

We are the largest donor and—but this needs to galvanize the whole international community for us to make a difference because the humanitarian needs are immense, and I do think that not all is lost, but we need to have sustaining power to make sure that we can continue to save lives as we try to turn the course of Haiti.

Thank you.

Senator KAINE. Thank you very much.

Well, I know that I am really looking forward to this report from the Secretary General, the recommendations back to the Security Council in mid-August, and I do not know that we will have a hearing on that, but you can expect that we will be reaching out to State once those recommendations are delivered to have further dialogue about whether there seems to be a gelling plan to move forward.

My assessment of this before today, but it has certainly been emphasized in your testimony, is that there are a number of partners that really want to participate in this multinational effort if it is scoped correctly, defined correctly. Learn some of the lessons from some past challenges.

I think the challenge is not finding willing participants. The question of leadership is a tough one, but at least there are partners around the table that want to participate and that should give us hope.

I look forward to the report on the 15th and then further dialogue with you about how we can move forward to provide appropriate security assistance.

I am going to ask that the record of this hearing stay open until close of business tomorrow in case members who were not able to come would like to submit questions for the record. If they do, I would encourage you to respond fully and promptly.

With that, the hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:04 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

RESPONSES OF MR. BRIAN NICHOLS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ

Question. For over 6 months, Haiti has had zero democratically elected officials. Prime Minister Henry, who the United States and international community recognize as Haiti's de facto leader, had his term constitutionally expire in November 2021 and is viewed as illegitimate by a significant portion of the Haitian population. And despite the signing of the December 21 Accord, it seems to me that a true political consensus between Henry and key opposition groups remains elusive as does any concrete, realistic timetable for the peaceful holding of free, fair, and transparent elections in the immediate future.

Is it time for a more inclusive transitional government in Haiti or do you believe the December 21 Accord is sufficient to set Haiti back on the path towards democratic governance?

Answer. We believe Haitians must decide what an acceptable political consensus looks like. To that end, the U.S. Government has supported Haitian-led efforts facilitated by actors such as the Eminent Persons Group from CARICOM, which includes former prime ministers of Jamaica, The Bahamas, and St. Lucia. These efforts aim to facilitate greater political dialogue and broader consensus, paving the way for elections when security conditions permit. The National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections, also known as the December 21 accord, represents a positive step towards resolving Haiti's political impasse. This accord has broader support than previous efforts and its leadership, including Prime Minister Henry, continues to engage opposition parties including the Montana Group and the Group of Eight political parties. Since the signing of the December 21 accord, Prime Minister Henry took several significant steps towards creating a path forward for inclusive elections, including installing the High Transition Council, reconstituting the Supreme Court, and holding political roundtables and ongoing discussions with opposing political parties.

Question. Are you satisfied with progress made under the December 21 Accord?

Answer. Much work remains ahead but, Haitian stakeholders made important progress through the December 21 accord. The installation of the High Transition Council, reconstitution of the Supreme Court, and political roundtables with opposing political parties were important steps in the path towards elections. Now Haitian stakeholders must reach a compromise on the distribution of executive powers and remaining steps towards elections, including naming members of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) and logistics around identifying polling places, updating voter lists, and issuing voter registration cards.

Question. It is clear to me that the Haitian National Police unfortunately cannot solve the urgent security crisis in Haiti alone. To this end, I was glad to see the

United States introduce a resolution at the UN Security Council this month, which was adopted unanimously, requiring the UN Secretary General to develop a comprehensive list of international responses to address Haiti's security challenges, including the potential creation of a multinational force. While I know the United States has been in discussions with partner countries on the creation of such a force for close to a year, I am frankly frustrated at how long this process has taken and at the ongoing lack of clarity over the leadership, composition, duration, and mission objective of a multinational force.

What specific information can you share on each of these points?

Answer. The United States continues engaging the international community on the potential creation of a multinational force (MNF). A MNF could assist the Haitian National Police (HNP) in securing critical infrastructure sites and enabling the HNP to focus on curtailing gangs' use of kidnapping, hijacking, extortion, murder, and sexual violence. The United States stands ready to provide support to a MNF where it would be most effective, potentially including the provision of training, logistics, and/or equipment.

Question. What is being done to ensure that any future multinational force avoids the shortcomings of previous internationally led efforts in Haiti?

Answer. We are drawing lessons from prior international efforts in Haiti to avoid shortcomings from these experiences and to maximize the ability of a MNF to pave the way towards sustainable peace and security and maintain credibility and popular support. We remain committed to introducing language in a UN Security Council Resolution authorizing a MNF that encourages the MNF to comply with applicable international law and follow best practices the international community has established on gender, the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, and environmental management. In addition, we will use the upcoming United Nations Secretary General report, which we expect to outline the full range of support options the United Nations can provide to enhance the security situation, to help guide development of the MNF.

The deployment of a MNF should provide short- to medium-term security assistance. The United States will also continue to support Haitian National Police (HNP) capacity building efforts, which would complement a MNF. We will supplement these efforts with longer term, strategic planning under the Haiti Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability (SPCPS) 10-year plan, which provides a comprehensive U.S. Government approach to address the drivers of instability, in close coordination with local stakeholders in Haiti and the international community. We actively coordinate on implementation of this 10-year plan and apply lessons from past experiences.

I believe a MNF with a narrow scope could assist the HNP in securing critical infrastructure sites and better enable it to curtail lawlessness and stop rampant gang violence. Continuing to support the growth of the HNP will also play a critical role in ensuring a positive outcome in Haiti.

Question. The Haitian people cannot afford to wait another year for the international community to figure this out. When do you expect a multinational force to be ready for deployment?

Answer. Given the urgency of Haiti's security situation, we actively engage the international community to advance a multinational force as soon as possible. Timing of deployment of a multinational force would depend on several factors, including the identification of a lead country, and that country's review of conditions on the ground in Haiti.

Question. For 2 years, armed criminal gangs have launched a horrific wave of violence across Haiti. Murdering civilians and ambushing police officers. Kidnapping American nationals. Sexually assaulting women and girls. They have done so with the political and financial backing of Haitian elites. That is why I introduced the *Haiti Criminal Collusion and Transparency Act*, which has the support of over a dozen Haitian civil society and diaspora groups, to expose the links between these actors and ensure both Haitian gangs and their sponsors are targeted for economic sanctions and visa restrictions. That is also why I supported the establishment of a sanctions regime at the United Nations last October.

Can you provide an update on progress towards holding Haitian criminal gangs and political and economic elites accountable through the use of sanctions? What more needs to be done?

Answer. The United States' financial sanctions and visa restrictions—rolled out at an unprecedented pace—placed significant pressure on political and economic elites who finance gang leaders and foment the ongoing crises in Haiti. Since Octo-

ber 2022, the United States took steps to impose sanctions and visa restrictions on over 50 individuals involved in street gangs, other Haitian criminal organizations, drug trafficking, significant corruption, gross violations of human rights, and serious human rights abuses. In October 2022, the United States also secured unanimous approval for the first ever UN sanctions regime in the Western Hemisphere and persuaded partners like Canada and—following my hearing—the EU to create their own Haiti sanctions programs. We continue to press other actors to follow suit.

A key factor in the success of our sanctions policy is carefully choosing targets who are doing the most damage and whose sanctioning will motivate others to improve their behavior. U.S. financial sanction and visa restriction laws and regulations that remain narrow in scope and/or require evidentiary standards limit the efficacy of our sanctions due to limited information collection capabilities in Haiti. I would welcome a chance for my team to brief your staff in-depth about our sanctions successes so far and how to ensure that your well-intended legislation does not have unintended consequences that would harm the effectiveness of sanctions as a tool.

Question. What is the current status of the UN sanctions regime, and has the U.S. proposed additional targets for inclusion?

Answer. Establishing this sanctions regime proved an important step to help the Haitian people push back against a culture of impunity among certain elites and criminal actors, and had an immediate deterrent effect on actors supporting or involved in criminal activity. However, the peace and security of the Haitian people requires more. We continue to work with members of the UNSCR 2653 Sanctions Committee to co-sponsor additional designations against those who finance and foment violence and instability in Haiti.

Question. The United States has a global responsibility to prevent U.S.-manufactured guns from falling into the hands of criminal actors overseas. For decades, we have failed to live up to this responsibility, and the trafficking of American guns has directly contributed to widespread insecurity and violence across communities in our hemisphere. This includes Haiti, where the United States is the principal source of licit and illicit firearms, according to a recent report by the UN Office on Drugs and crime. We should all be ashamed that the horrific wave of murder, kidnappings, and sexual assaults being unleashed by Haitian gangs is most likely being committed with the assistance of U.S.-made weapons.

What is your assessment of the extent to which arms trafficking from the U.S. is contributing to insecurity in Haiti?

Answer. The illicit flow of firearms enables gangs to carry out their crimes and to stockpile weapons that can often surpass the firepower of the HNP. We also know that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons can be linked to conflict-related sexual violence. We recognize that arms trafficking is a critical issue in Haiti as well as the broader Caribbean, and we remain committed to addressing this issue.

Question. What are we doing to effectively address this issue, and what challenges remain?

Answer. In June, Vice President Harris announced a new position within the Department of Justice, the first ever Coordinator for Caribbean Firearms Prosecutions. The Coordinator will support the *Bipartisan Safer Communities Act*, which established stiffer penalties for international weapons trafficking. As the Vice President also announced in June, the Department of State will support the Department of Homeland Security in collaboration with the HNP to develop a Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit (TCIU) to facilitate investigations and prosecution of transnational crimes with a U.S. nexus, including firearms and ammunition smuggling. We continue providing training and access to the eTrace software platform that allows police officers anywhere in the world to trace the serial numbers of weapons found at crime scenes for investigative purposes. The United States has been a strong supporter of the Crime Gun Intelligence Unit in Trinidad and Tobago, which is a regional effort to understand issues related to gun trafficking. We recognize the challenges to stopping firearms flow, tracing trafficked weapons, identifying perpetrators, and holding criminals accountable. Aligning our efforts strategically and leveraging all available tools to advance the Haiti Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability 10-year plan can enable us to address gun trafficking in Haiti and the broader Caribbean in the most comprehensive manner.

RESPONSES OF MS. MARCELA ESCOBARI TO QUESTIONS
SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

Question. For over 6 months, Haiti has had zero democratically elected officials. Prime Minister Henry, who the United States and international community recognize as Haiti's de facto leader, had his term constitutionally expire in November 2021 and is viewed as illegitimate by a significant portion of the Haitian population. And despite the signing of the December 21 Accord, it seems to me that a true political consensus between Henry and key opposition groups remains elusive as does any concrete, realistic timetable for the peaceful holding of free, fair, and transparent elections in the immediate future. It is imperative we make sure Haiti is equipped to hold elections when the time comes.

What democratic governance programming is USAID undertaking now to help the Haitian people prepare for this?

Answer. In Haiti's contested political environment, USAID is focused on facilitating a process that builds trust between citizens and their institutions and starts to renew Haitians' faith in democracy. In alignment with the State Department's efforts to build consensus around a path to elections, USAID is supporting the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) to work with Haitian institutions and civil society actors on election planning and preparations. CEPPS is fostering dialogue on a range of reforms to Haiti's electoral process, including a required revision of the Electoral Law, which could include improvements to the structure and functions of the electoral council; a realistic elections calendar, including the synchronization of presidential, legislative, and municipal elections; and identifying polling places. They also plan to hold dialogues on the Political Parties Law, which will involve political actors, the Provisional Electoral Council, and civil society. In addition, the CEPPS partners are supporting civil society organizations so they can build their capacity for advocacy in these discussions and can lead efforts for constitutional and electoral reforms and election observation.

Also, in partnership with the Organization for American States, USAID has launched a program to support Haiti's National Identification Office to renew expired national identity (ID) cards. This activity will help register, issue, and deliver 2 million new national ID cards to Haitian adults who do not have one. In Haiti, national ID cards serve as voter ID cards. Importantly, this program will also update Haiti's voter registration system, helping to bolster future turnout.

Question. We are currently witnessing one of the world's worst humanitarian and food security crises unfold in our own hemisphere, mere miles from Florida. Haiti is per capita the second most food insecure country in the world, with more than half the population in need of humanitarian assistance. At a time when Haitians desperately need support from the international community, however, such support has been lacking. Only one-fourth of the UN Humanitarian Response Plan request has been met, and the World Food Program has announced it will be forced to cut hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries without additional funding. While I recognize USAID's significant contribution of over \$100 million in humanitarian assistance this year, this is clearly insufficient to meet Haitians' dire needs.

Does USAID have sufficient resources at its disposal to bolster humanitarian support to the Haitian people? If not, what additional funds and programs are needed this year to prevent the humanitarian crisis from worsening?

Answer. Thanks to the continued support of Congress, the United States is the top humanitarian assistance donor to Haiti (\$112 million), followed by the EU (\$10.5 million), Canada (\$8 million), and Japan (\$7.1 million). Since FY 2021, the United States has provided more than \$265 million in emergency humanitarian assistance to Haiti. Since its deployment to Haiti in mid-October of 2022, USAID's Disaster Assistance Response Team has worked closely with partners to assess needs on the ground and to provide life-saving assistance such as food assistance, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and protection services, and critical health and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) supplies to partners responding to the ongoing cholera outbreak. While USAID will continue its lifesaving work through humanitarian assistance and will advocate for a robust budget in FY 2024 based on humanitarian needs, the hard reality is that more support from the international community is required to fully address the widespread needs of the Haitian people.

The UN launched a 3-month system-wide scale-up in April aimed at bolstering resources, increasing UN staff and coordination, raising the profile of the emergency, and addressing acute food security and malnutrition, child protection, cholera, and gender-based violence (GBV) needs across Haiti. The scale-up has since been extended to mid-October. USAID has been a strong advocate and supporter of the scale-up since its inception, and we continue to advocate for other international

donors to increase their funding toward the underfunded Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). USAID continues to advocate that Haiti remains in the spotlight of higher-profile emergencies considering the deepening humanitarian situation that exceeds the Government of Haiti's capacity to manage.

Meanwhile, USAID works through a wide range of capable and longstanding partners to reach the most vulnerable populations despite operational challenges and the unpredictable security environment. For example:

- USAID partners continue to provide emergency food assistance and nutrition support to at-risk populations despite significant security challenges. Specifically, the World Food Program (WFP) reached nearly 26,600 households with cash distributions in Artibonite, Centre, Nord-Ouest, Ouest, and Sud departments during July. Further, BHA's funding contributed to a WFP effort that brought 20,000 people in the Cité Soleil commune of Port-au-Prince out of Catastrophe—IPC 5—levels of acute food insecurity.
- In response to massive protection violations and sexual violence, BHA partners have provided critical protection services, including GBV prevention and response, as well as psycho-social services. USAID partner, Concern Worldwide, reached nearly 2,900 people with GBV prevention and response, including GBV sensitization, in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area as of June.
- In partnership with the logistics nonprofit Airlink, USAID established a humanitarian air bridge to deliver critical health and WASH supplies to relief organizations combating cholera in Haiti, transporting more than 232 metric tons (MT) of assistance to eight humanitarian organizations as of July 2023. Overall, BHA has transported more than 682 MT of health and WASH commodities to humanitarian partners in Haiti in FY 2023.
- USAID currently supports 11 partners implementing WASH activities to disseminate disease prevention messaging; provide hygiene kits and safe drinking water to vulnerable households; repair WASH infrastructure, and conduct awareness campaigns on hygiene best practices to reduce disease transmission.

Written Statement of Assistant Secretary Todd Robinson

Submitted by Senator Tim Kaine

Prepared Statement of Todd D. Robinson

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Rubio, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Department of State's efforts to address the security and humanitarian crises in Haiti. Addressing the current emergency in Haiti is a key foreign policy objective that supports our goals of reducing instability and illegal trafficking in one of the United States' closest neighbors.

When I traveled to Port-au-Prince in January, I saw firsthand the effects of the instability and violence devastating Haiti. In my conversations with the Prime Minister and Haitian National Police (that is, HNP) Director General, we discussed the urgent challenges facing the police, and the message was clear: HNP officers need our support with training, equipment, logistics, and vetting. In their work to counter increasingly sophisticated and violent gangs, HNP officers are outnumbered and outgunned, leading to low morale and making clear the HNP needs the help of the international community to grow and maintain the force. Experiencing the public outpouring of discontent shed a new light on Haiti's security, humanitarian, and economic crises, and prompted me to redouble my efforts alongside U.S. interagency, Haitian, and international partners to improve the security situation, thereby laying the foundation for meaningful progress in Haiti.

The U.S. Government has led the international community in responding to the security situation in Haiti. Since 2021, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), has allocated approximately \$122 million, including \$30.3 million recently approved by Congress, to address rampant insecurity and support the Haitian state's ability to provide a safer country for its citizens. We have provided key equipment donations, including 100 unarmored vehicles, 1,200 sets of body armor, and 37,400 emergency food rations for police officers. We will donate additional strategic equipment in the coming months, including armored vehicles for U.S.-vetted HNP officers, armored heavy equipment to help police dismantle roadblocks created by gangs, and advanced GPS trackers to protect donated vehicles.

Our support includes training and advising, and we fund 16 advisors to specialized units and senior leaders of the HNP, nearly all of whom bring U.S. law enforcement experience paired with Haitian Creole language abilities to offer capacity-building expertise. In addition, our training program has grown the HNP counter-gang intervention unit to approximately 110 officers as of this month, which represents a 50 percent increase in the force size. To mitigate the risk of gang influence and corruption, U.S.-certified polygraphers vetted approximately 240 current and prospective officers in the specialized units.

Our assistance helped to establish and develop new units in the HNP and contribute to stronger HNP leadership. Over the past 10 years, we supported the creation and professionalization of the HNP's counternarcotics, crowd control, border patrol, and community policing units. Through long-term INL training programs, eight individuals INL trained are now in key leadership positions across the HNP, including the Acting Director General.

Our efforts have helped the overburdened officers in the corrections sector. Prison infrastructure support since the devastating 2010 earthquake helps reduce overcrowding and create more humane conditions for those detained. We also trained Haitian prison authorities and developed food production programs to reduce malnutrition and health issues among the prison population, including cholera mitigation efforts amid the ongoing outbreak. This support continues today despite the incredibly challenging security and operational environment.

INL developed new partnerships with our interagency colleagues. We coordinated with the Department of Defense (DoD) to deliver HNP-purchased armored vehicles to Haiti in 2022 and 2023. These vehicles helped the HNP to end the fuel blockade and reopen the Varreux Fuel terminal in November 2022. We are partnering with Homeland Security Investigations to establish a Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit, the first of its kind in Haiti. Starting in fall 2023, this specially vetted HNP unit will work with HSI special agents on the ground in Haiti and analysts in Miami to investigate and prosecute transnational crimes impacting both U.S. and Haitian security, including firearms, drugs, and human trafficking.

Under the umbrella of the *Global Fragility Act* (GFA), we intend to join our colleagues at USAID to undertake a new phase of INL's ongoing community violence prevention program. Aimed at improving community police units, restoring trust within communities, and delivering key health, educational, and economic services, this effort would bring together the best of INL and USAID expertise to build the resilience of communities through violence prevention, including sexual violence prevention, provide incentives to reject gangs, and offer alternatives for at-risk youth. We welcome the efforts of our USAID and other interagency colleagues under the GFA 10-year plan to address the development and humanitarian components of the crisis that continues to plague Haiti's citizens, which also will shore up Haitian Government resources for investment in security.

INL's work has saved lives in Haiti, but the challenges facing the HNP are daunting—gangs continue to terrorize Haitian citizens, recruit young men and boys into a life of violence, and outnumber the HNP. Our brave HNP counterparts face extreme danger every day and are asked to carry out high-risk operations well beyond typical police duties. Thirty-two HNP officers have been killed in the line of duty since the beginning of 2023. With approximately 14,000 officers on HNP records in July 2023, the Haitian police need to double the force to adequately provide security and meet UN-recommended force levels. We anticipate this will be a long-term effort, and we are looking at ways to increase the recruitment and retention of the HNP in the short- and medium-term.

INL cannot do this alone—corruption, firearms trafficking, and irregular migration continue to hinder Haiti's ability to emerge from the crisis and move towards political stability. We need the support and cooperation of the international community and regional law enforcement partners to investigate and counter criminal organizations. We are encouraged by the continued collaboration with our international partners—we are actively coordinating with our Canadian counterparts on their March 2023 announcement of 100 million CAD (~76 million USD) towards improving security in Haiti. The UN-led multi-donor police support fund is another key mechanism for us to harmonize security assistance with international partners, and we have provided funding for this effort to assist the HNP with emerging needs.

Within our own government, a coordinated response is more important than ever, and we are pleased to have increased our collaboration with our partners at USAID, HSI, and DoD. We will continue to seek further opportunities to improve inter-agency efforts and deploy expertise that can improve conditions in Haiti.
Thank you for the opportunity to share INL's work in Haiti.

