



Statement by:

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Before the Senate Foreign Relations
Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Global Narcotics Affairs

Hearing on “The U.S. - Caribbean Shared Security Partnership:
Responding to the Growth of Trafficking Narcotics in the Caribbean”

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Chairman Menendez, Senator Rubio, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the U.S. – Caribbean Shared Security Partnership and the work the Department of State has undertaken to address security issues in the region.

I would like to begin my remarks by highlighting the word “partnership” in your hearing title, which defines most succinctly the fundamental underpinning of our hemispheric approach on security. When President Obama announced the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) in 2009, he pledged to create a relationship of “equal partners” based on mutual interests and shared values. In the Western Hemisphere, our major initiatives - Merida, the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), the Colombian Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI), and CBSI – are partnerships that provide us with the framework to collaborate with other governments and jointly pursue our overall strategic goal to improve citizen safety and security. This focus on citizen safety and security partnerships draws on important lessons learned from our experience with Plan Colombia where, over time, it became clear that dismantling the drug cartels was one, but not the only step necessary to reduce crime and strengthen security. We recognize that only by extending the rule of law, increasing the reach of the state, and reforming criminal justice institutions could effective security take root in Colombia. We also learned that U.S. resources alone would not get the job done, that strong partners capable of providing the political will and leadership to undertake the combined security, counternarcotics, rule of law and economic development programs are required.

Introduction

CBSI is a critical component of our hemispheric approach to counter a clear trend-line in the pattern of drug trafficking over the past three decades. Our experience in the region has taught us that we must apply constant pressure throughout the entire hemisphere in order to effectively combat trafficking organizations. In the 1980s, traffickers used the Caribbean as a launch pad to send

drugs into Florida and the Gulf Coast – until we forced them to retreat back to South America. In the 1990s, Colombia became the epicenter of trafficking until Plan Colombia forced a shift to Mexico. In the 2000s, the Merida Initiative has, in turn, pushed the cartels increasingly into Central America. Although 90-95 percent of the cocaine from South America now transits the Central America/Mexico corridor, it is likely that the combined efforts of Merida and CARSII will force the traffickers to once again use the Caribbean as a conduit to the U.S. market.

The Caribbean is already suffering from deteriorations in public safety that cannot be ignored. Rising homicide and crime rates are the subject of almost daily press reports and have become hot political issues. According to the UNODC's 2011 Global Study on Homicide, murder rates in the Caribbean and Central America have increased since 1995, and are among the highest in the world. Data from 2011 indicates that Jamaica's murder rate of 50/100,000 is the highest in the Caribbean followed by St. Kitts and Nevis at 40/100,000 and Trinidad and Tobago at 35/100,000. The same data indicate that Honduras leads Central America with an 80/100,000 homicide rate followed by El Salvador at 65/100,000. By contrast, the U.S. homicide rate for the same year is 5/100,000. Just as the Caribbean cannot ignore rising crime and violence, the United States cannot afford to ignore what is happening very close to our borders. Drug-related crime and violence in the hemisphere inevitably impacts U.S. security - whether it is youth gangs from Central America or traffickers from the Dominican Republic - and we have learned from experience that we need to address the problem at its source.

The CBSI Partnership

CBSI is a partnership that takes a comprehensive approach to improving citizen security. However, its emphasis on strengthening the capacity of the Caribbean to respond as a region to the transnational crime threat makes it unique. Unlike Central America, the Caribbean has a tradition of pooling limited resources through institutions such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Regional Security System in the Eastern Caribbean. CBSI is also exceptional in that it is the product of a cooperative dialogue process between CARICOM, the United States and the Dominican Republic that began with year-long discussions that led to an agreement on a framework for cooperation linked to three CBSI objectives or pillars:

- Substantially Reduce Illicit Trafficking;
- Increase Public Safety and Security; and
- Promote Social Justice.

The framework for cooperation called for the establishment of an annual high-level Dialogue, a Commission to oversee the implementation of CBSI and Technical Working Groups to develop projects designed to meet its objectives. The Technical Working Groups met during the first six months of 2011 and brought together our Caribbean partners as well as the broader international community to collectively reach agreement on specific projects and to identify priorities going forward. The dialogue process has proven to be an effective mechanism in creating and reinforcing the sense of partnership that is critical to the success of CBSI. At the Second Annual CBSI Dialogue held in Nassau on November 10, Caribbean nations, in a joint declaration with the United States, publicly affirmed their commitment to strengthening their regional institutions and developing and sustaining a coordinated approach to citizen security. They also expressed appreciation for the \$139 million Congress appropriated in FY 10 and FY 11 to support activities in the following areas:

Maritime and Aerial Security Cooperation: Maritime interdiction operational capacity is a necessary tool for Caribbean nations to counter narcotics trafficking. As a result of a capacity deficiency, the United States provided specific interceptor boats and training to support interdiction operations. Absent the ability to detect traffickers, interdiction operations are for naught. CBSI is also supporting the development of the Caribbean Sensor and Information Integration (CSII) initiative to improve domain awareness and coordination in the Caribbean by integrating partner nations and U.S. data into a regional, web-based network for sharing a common operating picture on air, maritime, and land activity. As part of this effort, coastal radars will be installed at strategic locations to provide greater visibility into illicit trafficking patterns to our partners through the Joint Task Force-South. The U.S. Coast Guard's Technical Assist Field team (TAFT), which is based in Puerto Rico and includes engineers and logistical experts, will also expand to bolster the maintenance and logistics capabilities of Caribbean maritime forces under the initiative. What's more, maritime surveillance aircraft from the RSS in the Eastern Caribbean will be overhauled and upgraded with new sensors.

Law Enforcement Capacity Building: Many Caribbean nations have demonstrated the will to expand their capacity to administer justice under the rule of law, but most do not have the resources or expertise to train their police and security services. Under CBSI, we plan to provide training in community-based policing, investigation of money laundering and financial crimes, and the interdiction of trafficking of drugs, arms and bulk cash to Caribbean police managers. To counter drug trafficking organizations, CBSI provides DEA-led vetted police units in The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica with

training equipment and operational support. In addition to specialized training, our assistance in the region provides specific anti-crime technologies to investigate and apprehend illicit actors. For example, assistance already provided includes forensics equipment for the collection and sharing of digital fingerprints and ballistics information. And building on past efforts by the Royal Canadian Mounted police to train polygraph examiners, we will partner with Canada to establish a regional center capable of certifying examiners to international standards. Anti-corruption efforts include the development of policies and standard operation procedures for internal affairs investigations. For example, the success of the anti-corruption efforts of the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF) will serve as a model for dealing with police corruption. The JCF has conducted investigations that resulted in the dismissal of more than 300 police officers on charges of corruption since the initiative was launched in 2008.

Border/Port Security and Firearms Interdiction: Technology for inspection and interdiction operations is important, but not effective without the appropriate training. CBSI provides specific advanced training on techniques for intercepting smuggled narcotics, weapons and other contraband at ports of entry to the very law enforcement and customs officers who will be responsible for this task. What's more, in the area of passenger screening we are working to enhance the capacity of Caribbean nations to identify high risk travelers and execute coordinated interdiction operations utilizing the CARICOM Advance Passenger Information System that was developed in partnership with DHS. Training and assistance also supports the policing efforts to seize firearms and secure weapons and ammunition stockpiles for judicial handling and court procedures.

Justice Sector Reform: At their request, we are helping to reform and further develop Caribbean criminal justice institutions through our deployment of regional legal advisors with the Department of Justice. We are jointly funding a prosecutor from the United Kingdom based in the Eastern Caribbean who provides technical assistance and training to judges and prosecutors. And we plan to facilitate the deployment of a U.S. Department of Justice lawyer to advise selected jurisdictions on establishing a task force to coordinate efforts on reducing homicides and violent crime. Separately, through prison assessments and training, the State Department is helping Caribbean governments reduce overcrowding and improve prison management strategies.

Crime Prevention and At-risk Youth: Programming in this area focuses on developing a sustainable approach to juvenile crime by targeting first-time offenders. We are helping the Caribbean design education and workforce

development services for at-risk youth to provide an alternative to crime and other harmful behavior. Separate programming supports drug demand reduction through the training of treatment and rehabilitation professionals.

CBSI Implementation

To assist in the implementation of CBSI, the Department of State has drawn upon the expertise of our colleagues at U.S. Customs and Border Protection (Department of Homeland Security), the Office of Technical Assistance (Department of the Treasury), and the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (Department of Justice) to contribute technical assistance focusing on border control, anti-money laundering and criminal justice reform. We have also secured cooperation with international donors to an unprecedented level. Through cooperative arrangements with the United Kingdom and Canada to jointly fund CBSI projects, we are leveraging available tools to enhance priority capability needs in the Caribbean together. This coordinated approach ensures that our governments and other international donors avoid duplication and reduce red tape to deliver professional skills more quickly. Our arrangement with Canada, which currently supports the creation of a regional ballistics information sharing network, will also serve as the vehicle to jointly impart law enforcement professionalization projects in Jamaica and the Regional Security System described earlier. We will use our current arrangement with the United Kingdom to expand our cooperation into additional criminal justice reform activities.

Conclusion

Citizen safety and security in the hemisphere continues to be threatened by a wide range of criminal organizations; drug related crime, violence and corruption; and youth gangs. Nevertheless, I am confident that our focus on strengthening law enforcement and judicial institutions in the region has put us on the right track toward a sustainable response. The concept of “partnership” is critical to the success of our efforts to improve citizen security in the hemisphere, and while CBSI is in the early stages of its implementation, I am confident that we have created a framework for cooperation that will serve to strengthen the working relationships we have with the Caribbean nations to counter the violence that threatens their communities.