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**GRANGER OPENING STATEMENT: BUDGET HEARING -  
ASSISTANCE TO CENTRAL AMERICA**

The Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs will come to order.

I would like to welcome our witnesses to today's hearing:

- Roberta Jacobson, Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere
- William Brownfield, Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement
- Elizabeth Hogan, Acting Assistant Administrator of U.S.A.I.D. for Latin America and the Caribbean

Last summer, our country experienced a national security and humanitarian crisis of historic proportions as tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors were sent through criminal smuggling networks from Central America, across Mexico, and to our southern border. Although the number of unaccompanied children has dropped since then, thousands more are expected to cross this year. This is unacceptable.

At the Speaker's request, I led a working group to examine this issue and provide recommendations. I visited the Texas-Mexico border several times. I also led a delegation to Guatemala and Honduras to see where the children were coming from and why. There are many reasons why so many families and children have made, and continue to make, this dangerous journey. Some of this can be explained by the Administration's slow pace of deportations and insufficient focus on law enforcement at the border. The harsh conditions and lack of security in Central America also play a role. In addition, the lack of economic opportunity and high unemployment is causing people to look for other ways to survive.

The purpose of today's hearing is to discuss what the United States and other countries in the region can do to put an end to this illegal migration at its source. The United States has provided assistance to Central America for many years. We need to take a hard look at what has worked, what has not, and what changes need to be made going forward.

Last year's appropriations act increased assistance for Central America and also included support for programs to combat human trafficking and help countries repatriate and reintegrate their citizens. The Administration's budget request includes \$1 billion for Central America, more than double the amount provided last year. The committee needs an explanation from our witnesses of how such a large investment will change the situation on our border.

While the United States has a role to play in helping Central America, we cannot and should not do this alone. Other countries in the region have a stake in Central America's failure or success. Our neighbor, Mexico is on the front lines of combating the illegal migration issue and we must do all we can to help Mexico strengthen its borders. In addition, we should also support and use the capabilities of partners in the region, such as Colombia.

There are a number of lessons we can learn from 'Plan Colombia' that can help guide us. One of those lessons is that for lasting change to occur, we need a solid commitment from the partner countries themselves. These governments must be willing to make hard choices and address the needs of their own citizens. I have met with the Presidents of some of these countries and have already seen progress. For the first time, the Central American governments have come together to develop a joint plan to address shared problems in the region. Just as I believe the United States should assist these countries, so too should we hold the governments accountable for following through on their commitments.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how we can best address these important issues.

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