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Civilian Security, and Trade**

**“The Trump Administration’s FY2020 Budget and U.S. Policy Toward Latin America  
and the Caribbean”**

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Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, distinguished members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the President's FY 2020 budget request for foreign assistance in the Western Hemisphere. Given our proximity and shared interests, the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' (INL) efforts with Western Hemisphere partners are vital to our national security interests. The FY 2020 request of \$484 million in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) assistance to the Western Hemisphere will provide the necessary resources for INL to address pressing security issues directly impacting the United States: combating transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), especially drug trafficking organizations and gangs; turning the tide of the opioid epidemic in the United States; and working with Mexico and Central America to address the migration crisis at our southern border.

Drug trafficking organizations and other TCOs continue to inflict devastating harm on the United States and our partners in the region. Throughout the hemisphere, these criminal organizations undermine citizen security, limit economic investment and growth, weaken the rule of law, and erode citizens' trust in the criminal justice sector and government institutions. TCOs have a direct, detrimental effect on United States citizens and our interests, most evident in their contribution to the ongoing drug crisis in our country. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) predicts a staggering 68,637 drug overdose deaths in 2018, according to its preliminary data.<sup>1</sup> INL efforts to address drug trafficking, TCOs, and other security issues in the hemisphere translate to increased security for American citizens and American lives saved. We disrupt transnational crime by building the capacity and increasing the will of our foreign partners to address threats before they reach the United States' borders. Due to the complex and cross-border nature of transnational crime, our programs reflect a comprehensive and multilateral approach to address these pressing issues.

### ***South America***

Colombia remains the world's largest producer of cocaine and the source of over 90 percent of the cocaine seized in the United States. Cocaine originating from Colombia, and to a lesser extent from Peru, contributes to the rising drug overdose rates in the United States, particularly when combined with synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl. CDC preliminary data reports a record level of more than 14,800 Americans died of cocaine overdose in 2018.<sup>2</sup>

The request of \$209 million for Colombia represents the largest portion of INL's FY 2020 funding request in the hemisphere. Funds will continue to support the Colombian government's efforts to meet our joint goal to cut coca cultivation and cocaine production levels in half by the end of 2023. We are indeed seeing early signs of progress from this partnership, with illicit cultivation numbers stabilizing in 2018 for the first time since 2012. INL continues to support President Duque's whole-of-government counternarcotics strategy, which includes reducing consumption, decreasing the supply of drugs, dismantling TCOs, disrupting financial flows to TCOs, and increasing state presence and economic opportunity in rural areas. Our efforts focus on regions responsible for the majority of Colombia's coca cultivation and cocaine production.

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<sup>1</sup> Predicted Number of Deaths for the Period Ending December 2018, accessed October 18, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Provisional Drug Overdose Death Counts, accessed October 18, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>

A cornerstone of INL's support to the Duque administration to meet its five-year goal is coca eradication. In addition to aviation support, INL provides Colombian eradicators with logistical support, field equipment, supplies, and life-saving counter improvised explosive device (IED) training and detection equipment. With INL assistance, President Duque significantly increased eradication efforts, including quadrupling civilian manual eradication groups from 23 to 100 in 2018 and achieving the highest level of manual eradication since 2012. Colombia destroyed 56 percent more coca in the first six months of 2019 than during the same period in 2018. On July 18, Colombia's Constitutional Court gave the Colombian government the authority to restart aerial spray of glyphosate on coca once it meets certain administrative and oversight conditions. In light of the court's decision and at the request of the Duque administration, INL will work with the Colombian government to restart a targeted, Colombian-led aerial eradication program that meets the administrative and oversight conditions upheld by the court. As part of a comprehensive approach, including manual and targeted aerial eradication, expanded police presence, crop substitution, and alternative development, we are helping Colombia sustainably reduce cocaine production. We are continuing efforts to build Colombian capacity to conduct interdiction operations, including destruction of cocaine processing labs and maritime operations along Colombia's rivers and along Colombia's Pacific coast.

As drug trafficking organizations become increasingly diffuse and interconnected through the use of modern technology, including the dark web, crypto currency and other digital assets, and secure messaging, INL support is also evolving. Our anti-money laundering and seized asset support builds Colombian capacity to go after the profits of criminal groups, cutting off their financial resources and obtaining proceeds that will bolster Colombia's counternarcotics efforts. INL justice sector reform and capacity building helps ensure the Colombian justice system is capable of investigating and prosecuting complex crimes ensuring criminals do not operate with impunity.

While Colombia is the origin point of the majority of cocaine destined for the United States, TCOs by nature are not contained by borders and their operations impact many countries in the region. INL's FY 2020 request includes funding for Ecuador and Peru, which have smaller, but significant, roles in the illicit cocaine trade. Ecuador is a key transit point for both narcotic precursor chemicals entering Colombia for cocaine production and for cocaine from Colombia destined for the United States. After a suspension of programming from 2014-2018, the current Moreno administration provided a new opportunity for INL engagement. INL's FY 2020 request will address drug trafficking and the criminal organizations engaged in it through training and mentoring by the Colombian National Police to build Ecuadorian police counternarcotics capacity; technical assistance to build Ecuadorian justice sector capacity to investigate and adjudicate transnational organized crime cases; and citizen security initiatives along Ecuador's northern border to combat drug trafficking and other criminal activity. In Peru, INL assistance is focused on coca eradication, interdiction, and capacity building opportunities, thus denying revenue to TCOs. INL will continue to nationalize aviation assets; support the Peruvian government's manual eradication and interdiction efforts; enhance the rule of law and combat corruption; and combat illegal mining- a key revenue source for TCOs in Peru.

## *Mexico*

Drugs originating from Mexico have a profound and deadly impact on the United States. Opioids, particularly synthetic varieties like fentanyl, destroy the lives of Americans and wreak havoc on communities across the country. In 2017, nearly 68 percent of fatal drug overdoses in the United States involved opioids, and of those, more than half involved synthetic opioids. Synthetic opioids are particularly challenging to target as they can be produced almost anywhere and criminals are able to tweak chemical formulas to evade detection. Traffickers smuggle synthetic opioids via mail and in the form of counterfeit prescription pills. Of great concern are indications that fentanyl trafficking operations in Mexico are growing and evolving to include fentanyl production—an alarming new development. Mexico is the country of origin for most heroin and methamphetamine consumed in the United States, and along with Central America and parts of the Caribbean, Mexico remains a major transit zone for cocaine from South America destined for the United States.

TCOs in Mexico perpetuate violence and corruption. In 2018, Mexico's homicide rate hit a record high of 29 per 100,000 inhabitants and homicides continue to climb in 2019, according to Government of Mexico statistics. A Mexican non-governmental organization estimated over 60 percent of the murder in Mexico in 2018 were tied to organized crime. INL supports Mexico's efforts to reduce drug trafficking and production, secure its borders and ports, deprive TCOs of illicit revenue streams, and reduce the impunity and corruption that enables TCOs to thrive. Our FY 2020 request supports the expansion of counternarcotics programs to address the multiple drug threats, disrupting the production and trafficking of heroin, fentanyl, methamphetamine, and precursor chemicals used to make these drugs. Mexico has seized some significant drug loads and dismantled drug labs, but much more work remains. The request prioritizes counternarcotics funding to improve Mexico's capacity to detect and interdict drugs at ports of entry through more targeted application of non-intrusive inspection equipment, and in the maritime domain through training and mentoring; to improve poppy eradication through capacity building for Mexico's army and Prosecutor General's Office; and to strengthen border security through cross-border training initiatives.

INL continues to work with the Lopez Obrador administration to address shared security priorities and seeks to intensify cooperation on counternarcotics, especially strengthening border security and ensuring the criminal justice system in Mexico serves its citizens and ends impunity for crime that impacts both our countries. Our programs take a comprehensive approach to build the capacity of Mexican criminal justice actors to attack each component of the TCO business model to reduce drug production and remove illicit profits. Before the Merida Initiative, most Mexican criminal justice institutions lacked any enforceable career standards and relied primarily upon on-the-job training. Today, with INL's support, Mexican police departments, forensic labs, prisons, and courtrooms are improving professional standards. In August 2019, Mexico strengthened its asset forfeiture law, a vital tool in the fight against TCOs and their affiliates. We expect Mexico to make full use of this new law.

In cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mexico is working to build its capacity to more effectively target its poppy eradication to areas of highest opium yield, and to share that information with the United States, given our interest in reducing production and trafficking of heroin. Yet, as noted in the *Presidential Determination on Major*

*Drug Transit or Major Illicit Drug Producing Countries for FY 2020*, Mexico needs to do more to combat Mexican TCOs and their networks. Two weeks ago, INL Assistant Secretary Kirsten D. Madison traveled to Mexico, accompanied by DEA and DoD counterparts, to discuss the next phase our security cooperation with Mexico, including the need for Mexico to develop and share a comprehensive and whole-of-government counternarcotics strategy that incorporates clear goals and targets, and a means to monitor effective progress against those targets.

### ***Central America***

INL's Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) programming counters drug trafficking, combats TCOs, and decreases irregular migration to the United States by improving the capacity of Central American governments' law enforcement, immigration, customs, and justice sectors to address these threats before they reach the United States. Since surging in 2015, these programs yielded decreased homicide rates, most notably a more than 50 percent reduction in El Salvador from its record calendar year 2015 rate as the "murder capital of the world" and a more than 50 percent reduction in Honduras since 2014.

Earlier this year, the President directed the Department and USAID to reprogram foreign assistance funding from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras over concerns these governments were not doing enough to prevent irregular migration to the United States. This action sent a clear message that we needed these governments to do more to reduce migration flows. The Secretary recently announced the governments demonstrated action and ownership to address this issue and resumed targeted foreign assistance funding for certain programs to deter irregular migration. We are hopeful this ownership and action will continue in the future.

The flow of cocaine through Central America profoundly affects these countries' security environments, giving undue influence to TCOs, and overexposing the region to the effects of the drug trade, including pervasive violence, and endemic corruption. INL programs work to strengthen laws, enhance law enforcement capabilities, support cross-border law enforcement cooperation, and equip criminal justice system actors in Central America to secure convictions—all important factors for improving the overall security situations in each country.

In El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, INL will continue to address the security-related drivers of irregular migration. Transnational gangs, such as MS-13 and Barrio 18, perpetuate high levels of violence, insecurity, and extortion. With an MS-13 presence in more than 40 U.S. states, communities across the country are forced to grapple with homicide, drug dealing, prostitution, and other crimes carried out by the gang. Working closely with Central American partners and interagency colleagues, specifically the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, INL combats transnational gangs by building the capacity of 56 vetted units and specialized task forces to investigate cases and to serve as reliable, trusted partners of U.S. law enforcement. These units arrested more than 5,000 criminals in 2018. INL and the FBI work with the Governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to support Transnational Anti-Gang (TAG) vetted units and an associated Regional Criminal Gang Intelligence Platform to target transnational criminal gangs such as MS-13 and Barrio 18. The Salvadoran TAG has facilitated the arrest of more than 150 MS-13 members in the United States since 2015.

Due to the transnational nature of Central American gangs and TCOs, our efforts increasingly focus on multi-national approaches. This includes enhancing intelligence-sharing,

such as the El Salvador-based Regional Border Intelligence Center (GCIF), that identifies criminals and transnational crime trends in Central America, Mexico, and the United States. This fusion center enables real-time collection, analysis, and dissemination of criminal intelligence among the United States, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Spain, and participating Central American countries. From June 2017 to May 2019, information sharing facilitated by GCIF led to the identification of 1,330 gang members, the majority of whom were previously unknown to the United States; 132 human smugglers; and 56 drug traffickers. Addressing transnational gangs requires a regional approach.

In Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama, where maritime narcotics trafficking is most prevalent, INL supports maritime and air assets, which enable these nations to surveil and interdict in previously inaccessible areas. In 2018, with U.S. support, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Panama interdicted more than 115 metric tons (MT) of narcotics through maritime seizures. El Salvador, a country with historically and comparatively low drug trafficking, even seized nearly 13 MT of illegal drugs in the same year. With the FY 2020 request, INL will continue to support and expand maritime interdiction efforts with an eye towards enhanced bilateral and multilateral information-sharing and operations.

Central American governments will not achieve long-term successes without improving citizens' trust in institutions. Citizens often do not report crimes, especially crimes of corruption and extortion, and when citizens do report, the alleged perpetrators often go unpunished. INL will continue efforts to strengthen the rule of law to ensure partner governments are holding criminals accountable. Programs will focus on building prosecutorial capacity and building asset forfeiture and anti-money laundering initiatives to cut off transnational criminals from illicit profits.

### ***Caribbean and Haiti***

The Caribbean remains a viable trafficking route for Colombian cocaine, and INL programs will continue to promote regional cooperation among the 13 Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) partner nations, while building bilateral capacities to stem the flow of drugs. The FY 2020 request includes support for citizen security and law enforcement, as well as continued efforts to increase regional cooperation through programs such as CBSI-Connect, which links law enforcement officials in the Caribbean via an online training and video conference platform. INL will continue to build maritime interdiction and prosecution capacities and support enhanced targeting of containerized cargo through our agreements with the U.S. Coast Guard and UNODC, which supported increased drug seizures from 5.5 MT at the inception of CBSI to 22.6 MT in 2017. We will continue to enhance the ability of our partners to target and dismantle TCOs in the Caribbean Basin by targeting their assets, an increasingly vital tool in fighting TCOs. Trinidad and Tobago recently became the sixth CBSI partner to pass civil asset recovery legislation with INL assistance. These laws permit our partners to investigate, freeze, and recover criminally-obtained funds and property.

In Haiti, INL focuses support on building capacity of the Haitian National Police (HNP). As a direct result of INL support, the HNP added over 7,000 trained officers since the devastating earthquake in 2010, increasing the total force to more than 15,400 officers in 2019. Specific efforts will include INL investment in the HNP School, training for the HNP's

specialized units, including crowd control, and technical and advisory support for the HNP's leadership. INL efforts are focused on supporting the HNP's development as a professional and accountable institution that can manage Haiti's internal security in the aftermath of the October 2019 transition from the police-only UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) to a non-peacekeeping UN Special Political Mission (SPM).

***Conclusion***

INL programs in the Western Hemisphere address direct threats to United States safety and security. There are continued challenges, but we are seeing an impact. Between 2013 and 2018, there was a 24 percent increase in the number of kilos of illicit drugs seized hemisphere-wide. These seizures, often done by or in coordination with our regional partners, take drugs off the streets of United States communities like Newark and Fort Myers. From Colombian President Duque's quadrupling of manual eradication groups, to homicide reductions and increased maritime interdiction efforts in Central America, our programs are delivering and saving lives. We see the greatest impact where we have the political will of committed partners. More work remains to be done to further sustain this impact and increase security in the United States and throughout the hemisphere. Our FY 2020 request is critical to making further gains.