

FY 2020 U.S. ASSISTANCE REQUEST FOR THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE
THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
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Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Rooney, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Fiscal Year 2020 foreign assistance request for the Western Hemisphere. This is a time of great challenge and opportunity in the region. If we are successful in our efforts to promote democracy in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua – and we intend to be—we will need to provide assistance that is quantitatively and qualitatively different than what we are providing at present to combat the repressive regimes that hold those countries hostage. We expect our partners in Central America to show the political will to break with the past to curb unsafe and illegal immigration and corruption and to allow all of their citizens to pursue prosperity for themselves and their families. If they do so they will find us ready to provide significant assistance. But for those who seek to maintain the status quo, we will not let them use our assistance as a façade for their lack of political will to make real reforms. Given these challenges and opportunities, Mr. Chairman, we have proposed assistance programs with the recognition that it may need to be significantly reshaped in coordination with you and the subcommittee as events unfold in the region.

The FY 2020 \$1.19 billion request for the Western Hemisphere prioritizes programs that address illicit pathways that transnational criminal organizations exploit to traffic in drugs and smuggle people. At the same time, our proposed assistance seeks to create an environment for increased U.S. trade and investment in the hemisphere. Security and prosperity in the region benefit our interests directly and create opportunities for U.S. companies.

The request supports programming that disrupts transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), strengthens border security, combats corruption and impunity, and reduces illicit trafficking across our southern border. We know these programs work if the partner governments are truly committed to reform. So we continue to expect our partners in the region to stand up against corruption and against those who seek to preserve the economic and governance status quo. By doing so they contribute more to their own security and development.

The request for the Western Hemisphere includes eight primary components:

For Venezuela, the Administration designed the FY 2020 request to support emerging democratic actors and included a continuing democracy bilateral request of \$9 million. It also includes a \$500 million transfer authority that would provide flexibility to expand U.S. support for a democratic transition and to meet regional migration challenges. Since the time of the request, international support has advanced for Interim Venezuelan President Juan Guaidó and the National Assembly—the only democratically elected governing institution in Venezuela. The United States and fifty-five other countries have recognized Interim President Guaidó as Venezuela’s rightful democratic leader. Since 2017, the United States has committed almost \$644 million in response to the crisis in Venezuela. This includes resources to support countries in the region and provide assistance and other services to Venezuelan refugees and other displaced Venezuelans. We will continue to direct U.S. foreign assistance resources to support Venezuelan democracy and to support countries in the region receiving Venezuelans fleeing this Maduro-imposed crisis. At the same time, given Cuba’s continued interference in Venezuela, as well as its increasing repression against the Cuban people, we are expanding our efforts outside of foreign assistance to disrupt the flow of funds to Cuban regime coffers.

The United States and Mexico through the Merida Initiative cooperate to combat illicit trafficking, improve border security, and support Mexico’s efforts to strengthen the rule of law. Consistent with the President’s Executive Order on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking, our joint efforts reduce drug production, inhibit cross-border movement of drugs, cash, and weapons, and deny illicit revenue to transnational criminal organizations. The total Mexico FY 2020 bilateral request is \$78.9 million. Of this, \$76.25 million is for the Merida Initiative in the ESF and INCLE accounts. The request supports Mexico’s efforts to combat illicit poppy cultivation, heroin production, and fentanyl trafficking. It also supports Mexican efforts to reduce violence, and promote greater respect for human rights. The United States will continue to work in partnership with Mexico to combat migrant smuggling and take critical steps to secure our shared border.

The request includes \$445 million for El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. We expect the governments of these three countries to take action to reduce illegal immigration to the United States, in time to be factored into the FY 2020 appropriations process. The President will ultimately decide whether each government has taken sufficient steps to warrant our foreign assistance, and last week the President supported some targeted foreign assistance aimed at advancing our joint efforts to deter illegal immigration from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. We will continue to press the countries to address human trafficking, gang violence, illicit finance transnational crime, and the production and movement of illicit narcotics destined for the United States. We will also urge them to improve governance, civilian security, and economic opportunity. But our programs cannot be a substitute for political will. The governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, must demonstrate that they are willing to stand up to those who profit from the status quo which generates large numbers of illegal immigrants arriving at the U.S. southern border.

For Colombia, the \$344.4 million bilateral request prioritizes counternarcotics efforts, including eradication, interdiction, alternative development, and peace implementation. The request includes additional funding for shared U.S.-Colombian eradication priorities. Colombia is the United States' highest performing and most willing partner in Latin America; President Duque has shown the political will necessary to confront the severe challenge of coca production, which directly affects the United States. Colombia continues to absorb the largest influx of Venezuelans fleeing the crisis in their country; the United States will continue to support Colombia as it responds to these migration flows.

In Haiti, the \$145.5 million bilateral request serves to promote good governance, fight poverty, advance economic growth initiatives, improve food security and nutrition, support transparent and accountable government institutions, build the capacity of the Haitian National Police, and support assistance to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. We urge the elected representatives of the Haitian people to take steps necessary to stabilize democratic governance.

For Peru, the \$55.1 million request supports efforts to combat the illicit drug trade and TCOs through tightly paired eradication and alternative development. The request also supports anti-money laundering and asset-forfeiture initiatives; counternarcotics and justice sector efforts; customs and port security; and private sector-led alternative development programs.

In the Caribbean, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative remains critical to our efforts to combat crime and violence threatening the United States. The \$40.2 million request will strengthen maritime boundary controls and combat illicit trafficking. Funded programs will strengthen law enforcement capacity and improve justice institutions. They will also support anti-corruption and alternative opportunities for youth who may otherwise fall victim to criminal activity.

In addition to support for democracy in Venezuela, the request includes \$6 million to support democracy, human rights, and civil society in Cuba; as well as for democracy programming for Ecuador, with a request of \$1 million; and Nicaragua, with a request of \$6 million.

Again, if our policies are successful in promoting change, we will welcome the opportunity to consult with you to take advantage of such positive developments.

I look forward to your questions.