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GRANGER OPENING STATEMENT: BUDGET HEARING ON UNITED STATES ASSISTANCE TO COMBAT TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

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

Today's hearing is on U.S. assistance to combat transnational crime. I would like to welcome our two witnesses from the Department of State:

- Ambassador Brownfield, Assistant Secretary of the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
- Ambassador CdeBaca, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large to Combat Trafficking in Persons

Today's hearing will address many of the subcommittee's priorities, such as combatting human trafficking, countering the flow of illegal drugs, addressing the wildlife poaching crisis, and stopping the funding that supports terrorist activities.

Many of us follow these issues for humanitarian reasons, public safety, or for the cause of conservation, but these issues are also directly related to the security and stability in the countries we provide assistance to, as well as our own national security.

The outrageous actions of Boko Haram abducting hundreds of girls and claiming to sell them as slaves should remind us all how very real these threats are.

This case is also an example of how these issues are linked. Boko Haram is a terrorist organization and there are reports in the press that some of its members have profited from poaching elephants for their ivory. Boko Haram has been terrorizing the Nigerian people for years and now they are involved in this horrific case of human trafficking.

We want to hear about how the funding this subcommittee provides is being used to confront these types of issues and what is needed for the next fiscal year.

Transnational crimes share common traits --

The sex and slave trade, as well as the demand for animal parts and drugs, drives the trafficking problem;

Weak government institutions and corruption facilitate the criminal networks;

And current laws and law enforcement are not effectively deterring the perpetrators.

We would like to hear how these criminal enterprises are related and whether resources can be used to solve more than just one problem.

We hope the agencies we fund are coordinating and are applying the lessons learned from decades of counter-narcotics and anti-trafficking work to other areas of transnational crime.

We also want to be sure the funding we provide around the world to improve governance and reduce corruption is focused on addressing transnational crime.

This subcommittee included funding in the fiscal year 2014 Appropriations Act for programs to combat human trafficking, and also, for the first time, directed funds to address wildlife trafficking. I would like to know more about how those funds will be used and what has been accomplished to date.

In addition to the funding, I would like to hear what new technologies, partnerships, and diplomatic efforts are being used to address these challenges.

I was pleased to see the budget request for fiscal year 2015 increased funding to combat trafficking in persons – we know the need is tremendous.

The most recent human trafficking report concludes that 40,000 trafficking victims were identified in the last year, and there are some estimates that as many as 27 million men, women, and children are trafficking victims at any given time.

Turning to wildlife trafficking, I was disappointed to see the request is down more than 50 percent from what we included in last year's bill. I should also note that I had to ask for that funding level to be provided because it was not included in any of the budget materials.

Secretary Kerry has said this issue is a priority, but that is not reflected in this budget.

In 2013, over 1,000 rhinos were poached in South Africa. This was an all-time high. Cutting the funding in half does not seem like an appropriate response.

I would like you both to discuss your plans for fiscal year 2015, including how the funding this subcommittee provides will address the most urgent needs.

I'll now turn to my Ranking Member, Mrs. Lowey, for her opening remarks.

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