



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS

Prepared Statement of:

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**“Migration Crisis: Oversight of the Administration’s Proposed
\$1 Billion Request for Central America”**

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Chairman Duncan, Ranking Member Sires, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Administration's Strategy for U.S. Engagement in Central America and the role of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) in supporting two key objectives of this strategy: security and governance.

The interrelated economic, political and security challenges facing Central America are well documented, and the consequences of these challenges are critical to the interests of the United States. Last summer's surge in the numbers of unaccompanied children and families from Central America to the United States was just the most dramatic example of how our national security is entwined with that of the region's. We could also cite as evidence the growth of violent transnational gangs that operate throughout Central America and across the United States, or the region's exploitation by international drug trafficking organizations that supply most of the cocaine available on our streets, or the high levels of gender-based violence that are pervasive throughout the region. As the Administration's Strategy for U.S. Engagement in Central America makes clear, if economic prospects remain poor, institutions remain weak, and the crime rate remains high, Central America will become a source of further instability for its neighbors, including the United States, in the form of illegal migration and even more entrenched transnational organized crime. We are already feeling some of these effects, and we need to act now to improve Central America's ability to address these challenges.

While there are sound reasons to ensure continued focus on the entire region, there is special urgency regarding the situation of the three countries of the "Northern Triangle" – El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. In November 2014, the Northern Triangle presidents, along with the Inter-American Development Bank, presented their "Alliance for Prosperity" and committed to an unprecedented plan to jointly improve economic opportunity, governance, and public safety in their countries and improve the lives of all their citizens. In March, Vice President Biden met for the fourth time in eight months with these three leaders and successfully pressed them to commit to systemic reforms, with timelines, to make their plan a reality. This includes their commitments to police reform, greater transparency and effectiveness in their collection and management of government resources, addressing domestic violence and violence against women, and prison reform. This political commitment offers us an invaluable opportunity. With smart foreign assistance and sustained political engagement, we can address the underlying factors of insecurity in the region in a strategic and sustained way, and help support our Central American partners achieve better governance and

economic growth. Let me be clear. We cannot address security in a vacuum. Sustainable security depends also on the strength of government institutions and equitable economic growth, and we are working closely with our interagency partners to implement this comprehensive plan.

Falling under the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America, the ongoing Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) is a key component of the U.S. implementation structure for United States citizen security assistance to the region. INL works in close partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other departments and agencies, particularly the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security and Defense, to reduce levels of crime and violence, build the capacity of law enforcement and rule of law institutions, and support prevention programs for youth and in communities at-risk of crime and violence.

The overriding goal of INL's CARSI programs in Central America is to help these governments achieve self-sustaining progress in ensuring a legal, regulatory, and operational framework for security for their citizens. With your support, we believe this comprehensive approach can play a historic role in shifting this region back onto a positive trajectory.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 we are requesting \$205 million in the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) account for CARSI programming; USAID is also requesting CARSI funding for its counterpart activities. This request will provide INL the resources it needs to build on successful programs in the region, improve host nation ownership and ability to assume responsibility for new programs and reforms, and expand models that have proven successful to a wider geographic area. At the same time that we are requesting additional funding from the U.S. Congress to build capacity for Central American leaders to address the region's fundamental challenges, we must be able to demonstrate results and rigorously evaluate our programs to build on what works and eliminate what does not. This process is already underway with ongoing formal and informal evaluation mechanisms, and we look forward to working closely with Congress to craft the most effective assistance package.

INL programming will focus on criminal justice sector capacity-building and reform, primarily in the Northern Triangle region, including the expansion of successful programs such as Model Police Precincts, border control, police reform, anti-gang initiatives, and vetted units.

With a view to the long-term sustainability of our efforts, we will use the new opening by partner governments to promote structural reforms to the weak institutional framework of the police, courts and prisons, which has led to longstanding problems of impunity. We are increasingly focused on supporting wider rule of law programming to help support judicial institutions and address the ongoing problems of impunity and lack of transparency. We will increase the number of Resident Legal Advisors (RLAs) in the region to focus on reducing the impunity rates for violent offenders and ensuring adequate legal frameworks are in place to efficiently and effectively prosecute criminals. Within corrections systems, INL provides technical assistance for critical reforms. We are developing regional models in Costa Rica and El Salvador to secure these locations more effectively and ensure that criminal enterprises are not run from inside prison walls, while allowing for rehabilitation and reintegration services that will lower recidivism rates. We also are in ongoing discussion with the Government of Honduras regarding a forthcoming prison reform law.

To address immediate problems, in partnership with USAID, INL is supporting a new “place-based strategy” to reduce and prevent violence in the most at-risk communities in the region. Drawing upon a proven Los Angeles model for gang and homicide reduction, INL and USAID’s place-based strategy works with host nation authorities at municipal and national levels to combine community-based violence prevention programs with law enforcement interventions, targeting the most at-risk members of the most at-risk communities. In collaboration with the Government of Honduras, INL and USAID are beginning this effort in two of the most violent neighborhoods in the city of San Pedro Sula, with the goal of lowering homicide rates in the target communities. In the coming months, INL and USAID will work with local governments to identify the key places and people to target for additional place-based programming in El Salvador and Guatemala.

INL will also continue to work with host nations to expand and institutionalize one of our most successful programs in the region, the Model Police Precincts (MPPs) program. MPPs emphasize community engagement and crime prevention through the use of intelligence gathering, targeted investigations, and community involvement. In areas where INL has established MPPs in coordination with local police authorities, we have seen an average 10 percent reduction in crime rates. INL currently supports 16 MPPs in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and we plan to work with national governments to roll out MPPs throughout the region, increasing that number to 137 by the end of 2017. In order to make these expansions sustainable, we will also work with national

legislatures and relevant ministries to establish a blueprint for adoption of relevant policies and, eventually, budget support for the MPP model.

We also plan to expand the successful Gang Resistance Education, and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) program, which sends police officers into schools to teach children and young adults life skills and the ability to resist the pressures to join gangs or engage in other risky behaviors. Seeing police officers as positive role models in a safe setting helps these young children build positive relationships and lasting trust with law enforcement that will transfer into the larger community over time.

Despite laws criminalizing rape and domestic abuse in the Northern Triangle, violence against women, remains extremely high. INL is focused on addressing these issues, which contribute to the high rates of violence and homicide throughout Central America. Last year, a group of prosecutors, judges, and doctors, selected by the President of Costa Rica's Supreme Court, attended a gender based violence (GBV) training in the United States. Upon their return, the participants recommended creating a specialized unit to help victims of sexual assault, launching a national campaign to promote awareness and prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence, and called for a national congress to provide train-the-trainer workshops for 450 people to combat gender-based and domestic violence.

Through continued support for law enforcement training and vetted units, INL is focused on promoting reforms to establish new relationships between police forces and the public they serve and improving the capacity of law enforcement to combat transnational organized crime. We will expand efforts to professionalize and reform police departments through modern policing techniques, to include a focus on community policing and the use of technology such as Complaint Statistics (COMPSTAT), a U.S.-modeled analytical tool that allows police to make informed, targeted responses to crime. INL support for vetted units in the region has been crucial to the removal of transnational crime leaders and organizations and forms a solid foundation for increased cooperation between U.S. and host nation law enforcement agencies. Members of these units are often the best of the police force; officers who focus on specialized areas such as counternarcotics, violent crimes, and financial crimes. The work of these units is essential to reducing the power and influence of these sophisticated transnational criminal organizations, which are responsible for promoting much of the growth in violence and corruption of public officials in the region that undermines security and governance. Recently, these vetted units have seen notable success in taking down

large transnational criminal organizations and, in some cases, extraditing their leaders to the United States.

Chairman Duncan, Ranking Member Sires and Members of the Subcommittee, we are committed to working with our neighbors in Central America to influence significant and positive change in the region. Governance and prosperity require a secure environment in which to flourish. Likewise, security will only be sustainable in an environment where democratic institutions flourish, human rights are protected, and citizens enjoy economic opportunity. We need all three: prosperity, governance, and security, for all citizens of the Northern Triangle. While the task at hand is incredibly challenging, INL is well-positioned to grow and expand proven programs in the region, partner with the interagency, and work in alignment with host nations to effect systemic and positive change in Central America's security environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss INL's work in Central America and our role in the ambitious action strategy for the region. I look forward to your questions.