

Testimony of Amb. Michael Kozak
Senior Bureau Official
Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Before the
House Foreign Affairs Western Hemisphere Subcommittee
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“Latin America After the Fall of Maduro”

Chairwoman Salazar, Ranking Member Castro, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on how our engagement in the Western Hemisphere has yielded positive results for the American people.

President Trump’s National Security Strategy affirms the critical importance of this region to our national interests. Over the past 14 months, we have seen tremendous success on a broad agenda that includes securing our border and ending illegal immigration, defeating the narcoterrorist groups that traffic drugs to the United States and destabilize their own communities through violence, and expanding economic opportunities for Americans. The reassertion of the Monroe Doctrine to eliminate the influence of global adversaries and malign actors in the Western Hemisphere is helping the United States to protect our homeland.

Illegal immigrant encounters at the U.S. Southwest border were down 91 percent, and illegal crossings through the Darien Gap down 99 percent in 2025. These dramatic statistics are a testament to our comprehensive approach. We have worked with partners to enhance control of their own borders. Our partners have imposed new visa requirements and have sanctioned and prosecuted those involved in human smuggling and trafficking. We are also facilitating the highest number of removals and deportations in history. We have negotiated Asylum Cooperative Agreements (also known as Safe Third Country Agreements) to reduce the burden on the American asylum system. We have entered into Third Country National Arrangements to remove aliens with no right to remain in the United States throughout the Western Hemisphere. All of this upholds the President’s commitment to making American citizens safer.

For too long, Americans have been poisoned by the flow of fentanyl, cocaine, and other drugs through our open borders. We are taking action to eliminate these threats, and we are already seeing results. Drug flows are disrupted. The CDC estimates that U.S. drug overdose deaths dropped 17 percent in the 12 months through October 2025. These efforts are saving thousands of American lives. On March 7, 2026, President Trump expanded our security efforts through the Shield of the Americas Summit. Leaders who share our resolve to defeat the cartels and foreign terrorist groups operating in the Western Hemisphere are now engaged as never before.

Nowhere is our resolve to defeat narcoterrorists clearer than in Venezuela. We are now helping Venezuela transition from a criminal enabler to a responsible partner through the three-phased approach to Venezuela's stabilization and democratic transition.

The United States is assisting in safekeeping Government of Venezuela funds derived from the sale of Venezuelan oil or other natural resources and intended to benefit the Venezuelan people. We see progress in Venezuela's political reconciliation. The interim government passed an amnesty law and released hundreds of political prisoners, including unjustly detained Americans. Exiled opposition figures are reengaging in public life. Civil society is rebuilding. These steps are essential to create the conditions for transition to a democratically elected government in Venezuela.

Venezuela's interim government enacted a significant hydrocarbons reform, and Treasury-issued general licenses have expanded U.S. commercial engagement.

The region is also now safer. On March 30, we announced the resumption of operations at the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, marking a new chapter in our diplomatic presence in Venezuela. We are strengthening cooperation on counternarcotics and migration. We are building economic ties that benefit America.

With Maduro's arrest, Cuba lost one of its last benefactors. The end of massive subsidies at the expense of the Venezuelan people exposed the Cuban communist regime's economic failings. President Trump has made clear through his actions

and his words that we will not tolerate this threat any longer. Now is the time for drastic political and economic reforms in Cuba.

Our vision is for a hemisphere that prevents mass migration, counters narcoterrorist groups, remains free of hostile foreign incursion, and generates economic opportunity. As outlined in the National Security Strategy, we are working to enlist both our established friends and new partners in this endeavor.

Over the past year, we've seen countries like Panama stand up to the influence of extra-hemispheric powers and defend their sovereignty. We have seen President Paz turn the page on 20 years of anti-U.S. sentiment in Bolivia. And we've seen partners like Ecuador and Mexico remove violent criminals to the United States to face charges.

These historic achievements require our sustained support. Panama faced economic pressure after its Supreme Court nullified port concessions that favored Beijing over Panama. As Secretary Rubio has stated, we will stand firmly with Panama and will only increase our economic and security cooperation with this important partner.

This, like other partnerships, generate economic opportunity for Americans. Across the Hemisphere, we are strengthening critical supply chains. At the February Critical Minerals Ministerial, the Secretary signed agreements on critical mineral cooperation with Argentina, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru. The linkages created between America and our partners in key strategic sectors will benefit both sides and push our competitors out of the region.

The President has been clear on the critical importance to our national security of American preeminence in the Western Hemisphere. In the past, we took our position in the Hemisphere for granted, with unfortunate results. We are now intensely focused on building the partnerships necessary throughout the region to meet our responsibility to the American people.