



**Statement of William R. Brownfield**

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Next Steps for U.S. Policy”

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Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Berman, and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss criminal threats to public security in the Western Hemisphere, the work that the Department of State has undertaken to address these threats, and the reason that our assistance is vital to our national security interests.

Rising homicide and crime rates in Central America and the brutal acts of violence carried out by drug traffickers and migrant smugglers in Mexico are dramatic symptoms of a broader climate of insecurity that prevails throughout the region. While it is true that drug trafficking and other transnational criminal organizations continue to represent the primary threat to good governance and the rule of law in the region, it is equally true that the nature of that threat has constantly evolved over the past 10-15 years and has created new and emerging policy challenges in the process. Over the same period, our counternarcotics and rule of law objectives in the region have evolved and adjusted in response to changing realities on the ground.

President Obama's March 2011 visit to Brazil, Chile, and El Salvador highlighted U.S. vital national interests in addressing citizen security in the Americas. The President built on his 2009 Summit of the Americas pledge to create a relationship of "equal partners" based on mutual interests and shared values. Over the last two years, we have advanced new networks of cooperation linking the United States to other countries and regional organizations in the hemisphere, culminating in the President's March 2011 trip to South and Central America, where he said: "As the nations of Central American develop a new regional security strategy, the United States stands ready to do our part through a new partnership that puts the focus where it should be – on the security of citizens. And with regional and international partners, we'll make sure our support is not just well-intentioned, but is well-coordinated and well-spent."

In the Western Hemisphere, our principal mechanisms for implementing coordinated approaches to transnational threats are the Mérida, Central American Regional Security, Colombian Strategic Development, and Caribbean Basin Security Initiatives. Each partnership is an opportunity for our government to collaborate with other governments to jointly develop programs that strengthen the capacity of institutions required for citizen safety. Secretary Clinton summed up the rationale for this regional approach in a speech before a meeting of Caribbean foreign ministers in Jamaica on June 22, when she noted that Colombia and Mexico are our key partners in the regional struggle to improve public security in the hemisphere.

Our approach today throughout the region draws important lessons from our experience and partnership with the Government of Colombia on what it takes to improve citizen security in the hemisphere. When Plan Colombia started over a decade ago, our strategy initially focused on supporting Colombian programs to take down narcotics trafficking organizations and included an aggressive coca eradication campaign in Colombia, as well as Peru and Bolivia. Those efforts also included alternative development and rule of law elements. Over time it became clear that while the dismantling of the cartels was a necessary step toward reducing crime and insecurity, it was not sufficient. Only by extending the rule of law, increasing the presence of the state, and bolstering respect for human rights, could real security take root in Colombia.

This approach was supported by strong political leadership, and combined security, counternarcotics, rule of law and economic development programs in targeted rural and conflict areas to gradually displace the narcotics traffickers who had long functioned as an alternative government for the population under their control. It also included the gradual transfer of responsibility for security from the military to a substantially developed civilian police, the improved capability of the civilian police to undertake management and operational responsibility for eradication, and equally importantly, the gradual transformation of Colombian criminal justice institutions.

We have known for decades that transnational criminal organizations adapt and evolve quickly. In the early 1980s, traffickers moved around the Caribbean, corrupting fragile governments and using the region's proximity to send drugs into south Florida and the gulf coast. Our response helped to bolster governments and displace traffickers. Peru's security advances in the 1990s forced drug traffickers to move from Peru to Colombia. Plan Colombia's success dismantled the cartels in Medellin and Cali and displaced leadership of the drug trade to Mexican organizations. Facing a decline in Colombia, the drug trafficking center of gravity took hold in Mexico, which has now created new security threats in the process.

While between 90 and 95 percent of the cocaine from South America destined for the U.S. still transits the Central America/Mexico corridor, we have witnessed an increase in the drug flow to Europe via West Africa as the cartels seek to expand their markets. Although Colombian traffickers no longer lead the drug trade, some remain incredibly resourceful and have succeeded in developing new threats, such as semi-submersible vehicles and even fully submersible vehicles, which are extremely difficult to detect and capable of carrying multi-ton loads of cocaine or other payloads across international maritime boundaries.

In recognition of other emerging security threats, the Department of State, and the bureau I lead more specifically, expanded the focus of our assistance policies beyond bilateral individual country programs and moved toward regional engagement, where appropriate and feasible. This strategy recognizes that to effectively combat transnational threats, we must apply constant pressure throughout the Hemisphere on transnational criminal organizations, while building partner-nation capacity, and supporting regional partnerships that address the symptoms of crime and also the root causes. That is why running through all of our security partnerships is an emphasis on building resilient communities, enhancing socio-economic opportunities, and enhancing the civilian capacity and presence of the state.

To ensure the irreversibility of the progress that Plan Colombia made in expanding state presence and services, the U.S. Government developed a follow-on program called the Colombian Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI) to support Colombia's National Consolidation Plan. Today, CSDI provides for civilian institution building, rule of law, and alternative development programs, coupled with security and counternarcotics efforts, in those areas where poverty, violence, and illicit cultivation or drug trafficking have historically converged. Colombia's goal is to integrate these priority regions into the country's broader, political, economic, and social fabric.

Since 2006, the Government of Mexico has been engaged in a comprehensive effort to reform its law enforcement and judicial institutions to directly confront transnational criminal organizations and the accompanying corruption, which has been pervasive in Mexican institutions. The Calderon Administration has adopted a whole of government approach, which we support through the four pillar strategy directed by President Obama and President Calderon in August 2009. Because Mexico has a federal system of government, we are expanding our efforts for criminal justice sector reform to state and local entities, which have jurisdiction for most crimes and need enhanced capabilities to protect their citizens.

The technical assistance and training we have provided to Mexican law enforcement personnel through the Mérida Initiative has been effective: since December 2009, 33 high-level drug traffickers were removed or arrested, including key leaders of the Beltran Leyva, Sinaloa, Gulf and La Familia Cartels. In addition, U.S. Government -provided Blackhawk helicopters played a role in the December 2010 mobile air operation against La Familia Michocana trafficking group. Our partnership with Mexico keeps citizens safer on both sides of the

border, as the leads developed in Mexican investigations have helped our own law enforcement agencies arrest hundreds of criminals in the United States.

Just as Mexico was affected by the success of Plan Colombia, Central America is now suffering the consequences of Mexico's pressure on the cartels. The drug cartels are seeking sanctuary and competing for control of drug trafficking in the region, especially in Honduras and Guatemala. The result has been an increase in crime, homicide rates and general insecurity, which, when combined with already weak institutions has overwhelmed the capacity of some Central American communities. Although Mexico and Central America do not face the organized terrorist threat posed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the profits it earns through the drug trade, the level of violence is worrisome.

In March, President Obama launched the Central America Citizen Security Partnership (CACSP) in El Salvador, stating that the U.S. would take steps to ensure our assistance to Central America was more focused, accelerated, and more effectively coordinated. This new partnership reflects our understanding of the importance of citizen security, drawing from our experiences in Mexico and Colombia especially. As a result, a key underpinning of the effort is the importance of not only U.S. contributions to combating crime and violence in Central America, but also the vital investments that our Central America partners must make for our collective efforts to be sustainable. As the Central American countries identify their priority initiatives, we are refining our assistance – including that under the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) – to ensure our assistance is supporting established priorities in Central America. Ultimately, much like Plan Colombia, our goal is to cultivate partnerships that can build institutional capacity and promote self sustainability.

Secretary Clinton traveled to Guatemala for the Central American Integration System's (SICA) conference in June to underscore the international community's commitment to partnering in support of Central America's security needs and to lay the foundation for future progress.

The U.S. Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), launched by President Obama at the 2009 Summit of the Americas, also reflects an inclusive approach to achieve three key objectives: substantially reducing illicit trafficking, increasing public safety and security, and promoting social justice and economic opportunities. Citizen security is the single most important issue confronting the Caribbean as narcotics-driven crime and violence have reached epidemic

proportions. Because of their small size and limited resources, the Caribbean islands are working to develop the capacity to pool their resources to effectively respond to the challenges presented by transnational crime. Along with support for bilateral maritime interdiction and other law enforcement efforts, CBSI focuses on developing regional capacity in the areas of information sharing, criminal justice reform, demand reduction, border control, and firearms trafficking.

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee, hemispheric security is a work in progress, and far from an easy objective to achieve. But the purpose that drives our engagement in support of our regional neighbors is one of critical importance that cannot be overstated. When credible law enforcement capacity and systems of justice are built, criminal information sharing, judicial cooperation, human rights, counternarcotics, and counter-terrorism programs can take hold. Where they are absent, transnational criminals operate with impunity, threatening the safety and security of our citizens at home and abroad. While the task at hand is incredibly challenging, our significant partnerships with Mexico and Colombia and our cooperation on shared objectives with countries such as Brazil and Chile, for example, represent the most effective and rational approach toward countering emerging threats.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this thematic overview. I look forward to any questions you might have.