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OUR EVOLVING UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONSE TO TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL THREATS

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS UNITED STATES SENATE

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THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 2016

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:31 a.m., in Room SD–419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Corker [presiding], Flake, Gardner, Isakson, Cardin, Menendez, and Kaine.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

The CHAIRMAN. The Foreign Relations Committee will come to order.

This morning, we will look at how we are moving beyond the war on drugs to understand the broader challenges of transnational organized crime and what strategies can be effective in combating this threat. While illegal drugs and crime associated with them are devastating communities on both sides of our southern border, it is not yet clear how successful huge investments made over the decades have been in eradicating supply and production.

The bottom line is this. Where the rule of law is weak or nonexistent, transnational criminal organizations will prosper and engage in corruption.

In 2011, the Obama administration issued a strategy to combat transnational organized crime. This was an ambitious, aspirational strategy that sought to mark an evolution in thinking. Now, nearly 5 years later, we need to ask what is working and what is not so we can get this right moving forward.

Our witness today is Ambassador Bill Brownfield, who is a strategic thinker with long, practical experience. We welcome him and look forward to his testimony and our discussion.

With that, I will turn to our ranking member, our distinguished ranking member, Senator Ben Cardin.

STATEMENT OF HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for convening this hearing on transnational crime.

The world has changed and so has transnational organized crime. I think it is important for us to have an update as to where we are. President Obama's 2011 transnational organized crime strategy has been there for a while. Is it working? Do we need to do more?

We need an update, and I hope today that, Secretary Brownfield, you will share with us how we are doing in regards to that strategy.

Organized transnational crime, we have seen many of the results of that. We have had hearings on trafficking on human beings, on wildlife, on weapons, on drugs. We have seen transnational organized crime and its financial crimes against us, particularly on cyber.

I am particularly proud of the work being done in my own State of Maryland on cybersecurity dealing with the effects of transnational crime, the work at Fort Meade where we have our cybersecurity command, and many private companies working in my State in regards to these issues.

There is a clear nexus between government corruption and transnational crime that I think is pretty clear. When you take a look at how transnational crime spreads, you find areas in which there is corruption and where they can deal with their expansion of their own activities.

Then, Mr. Chairman, the human cost of this, we talk about the impacts of dealing with transnational crime, but the impact of this, the trafficking of drugs into America, in my State, in every State in the Nation, we see record numbers of addictions. So it is affecting our communities directly, as well as the criminal elements and what they do.

We certainly have seen that in the trafficking of migrants. In April, 500 people died alone in the Mediterranean on one capsized trafficking boat.

So there is a human cost to this.

Of course, this is big business. The numbers are astronomical. Just in the trafficking of refugees in 2015, it was about a $5 billion to $6 billion enterprise.

So it is a huge amount of resources that are being taken out of our productive economy through organized transnational crime, and we need an equal response to it. And I look forward to hearing from our witness.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for your comments.

Today, our witness is Ambassador William Brownfield, the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. We had a long meeting last week to go through many aspects of this problem, and I thank him for being here today and sharing his knowledge, but also his thoughts about how better to attack this.

If you could, if you could keep your comments to about 5 minutes, that would be great. We look forward to questions.

Without objection, your written testimony will be entered into the record.

With that, have at it.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. WILLIAM R. BROWNFIELD, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE, BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin. Thanks for the opportunity to appear today to discuss our evolving understanding in response to transnational criminal threats.

Gentlemen, if I were asked to describe the current strategic threats from transnational crime, I would mention two.

First is our priority from the last century, drugs. We must today manage a strategic transition from cocaine to heroin. We have made great progress on cocaine. U.S. consumption is down more than 50 percent, but heroin abuse is exploding. Our international challenge is to work the solution with the Government of Mexico, the source of most heroin in the United States, and I can report that we are working well together, meshing our domestic heroin abuse reduction plan with Mexico's new national heroin plan.

But we must not ignore cocaine. In 2 years, cocaine production in Colombia has doubled, and the U.S. is the traditional market for Colombian cocaine.

Colombia is understandably focused on its peace process to conclude a 50-year armed conflict. Our challenge is to support that process while at the same time pursue a serious drug strategy for Colombia and Central American transit nations.

And we need to address challenges beyond our hemisphere. Afghanistan produces more than 80 percent of the world's heroin. Africa is a massive transit point for trafficking networks moving north-south and east-west. And the Chinese pharmaceutical industry produces much of the world's dangerous new psychoactive substances, and some old ones like fentanyl.

The second and the greater strategic challenge for the 21st century is that vast new field of organized criminal activity that is neither drugs nor terrorism. We call it transnational organized crime. It includes human smuggling and trafficking in persons and wildlife, arms trafficking, illegal mining and logging, cybercrime, intellectual property theft.

While each crime is distinct, they all share certain enablers. They require corruption to run their trafficking networks and money laundering to convert illegal revenue into legitimized property. They all prey on week governing institutions and benefit from poverty, poor education, and lack of jobs.

In the increasingly globalized 21st century, transnational organized crime may be the greatest law enforcement threat to confront the United States.

We have learned lessons since first attacking the drug crises of the 20th century, and we have changed our tactics accordingly. One lesson is that many of the techniques and technologies developed over 40 years to control illicit drugs can also be applied to TOC.

But police operations, interdiction, lab takedowns, arrests, while important cannot alone solve transnational organized crime. Long-term progress means stronger law enforcement and rule of law institutions, whether through training, education, equipment, or technology.

And our partner institutions are not just the police. They are also investigators, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, and corrections officials. And we must construct the global architecture, the treaties and conventions, the U.N. and other international organizations, the cooperation and coordination mechanisms that permit governments and law enforcement to work together to address transnational organized crime.

Mr. Chairman, I have been in this business more than 37 years. I take the long view to solving our national security challenges. When I joined the Foreign Service in 1979, the most sophisticated tools available to law enforcement working an international case were the telephone and a Rolodex file. We have come a long way since then, but we have a long way to go still.

Thank you, and I thank the members of the committee, and I look forward to your questions and your comments.

[The Ambassador Brownfield's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR WILLIAM R. BROWNFIELD

Chairman Corker, Senator Cardin, distinguished Members of the Committee; thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Department of State's work to prevent transnational organized crime from harming U.S. citizens and threatening our national interests.

Since 2011, it has been my privilege to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) which leads the Department's efforts to meet this considerable challenge. INL is responsible for coordinating U.S. government efforts abroad to increase international cooperation against all forms of transnational crime. To support this mission, INL is entrusted with developing and managing U.S. foreign assistance programs in approximately 90 countries to strengthen the criminal justice capacity of like-minded foreign governments. INL also coordinates and funds the efforts of U.S. law enforcement agencies that provide training and other assistance to our international partners.

Transnational organized crime encompasses a wide variety of criminal threats, ranging from illegal trafficking in drugs, people and wildlife to cybercrime and money laundering. Any serious ongoing criminal activity that crosses international borders and involves three or more people meets the legal definition of transnational organized crime, and these activities threaten the interests of the United States on three broad, interrelated fronts.

First, transnational organized crime's impact is felt directly on the streets of virtually every community in America. Drugs, counterfeit merchandise, and other contraband are illegally smuggled into the United States every year, undermining our border security and inflicting harm on society and individuals. Heroin, fentanyl, and illicit opioids originating from abroad are perpetuating the national opioid epidemic. Cyber-enabled fraud and other forms of crime victimize American citizens of billions of dollars annually, and transnational criminal gangs commit crimes in collaboration with their peers located beyond our borders.

Second, American businesses and financial institutions are more affected than ever before by the impact of transnational organized crime. When international crime infiltrates legitimate commercial sectors, our companies and workers are deprived of a level playing field to compete globally. Markets for U.S. products are diminished, prices are distorted, and consumers are exposed to additional risks from unregulated (and in many cases unsafe) products. Counterfeiting and piracy cost the U.S. economy billions of dollars annually and expose consumers to dangerous and defective products. Transnational crime also corrupts international financial institutions that supply the credit and banking services that our global economy depends on.

Third, international criminals engage in a variety of activities that pose a grave threat to our national security and the stability of the global community. Corruption and the enormous flow of illicit profits generated by criminal activity are serious threats to the stability of democratic institutions, the rule of law, and sustainable economies around the world. Once imbedded within the political institutions of a society, transnational criminal networks weaken the bonds of trust between citizens and their state. Governments corrupted at senior levels by organized crime cannot be trusted to act as reliable partners of the United States, or as responsible stakeholders in the international community. The convergence of crime, corruption, and weak governments can also devolve into failed states and ungoverned spaces that provide a foothold for terrorism, insurgencies and unchecked human rights abuses.

The Department of State has treated transnational organized crime as a foreign policy priority for approximately the past forty years. We started with illegal drugs. In the late 1970s, INL was created to develop and manage international drug control programs. Our focus was on eradicating drug crops in Latin American source countries. We had some success with eradication, but in and of itself, it wasn't sufficient; drug cultivation could be shifted to new areas where governments had less authority. When it became apparent that eradication wasn't enough, in the 1980s, we shifted our approach to interdiction. And again, we had some successes, particularly in reducing the flow of cocaine through the Caribbean. But traffickers can adapt and evolve quickly, budgets to support interdiction are limited, and the flow of drugs shifted over time.

These early years of experience taught us some valuable lessons with wider applicability to all other forms of transnational organized crime. We learned that we could displace criminal activity in certain regions for a time and that we could displace the leadership of particular criminal organizations and by doing so, bring about short-term disruption to drug flows. But these were short-term palliatives, not sustainable long-term solutions. Over the past two decades, with support from successive administrations and bipartisan backing from Congress, INL has recalibrated its work to focus on two mutually supportive strategic objectives; helping partner governments build, reform, and sustain judicial institutions that enhance the capacity of their criminal justice systems; and developing the global architecture necessary for cross-border law enforcement cooperation and preventing corruption.

Our shift to institution building became more pronounced as the threat of transnational organized crime evolved during the 1990s, beyond drugs. As globalization accelerated with the end of the Cold War, so too did the spread of transnational organized crime, along with its attendant corruption. U.S. policy leaders recognized that the same institutional shortcomings of vulnerable states allowed all manner of criminal threats to expand across international borders. To deny international safe havens to these criminal networks, our assistance programs had to expand to focus on strengthening these institutions and provide host governments with the ability to enforce their laws.

Developing strong and effective criminal justice institutions requires a long-term commitment. Successful law enforcement operations are satisfying, but strengthening institutions provides value for a generation. All links in the criminal justice continuum—police, courts, and corrections—must be capable of effectively delivering justice, securing public trust and safety, and enabling international cooperation.

This is not an easy task; if all links in this chain are not addressed, sophisticated criminal organizations will exploit the weakest link. More than half of INL's budget today directly promotes sustainable institutions and criminal justice reform. Our goal is to help partner nations gain the capabilities they need to effectively sustain the administration of justice and the enforcement of their laws. U.S. foreign assistance is always a development bridge, not a permanent status quo. Our capacity building assistance is not intended to create dependencies nor to replace host country responsibilities to invest in developing and sustaining their own institutions.

This relates to another important lesson that INL has taken to heart: host governments and their citizens must own the process of reforming their institutions. It can't be driven by the desire of the United States or other donors. INL's support for capacity-building is directed by the requests of our international partners. No other approach works; host governments determine what assistance they will accept, and we do the best we can within available resources to work with them.

Assisting international partners across the full range of criminal justice sectors requires specialized expertise. INL has subsequently expanded its collaboration with a wider range of implementation partners. In addition to our longstanding partnerships with the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, INL has expanded its range of Federal implementers to include the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and the Law Library of Congress. INL has also developed over 110 partnerships in 25 states and

the District of Columbia with police departments, district attorneys' offices, public defender services, departments of corrections, and maritime ports. Our state- and local-level partners possess unique technical, linguistic, and cross-cultural expertise and represent the diversity of America's law-enforcement and justice sector communities. These partnerships are a win-win: our assistance programs benefit from the knowledge and expertise of active police officers, corrections officials, and legal professionals, and state and local partners expand their ties with countries of interest to their communities and gain new professional development opportunities.

This approach to long-term institution building on a global scale requires patience and a sustained political will by both host governments and our own. In many countries where INL operates, police, judicial, and correction institutions have been historically underfunded, with poorly-paid and trained staff operating under antiquated laws and codes. The institutional improvements that our programs support require generational change. Most progress takes place in incremental steps that seldom attract news headlines; more criminal investigations resulting in trials; more trials brought to successful verdicts; and more humane and secure prison facilities.

In Central America, INL's support for institutional reforms to law enforcement coupled with an emphasis on transparent, accountable policing in high crime locations is resulting in decreased rates of violent crime and improved relationships with communities. In Ukraine, we helped plan, equip, train, and roll out an entirely new police force in just ten months, covering 34 cities in every region in the country and credited in polls as the third most trusted institution in the country after the army and the church. Globally, INL-funded programs trained over 1,000 officials to combat wildlife trafficking in 2015, benefitting nearly 30 countries.

Colombia has served as a showcase for where our approach can succeed given sufficient resources, patience, and host nation political commitment. Fifteen years ago, before the advent of U.S. assistance under Plan Colombia, large areas of the country were beyond the writ of the state, controlled by terrorist and criminal organizations. Today, while many challenges remain, the Colombian state is not only able to provide its citizens greater security and access to formal institutions of justice, but the country now exports law enforcement and justice sector assistance to its international partners.

In addition to capacity building, INL has achieved substantial progress in developing frameworks for cross-border cooperation. Beginning in the late 1990s, thanks in large part to U.S. leadership, and working largely from U.S. models, the global community has developed a series of groundbreaking treaties that promote international law enforcement cooperation and reduce the advantage that criminals gain from crossing borders. The UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), which entered into force in 2003, is the first legally binding instrument that commits countries to common criminalization of a wide range of serious organized crimes and to cooperating with one another on criminal justice enforcement. It is supplemented by three Protocols to combat trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling and illicit trafficking in and manufacturing of firearms. The United States has used the UNTOC as the basis for mutual legal assistance and extradition cooperation with other countries on over 470 occasions, making the treaty a valuable tool for our criminal justice practitioners.

We've achieved similar progress in creating global standards against corruption, the great enabler and worst consequence of organized crime. The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) entered into force in 2005 and provides a complementary framework to address both the supply and demand for corrupt international practices. The UNCAC lays out requirements for preventive anti-corruption measures, criminalization of bribery and other corrupt practices. These requirements are only as good as governments' ability to enforce them, so INL also works with international law enforcement networks such as INTERPOL to target perpetrators of corruption and their ill-gotten gains. INL also leads efforts within the G-20 to prevent corrupt officials from traveling internationally and enjoying the benefits of their crimes.

These UN benchmarks have been complemented by treaties developed in other multilateral organizations that support global efforts to prevent transnational crime. The Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime, for example, provides a model for countries to develop domestic legislation and provides a platform for increased cooperation in cybercrime investigations. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) serves as the global focal point for concrete cooperation to counter money laundering, which greases the wheels of international criminal activity. Taken collectively, this legal framework provides the foundation necessary for systemic, standardized law enforcement and judicial cooperation between governments. INL is committed to using all levers of diplomacy to encourage our international partners to

take advantage of this framework, for the protection of their own citizens and interests as well as ours.

In conclusion, we believe we are achieving progress and pursuing the correct strategy by working with like-minded governments and other partners to promote sustainable criminal justice institutions and durable civilian security. We have made great strides in developing an international legal foundation and normative framework for common approaches to combatting transnational organized crime. But I am not suggesting the problem is solved or that we will ever be able to declare victory. Criminal threats emanating from abroad are always going to exist, and we will need to remain constantly vigilant as they metastasize and evolve. Our goal is to continue to reduce the ability of transnational organized crime to operate with impunity, and ultimately reduce it to a manageable threat that can be contained by our partners domestically.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much for your testimony and for the time you have spent on this for 37 years, and for the meetings that we have had in the office.

I want to make sure people heard fully what you had to say. Ninety percent of the heroin that comes into the United States is not just coming from Mexico, it is produced in Mexico. Is that correct?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. That is a good rough estimate, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. So it is not a situation of having a southern border where things would naturally migrate through. It is actually being produced there.

I think the point you wanted to make sure that you got out is that you are working very closely with the Mexican Government to try to deal with this issue and feel like you have a good partner in that regard. Is that correct?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. That is also correct, Mr. Chairman. I think very highly of the Attorney General of Mexico who has been placed in charge of the Mexican Government's efforts.

The CHAIRMAN. So what is it that is specifically causing 90 percent of the heroin that Americans are consuming to be produced in Mexico?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Mr. Chairman, that is a very good question. I am going to offer you two, three, maybe even four elements of an answer.

One part of the answer is that the same Mexican trafficking organizations or cartels that for the last 20 years or so have been moving the product from South America, mostly cocaine, through Central America and into the United States discovered as the cocaine demand reduced in the United States that they could replace much of that through heroin and made a systematic effort to build that market. So it was Mexican organizations building the market.

Second, they discovered that having a vertically integrated system, which is to say controlling the entire process from cultivation, through laboratories that convert opium poppy into heroin, through the transport and logistics networks, and eventually then the revenue, the money laundering networks, worked to their advantage.

Third, you have geography, which is to say Mexico is a lot closer to the United States than is Afghanistan.

And fourth, in a sense, Mexico became the victim of Colombia's successes. Colombia used to produce about half of the heroin consumed in the United States. But thanks to some very serious and successful efforts by the Colombian Government, Colombian heroin

has dramatically reduced in the U.S. market, and Mexican heroin has replaced it.

The CHAIRMAN. So what has happened in Mexico is not unlike any international business enterprise, vertical integration, proximity to customer, has caused the Mexican production to dramatically increase just like any other legitimate business might act. This is obviously illegitimate. They are adopting the same principles. Is that correct?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. That is exactly right, Mr. Chairman. As I like to say often, drug trafficking organizations are criminal and are vicious, but they are not stupid. They are very good businessmen.

The CHAIRMAN. So my staff had some comments, my great staff had some comments about some of the positive things that were happening in Colombia. However, I declined to say those in my opening comments because of what you just said, and that is that a 50 percent increase in cocaine production is occurring right now in Colombia.

What is driving that? After all the years of effort, after positive effort by many administrations, what is driving that 50 percent increase?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Actually, Mr. Chairman, I might even nudge your figure up from 50 percent to closer to 100 percent over the last 2 going on 3 years.

I think it is driven by several factors. One, to be blunt and honest, is the focus and attention of the Colombian Government on their peace process and, to some extent, a willingness or a desire not to take steps that would complicate that peace process. The FARC guerrilla movement is today, as it has been for more than 30 years, one of the world's leading drug trafficking organizations.

Second, the Government of Colombia no longer has the same eradication program that they had for the last 20 years or so. They have stopped all aerial eradication, and they have not replaced it with ground-based manual eradication.

Now this is partly a decision of them telling us to stop aerial eradication. But it is also partly a function of the Colombian coca growers having realized and discovered that certain zones in Colombia would not be sprayed, zones right near national frontiers and borders, or zones in national parks, or zones in indigenous reserves or in FARC-controlled areas.

The net effect of that is this explosion of coca cultivation.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me just ask you—this is not what we want to hear. I know we had the President up here recently, and all of us were glad to see him and certainly want to continue the partnership we have had. But is this in some ways an accommodation to the FARC in order to end up in a more peaceful situation that you see occurring?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Mr. Chairman, I think it is part of that, but that is too simple of an answer, and I want to give complete credit to the Government of Colombia, who I admire enormously, who I think have made extraordinary effort at great cost and with great courage in terms of what they are doing.

But I do think we have to acknowledge that as the peace process and its negotiations have developed over the last 4 years, one of

the elements of Colombian Government policy that has not been maintained at its previous level is counternarcotics and eradication.

The CHAIRMAN. So I want to move on to the next person, out of respect for everybody here on the committee. I do in the next round want to focus on the tremendous increase in production that is occurring right now in Afghanistan and the highly lucrative production of fentanyl that is occurring in China, which is actually so much easier to do, so much cheaper to make, and yet so much more lucrative. That is probably our next challenge as a Nation.

With that, Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Mr. Chairman, I want to follow up on your point.

Ambassador Brownfield, we very much appreciate your service. We know the work that you did in Colombia, and we appreciate that very much. We now need to see how we can deal with a more holistic approach on drugs coming into America.

I just want to concentrate 1 minute on heroin because I have been throughout my State, and I have seen the impact of heroin addictions in Maryland. It is in every part of my State. There is no part of Maryland that has been immune, no community has been spared. My understanding is that this is true throughout America. The heroin addiction issues are incredibly impacting all of our communities.

So I am pleased to hear your report that, from the governmental sector, you are confident that our relationship with Mexico is productive, and that we are working on that issue. But you have also acknowledged a 100 percent increase in the heroin production in Mexico. So clearly, we have to be more effective in our policies in Mexico to stop the production.

Now, there are a lot of other issues involved in the heroin use here in the United States. We have the opioid abuses, et cetera. So we need a multiple approach. But from your experiences in Colombia, I would hope that we would have more aggressive expectations on cutting off the source of production in Mexico.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. That is a very fair hope on your part, Senator, and I want to feed into that hope. I am optimistic. But by the same token, I have been in this business long enough to know that, to have an impact, you have to think in terms of years, not in terms of months. I would use Colombia as an example.

Plan Colombia launched in 2000. Until the year 2007, no one, no one in this institution of the United States Congress or the executive branch, would have been prepared to say we have made serious inroads and impact on cocaine production in Colombia.

By 2007, 2008, 7 to 8 years after the start of the most aggressive program we have ever pursued in the Western Hemisphere, we began to see that impact. I lay that out as a concern as we deal with Mexico.

As we are working with Mexico, we have to remember that we have our own part to play in this, and it is a serious part. The Office of the National Drug Control Policy director has developed the heroin abuse reduction plan. And the objective of that plan is to reduce the demand for the product in the United States.

The Mexican Government, in my judgment, has been very good about law enforcement efforts focused on interdiction and attacking and taking down laboratories. The challenge that we have right now, Senator, is going after the tens if not hundreds of thousands of acres in Mexico that are currently under cultivation for opium poppy.

That is the challenge. That is what I am trying to work right now with the government.

Senator CARDIN. Obviously, that is extremely important, and we want to help any way we can.

Could you just share with us a better understanding of the criminal elements that are bringing the heroin into the United States, its relationship to traffickers in regards to humans? Give us an understanding. Are we talking about Mexican cartel-type operations? Are we talking about American connections? Are we talking about other parts of our hemisphere, outside of our hemisphere, that are involved in these transnational criminal syndicates that are effectively bringing the drugs and perhaps people into the United States?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Senator Cardin, I will offer you my views. Obviously, U.S. law enforcement has a right to correct, adjust, fine tune, or modify anything you are about to hear from me.

First, it is my opinion that the Mexican drug trafficking organizations have developed in the last 10 to 15 years in a way that basically supplanted previously the Colombian drug trafficking organizations, which dominated the movement of product, particularly cocaine, from South America to the United States.

They are overwhelmingly, within Mexico, Mexican organizations that are comprised of Mexican citizens.

Do they also take advantage of other forms of trafficking in order to make money? Yes, they most assuredly do. Whether that is trafficking in persons or firearms, whether it is trafficking in contraband or other forms of criminal activity, they engage in it.

Their usual approach is to manage the process themselves from within Mexico and get the product across the United States border. That is done by the organizations themselves and their personnel.

Once they have delivered to the ultimate destination in the United States, by which I mean the city, at that point, they have a local partner. That partner may or may not be Mexican. It may be an all-American gang. It may be a mix.

But that is the point they shift from transportation and wholesale into retail, where the product then moves from the criminal organization, the Mexican cartel, to some other Americanized version.

Senator CARDIN. Just so I understand, you are confident that the leadership in Mexico fully understands this and is working with us in order to root out these criminal elements within Mexico?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. I am, Senator, although I do say that this has taken a number of years, and the reason is that it is a change from the perspective of Mexico to how they address drug-related issues.

Until the heroin crisis—and you used that word correctly; we have a heroin crisis in the United States—until that crisis, the Mexican position was roughly that by the accident of geography,

they were located in between the producer states further down to the south in South America—Colombia, Peru, Bolivia—and the consumer states located to their north in the United States or in Canada or in Western Europe.

As we have shifted from cocaine to heroin, they have had to confront the reality that the entire problem is centered there.

It has taken time. I believe we are moving in the right direction. I continue to offer you optimism, but with a careful dose of please do not hold me to a "solve this problem by Friday" standard.

Senator CARDIN. I will follow up in the second round. Thanks.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Isakson?

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I represent the State of Georgia, the capital of which is Atlanta, which is ground zero for Mexican drugs coming into the United States. I mean, that is where it comes to get distributed either through Hartsfield International Airport, the interstate highway system, the Port of Savannah, whatever.

My impression is that operational control of the border between the United States and Mexico, and the land therein, is pretty much controlled by the Mexican drug cartels. Am I right?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. You are talking to a native Texan, Senator. I would not go that far. I would say, however, on the south side of the border, there is a tremendous amount of penetration and influence, including several of the major Mexican border cities.

Senator ISAKSON. And the increase in the heroin trafficking is because of increased demand for heroin in the United States of America. Is that not right?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. It certainly is right that you would not have nearly the amount of heroin crossing the border if there were not demand, although I would suggest to you that much of this demand was manufactured and artificial, which is to say the original demand was caused by perhaps overprescribing pain opioids as pain medication, which developed some demand. And then the cartels substituted say $40 a hit, which you had to do by using a prescription drug, to give the same buzz for 10 bucks with straight heroin. They then created, if you will, a market for heroin.

Senator ISAKSON. Do you think the human trafficking and the drug trafficking coming into the United States out of Mexico are tied to each other?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. I do in very many instances, yes.

Senator ISAKSON. In fact, the human traffickers are used to get the drugs into the United States over the border, are they not?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. I do believe that as well.

Senator ISAKSON. How much cooperation are we getting from the Mexican Government to try to stop that?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. I believe we get good cooperation on a case-by-case basis and in specific locations.

I believe, across-the-board, the corporation is good with Mexican federal authorities along the border. I think the cartels are so skilled and so well-informed that they can identify and spot the weak points, so that, in a sense, even if we had 99.9 percent of a tightly controlled border, they would find that one-tenth of 1 percent.

That is the problem. That is the challenge that we are dealing with.

Senator ISAKSON. I get the impression that the enforcement, the cooperation—I am not talking just about Mexico here. I am talking about in the macro sense. The cooperation that foreign governments give us on the human trafficking issue is less than helpful. Is that correct?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. It depends upon the country, but I would not disagree that in a lot of cases there is a reluctance to acknowledge that they have a trafficking in persons problem.

Senator ISAKSON. Our chairman and ranking member have done a great job of really focusing on the human trafficking issue, which is a real tragedy.

I go back to my State of Georgia and Atlanta, in particular, and we are ground zero for where a lot of those people are brought, thinking they are getting into America, but end up becoming sex slaves, drug traffickers, or worse, or domestic servants, or whatever they might be.

But I just do not get the impression that internationally or within this hemisphere that we get the cooperation we should from other governments to really stop the human trafficking. It seems to be growing rather than diminishing.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. I do not disagree with that, Senator. You are going to accuse me of pandering, but I am going to make one additional statement. I have signed a memorandum of understanding, and I signed it the first time about 2 years ago, with a large city police department. It is called the Atlanta Police Department. They have a division that does hate crimes as well as crimes involving trafficking in persons, which are usually sexual- or gender-based crimes. And they are the best trainers that we have anywhere in the world for many of the reasons that you yourself have just laid out.

Part of the challenge, and, therefore, part of the solution, is how we can project the way we deal with these problems here in the United States in a real-world way with police that are overseas in countries that have the same problem. That is part of our challenge.

Senator ISAKSON. Do not ever apologize to the Senate for pandering. We do it all the time. [Laughter.]

Senator ISAKSON. But on the subject, and you and I, I do not think, have ever met, so I want to thank you for teeing up what was going to be my last comment about the Atlanta PD and what they are doing in terms of the gang issue, which in terms of human trafficking and drugs are the enablers in the United States for a lot of the cartels in Latin America and in Mexico.

It is the flow of information of these gangs that can be the best mechanism we can use to stop a lot of trafficking and drug distribution. That is my impression. Do you agree with that?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. I do agree with it. In fact, I try to say it as often as I can. We have signed 110 memoranda of understanding with State and local law enforcement institutions throughout the country. And my message is this is not just in our interests—we get excellent trainers to do programs overseas—it is in their interests, because as they engage overseas in training mis-

sions, they are developing the contacts with foreign police. They are developing the intelligence sources that can in turn be played back to help them do their jobs on the streets of America's cities and communities, whether it is gangs or trafficking organizations or others that are involved in international, transnational organized crime.

Senator ISAKSON. On that point, Mr. Chairman, law enforcement, particularly in the southeastern United States, has developed such a database that the tracking of these gang members and the flow of these gang members is becoming very traceable in a very instantaneous type of approach through a database that has been assembled. It is really helping us to begin to get our arms around this.

So I appreciate you bringing the APD up. Thank you.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Thank you, Senator.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Menendez?

Senator MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your service.

In 2011, the administration released a strategy on combating transnational organized crime with a stated end goal of reducing from a national security threat to a manageable public safety problem, the effects of organized transnational crime.

The strategy outlines five key objectives, identifies dozens of priority actions for implementation. The five objectives of the strategy are protecting U.S. citizens and interests, supporting partner nations to address corruption related to transnational crime, protecting the U.S. financial system from exploitation by organized crime, targeting transnational criminal networks that pose a threat to U.S. national security, and building international cooperation through multilateral fora and public-private partnerships.

In your testimony, however, you noted that INL, and I am quoting, "has recalibrated its work" and focused on two mutually supportive strategic objectives, helping partner governments build, reform, and sustain judicial institutions that enhance the capacity of their criminal justice systems, and developing the global architecture necessary for cross-border law enforcement cooperation and preventing corruption.

So does that represent a strategic shift by the administration? I know that you noted that you are not ready to declare victory, but did circumstances portend defeat? I would like to understand what the recalibration means for U.S. policy. Has our end goal changed? Have the ways to achieve it changed?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Senator, here is the way I would answer that perfectly legitimate question, I would say——

Senator MENENDEZ. I only ask perfectly legitimate questions. [Laughter.]

Senator MENENDEZ. At least I think so.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. I would say that INL is part of a larger group of institutions. We obviously have the Federal law enforcement organizations. We have the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security. We have those that are involved in the counterterrorism efforts as well.

We, therefore, have a piece of the national strategy on transnational organized crime. This was about the time, you may vaguely recall, since you chaired the hearing that foolishly recommended eventually my confirmation in this position, that this was about the time I came into this position. And my decision at that time was, as INL, let us not try to do all of this strategy. Let us pick those elements where we have the greatest ability to influence in a positive way.

And we picked institution-building, because, in a sense, it is what we do across-the-board around the world and developing the global architecture, which is a code for the conventions, the international agreements, the international organizations and mechanisms that allow governments to coordinate and cooperate around the world.

We are actually working the other issues as well, but my guidance to my people 5 years ago was let's pick those areas where we can have the most impact, and where other parts of the United States Government would not naturally be doing as much.

Senator MENENDEZ. I ask the question, and I want to follow up with a different part of your testimony, because, certainly, protecting the U.S. financial system from exploitation, and certainly targeting transnational criminal networks that pose a threat to U.S. national security I would think would be essential elements of any such plan that we would want to pursue.

So the two stated goals that you described that you have narrowed it down to may tangentially help that, but I am not sure it directly does.

So let me ask you this. You say that INL support for capacity-building is now, my emphasis, directed by the requests of our international partners. Host governments and their citizens must own the process of reforming their institutions. It cannot be driven by the desire of the United States or other donors.

Again, it may be more than semantics. But where you say this cannot be driven by the desire of the United States, I absolutely think it should be driven by pursuing our own national security interests and projecting our own values. No one else is going to do that for us.

So I ask these questions because many of us here are trying to give this and whatever future administration the tools it needs to accomplish the goals the administration says it has set, and I hope the administration has not reset INL's goals to only work within the confines of relationships that are not adversarial.

So what happens in many countries—certainly, there are several, the 90 or so that fall within INL's orbit—where the government or others in control do not want our help because that would interfere with their profit-taking or other personal interests.

Are we seeing ourselves, then, as barred from working with other institutions and NGOs and others in those countries that could move toward creating the type of systems that we would want to see?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Senator, I think, in a sense, you and I are reaching the same conclusion, but we are saying it in different ways.

Of course, we want to cooperate with those governments and in those countries that represent, if you will, the greatest transnational organized crime threat to the United States of America. My point in my statement was, if we do not have buy-in or genuine commitment by the host government, we probably are not going to succeed. That is one of those lessons I have learned over the last 37 years.

Now, we certainly can encourage the buy-in. We can nudge the buy-in. We can try to direct and guide the buy-in.

But I had, you will recall, I had the somewhat dubious pleasure of being the United States Ambassador for 3 years to a country whose government was determined to have an adversarial relationship with us. I will not identify it other than to say its capital is located in Caracas.

I could not have delivered one single successful program in terms of institution-building in those 3 years in that country because the government would not cooperate.

That is the point I am trying to make. With some countries, our strategy has to be a periphery strategy. What can we do around the edges to address those issues that represent a threat to the United States? What we want to do is work with the government, with its commitment and its buy-in for these programs, so that they themselves are supporting what we are trying to accomplish, what we are putting resources into, and what we are doing the training for capacity-building.

Senator MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman, I would just—I appreciate your courtesy.

Then in countries like Venezuela and others, this is not unique to them, where they are operating in a way for which there is significant operations in transnational crime, then we must find other ways, if we cannot induce them to participate and have them institutionally decide to move in a direction that is both good for their people and in our national security, then you have to find other ways, it seems to me, to pursue actions that will get them to that.

I look forward to working with the chair and the ranking member to think about those ways, because otherwise we abdicate large swaths of countries in which we are undermined in our overall goal.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate that. As a matter of fact, I would say, based on my trip to Venezuela that took place not long ago, I cannot imagine anything constructive that they would be willing to work with us on under the existing government. So I agree with you. Thank you.

Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Secretary Brownfield. I wanted to ask you some questions about cyber, and I may get to one about fentanyl.

When we talk about cyber so often in this body, in this committee, but I am on the Armed Services Committee as well, we so often talk about it as a state vs. state. Our cyberthreats tend come to from state actors. I am just intrigued by your position at State.

Talk to us a little bit about cyber activities you see from transnational criminal organizations rather than direct state. What

is the magnitude of this threat? What are trends in terms of cyber activity by criminal organizations that we need to be aware of?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Senator, I think you have already put your finger on the three areas where cyber and call it misuse or unlawful use of cyber constitutes a threat to the United States. One is state-to-state, and it is a matter of intelligence, for all intents and purposes, either intelligence collection or intelligence manipulation.

The second is terrorism, which it is connected to but we have treated it as a different issue from the rest of transnational organized crime, and that is the use of cyber for the purpose of supporting in some way, shape, or form terrorist activities and terrorist operations.

The third is pure criminal activity, which is to say the use of cyber for the purpose of stealing or in some way illegally enriching oneself or one's organization.

My suggestion at the end of my oral statement was, as we look at transnational organized crime into the 21st century, we had better be careful because as we make progress on other elements, we may discover that it winds up being the greatest not just law enforcement, but even security challenge to the United States of America.

That is the challenge that we have before us. The challenge that I have is dealing with two different communities as well as my own kind of law enforcement and criminal justice community and figure how we can mutually support or borrow from one another in terms of technologies, techniques, and systems that we have developed for dealing with these issues.

They are similar but they are different. As you well know, based upon other committees that you sit on, if you are working an intelligence issue or a terrorism issue, you are not necessarily thinking about developing a case for prosecution in a court of law. If you are dealing in my area of criminal justice, that is exactly what you are dealing with.

Then the question is how much we can borrow from one another before we have contaminated the product. Either we have contaminated their intelligence or counterterrorism product, or they have contaminated ours.

Those are the sorts of challenges that I am dealing with every day on the matter of cyber.

Senator KAINE. You mentioned in your written testimony, just one quick sentence: "The Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime, for example, provides a model for countries to develop domestic legislation and provides a platform for increased cooperation in cybercrime investigations."

Is the United States actively engaged with that council or similar multinational efforts to specifically focus on cooperation vis-a-vis cybercrime?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Senator, we have adopted the convention of the Council of Europe. We did it not because we are members necessarily of the Council of Europe or that we were a European nation. We did it because, as we looked at the entirety, if you will, of international conventions on the matter of cybercrime about 5 or 10 years ago, we thought this was the best product out there.

Our view was, rather than reinvent the wheel, rather than creating something else from scratch, bringing in 196 different governments, all of whom will have their own particular point of focus or interest or concern, let's use the existing document.

There are some that disagree. The Government of China tells me on a fairly regular basis, which is to say every time I talk to them, that they would like there to be a new international convention on cybercrime. I can understand their position, but my own view is, let's not throw away a working vehicle if, in fact, with minor modification, it can be made to run well for the next 50 or 60 years.

Senator KAINE. One last question, if I could, if you were to give—that was international cooperation—inside the U.S. family, if you were to grade the level of cooperation between the different agencies that touch this, the three kinds of cyber areas you mentioned, whether it is state-to-state or terrorism or pure criminal activities, you are talking DHS, you are talking State, you are talking DOD, you are talking intel agencies, what grade would you give currently to the level of coordination among the parts of the Federal family that touch upon this important issue?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Yes, that is an unfair question. But I have been in this business long enough that I am willing to take a risk and say things I should not say probably.

I would put it this way, Senator. We have probably moved from a C- up to a B- in the last 5 years. That is to say that we are moving in the right direction.

What we are pushing against are decades-long, institutional biases and approaches from specific communities. We are pushing against some degree of stove-piping, which is to say each organization has its own capability and are not particularly anxious to relinquish control over that and mix it in with somebody else. And we are dealing with different desired outcomes or objectives.

And it is a tough challenge. The easy answer would be to tell you or allow you to say to me you guys are just stupid, you cannot figure it out, and do it on your own. It is a bit more than that. This is complicated. This is an issue where we are bringing together different communities that have traditionally, over the last, oh, 300 or 400 years, not worked very closely together.

In some ways, may I offer one ground for hope from the State Department side, part of the solution is the embassies, at least those embassies that are in the middle of the particularly dangerous zones, there it is the United States Government in microcosm. We have a mini president with presidential authorities. We call him or her the ambassador. And when you boil it down to a smaller group of people, there they actually are able to work through some solutions, which we then find, you flip them back to headquarters, and we try to use the same solution here.

It is actually one of the reasons why I have some optimism in this field.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

If you would, Mr. Brownfield, would you expand a little bit on what is occurring in China as you did in our office.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. China today, Mr. Chairman—and this is not evil. This is not bad.

China is today perhaps the world's largest pharmaceutical industry. I read a figure recently that there are 160,000 pharmaceutical companies in China. That strikes me as high, but I read the figure. Do not ask we where I read it, but I can find it at some point, if I have to.

China then confronts a situation where they have an incredibly diverse, extremely energetic pharmaceutical industry that is not anxious to be regulated. The Chinese Government has moved in the right direction in a number of areas. Within the last 6 months, they have moved to register 116 new psychoactive substances. This is the stuff that the pharmaceutical industries of the world can [*unintelligible*] at a rate of several hundred per year with a registration rate in the United Nations system of somewhere between 20 and 30 per year. You can do the math, in terms of what the impact in that regard is.

One of the areas which we have consistently discussed with the Chinese Government, Senator Cardin, is fentanyl, where we have noted that fentanyl is produced in many different forms or analogs in China. They have moved to register, which is to say to control, to require a license for the production of many forms of fentanyl, but not all.

Your question, Mr. Chairman, suggests this answer, which is an accurate one, the overwhelming majority of fentanyl that is consumed in the United States of America, which also produces fentanyl, by the way, for legitimate medical purposes, but very little of that slides out into the black market. The overwhelming majority of fentanyl that is consumed in the United States of America as part of the heroin crisis is produced in China.

The CHAIRMAN. And explain to those who are watching the difference in profitability.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. It is phenomenal, if you assume that the cost of producing fentanyl is not significantly different from the cost of producing heroin. From a rough estimate perspective, that is not a bad assumption, Mr. Chairman. A gram of fentanyl, a gram of heroin, would probably end up being about the same.

The gram of fentanyl will produce a buzz, a high, whatever the noun is you wish to use for it, about 100 times, 80 to 100 times, as powerful as morphine, and 40 to 50 times as powerful as heroin. So you just do the simple math here.

Add to that the fact that the transport of fentanyl can be as simple as taking an envelope and putting several thousand doses of fentanyl in the envelope, sealing it, putting stamps on it, and putting it in the mail. The delivery is much, much simpler than the delivery for heroin.

The CHAIRMAN. If you will, to explain to those who are listening to this, the size of an equivalent cocaine delivery, if you will, that has the same potency that you just described. You are talking about half a shoebox for what you just described. Is that correct?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Yes. That is basically right. I would say that a half shoebox of fentanyl would provide you the same amount of buzz, in purely psychic and drug-related terms, as 25

full shoeboxes of heroin. That is the difference that we are looking at.

That is why an envelope produces as much as a substantial, like multi-kilo, shipment of heroin.

And fentanyl in and of itself, if properly used, Mr. Chairman, doesn't kill you. It is still used in the American medical community under obviously tight control by an anesthesiologist. The problem that we have is when the fentanyl is mixed with heroin and the user either does not know he has fentanyl at all or has bad fentanyl or has miscalculated, given the potency of the fentanyl, how much he can absorb.

That is what is killing Americans at the rate they are dying these days in the heroin crisis.

The CHAIRMAN. I look forward to another round of questions where we can talk a little bit about authorities that you might like to have to do your job better.

But with that, Senator Cardin?

Senator CARDIN. Just to underscore that point, in my meetings that I have had in Maryland, the fentanyl issue has been highlighted as the growing problem, and where we get most of our overdose fatalities. So it is a very, very serious problem today in Maryland and around the Nation.

I do not think we are going to have time today to understand this, but I think you are suggesting that the source, China, is one of the largest sources that is coming into the United States. Is that correct?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Yes. The overwhelming majority. Although much of it comes in via Mexico, but that——

Senator CARDIN. The criminal elements that are bringing it into the United States are similar to the heroin trafficking?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. They are. In fact, more often than not, Senator, they are exactly the same criminal organizations.

Senator CARDIN. But they are using it as a source? Rather than homegrown poppy in Mexico, they are doing the synthetic drug in China?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. My view, as of right now, as to how this is happening is that the heroin itself is grown and produced in Mexico, that which is consumed in the United States. The fentanyl is produced in China, much of it, probably most of it. It is then processed, shipped through Mexico, where it is then put into the pipeline, the same pipeline that moves heroin into the United States.

Senator CARDIN. Here I hope that your relationship with the Mexican authorities is helping us with our capacities to try to stop that flow from China to Mexico to the United States.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Yes. In fact, again, Senator, the Government of Mexico has worked with us. Fentanyl is a controlled substance in Mexico. It is not openly available so that it can only move through Mexico through criminal means.

So we are starting from a positive starting point. We still, obviously, have a lot of work to do.

Senator CARDIN. You said in your oral presentation, you have it in your written presentation, the direct relationship between corruption and transnational organized crime. You talk about govern-

ments that are corrupted at the senior level are ripe for this type of activity, and you talked about the impact it has within the country itself.

So I want to hone down, just for a moment, on the corruption issues we have in regards to the heroin or the synthetic drugs coming into the United States. There are problems in Mexico and the United States. Can you just tell us the degree to which corruption is entering into this and what we should be aware of?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Sure. Senator, corruption is the great enabler for drug trafficking, quite frankly, for any kind of trafficking, criminal trafficking, in the world, to such an extent that I would say that if you did not have corruption, the trafficking networks would not work. They could not operate.

The corruption literally is corruption of individuals. They might be customs officials. They might be border officials. They might be police or airport or seaport officials. In other words, the corruption that allows them to move their physical product through the chokepoints—because any trafficking network will have to chokepoints. They usually are at borders. They might be at airport borders or seaport borders. But they have to move their product through there.

As they move into money laundering, they have to deal with bankers and others in the financial institutions who will be aware of what is moving through but willing either to participate or look the other way. Those are corrupted officials.

At the end of the day, if a trafficking organization does not have a network of corrupted officials, it will not succeed.

Do we see them in Mexico? Yes, of course, we do. As you well know, you will find them, perhaps in different numbers, but you will find them in the United States of America as well. We are not immune to corruption.

And in countries with a lower income level than in the United States, the possibility of a multibillion-dollar company or cartel offering a sum of money that might equal 100 years' salary to a police officer or a customs official solely to look the other way is a tremendous inducement. And it is why corruption, in my opinion, has to be one of our highest priorities as we address transnational organized crime, perhaps for the rest of this century.

Senator CARDIN. Let me just point out that Secretary Kerry recently announced a $70 million program in regard to fighting corruption. I would just urge that we maybe look at additional resources here, and I thank you very much for highlighting that point.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Gardner?

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you for being here today and your testimony.

I wanted to follow up and perhaps talk a little bit further about Mexico as well. I had the opportunity to visit with many in their government this past November. We talked a little bit about the Merida Initiative and some of the efforts taking place there.

How effective do you think the Merida Initiative has been? Since 2008, we spent about $1.5 billion in taxpayer money. How has that been? I know they are making some changes as well in Mexico on

judicial reform. Can you maybe talk about both the effectiveness of the initiative and perhaps how their changes in judicial prosecutions will affect transnational crime, drug trafficking issues, et cetera?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Senator, I am going to answer your question in two parts. First, I am going to work through the four so-called pillars of the Merida Initiative and offer my views on how successful we have been on each one.

One pillar was a modern 21st-century border between the U.S. and Mexico. I think we have made tremendous progress there. I think they have equipment, they have capabilities, they have people that they did not have before.

We have reached a point now where we are focusing much more effort on Mexico's southern border, that with Guatemala and Belize, because much of what we are trying to control and manage is the flow of migrants and people as well as drugs through Mexico.

Second is taking down criminal organizations. They have done a very good job of taking down the leadership of a number of cartels. A critic or skeptic would push back and say, yes, but they seem to be replaced, and the cartels have not disappeared. Some have. Some have not. I would give them at least a passing grade in that regard.

Third is building stronger institutions. I do believe that the federal Government of Mexico today has far better, more professional, better trained and equipped institutions than they did at the start of the Merida Initiative 7 or 8 years ago.

The challenge now, in my opinion, is trying to take that capacity and expand it into the 32 states as well as the federal district of Mexico City, since Mexico, like the United States, is a federal state.

Finally, building stronger communities, particularly up along near their northern frontier with the United States, I mean, the truth is the Mexican economy is what drives that. When the economy is going well, the communities are better. When the economy is down, the communities are less strong.

That is taking the four things that we described as our Merida Initiative and giving them a report card.

Where are we across-the-board?

First, the realities are changing. We are dealing today more with transnational organized crime. When we started Merida, we were focused on largely cocaine and, to a lesser extent, heroin. We have to adjust Merida to reflect that reality.

Second, we were dealing with a different Mexican Government. That government left office at the end of 2012. The now not-so-new-government has a right to determine its own priorities. I think we are making progress there, but we have to continue to work that.

At the end of the day, my assessment is we are substantially better in our bilateral relationship with Mexico today than we were at the start of the Merida Initiative. That in and of itself gives good value to the United States of America.

Senator GARDNER. One of the concerns I picked up on, particularly when it comes to drug trafficking issues, was concern from some that decriminalization efforts of marijuana in the United

States was hurting our efforts to stop drug trafficking out of Mexico. Can you talk about that perhaps?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Yes, I will do it carefully, Senator. I am aware of who I am speaking to right now.

I will say that it is impossible for me to go to Mexico and talk to the Mexican Government without hearing from virtually everyone I talk to the seeming contradiction between us seeking to cooperate with them in terms of controlling dangerous drugs while, in our own Nation, four States of the union have now proceeded to legalize, by which I mean the State Government has a direct financial interest in the cultivation, production, sale, purchase, of cannabis.

I understand their message. I do not seek to dictate to the people of Colorado, Oregon, or Washington State, or Alaska, what they will decide to do. I do think I understand the United States Constitution and the Federal system of government.

I say that it complicates my life internationally. And I am going to leave it at that, because I do acknowledge the people of Colorado have every right in the world to determine the laws that they wish to be governed by.

Senator GARDNER. I have run out of time here, but perhaps we could have another conversation about Burma. I recently visited there, and we spent a tremendous amount of time talking about the drug situation there. The 2016 report, International Narcotics Control Strategy, talked about Burma continuing to be a major source of opium and exporter of heroin second only to Afghanistan.

So perhaps we could submit a question for the record for you in terms of Burma collaboration, what is happening with the new democratic government in Burma, in terms of the production eradication efforts in trafficking, and then I would like to talk a little bit further and get more detail on the trafficking of drugs in Burma by the Burmese military and their complicit role they play in this ongoing effort.

So I would like a little bit more about that at some point.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Senator, I welcome the question, because, I have to tell you, the timing I think is very good. My read of Burma right now is this new government actually is ready to do some serious things on drugs and counternarcotics that they have not been willing to do for 30 years.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. You have been a great witness, and we thank you for the commitment and time and knowledge on this topic. Let me just wrap up.

I want to go back to Colombia for a second. When the President was here, everyone was spiking the ball, if you will. Negotiations on FARC were progressing and people were happy and all of that.

But I guess as I prepared for this hearing today, it feels to me like the reason things are progressing politically is they are easing up on the very thing we began working on so hard, and that was production within their own country.

I just want to make sure I leave here with a proper understanding from a witness who has lived and breathed this.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Mr. Chairman, I am going to give you an honest answer, but a careful answer. I want to be careful because I said it before and I will say it again, I admire and respect tremendously the Government of Colombia. Until he became President, I would have called the current President of Colombia a friend of mine. You obviously cannot be a friend to President. They are far too distinguished to permit something as low and common as common friendship.

But I know and admire Juan Manuel Santos enormously. I respect what is trying to do. He is trying to bring to conclusion a 50-year armed conflict that has killed tens of thousands of Colombian citizens. I not only respect that, I support it and endorse it.

It is my view that it should be possible to pursue those negotiations to reach that conclusion without having to walk the clock back to where we were 8 or 9 years ago, in terms of drug cultivation and production in Colombia. It is my view that it should be possible to continue to eradicate or have the threat of eradication so that thousands of campesinos, many of them encouraged perhaps by the FARC guerrillas, do not believe that it is open season on planting as much coca as they might wish.

We have opened a discussion with them. It is a good discussion, because these guys are our friends. We have been partners and allies with them now for more than 16 years under Plan Colombia.

I do not mean to be critical of them. I mean to state an obvious fact. The amount of cocaine being produced in Colombia has doubled in the last 2-plus years. That is kind of a disturbing fact, since most Colombian cocaine traditionally and historically is transported to the United States.

We need to work together to figure out how to deal with eradication, which is to say to stop the actual cultivation; to deal with taking down the laboratories, which convert the raw coca into cocaine; to go after the criminal organizations, those organizations, not necessarily the FARC guerillas, but the criminal organizations that are trafficking the product; and then, finally, how to interdict the product as it is moving from Colombia to North America; and how to attack their financial networks.

It should be possible to do that. I intend to do that. You have my absolute word of honor that there will not be an opportunity of mine when I am talking to the Government of Colombia when I do not make this point and have this discussion with them.

The CHAIRMAN. But my sense is, for what it is worth, we missed that opportunity when he was here last. And there was a lot of happy talk here about Plan Colombia.

What I hear you saying, with all your niceties regarding the government and your friendship with the existing President, is that he is not pursuing both tracks in the way that he could be, that he is pursuing the relationship with FARC and ending what has certainly been a blight on their country for a long time, but he is not pursuing as heavily the issue that has been at the core of this, and that is production of cocaine in their country that is coming to the United States in the way that he could.

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Mr. Chairman, I am not going to walk that far down this road. I am going to go back to where I left it before.

We are talking. We are moving in the right direction. How we got there, I am going to leave that to the historians and the people far smarter than me.

What I will say is that I believe there is now a realization we have a serious problem, and we are now talking to our friends and partners and allies in the Colombian Government as to how to solve this problem.

And on that, I feel pretty good. We are all entitled to our own views as to how we got into this situation. The only point that I am making is, I believe we are working on a route out of it. We know how to do it. For the love of Pete, it is what we were doing from the year 2000 until the year 2012, 2013, very, very effectively. And I am determined that we are going to do it again.

That is the way I would respond to your valid comments.

The CHAIRMAN. We are the authorizing committee for the work that you do. Are there some authorities that we could provide to you that would cause your job to be easier, to be successful?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Mr. Chairman, I am going to answer that question this way. Obviously, as one Assistant Secretary among several, and one department among a bunch in the Federal Government, I will not express a view as to what the executive branch believes it needs in terms of new authorities.

I will state the following, however. The last authorization that INL received was more than 20 years ago. Since that time, the United States has moved from a cocaine crisis to a heroin crisis. We have moved from a drug-focused international crime effort to a larger transnational organized crime effort. We have moved from an overwhelming focus on the Western Hemisphere to having to deal with places like Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Are there areas that were not addressed in the early 1990s? Yes, undoubtedly there are. And I would welcome a discussion with this committee in the months ahead.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator Flake?

Senator FLAKE. Thank you for your testimony.

If we can talk about sub-Saharan Africa for a bit, it has many of the characteristics that make it prone to transnational terrorism and financing and criminal networks operating.

Let's talk about East Africa for a minute with al-Shabaab. What evidence do we see there of transnational criminal networks operating?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. Huge evidence, Senator. In fact, I mentioned it in my oral statement, and I would say it again right now. Africa is, from my perspective, one of my three principal focuses, foci, as I look outside of the Western Hemisphere, in terms of direct criminal networks with direct impact on the United States.

The reason is that two specific parts of Africa, West Africa and south East Africa, have become transit points for trafficking flows that are moving either east-west from Asia en route to markets in Europe or North America, or north-south, which is to say from, say, South America into West Africa and then seeking market in Western Europe, if not flipping back across.

We need to have focus on both of these from a pure trafficking perspective. The problem that we have is weak institutions in a number of countries in Africa, which make them very attractive for multibillion-dollar trafficking organizations.

We also have organizations like al-Shabaab or Boko Haram or further up north Al Qaeda or the Islamic State, which are able to corrupt and then use government institutions as well.

Africa, from my perspective, is a very important point of focus without even going into the wildlife trafficking area, which we have become engaged in more aggressively over the last 3 and 4 years.

Senator FLAKE. What are some of our strategies in East Africa. Let's take it with al-Shabaab. There are concerns, obviously. It is a transit point along the coast there. Obviously, we have concerns. What are we doing?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. First, you have correctly summarized the nature of the threat, and the nature of the threat is product and criminal activity that originates, for the most part, in South Asia, although the product may actually be further up in Central Asia. Then it is transported from South Asia to East Africa for, in a sense, transshipment.

That becomes a point where it is introduced into a north-south access moving either to Europe or flipping across the continent and moving into North America.

What we are trying to do is build institutions that are better capable of addressing the problem, providing direct support, operational support to existing law enforcement organizations, and using vetted units or specialized units in whom we have a great deal of confidence and are able to share intelligence and information with, and ensuring that their regional coordination and cooperation is such that permits them to actually pass off or hand off movements or organizations that are moving across borders and frontiers so that crossing a frontier doesn't completely lift all of the danger to the criminal trafficking organization.

And I would say that in East Africa, we are better today than we were 5 years ago. We are still miles away from being able to say that we are comfortable with and confident that these countries and these governments can control their own borders.

Senator FLAKE. Do we have any successes that we can point to specifically in terms of cooperation with local officials that has yielded benefits that are tangible?

Ambassador BROWNFIELD. We have had several major drug seizures, mostly heroin, coming in from Southwest Asia that have been picked up, for the most part, at seaports, in some cases at airports.

In fact, I will shoot you, if you wish, I will get you a written summary of some of those success stories. We have also taken down several of what I would call midsized trafficking organizations in East Africa, although not the international or global organizations. And we have had some success, some of which has made the newspapers, in terms of reducing if not shutting down the flow of what is one of Africa's great criminal exports, and that is illegally trafficked ivory and rhino horn. So I would suggest to you we do have some success stories. They are not as many as I would like to be able to report.

Senator FLAKE. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, you have been an outstanding witness. We thank you again for your years of commitment to this issue. We look forward to following up with you relative to some updates that may occur that give you greater freedoms and flexibilities to do your job.

I know that you have a hard stop for a meeting that you need to attend, so thank you again for your time, both here, but also in preparation for the meeting. And we look forward to seeing you again.

There will be other questions that people will have in writing, and we will keep the record open until the close of business on Monday. If you could get to those fairly promptly, we would appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN. But thank you again. And with that, the meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:48 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD BY SENATOR CORKER

Question 1. The U.S. was able to help the Colombian government strengthen the rule of law across its territory. There were of course some key variables present, including Alvaro Uribe. Is that experience actually replicable elsewhere? How, for example, can it be done in Central America?

Answer. For nearly two decades, Colombia and the United States have worked together to bolster rule of law in Colombia and throughout the hemisphere, including by confronting transnational crime and minimizing the harmful effects of criminal activity, including narcotics trafficking. This partnership has demonstrated results: Since 2002, Colombia has experienced an 89 percent reduction in kidnappings and a 48 percent reduction in homicides. Colombia has emerged as a supplier of civilian security assistance and expertise through the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan on Regional Security, whereby Colombian security officials train and advise their counterparts throughout the hemisphere.

The situation our Central America partners face is similar, but not identical, to Colombia's experience, requiring an assistance approach tailored to the realities on the ground. Unlike Plan Colombia, our engagement in Central America encompasses multiple countries with differing levels of development. Success requires action from several governments instead of one to strengthen rule of law throughout the region. The Department identified three lessons learned from Colombia that informed our general approach to the development of the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) and later the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America: 1) Dramatic change is possible; 2) Partnership is essential; and 3) Enhancing civilian security requires a sustained, comprehensive approach.

Our experience in Colombia, when coupled with similar lessons learned from the Merida Initiative in Mexico, demonstrates that each country is complex, nuanced, and requires an approach that harnesses the entire breadth and depth of law enforcement, criminal justice, and community violence prevention tools at our disposal. Lasting change also requires a long term commitment on both sides. Our approach to implementing the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America builds upon these past experiences, drawing from best practices and lessons learned while adapting to realities and conditions on the ground. Many challenges in the region are deeply entrenched, but they are not insurmountable.

Question 2. Crime and insecurity are said to reduce GDP growth by as much as 8% in some developing countries. In the past, Congress enacted trade preferences for Andean nations both as an incentive for cooperation on counter-drug operations

and to boost legal commerce. How can we best align policies to encourage sustainable economic growth with efforts to combat Transnational Organized Crime?

Answer. The President's 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime highlighted transnational organized crime's exploitation of poor governance, insecurity and corruption. Taken together, these conditions enable the expansion of transnational organized crime and impede the ability of international partners to achieve sustainable growth. Although trade relationships are not within INL's direct purview, the Administration and Department recognize that many of the same conditions conducive for U.S. investment and trade can also reduce the ability of transnational organized crime to operate. In particular, countries must take effective steps to reduce corruption and promote transparency and reliable rule of law; protect the integrity of global supply networks to reduce illicit trade; provide access to justice and formal dispute mechanisms; and protect intellectual property rights from copyright infringements and piracy.

The Administration has pursued these objectives as part of its trade negotiations, most notably in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The TPP has established new standards for action against corruption as part of a trade agreement, including commitments to adopt, maintain, and enforce criminal laws to deter corruption by public officials, to maintain codes of conduct to promote integrity among public officials, to adopt laws criminalizing corruption in accounting practice, and to effectively enforce anti-corruption laws. Participants must ratify or accede to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and criminalize bribery of public officials. They should also have a code of conduct in place for public officials and take measures to decrease conflicts of interest; and take steps to discourage illegitimate gifts and discipline officials engaging in acts of corruption.

Transnational organized crime earns annual profits in the billions of dollars from intellectual property rights infringement, and the TPP also contains a chapter that promotes high standards of protection and provides fair access to legal systems in the region to enforce those rights. Drawing from and building on other bilateral and regional trade agreements, it includes commitments to combat counterfeiting, piracy and other infringement, including trade secret theft; obligations to facilitate legitimate digital trade, including in creative content; and provisions to promote development of, and access to, innovative and generic medicines. For additional information on TPP or other trade agreements, we recommend you contact the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

Question 3. Transnational Organized Crime touches otherwise legal industries. In our own country and elsewhere, contraband cigarettes are trafficked by criminal organizations involved in other illegal activities. An interagency report issued last December, entitled "The Global Illicit Trade in Tobacco: A Threat to National Security", the Obama Administration estimated that the illegal trafficking in tobacco products costs government worldwide a total of $40-50 billion per year in lost tax revenue. How big a problem is contraband tobacco and is it a good example of how transnational crime is intertwined with legal commerce?

Answer. The illicit trade in tobacco is a multi-billion dollar business that fuels crime and corruption, undermines the rule of law, and creates insecurity and instability around the world. As cited in the U.S. interagency publication, "The Global Illicit Trade in Tobacco: A Threat to National Security," the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that, as of 2006, the world-wide tax loss to the black market for illegal tobacco is $40-50 billion annually with illicit tobacco products making up 10% of all cigarettes consumed worldwide. Within the United States, where the illicit market is mostly contraband cigarettes moving between states, a recent study by the National Academies of Sciences estimate the annual tax loss related to the contraband market in the United States to be $2.95 to $6.92 billion, which represents 8.5% to 21% of the market or 1.24 to 2.91 billion packs of illicit cigarettes.

The illicit trade in tobacco products demonstrates how transnational crime can become intertwined with legal commerce. The Financial Action Task Force concluded in their 2012 report "Illicit Tobacco Trade" that large scale smuggling operations account for a vast majority of the international illicit trade in cigarettes. Organized crime groups have been engaged in cigarette smuggling for decades and exploit taxation differentials and vulnerabilities in supply chains and border security to make substantial profits. Depending on the type of illicit tobacco product (contraband, cheap/illicit whites, or counterfeit cigarettes), the point of departure from the licit market to the illicit market varies. Contraband cigarettes are produced legally and diverted into the illicit market when the appropriate taxes are not paid—unusually at the wholesale or retail stage. Cheap whites, or illicit whites, are also produced

legally but become illicit during the taxation and in transit stages. Finally, counterfeit cigarettes are an illicit product at production.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD BY SENATOR SHAHEEN

Question 1. How is the State Department partnering with other agencies, like the Department of Homeland Security, on this cross-cutting issue of counter-narcotics smuggling across our southern border?

Answer. The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) works with several U.S. federal law enforcement agencies and the Government of Mexico to create a 21st century border, one that facilitates legitimate commerce and movement of people while curtailing the illicit flow of drugs, people, arms, and currency across our southern border. INL programs strengthen security at Mexico's southern and northern border crossings, points of entry, and internal checkpoints to increase Mexico's capacity to stem the flow of illicit drugs and counter the activities of drug trafficking groups.

In collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP), INL trains Mexican Federal Police officers to better respond to cross-border incidents and coordinate operations with the U.S. Border Patrol. INL and the Department of Defense (DoD) helped establish a cross-border communications network to provide direct voice communication between CBP and Mexican Federal Police along the U.S.-Mexico border, enhancing cross-border coordination. INL and DHS are currently working to provide data and video connectivity and to expand communication capabilities to state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies along the border. INL's partnership with CBP has led to coordinated enforcement actions to disrupt and degrade drug trafficking organization activities.

INL also partnered with CBP to provide canines and related training to several Mexican agencies at the federal and state level. Mexican canine handlers traveled to CBP's Canine Centers in El Paso, TX, and Front Royal, VA, to receive training and enhance their interdiction capabilities.

In collaboration with DoD, INL provided telecommunications equipment throughout the border state of Chihuahua to enhance communication and operational coordination for Chihuahua state police. INL is currently working with DoD on a similar project to enhance radio network coverage in Mexico's southern border region. This project will improve the operations of Mexican agencies along the southern border by allowing them to better coordinate enforcement and interdiction activities.

In partnership with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), INL performed a comprehensive security assessment in several airports throughout Mexico. These assessments will help guide future programming to ensure compliance with international and TSA security standards.

INL also partners with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to enhance Mexico's interdiction capabilities. The DEA provides training to augment Mexico's ability to identify, investigate, and interdict clandestine heroin labs, and better prepare Mexican law enforcement officers to dismantle them.

INL works also with the Department of Justice to strengthen Mexican justice sector institutions and professionalize law enforcement at the federal and state levels, developing effective tools to prosecute drug traffickers, seize their assets, and limit their ability to influence state institutions via corruption and threats of violence.

Question 2. Could you describe your Bureau's cooperation with the Defense Department to counter transnational crime and narcotics smuggling? To what extent do Defense Department authorities overlap with State Department foreign assistance authorities? How should State and DOD share the responsibility and resources devoted to building law enforcement capabilities to combat transnational crime?

Answer. INL and the Department of Defense provide complementary assistance to international partners under our respective authorities. Under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, the Secretary of State is responsible for providing counternarcotics and anti-crime assistance to foreign governments and international organizations, and for coordinating all such assistance of the U.S. government (22 U.S.C. 2291). Many activities conducted under DoD's temporary counternarcotics support authorities could also be conducted under INL's broader assistance authority.

Presidential Policy Directive 23 (PPD-23), issued in April 2013, governs the process by which the U.S. government coordinates Security Sector Assistance (SSA), including to foster interagency policy coherence and collaboration. The PPD requires

the Department of State, designated as the lead agency for SSA, and other agencies, including the Department of Defense, to work together to coordinate SSA activities, from planning, to formulation, through to implementation and monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the U.S. is projecting a coordinated foreign policy through our security assistance activities. PPD-23 coordination between the Department of State and Department of Defense is particularly important as Department of Defense authorities, SSA funding levels, and U.S. military activities involving civilian entities overseas have increased substantially over the past several years.

In general, law enforcement capacity building should be civilian-led and focused, rather than military. In some cases, DoD-led assistance may be more appropriate given resources, security, or other requirements. However, in such circumstances, all programming should be subject to appropriate foreign policy oversight to ensure it advances broader policy objectives and the development of the recipient's entire security sector in the long term.

Question 3. Unfortunately, Afghanistan remains the world leader in opium production, which is a critical source of revenue for the Taliban. As the Afghan government confronts a militarily resurgent Taliban, are there opportunities to undercut their ability to finance operations by stepping-up Afghan counter-drug efforts?

Answer. Despite a difficult security situation, we are working closely with the Afghan government and expanding our collaboration with the U.S. Department of Defense to intensify our counternarcotics efforts. In the last two years, the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has worked to support two specialized units of the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan—the Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU) and the National Interdiction Unit (NIU). These units partner with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and have arrested individuals and targeted production facilities that exist in insurgent-held areas. In 2015, the SIU and NIU conducted 309 operations, seizing 15.2 metric tons (mt) of opium, 6.7 mt of morphine and morphine base, and 76 mt of hashish. This year, the NIU arrested major Afghan trafficker Haji Watan in Nangarhar, who was later sentenced to 17 years in prison. Also, on May 13, on a single operation in Nangarhar, the NIU (with support from a U.S. Special Forces unit) destroyed two tons of opium, heroin, and partially processed morphine as well as two laboratories. On June 5, the NIU executed search warrants on labs in Badakhshan province as part of an airmobile assault, seizing 173 kilograms (kgs) of heroin and morphine. Despite the finite number of security forces available to fight both the insurgency and conduct counternarcotics operations, the Afghan government understands the nexus between the Taliban and illicit drug revenues, and has made an effort to apply pressure on traffickers wherever security conditions permit.

Question 4. Much like the Taliban, Hizbollah in Lebanon is another terrorist group that mixes its terrorist activity with criminal activity. How are counterterrorism and counter-crime objectives complementary and what are some examples of where we are working to combat this convergence?

Answer. Terrorism and transnational organized crime, and the instability, corruption, and violence they cause, pose threats to the interests and security of the United States. Countering these challenges requires reliable international partners with the determination and capacity to uphold the rule of law. Through collaborative assistance, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) builds partner country criminal justice capacity and the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism (CT) expands on this capacity to enhance skills specific to the investigation and prosecution of acts of terrorism. Building the capacity of the criminal justice sector to fairly and justly fight crime increases public confidence in security forces and improves government legitimacy, creating space and credibility to combat extremism and terrorism. Anti-crime efforts often work to reduce funding streams for terrorist activities.

In Lebanon, INL training for the Lebanese police, the Internal Security Forces (ISF), the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Justice promotes increased skills in criminal investigation, police-prosecutor collaboration, financial and cyber-crimes, forensic capacities, crisis management and response, as well as improved criminal justice data integration throughout the entire criminal justice system. INL assistance works to ensure that Lebanese law enforcement institutions address criminal and terrorism concerns in a comprehensive and deliberate manner, serve the public more effectively, and are seen as a more capable and legitimate force that have the authority to project the government's sovereignty and authority throughout Lebanon. Through targeted training and assistance for the ISF and other security sector institutions, CT expands upon INL-supported training to build advanced capac-

ities to stem the flow of arms and terrorists across Lebanese borders and to enhance law enforcement investigative capabilities that will increase prosecution of terrorism and terrorism financing cases and prevent further attacks.

The Philippines is another example where terrorist groups and criminal activity converge. INL addresses this problem by strengthening police-prosecutor cooperation, improving prosecutorial training and skills development, promoting legislative and regulatory reforms designed to improve the operation of the criminal justice system, and developing and supporting better use of existing criminal procedure tools. CT assistance builds upon this capacity by mentoring and training Philippines prosecutors on terrorist legal procedure and legislature reform, police-prosecutor cooperation on terrorism cases, advanced evidence collection, and anti-money laundering and combatting terrorist financing.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED
TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY BROWNFIELD BY SENATOR RUBIO

Question 1. According to the 2015 National Drug Threat Assessment, Mexican transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) remain the greatest criminal drug threat to the United States; no other group can challenge them in the near term. They control drug trafficking across the Southwest Border and are moving to expand their share of U.S. illicit drug markets, particularly heroin markets.

Based on year over year assessments of the Mexican TCOs activities and the increase of heroin availability both in Florida and across the United States, why is the U.S. Government failing to stop this influx of narcotics?

Answer. Reducing the influx of narcotics into the United States requires effort on both drug supply and demand reduction strategies. The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) is working with the Government of Mexico to help build the capacity of Mexico's law enforcement and rule of law institutions to disrupt drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and to dimish the flow of heroin and other drugs from Mexico to the United States.

Over the past year, our bilateral dialogue with Mexico on heroin has reached an unprecedented level of engagement, leading to enhanced U.S.-Mexico collaboration on this critically important issue. In March 2016, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDPC) Director Michael Botticelli and INL Assistant Secretary William Brownfield participated in meetings with the Mexican interagency, hosted by the Attorney General's Office (PGR), to discuss U.S.-Mexico collaboration on heroin and potential new areas of assistance. The PGR is now serving as the lead on bilateral engagement on heroin, and regularly convenes the other Mexican entities involved with the heroin issue. The PGR committed to create a National Office for Drug Control Policy to help coordinate poppy eradication efforts and the destruction of heroin laboratories. The Government of Mexico is currently completing its National Drug Policy Plan and corresponding heroin plan. This plan will provide a greater understanding of how Mexican government eradication and interdiction responsibilities will be organized going forward, and it will help the United States identify the best areas for assistance.

Ongoing INL assistance includes training and capacity building for police at federal and state levels, enhancing Mexico's interdiction capabilities through the donation of non-intrusive inspection equipment (NIIE) and support for canine units, and assistance with Mexico's transition to an accusatory justice system to more effectively hold traffickers and other criminals accountable. INL is also augmenting Mexico's capacity to identify and dismantle clandestine heroin and methamphetamine labs.

We refer you to the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for additional details on the U.S. government's strategy to reduce the demand for drugs domestically.

Question 2. How do you gather information on the activities of Mexican TCOs in the United States? How reliable is current information on Mexico's heroin and fentanyl production? How might that data be improved?

Answer. The Government of Mexico has taken steps to improve its collection of data relating to the production of heroin. They have been working with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and two universities, the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences in Vienna, Austria, to design and validate a methodology for collecting data on poppy cultivation. On June 22, 2016, the Mexican government and UNODC released their first report on poppy cultivation within Mexico based on this method-

ology. Focusing on data collected between July 2014 and June 2015, the report notes an average estimate of approximately 24,800 hectares (ha) poppy cultivated nationwide during the timeframe, and a higher end estimate of 28,100 ha, which aligns closely with the estimate published by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for 2015. This study serves as a baseline to measure the scale of poppy cultivation in Mexico and marks an important step towards countering heroin production in Mexico.

Collection and reporting of data on fentanyl production is not yet as advanced as it is for heroin. Because the drug is synthetically produced, it is not possible to rely on satellite images and photos of crops. Instead, data typically comes from testing seized drugs for the presence of fentanyl. The U.S. government is working with the Mexican government to identify clandestine laboratories and to increase the seizure of illicit drugs through additional training and the use of interdiction equipment and detection canines.

We refer you to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for additional details on the activities of Mexican transnational criminal organizations in the United States and estimates for heroin and fentanyl production within Mexico.

Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO) Strategy

Question 3. What was the impetus behind this strategy? Who is in charge of implementing it in the Western Hemisphere and where does it rank in terms of U.S. priorities for the region?

Answer. The President's 2011 Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime (Strategy) reflects the Administration's recognition that transnational organized crime (TOC) has expanded dramatically in size, scope, and influence over the past two decades and that it poses a significant threat to national and international security. The Strategy provides a framework to direct U.S. power against those TOC actors, activities, and networks on a global scale that are determined to pose the greatest threat to national and international security. The whole-of-government Strategy establishes several priority actions, including; enhancing intelligence and information sharing; protecting the financial system against TOC; strengthening interdiction, investigations, and prosecutions; disrupting trafficking of drugs and other contraband; and building the capacities of and cooperation with international partners.

Within the Western Hemisphere, the Strategy interlocks with and guides the relevant strategic goals of several other U.S. security assistance, counterdrug, and capacity-building efforts, including the Merida Initiative, the Central America Regional Security Initiative, and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

All of these initiatives are based on the Strategy's recognition that TOC threats in our hemisphere threaten the health and safety of U.S. citizens within our own borders, and among our international partners, undermine the rule of law, fuel corruption, and threaten public order and citizen security. Implementation of these initiatives is overseen by U.S. diplomatic missions, led in each country by the respective U.S. Chief of Mission, in coordination with Department of State and interagency stakeholders with relevant authorities pertaining to specific programs.

Sanctions Related to TCO Strategy

Question 4. How have sanctions imposed on TCOs helped combat the crime groups that OFAC has named on the list, including los Zetas and MS-13?

Answer. The Department of State refers you to the Department of the Treasury for questions regarding sanction programs under the authority of and administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control.

Question 5. On the other hand, how do the sanctions limit the ability of State and USAID to work with groups in cases like that of Central American gangs, where reintegration programs have not been carried out due to OFAC's failure to give State/USAID a license to do so?

Answer. USAID and INL generally refrain from investing in tertiary prevention programming directed at reducing recidivism for individuals already in conflict with the law partly due to OFAC's July 25, 2011 designation of Los Zetas and October 11, 2012 designation of MS-13 as significant transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) pursuant to Executive Order 13581.

Studies and relatively successful implementation of crime prevention and reduction programming such as those advocated by the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, promote and emphasize the need for holistic or comprehensive approaches based on differentiated levels of risk that include prevention, intervention, law enforcement and reentry programs. This type of approach is consistent with our Place Based Strategy, which consists of geographi-

cally concentrated, evidence-informed interventions by multiple stakeholders in strategic high-crime areas and is focused on reducing homicides, preventing violence, and improving citizen security.

Only by addressing all these areas can we hope to interrupt youth currently involved in a life of criminality who are at the highest risk of escalating their participation in crime and violence in the future.

Question 6. To what extent are transnational criminal organizations funding political campaigns in the hemisphere?

Answer. Through our embassies, the Department of State and U.S. law enforcement agencies are working closely with partner governments in the region to confront transnational criminal organizations. We cannot address ongoing investigations, but it is clear that criminal organizations and corrupt businesses use unlawful means, including funding political campaigns, to facilitate their nefarious activities.

In July 2015, the UN's International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) estimated political parties in Guatemala derived around half of their financing through corruption, including 25 percent from criminal organizations. The CICIG report cited such factors as weak campaign finance regulation, lack of independent media, and widespread impunity regarding political corruption. Recent allegations of criminal involvement in campaigns include Peru in 2014, when the National Jury of Elections listed 345 candidates in local elections who had been taken to court for a range of crimes, including drug-trafficking. In Mexican election results announced June 6, voters elected new parties to govern nine states; polls indicated this was because incumbents failed to crack down on corruption and violence. There was significant press coverage of allegations of criminal connections to the campaigns in Chihuahua, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo, Vera Cruz, and Sinaloa. The Mexican congress passed a series of anti-corruption measures in June that should provide greater electoral transparency.

Across the region, citizens, the media, and civil society are putting pressure on governments to act against political corruption. Through our citizen security initiatives we are working with partner governments to strengthen the rule of law, increase transparency, and strengthen civil society. It is only with improved law enforcement, enhanced judicial systems, and more transparent government institutions we can expect to successfully address the threat posed by criminal organizations and corruption. The indictment of former Guatemalan President Otto Molina Perez on corruption charges and the issuance of an arrest warrant for former Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli highlight that governments can take serious action against political corruption.

Question 7. To what extent have illicit finances from transnational crime distorted Central American economies and markets?

Answer. Central American countries have demonstrated varying levels of commitment to rooting out corruption and illicit finance in the region and undertaking reforms necessary to achieve an economically integrated region that provides economic opportunities to all its people; enjoys more accountable, transparent, and effective public institutions; and ensures a safe environment for its citizens. In the past year, Central American governments have been working closely with U.S. government officials on a number of high-profile cases to curb illicit finance activities in the region.

In October 2015, following the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designation of the Rosenthal Money Laundering Organization, which included Jaime Rosenthal, a former vice president, and Yankel Rosenthal, a former investment promotion minister, Honduras took steps to isolate the designated parties from the financial system

In May 2016, the Treasury Department's OFAC designation of the Waked Money Laundering Organization (Waked MLO), six Waked MLO associates, and 68 companies tied to the drug money laundering network, including Grupo Wisa, S.A., Vida Panama (Zona Libre) S.A., and Balboa Bank & Trust was followed by close collaboration with the Government of Panama. The Government of Panama took several steps to isolate the designated parties from the financial system and the broader economy, and Panama's Attorney General continues to work closely with State, Treasury, and the Department of Justice, and has stated her commitment to continuing to combat criminal activity in Panama.

Question 8. How extensive is the criminal infiltration of government institutions in the northern triangle of Central America?

Answer. The Northern triangle governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras have demonstrated commitment in fighting corruption and removing criminal infiltration from government institutions through the prosecution of high-profile

public officials for a broad spectrum of crimes. A few examples highlight these governments' commitment to addressing corruption:

The Guatemalan Attorney General's office, in collaboration with the UN's International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), continues to root out corruption at all levels of government. Recent successes include the February arrests of tax authority personnel accused of providing illegal tax refunds. Additionally, on April 18, President Morales requested CICIG's extension through 2019 and reaffirmed his promise to institute a "zero tolerance for corruption".

Honduras has shown significant progress and commitment to fighting corruption in the prosecution and investigation of public officials. On March 3, three senior and influential judges in the Honduran judiciary resigned following an investigation by the Honduran Supreme Court. Additionally, from January through March, the Honduran Attorney General's office detained, indicted, and successfully sentenced five mayors for charges of money laundering, illicit association, contract killing, drug trafficking, misuse of office, and illicit enrichment. The Honduran government also recently affirmed its commitment to support the new OAS Mission Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH).

El Salvador's Attorney General (AG) has demonstrated determination to combat corruption and target prominent Salvadoran figures with current or past government ties who are involved in it. In March and April, the AG filed civil charges against two former Presidents, Mauricio Funes (FMLN, 2009–14) and Antonio Saca (ARENA, 2004–09), for illicit enrichment while in office. The AG's investigation into the former Presidents continues, with criminal charges still a possibility.

Question 9. How have the Honduran government's efforts to apprehend and extradite top drug-traffickers affected the dynamics of the criminal underworld in Honduras and Central America?

Answer. After the 2014 extradition of Carlos Arnoldo Lobo, Honduran drug traffickers have become increasingly concerned with the possibility of apprehension and extradition. Honduras has extradited a total of 11 people, most of whom were the leaders of Honduras' most notorious drug trafficking organizations. Those actions, together with repeated operations seizing hundreds of millions of dollars in assets from drug traffickers, sent a shockwave through the criminal organizations, which had previously found Honduras to be a completely permissive environment. U.S assistance to Honduras has demonstrated a significant impact on illegal drug flows into and through Honduras. Transnational narcotraffickers have become more reluctant to work with Honduran drug traffickers due to an uptick in Honduran government's efforts to efficiently and effectively combat drug trafficking. Honduran government efforts to prosecute financial crimes, including the high-profile Rosenthal case, and to apprehend narcotics traffickers are sending a strong message throughout Honduras that all people are subject to the law.

Question 10. How has Operation Martillo affected illicit trafficking patterns in the hemisphere?

Answer. Operation Martillo continues throughout the western Caribbean and eastern Pacific regions and has been successful in involving all allied and partner nations in a unified hemispheric counter illicit trafficking operation. Illicit maritime trafficking patterns have not changed significantly, however allied and partner nations have contributed to 50 percent of all Joint Interagency Task Force South's (JIATF-S) seizures and disruptions. It has also raised awareness of maritime drug trafficking activities to our partner nations in Central America.

Question 11. What is your reaction to recent press reports that high level police commanders in Honduras colluded with drug-traffickers to assassinate top Honduran anti-drug officials and subsequent police commanders and security ministers covered up those crimes?

Answer. We take allegations of human rights violations very seriously. We are in regular contact with NGOs, Honduran civil society, human rights officials, concerned citizens, security forces, and government officials to request and receive information about the human rights situation in Honduras. When we receive credible information about human rights violations by members of the security forces we take immediate action, which includes halting provision of assistance and encouraging the relevant foreign government to thoroughly investigate and bring any perpetrators to justice. We report publically on human rights cases involving security forces in the Department's annual Human Rights Report.

Following media revelations of police commanders for alleged involvement in the murders of Julian Aristides Gonzalez and Alfredo Landaverde, the Honduran government established a Special Commission for National Police's Purge and Transformation. The civil society-led commission focuses on administratively removing

corrupt officers and passing relevant information to the Public Ministry for possible prosecutions. As of late June, the Commission reviewed a total of 272 officers from the Honduran National Police (HNP), including 90 for restructuring; five (5) accepted early retirement; 150 ratified and continue with the HNP; 11 still under review; and 16 referred to the Public Ministry for criminal investigation. The Attorney General formed a special unit, supported by INL, to investigate police officials that have been referred for possible criminal prosecution. INL also provides administrative support to the commission. In addition, as a standard part of the Commission's review process, it provided the Embassy the names of police officers under review, and the Embassy has informed the Commission when derogatory information exists in its databases. Additionally, INL funds the Association for a More Just Society, which has seconded commissioners, administrative, and technical staff to the Commission. INL also is providing the Commission with a safe house and armored vehicles.

Question 12. Given the high level of criminal infiltration of Central American security forces, how do you ensure that U.S. assistance does not end up strengthening transnational criminal organizations?

Answer. The State Department conducts rigorous vetting of military and police units that seek U.S. assistance, in accordance with U.S. law and policy, and we do not provide assistance to a unit when we have credible information that it has committed a gross violation of human rights. As part of our review, we receive information from individuals and organizations outside the U.S. government, as well as from other U.S. Government sources, about gross violations of human rights by security forces. Additionally, we ensure such information is evaluated and preserved for purposes of vetting proposed security assistance recipients.

Question 13. The Tri-Border Area (TBA) where Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil intersect is an illicit hotbed plagued by criminal money laundering, trade in contraband, extortion and terrorist financing.

To what degree are the three governments of the region making these challenges a priority?

Answer. The governments of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil would all benefit from strengthening their efforts to mitigate the impacts of criminal money laundering, trade in contraband, extortion, and terrorist financing in the Tri-Border Area. Brazil does not maintain comprehensive statistics on money laundering prosecutions and convictions. This lack of data makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of Brazil's anti-money laundering/counter-financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) regime. In Argentina, while the government has established the legal authorities and structures necessary for an AML regime by institutionalizing suspicious transaction reporting and allowing information to flow more freely between branches of government, Argentina lacks sufficient enforcement, a deficit the Macri administration has acknowledged and is working to remedy. Although the Government of Paraguay is making progress in improving its AML/CFT regime, concerns remain regarding the country's ability to identify, investigate, and prosecute money laundering and related crimes effectively. The banking sector is sometimes unwilling to engage in combatting AML/CFT, and the lack of data on prosecutions and convictions makes tracking government effectiveness difficult.

Question 14. How would you describe cross-border cooperation between law enforcement agencies?

Answer. Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil collaborate on some border protection initiatives, regional exchanges, and discussions on counterterrorism and law enforcement. In 2015, the Paraguayan and Brazilian Federal/Civil Police held working-level meetings to increase cooperation. Some officers cited investigative successes through the unprecedented sharing of leads and criminal intelligence between the two services. In general, however, cross-border cooperation between Argentine, Paraguayan, and Brazilian law enforcement agencies could be better. For example, customs operations at airports and overland entry points provide little control of cross-border cash movements. Customs officials are often absent from major border crossings, and required customs declaration reports are seldom checked. Institutionalized corruption and a lack of accountability among law enforcement agents stationed in the Tri-Border Area contribute to the porous nature of those borders.

Question 15. How successful are criminals in exploiting regulatory gaps either between governments or agencies within a single government?

Answer. Criminals are successful in exploiting regulatory gaps both between governments and agencies and within a single government. Argentine individuals and entities, for example, hold billions of U.S. dollars outside the formal financial sys-

tem, both domestically and offshore, much of it legitimately earned, but not taxed. Since 1999, Argentina has successfully prosecuted only seven cases of money laundering, an issue the Macri administration hopes to address. Systematic deficiencies in Argentina's criminal justice system, including widespread delays in the judicial process and a lack of judicial independence, contribute to this low number. In Paraguay, the non-bank financial sector operates in a weak regulatory environment with limited supervision. The autonomous government institution responsible for regulating and supervising credit unions, the National Institute of Cooperatives, lacks the capacity to enforce compliance. Credit unions respond to ad hoc requests from the central bank for money laundering indicators, but do not fall under the central bank's formal oversight. Currency exchange houses are another critical non-bank sector where enforcement of compliance requirements remains limited. In Brazil, the anti-corruption investigation known as "Operation Carwash" (Lava Jato) has uncovered a complicated web of corruption, money laundering, and tax evasion, leading to the arrests of money launderers, directors at parastatal energy company Petrobras, and major construction company executives. Many Brazilian politicians are also under investigation and the operation continues to uncover what many believe is the biggest corruption scandal in Brazilian history.

Question 16. To what extent do criminals cooperate with terrorists and which illicit activities do criminals market to terrorists?

Answer. The Tri-Border Area of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay continues to serve as a suspected funding source for terrorist groups, as the minimal police and military presence along these borders allow for a largely unregulated flow of people, contraband, and money. Efforts to provide more effective law enforcement and border security are hampered by a lack of interagency cooperation and information sharing, as well as pervasive corruption within security, border control, and judicial institutions. During 2014, the last period for which data is available, Argentina's Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF) identified seven possible instances of terrorism financing. These cases involve the capture of 11 terrorist fugitives, all from the last military dictatorship, and eight resolutions to freeze assets. At the end of 2015, the federal prosecutor in charge of economic crimes identified a new potential terrorism-financing case regarding a Syrian national involved in a number of suspicious transactions in the Tri-Border Area. While the Government of Argentina has established the legal authorities and structures necessary to identify and pursue terrorism financing, results in the form of targets identified, assets seized, and cases prosecuted have been minimal. In December 2015, the Macri administration appointed a new head of the UIF and considered proposals to create a special counsel reporting directly to the government to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, establish an interagency anti-money laundering/counterterrorism financing task force, and develop a new national risk-based strategy founded on a revised national risk analysis. Such measures, if implemented effectively, could help the country move closer to international standards and yield tangible anti-money laundering/counterterrorism financing results.

In October 2015, President Rousseff signed Law #13.170, which provides procedures for freezing assets relating to UNSCRs and for information provided bilaterally, closing a longstanding gap in Brazil's ability to confront terrorist financing. In March 2016, President Rousseff signed Law #13.260, which criminalized terrorism and terrorist financing, closing the legal gap on Brazil's ability to investigate and prosecute terrorists. This law has not yet been tested, but was a major advance for Brazilian prosecutors, investigators, and judges seeking to investigate terrorism-related crimes. Through Brazil's Council for Financial Activities Control (the COAF), which is a largely independent entity within the Finance Ministry, Brazil has implemented the UN Security Council 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and al-Qa'ida sanctions regime, but it has not reported any assets, accounts, or property in the names of persons or entities on the UN sanctions list. The Government of Brazil has generally responded to U.S. efforts to identify and block terrorist-related funds.

Paraguay has both counterterrorism financing legislation and the ability to freeze without delay and confiscate terrorist assets, yet there were no terrorism financing convictions or actions to freeze in 2015 or 2016.

Question 17. Colombia's largest criminal organizations, other than its guerrilla groups of leftist insurgents, are known as Bacrim from the Spanish term for criminal bands. The Bacrim are considered the largest threat to the civilian population, especially as the insurgent groups have entered into peace talks with the Colombian government. The largest group, Los Urabeos, is estimated to have about 3,000 members and is violent, controls territory in certain cities and in some rural areas, and has recently pushed to be recognized as a combatant in Colombia's internal conflict.

What is the likelihood that the government may give the Urabeos this status?

Answer. The Colombian government has stated unequivocally and repeatedly it considers the Bacrim to be non-political, criminal groups that must submit to Colombian justice or face arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment. The Colombian government has said it does not consider the Urabeos (which the Colombian government now refers to as "the Gulf Clan") combatants in Colombia's internal armed conflict.

Question 18. How would it affect law enforcement tools such as bringing criminal cases against the Urabeos in the nation's courts or the recent decision that the Colombian military could strike Bacrim strongholds?

Answer. The Colombian government has stated it does not intend to consider the Gulf Clan or any other Bacrim as combatants in Colombia's internal armed conflict.

Question 19. What lessons learned from Colombia's experience of successfully reducing heroin trafficking and cultivation of opium poppy might be valuable for other countries in the region?

Answer. Capable, committed local partners are critical. U.S. assistance in the form of a vetted unit carrying out intelligence-led investigations played a tremendous role in Colombia's experience of successfully reducing heroin trafficking and the cultivation of opium poppy.

Beginning in the late 1990s, the Colombian National Police (CNP) and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration partnered in an effort to investigate heroin cases and disrupt the Colombian heroin trade. In 2002, Congress formalized this through the appropriation of funds to stand up a CNP Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU), commonly referred to as the Heroin Task Force (SIU-HTF). Since 2002, the Heroin Task Force has conducted more than 150 investigations, resulting in nearly 2,000 arrests in Colombia. More than 200 of these were arrested for extradition to the United States.

Colombia remains active in eradicating poppy and interdicting heroin shipments. In 2015, Colombian authorities eradicated 624 hectares of poppy and seized 393 kilograms of heroin; in 2014, these figures were 813 hectares and 349 kilograms, respectively. As a result of these efforts, the U.S. government intelligence community consistently estimates Colombian-sourced heroin in the United States to be, as a percentage of the total supply on our streets, in the low single digits; the vast majority of heroin in the United States is traced to Mexico.

Question 20. Last year, Colombia discontinued its aerial eradication program following a March 2015 report by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, an arm of the World Health Organization, which identified glyphosate, the key chemical ingredient used in aerial eradication programs on coca bush crops in Colombia, as "possibly carcinogenic to humans." Aerial eradication had long been a controversial, but central component of U.S. counternarcotics support to Colombia. How has ending the aerial eradication program affected coca cultivation and cocaine production?

Answer. Increased Colombian coca cultivation can be attributed to a number of factors, many of which occurred prior to the end of aerial eradication. Coca growers implemented "counter" eradication techniques, including migrating their plantings to areas where spraying was not permitted by law or policy and cultivating smaller, better concealed fields to avoid their detection by law enforcement. Colombia's decision, which was based on various factors to include a Colombian court ruling, to end the aerial coca eradication program nationwide in October 2015 is a factor that has contributed to the increase in coca cultivation. We are working closely with our Colombian partners to implement their new counternarcotics strategy, which prioritizes robust law enforcement activity against criminal drug trafficking organizations, enhanced interdiction, manual eradication, and anti-money laundering operations. In 2015, Colombia seized a record 295 metric tons of cocaine along with other illegal drugs and destroyed a record 3,896 drug laboratories.

Question 21. What will the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement funds, previously allocated for aerial eradication in Colombia, be used for now?

Answer. The remaining $86.05 million in aerial eradication funds will be reallocated to other INL Colombia counternarcotics programs, to include aviation support projects, manual eradication, rural police establishment, environmental monitoring, and land, riverine, and maritime interdiction.

Question 22. What countries in the Caribbean are facing the biggest threats from drug trafficking and related crime?

Answer. Drug trafficking and transnational criminal organizations operating in and around the Caribbean exploit the region as a transshipment point for illicit drugs shipped to the United States, with cocaine the principal drug threat.

Cocaine movement from the northern coast of South America into the Eastern and Central Caribbean increased in 2015 to the highest documented levels since 2007, according to U.S. Government estimates. The Dominican Republic (DR), Haiti, The Bahamas, and Jamaica are on the fiscal year 2016 Majors List of Drug Transit and Producing countries due to the transshipment of drugs through these countries. Roughly two-thirds of the documented cocaine that moved through the region in 2015 was destined for the DR, mostly for forward transport to Europe and the United States, much of it via Puerto Rico.

We remain concerned about homicide and gang-related violence in the region which, combined with increased drug trafficking, create significant challenges for security forces. Our investments to build partner nations' law enforcement, counternarcotics, and justice sector capacity under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) are assisting security forces in addressing these criminal threats.

Question 23. How would you assess the impact of U.S. efforts aimed at combatting drug trafficking through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) and how might those efforts be improved?

Answer. Under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), the United States partners with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Dominican Republic to enhance the rule of law by substantially reducing illicit trafficking, increasing public safety and security, and addressing the underlying social and economic root causes of crime. Between fiscal year (FY) 2010 and FY 2016, the U.S. Government invested over $437 million in support of CBSI.

Through CBSI, the U.S. Government seeks to combat drug trafficking by supporting equipment and training for law enforcement and military forces with a counternarcotics mandate. Efforts promote information sharing among the region and with international partners, assist in the development of partner nations' interdiction capabilities on land and sea, and enhance maritime readiness.

The Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) provides training and equipment to specialized law enforcement units focusing on counternarcotics, border security, and maritime engagement. INL also works with the U.S. Coast Guard to support maritime interdiction exercises and to promote regional cooperation. INL efforts help partner nations strengthen port security through interagency task forces. These capacity-building activities are yielding results, contributing to a 152 percent increase in cocaine seizures in CBSI partner nations between 2014 and 2015.

We continue to encourage partner countries to cooperate more closely to address the shared drug trafficking threat across their vast maritime borders and surrounding waters. Improved regional information-sharing will help the region yield further successes in addressing drug trafficking.

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