

**WESTERN HEMISPHERE DRUG INTERDICTIONS:  
WHY MAINTAINING COAST GUARD OPER-  
ATIONS MATTER**

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(116-19)

**HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION**

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JUNE 4, 2019

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Printed for the use of the  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure



Available online at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/committee/house-transportation?path=/browsecommittee/chamber/house/committee/transportation>

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39-475 PDF

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**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515**

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MAY 30, 2019

**SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER**

**TO:** Members, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation  
**FROM:** Staff, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation  
**RE:** Hearing on “Western Hemisphere Drug Interdictions: Why Maintaining Coast Guard Operations Matter”

**PURPOSE**

The Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation will meet on Tuesday, June 4, 2019, at 10:00 a.m. in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building to examine the federal government’s efforts to confront transnational drug smuggling and stem the flow of illegal drugs to the United States. The Subcommittee will hear from the United States Coast Guard (Coast Guard or Service), United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), and the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

**BACKGROUND**

Illegal drug trafficking continues to threaten the safety, security, and public health of U.S. citizens and destabilize foreign governments. Such trafficking places significant strain on our Nation’s health care and criminal justice systems, costing U.S. taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars annually. The ability to intercept these drugs before they enter the U.S. enables agencies responsible for interdiction, like the Coast Guard, to leverage assets and seize drugs in bulk before they are broken into smaller packages inside the United States. Such seizures use drug law enforcement assets much more efficiently than trying to pursue smaller, less pure drugs closer to the end user.

In an effort to combat the adverse impacts of drugs and coordinate the federal government’s drug control activities, Congress established the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) as part of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-690). Section 1705 of title 21, United States Code, requires the ONDCP to submit to Congress a National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) on an annual basis. The latest NDCS, released in May 2019, focuses on reducing the use, production, and trafficking of illegal drugs, as well as lessening drug-related crime, violence, and health consequences.

**INTERDICTION ACTIVITIES**

The majority of illegal drugs entering the United States originate in South America. The Coast Guard primarily confiscates cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine with cocaine being the most commonly confiscated substance.<sup>1</sup> Other drugs such as Opiates, Fentanyl and similar substances that are smuggled into the country move primarily on land, air, or by commercial maritime conveyances whose cargos are regulated by Customs and Border Protection (CBP).<sup>2</sup> According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, Colombia is the source of 93% of the cocaine in the United States.<sup>3</sup> The drugs pass through a seven million square-mile area called the Transit Zone. Roughly twice the size of the continental United States, the Transit Zone includes the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Coast Guard, *Annual Performance Report: Fiscal Year 2017*. <https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/FY17%20APR%202015%20May%2018%20-%20Final%20-%20POSTED.pdf>

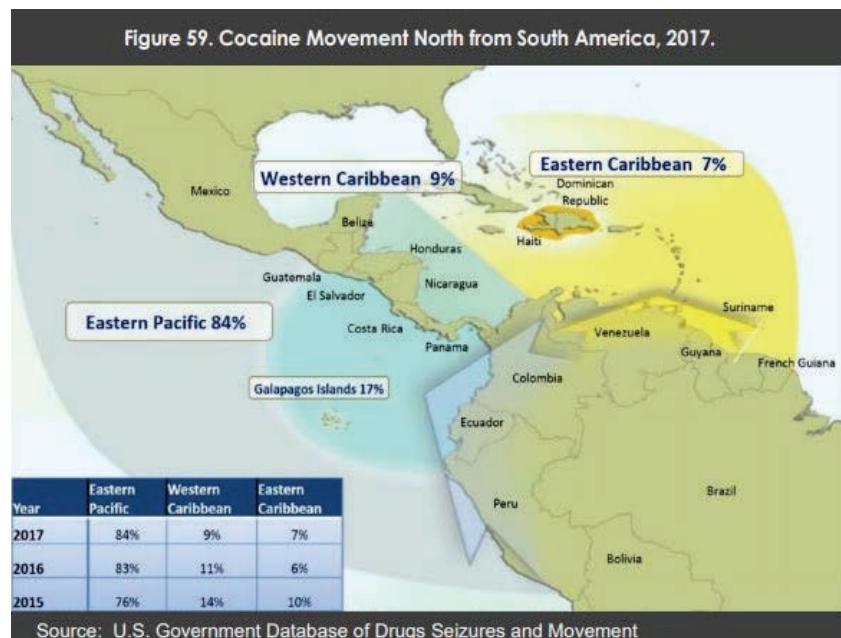
<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Page 14, paragraph 4.

<sup>3</sup> See page 41 <https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-11/DIR-032-18%202018%20NDTA%20%5Bfinal%5D%20low%20resolution11-20.pdf>

Typically, in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, fishing vessels carrying multi-ton loads of cocaine depart Colombian and Ecuadorian ports for delivery points along the Central American or Mexican coasts. In the Caribbean, high-speed “go-fast” vessels haul as much as two metric tons of cocaine at a time. These vessels generally leave Colombia’s north coast heading for points along the Central American and Mexican coastlines, or leave Venezuela’s north coast to island nations such as the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, and the Lesser Antilles. Smugglers have also turned to semi- and fully-submersible vessels to move large shipments of cocaine from South America to distribution points in Central America. These vessels are effective tools to move large quantities of illegal drugs and other illicit goods because their low profile makes them difficult to detect.

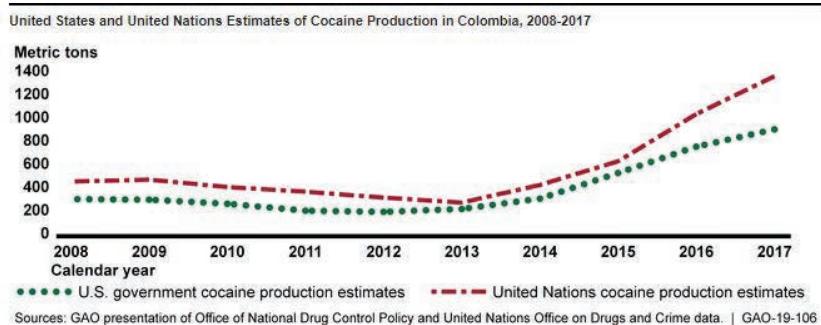
Once the drugs land in Central American nations, they are broken down into multiple smaller packages for transshipment to the United States. Mexican drug cartels have recently been using panga boats (e.g., small, open-air, outboard-powered fishing boats) to move drugs into the United States. While illegal drugs can enter the United States through the southern land border, a majority of those drugs are transported at some point via boats. Consequently, the NDCS focuses on intercepting bulk shipments of drugs in the Transit Zone prior to reaching the United States.

FIGURE 1. FISCAL YEAR 2017 DRUG SEIZURES AND MOVEMENT<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> See page 51 of <https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2018-11/DIR-032-18%202018%20NDTA%20%5Bfinal%5D%20low%20resolution11-20.pdf>.

FIGURE 2. COCAINE PRODUCTION ESTIMATES IN COLOMBIA



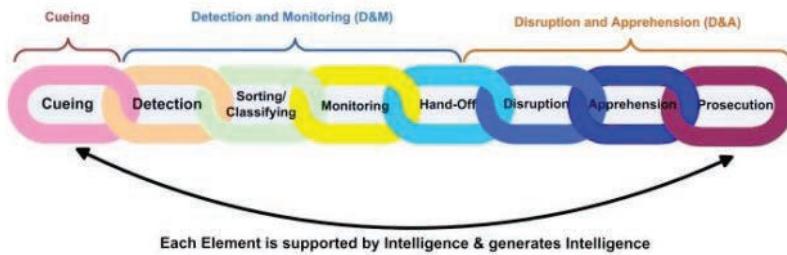
#### AGENCY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal years 1990 and 1991 (P.L. 101-189) designated the Department of Defense (DoD) as the lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime trafficking of illegal drugs into the United States. The U.S. Coast Guard is designated as the lead agency for the interdiction and apprehension of illegal drug traffickers on the high seas.

Detection and monitoring activities in the Transit Zone are coordinated by the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South (JIATF-South). A subordinate command of SOUTHCOM, JIATF-South is led by a Coast Guard Rear Admiral (currently RADM Pat DeQuattro) and composed of representatives from DoD and other departments of the federal government, including the Departments of Homeland Security (DHS), Justice, and State. Canada, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, and Spain provide ships, aircraft, and liaison officers to JIATF-South. A number of Central and South American countries also have assigned liaison officers to JIATF-South. To provide JIATF-South and the Coast Guard with the ability to conduct its mission effectively, the State Department has negotiated maritime counterdrug bilateral agreements or operational procedures with 43 foreign nations to coordinate detection, monitoring, interdiction, and apprehension activities.

The interdiction continuum (Figure 3) depicts how joint interdiction operations have been used to reduce the supply of cocaine to the United States. A typical operation begins with the collection of actionable intelligence on drug trafficking activities. This is used to help cue or tip the operational unit to narrow its patrol area and decrease response time. Next, CBP, Coast Guard, DoD, or allied nation Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) are launched to *detect* drug smuggling activities, *sort* through potential targets, and *monitor* the suspect vessel(s). The MPA will then contact a nearby Coast Guard, Navy, or allied nation's surface asset (e.g., a cutter, frigate, etc.) and *hand-off* the vessel. The surface asset will launch a small boat or an armed Coast Guard helicopter manned with Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) personnel to disable the vessel. The vessel is then *interdicted*, the drugs are seized, and the crew is *apprehended*. Final disposition of the vessel, drugs, and crew is coordinated between the U.S. State and Justice Departments and the flag state of the vessel who handles the prosecution.

FIGURE 3. THE INTERDICTION CONTINUUM



Operation Martillo (Hammer) is the name of the current JIATF-South counter-drug operation which brings together 14 countries to disrupt drug smuggling in the Transit Zone, including Belize, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Spain, United Kingdom and the United States. Chile has also assisted Operation Martillo. Since its launch on January 15, 2012, Operation Martillo has supported the seizure of 693 metric tons of cocaine, \$25 million in bulk cash, 581 vessels and aircraft detained and the arrest of 1,863 detainees.<sup>5</sup>

#### GOALS AND PERFORMANCE

In the 2019 NDCCS released in May, ONDCP calls for a significant reduction in the availability of illicit drugs in the U.S. with a goal of increasing the amount of cocaine removals (in metric tons) in the transit zone by 10 percent within 5 years.<sup>6</sup> In his May 1, 2019, testimony to the U.S. House Committee on Armed Services, SOUTHCOM Commander Admiral Craig Faller stated that last year JIATF-South was only able to disrupt about 6% of known drug movements.<sup>7</sup> He also stated that “doing more would require additional ships and maritime patrol aircraft and greater participation by interagency and international partners . . .”<sup>8</sup> While the Coast Guard may have resources to interdict up to 20-30% of drugs flowing through the Transit Zone, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted that for the period of FY 2009–FY 2013, the Coast Guard deployed cutters (used for drug interdiction) for fewer days than planned and that maritime patrol aircraft hours were below target levels. These factors likely contributed to the lower actual percentage of cocaine removed.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the nearly 224 metric tons of cocaine removed in FY 2017, the Coast Guard also removed 31,190 pounds of marijuana, 6 kilograms of heroin and other opiates, and 168 kilograms of methamphetamines. Estimates of cocaine moving through the Transit Zone toward the United States come from the Consolidated Counter Drug Database (CCDB).<sup>10</sup>

Since FY 2009, the Coast Guard has set its own internal annual performance target for cocaine removal from noncommercial vessels in the Transit Zone. The annual target varies from year to year based on the Coast Guard’s own review of intelligence, logistics, policy, capability, emerging trends, and past performance. The Service has achieved its performance target only once since FY 2009. For FY 2018, the Coast Guard set its annual performance target for cocaine removal at 10.0%. This is the lowest the Coast Guard has set its performance target since FY 2010 and has remained as the target for FY 2019 and FY 2020. The lowered target rate

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.southcom.mil/Media/Special-Coverage/Operation-Martillo>.

<sup>6</sup> See [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ONDCP\\_PRS.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ONDCP_PRS.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See [https://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM\\_2019\\_Posture\\_Statement\\_HASC\\_Final.pdf?ver=2019-05-01-095639-453](https://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM_2019_Posture_Statement_HASC_Final.pdf?ver=2019-05-01-095639-453).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Woody, “Billions of Dollars of Cocaine are Smuggled into the US by Sea Every Year, and the Coast Guard Says It Can Only Stop One-Quarter of It,” *Business Insider*, November 19, 2018; also remarks by Admiral Paul F. Zukunft, Commandant of the Coast Guard, at Center for Strategic & International Studies, “A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower: Forward, Engaged, Ready,” March 13, 2015. U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Coast Guard: Resources Provided for Drug Interdiction Operations in the Transit Zone, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands*, GAO-14-527, June 2014.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Coast Guard, *Annual Performance Report: Fiscal Year 2017*. <https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/FY17%20APR%202015%20May%202018%20-%20Final%20-%20POSTED.pdf>.

could be due to an increase in the flow of cocaine or the enhanced awareness of the quantity of cocaine flowing thru the Transit Zone; as the flow of cocaine increases, the Coast Guard interdiction rate can decrease since tonnage increased over time.

TABLE 1. COAST GUARD PERFORMANCE TARGET AND RESULTS FOR COCAINE REMOVAL IN RELATION TO NON-COMMERCIAL MARITIME MOVEMENT OF COCAINE

Year	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
Target	13.8%	11.5%	11.5%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Actual	11.5%	7.1%	8.2%	7.4%	TBD	TBD

TABLE 2. NON-COMMERCIAL MARITIME COCOAINE FLOW AND TONNAGE REMOVED (IN METRIC TONS)<sup>11</sup>

Year	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018
Flow	577	945	1,254	2,834	2,738	2,827.3
Removed	88.4	90	144.8	201.3	223.8	209.6

The Coast Guard has committed to increasing capabilities in the Transit Zone. Their FY 2020 Congressional Budget Justification proposed the expansion of Counter Transnational Criminal Organizations Initiatives requesting funding for 48 positions, 26 FTE, at a cost of \$6.5M, to expand the Coast Guard's capacity to execute a multi-layered approach in the Western Hemisphere maritime transit zone, and dismantle TCOs.<sup>12</sup> Currently, Coast Guard personnel are posted as attaches, liaisons and drug interdiction specialists at several U.S. embassies in the Western Hemisphere.

#### *FACTORS IMPACTING PERFORMANCE*

Several factors impact the ability of JIATF-South and the Coast Guard to meet drug interdiction performance targets, including continuously changing modes, tactics, and routes by drug smugglers; the inability of allied nations to consistently commit assets; and the availability, quality, and timeliness of actionable intelligence. However, according to the leaders of the Coast Guard and SOUTHCOR, the largest factor in the recent decline and ongoing inability to meet drug interdiction performance targets has been the insufficient inventory of vessels and aircraft available to support operations.

The Coast Guard is a multi-mission branch of the military where many of their assets oversee multiple missions. In September 2013, the DHS Inspector General (IG) reported that the primary cause of the failure of the Service to meet its FY 2012 drug interdiction performance target was due to decreased asset availability from aging and deteriorating assets (OIG 13-122). The DHS IG again reported that the Coast Guard failed to meet its drug removal rate in FY 2014 (OIG 15-27). In a June 2014 report to Congress entitled "Coast Guard: Resources Provided for Drug Interdiction Operations in the Transit Zone, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands" (GAO 14-527), GAO reiterated the Coast Guard's challenge in maintaining and operating legacy cutters and cited concerns in the timely replacement of these vessels. Despite years of Congressional questioning, the Service is only now undertaking work to extend the useful life of 270 foot Medium Endurance Cutters.

The Coast Guard's program of record (POR) calls for procuring 8 National Security Cutters (NSCs), 25 Offshore Patrol Cutters (OPCs), and 58 Fast Response Cutters (FRCs) as replacements for 90 aging Coast Guard high-endurance cutters, me-

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2019-03/OIG-19-27-Mar19.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> See page USCG-O&S-24. [https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/FY\\_2020\\_CJ\\_Combined\\_Chapters\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/FY_2020_CJ_Combined_Chapters_FINAL.pdf).

dium-endurance cutters, and patrol craft. While the procurement of these 91 cutters will replace the aging fleet, Coast Guard studies have concluded that they would only provide 61% of the cutters needed to fully perform the service's statutory missions in the coming years.<sup>13</sup> Congress has funded 11 NSCs; 7 of which are now in service with 3 more under construction. Funding and contracts have been awarded for 2 OPCs while procurement funding for additional OPCs was included in the Coast Guard FY 2020 budget request. At the end of May, a report is due to the Coast Guard from the contractor building the OPC's detailing whether the contractor can meet the terms of the contract. 56 FRCs have been funded through FY 2019.

#### *UNMANNED SYSTEMS*

In addition, the Coast Guard Research and Development Center has agreements with certain private companies to help evaluate the use of small unmanned aircraft systems for a variety of missions, including law enforcement. They are actively looking into the use of unmanned aerial systems for counter-drug and smuggling surveillance operations as it expands maritime domain awareness.<sup>14</sup> The Coast Guard has used the ScanEagle—an unmanned aircraft manufactured by Insitu Inc.<sup>15</sup>—to help detect illicit drug smuggling. Unmanned aircraft have been used on the National Security Cutter (NSC) Stratton, where they have “provided real-time imagery of suspected smuggling vessels, which helped minimize safety concerns for interdiction assets and allowed the Stratton crew to better track jettisoned material.”<sup>16</sup> While Coast Guard officials have noted successes in having this system aboard an NSC to aid in drug interdiction, they have noted challenges in acquiring other unmanned aircraft systems.<sup>17</sup>

#### WITNESS LIST

- Vice Admiral Daniel B. Abel, Deputy Commandant for Operations, United States Coast Guard
- Rear Admiral Steven D. Poulin, Director of Operations, United States Southern Command
- Mr. Thomas W. Padden, United States Interdiction Coordinator, Office of National Drug Control Policy

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<sup>13</sup> R. O'Rourke. CRS R42567 Coast Guard Cutter Procurement: Background and Issues for Congress.

<sup>14</sup> Sean T. Pribyl, “Drones: Is the Maritime Industry Ready?,” MarineLink, July 27, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.boeing.com/defense/autonomous-systems/scaneagle/index.page>.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Coast Guard, Acquisition Directorate, Small Unmanned Aircraft System Assists National Security Cutter Drug Interdictions, January 29, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Coast Guard, Acquisition Directorate, Unmanned Aircraft System, <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Acquisitions-CG-9/Programs/Air-Programs/UAS/>.

## **WESTERN HEMISPHERE DRUG INTERDICTIONS: WHY MAINTAINING COAST GUARD OPERATIONS MATTERS**

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**TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2019**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME  
TRANSPORTATION,  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m. in room 2167, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Sean Patrick Maloney (Chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. MALONEY. The committee will come to order. I will start by asking unanimous consent that members not on the subcommittee be able to participate for the purpose of today's hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

Welcome to this morning's hearing. Today we are here to learn more about the Coast Guard's 11 statutory missions, with a focus on drug interdiction in the Western Hemisphere, what we call the transit zone.

Every day members of our Coast Guard coordinate and execute this critical mission to stem the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. Through partnerships with other Federal agencies and international allies, our Coasties intercept drug cartel operations, interdicting more cocaine than all other Federal agencies combined. Notwithstanding its performance, the Coast Guard remains underresourced, and is asked to do more with less. And regrettably, their work in drug interdiction is no exception.

For example, the Service's aged fleet of legacy cutters can only muster an interdiction rate of roughly 6 percent of known illegal drug movements. If the Coast Guard had a recapitalized fleet of new offshore cutters on hand, however, they could interdict 20 to 30 percent of known drug movement in the transit zone. So unless we are happy to sustain this inadequate interdiction rate, it remains imperative that this committee and Congress continue to support funding increases to recapitalize Coast Guard fleets of surface and air assets.

If anything, our hearing last month on the Coast Guard's budget request and acquisition activities further corroborates my belief that the Coast Guard is going to be extremely hard-pressed to maintain its existing capabilities, much less increase its operational readiness to police a transit zone that is twice the size of the continental United States.

We might ask how can we reasonably expect the Coast Guard and other Federal agencies, for that matter, to accomplish their vital missions in this context. How can we demand the only military service left unpaid during the recent Government shutdown to be asked once again to do more with less?

If we want to succeed in our efforts to prevent illegal drugs from entering our country, we can no longer ignore the fact inadequate Coast Guard budgets have left the Service with crumbling shore-side infrastructure, aged or obsolete surface assets, and other glaring operational needs. Until we have resolved this issue, we are far more likely to see more illicit drugs and other harmful contraband crossing our shores, not less: a truly ironic outcome that would be devastating to both the Coast Guard and to the country.

[Mr. Maloney's prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Hon. Sean Patrick Maloney, a Representative in Congress from the State of New York, and Chair, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation**

Welcome to this morning's hearing. Today, we're here to learn more about one of the Coast Guard's eleven statutory missions, drug interdiction in the Western Hemisphere Transit Zone.

Every day, members of our Coast Guard coordinate and execute this critical mission to stem the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. Through partnerships with other federal agencies and international allies, our Coasties interrupt and intercept drug cartel operations, interdicting more cocaine than all other federal agencies combined.

Notwithstanding its performance, the Coast Guard remains under-resourced and is asked to do more with less, and regrettably, their work in drug interdiction is no different.

For example, the Service's aged fleet of legacy cutters can only muster an interdiction rate of roughly 6 percent of known illegal drug movements (due to unexpected maintenance). If the Coast Guard had a recapitalized fleet of new offshore cutters on-hand, however, they could interdict 20 percent to 30 percent of known drug movement in the Transit Zone.

Unless we are happy to sustain this mediocre interdiction rate, it remains imperative that this committee and the Congress continue to support funding increases to recapitalize Coast Guard fleets of surface and air assets.

If anything, our hearing last month on the Coast Guard's budget request and acquisition activities further corroborates my belief that the Coast Guard is going to be extremely hard pressed to maintain its existing capabilities, much less increase their operational readiness to police a transit zone that is twice the size of the continental United States.

Moreover, while the sheer size of the Transit Zone is a daunting enough challenge, the Department of Homeland Security continues to disproportionately reallocate and siphon resources from the Coast Guard and other agencies to reinforce operations at the Southern Border.

In the face of data demonstrating that the maritime environment is increasingly the preferred route for Transnational Criminal Organizations to operate, it makes absolutely no sense for the Administration to divert critical resources from an already overburdened Coast Guard in the face of a genuine, documented threat to the security and safety of the American people.

We might ask: How can we reasonably expect the Coast Guard and other Federal agencies, for that matter, to accomplish their vital missions in this context? How can we demand the only military service left unpaid during the recent government shutdown, to be asked, once again, to do more with less?

If we want to succeed in our efforts to prevent illegal drugs from entering our country, we can no longer ignore the fact: inadequate Coast Guard budgets have left the Service out to dry with crumbling shoreside infrastructure, aged or obsolete surface and air assets, and other glaring operational needs.

Until we have resolved the issue of this reality in full, we are far more likely to see more illicit drugs and other harmful contraband crossing our shores, not less—

a truly ironic outcome that would be devastating to both the Coast Guard and to our country.

Mr. MALONEY. Now I would like to recognize Mr. Gibbs, the ranking member of the subcommittee, for any opening remarks.

Mr. GIBBS. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman, and I also want to thank our witnesses for being here today, and for their service to our country.

The United States Coast Guard carries out a broad array of law enforcement, including drug interdiction in U.S. waters and on high seas. The Service works as part of the Joint Interagency Task Force South to remove drugs from the transit zone. Removing drugs in the transit zone closest to the source in their purest form not only keeps those drugs off the streets and out of our schoolyards in the United States, but also makes much more efficient use of law enforcement assets. Capturing bulk shipments of cocaine in this manner takes less time and effort than following smaller packages of less pure product being moved to users.

Looking at the falling targets for cocaine removal and the consistent failure to meet even those falling targets, I want to hear from the Coast Guard how the falling targets relate to the surface fleet recapitalization and the failure to implement the intended communication goals originally set out for the Service's new assets.

I am particularly concerned to know why, despite a decade of congressional questioning, the Coast Guard has still failed to undertake a ship life extension program for its workhorse Medium Endurance Cutters, especially given potential further delays in the construction of the new Offshore Patrol Cutters.

In addition to Coast Guard assets, I also look forward to learning what other agencies can contribute to and participate in the transit zone drug interdiction efforts.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the hearing today and hearing the witnesses' testimony, and I yield back.

[Mr. Gibbs's prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Hon. Bob Gibbs, a Representative in Congress from the State of Ohio, and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation**

The United States Coast Guard carries out a broad array of law enforcement, including drug interdiction in U.S. waters and on the high seas.

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In addition to Coast Guard assets, I also look forward to learning what other agencies can contribute to and participate in Transit Zone drug interdiction efforts.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman. I would like to recognize the full committee chairman, Mr. DeFazio.

Before doing so I just want to acknowledge someone I failed to mention. I am honored to be accompanied today by a foster youth shadow. If you see a number of young people following Members of Congress around today, it is the day when we welcome young people from the foster care system who have gone on to do extraordinary things to accompany us in our daily routine. I am joined by Raven Profit, here behind me, from the great State of New York. And she has already brightened my day and reminded me of why we do this important work.

Mr. Chairman, without further delay.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Great. It sounds like a great program, and hopefully it will be an interesting day for her to shadow.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate you scheduling this hearing, because we need to continue to emphasize the critical role the Coast Guard is playing.

I have here a poster. [Poster is displayed.] This is a number of Coast Guard personnel assembled in front of one of our aging helicopters. But you see in front of them an extraordinary display of intercepted drugs. Thanks, that is great [indicating poster can be removed].

And, you know, there is a lot of talk about drug smuggling on the southern border, building a wall, and all sorts of other ineffective measures, yet we have testimony from the former Commandant of the Coast Guard before the Senate about 2 years ago that we have actionable intelligence on a large number of drug shipments coming in in semi-submersibles, fast boats, being smuggled aboard fishing boats and other vessels, in the extraordinary area that the Coast Guard has to observe and patrol.

The Western Hemisphere transit zone is twice as big as the continent of the United States, a heck of a lot bigger, obviously, than the border. And we are only intercepting 20 percent of the known shipments, because of a lack of assets personnel. Airborne assets and/or better and new cutters, Medium Endurance Cutters, and others.

For too long the Coast Guard has been making do, and it is time that we moved ahead with the acquisition of new assets for the Coast Guard, since they intercepted more drugs than every other agency of the Federal Government, combined. And investment in assets for the Coast Guard, both personnel and equipment, would be a heck of a lot better than a static wall that people can go around, under, or through—not also to mention that on the land border most drugs are coming in through our ports of entry.

According to testimony in “El Chapo” Guzmán’s trial in New York, the preferred method is to come through legal points of entry in converted semi-tractor trailers, pickup trucks, and other things. If they lose a semi-trailer or pickup truck, so what? In a multibillion-dollar-a-year enterprise, it is the cost of doing business.

We need to enhance our maritime interception, and the Coast Guard is the first line of defense there, and they need better assets. And I hope to highlight that today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Mr. DeFazio’s prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Hon. Peter A. DeFazio, a Representative in Congress from the State of Oregon, and Chair, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

Thank you Chairman Maloney. I commend you for scheduling this morning's hearing to shine a bright light on one reason why the Coast Guard is indispensable to our Nation—the Service's essential role in interdicting illicit drugs at sea.

With all the talk about the Southern Border in the past two years, a person might assume that the border is awash in illegal drugs, among other threats, perceived or real. That characterization, however, is not the case.

In fact, due to our concerted efforts over the past ten to twelve years to ratchet up security operations along our Southern Border, transnational criminal organizations, or TCOs, have adjusted to the higher risks of attempting to run drugs across the border. Moreover, how have they adapted? They have taken to sea.

Whether through their use of "fast boats", fishing boats, or even semi-submersible vessels, TCOs are now utilizing the broad expanse of the Western Hemisphere Transit Zone—an area over twice the size of the continental United States—as a preferred route for moving contraband of all types, but especially illegal drugs such as cocaine and marijuana.

This change in tactics has forced the Coast Guard and other federal agencies and international partners to adapt as well. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this morning on how operations continue to evolve in order to keep one-step ahead of the TCOs.

Yet, as much as the Coast Guard can improve its maritime domain awareness to produce actionable intelligence to put "steel on target," one fact remains. The Coast Guard simply does not have sufficient cutters and other assets to improve substantially its interdiction rate in the Transit Zone. In fact, the Coast Guard only has the capacity to attempt to target, detect, and disrupt 20 percent of known drug movements.

For too long the Coast Guard has been relying on its aged fleet of legacy Medium Endurance Cutters, which become less reliable, more expensive to repair and maintain, and worse, provide fewer days at sea.

Perhaps belatedly, at least the Coast Guard and the administration have now come to the realization that a service life extension program (SLEP) for these cutters is way past due, and the Service has at least worked that into their budget request. I will definitely want to hear from Admiral Abel on the status of this critical initiative.

I am also reminded that even with its deficiency in cutters, and even considering the vastness of the Transit Zone, the Coast Guard still interdicts at sea more illegal drugs than all other agencies combined interdict at land crossings, seizing more than \$6.6 billion in drugs in fiscal year 2017 alone. That fact is remarkable.

It also demonstrates, again, why it was deplorable for the Coast Guard to go unpaid during the recent Federal Government shutdown.

To their credit, and as testament to their commitment to serve our Nation, the men and women of the Coast Guard continued to undertake this hazardous, if not downright dangerous, mission, all to protect the health, safety and security of the American people, even while not getting paid.

So this morning, as we delve into better understanding the scope and complexity of maritime drug interdiction, I hope we all keep in mind how important our Coast Guard is to that initiative, and the importance of our obligation to ensure that the Coast Guard never again is forced to operate without a paycheck. Thank you.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman. I would now like to welcome our witnesses.

We are joined today by Vice Admiral Daniel B. Abel, Deputy Commandant for Operations for the United States Coast Guard; Rear Admiral Steven D. Poulin, Director of Operations for the United States Southern Command, also a Coastie; and Mr. Thomas W. Padden, United States Interdiction Coordinator for the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Without objection, our witnesses' full statements will be included for the record. Since we have your written statement, gentlemen, we ask you to limit your oral testimony to 5 minutes.

I just point out, in the case of Admiral Poulin, I would encourage you to make any remarks in addition to the submitted testimony, since it is not yours. As much as I enjoyed reading the testimony of Admiral Craig Faller, who is the commander of the United States Southern Command, it would be wonderful to have testimony delivered to this committee that is intended for this committee, and not for another purpose.

So thank you all for being here. I would like to proceed with you, Admiral Abel. Go ahead, sir.

**TESTIMONY OF VICE ADMIRAL DANIEL B. ABEL, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, U.S. COAST GUARD; REAR ADMIRAL STEVEN D. POULIN, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND; AND THOMAS W. PADDEN, U.S. INTERDICTION COORDINATOR, OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY**

Admiral ABEL. Good morning, Chairman DeFazio, Chairman Maloney, and Ranking Member Gibbs. Thank you for an opportunity to speak today about the Coast Guard's interdiction operations in our hemisphere. I am particularly pleased to testify alongside two key shipmates in our Nation's fight against transnational criminal organizations, or TCOs.

In June of 1983, as a new ensign, I reported aboard Coast Guard cutter *Dauntless* in Miami, Florida. As such, 36 years ago I joined the Nation's fight against those seeking to traffic drugs across our shores. With this perspective, I can assure you that the tactics and resources our Service employs to confront the flow of this corrosive element has evolved significantly over the last three decades.

Concurrently and regretfully, drug runners of the 1980s have matured into transnational criminal organizations, multinational enterprises that are, unfortunately, adaptive, business-savvy, wield the influence of seemingly unlimited funds, and are proving to be highly effective.

We confront threats far from our land border, where traffickers are most vulnerable, and efforts net wholesale or Costco-styled size versus retail-size loads that could prove vexing for local police.

Since success requires the convergence of three essential elements—intel cueing to focus maritime operations on the size of twice the continental United States; patrol aircraft that help pinpoint targets; and finally, an afloat presence with pursuit boats and helicopters, from which use of force can be employed to compel compliance—we are getting results.

Coast Guard is on track for a fourth consecutive year of 200-plus metric tons of cocaine seized. These efforts likewise diminish the ability of criminals to fuel violence that destabilizes partner nations and create that migration push factor in these trafficking corridors.

Regarding our on-scene presence, I cited my first assignment cutter *Dauntless*. She remains on watch today. She is over 50 years old. She and her sister Medium Endurance Cutters are truly the patrol cars of this mission: 70 percent of our offshore presence. However, this fleet is increasingly expensive to keep in service, unreliable, and lacks the capability of modern patrol vessels.

Last year alone unplanned maintenance yielded the loss of two major cutters in the fight. Like our National Security Cutter, our Service is grateful to Congress' efforts to recapitalize our aging multimission Medium Endurance Cutters.

Over 90 percent of 2018 interdictions were intel cued. However, it is difficult to locate targets in a massive West Hemisphere transit zone. Small unmanned aerial systems game changes are being added aboard our National Security Cutters and augmenting manned aircraft. In a single deployment Coast Guard cutter *Stratton*'s small UAS was key to removing nearly 9 metric tons of cocaine and 23 suspects.

Just as today's Coast Guard has matured, the TCOs have evolved in response. We now confront self-propelled semi-submersible, special-built, low-profile vessels, along with a typical go-fast. But it takes a network to defeat a network. We partner with Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica, other Central and South American and Caribbean nations. Likewise, Dutch, British, French, and Canadian ships, at times with embarked U.S. Coast Guard teams, are complementing multinational counterdrug results.

Within our own Department, DHS, full-court press is harmonizing cross-component capabilities and getting results off Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Now, I have cited my observations as a three-decades-plus veteran in our Nation's counternarcotics fight. One constant remains: the unwavering resolve of Coast Guard crews to take all measures. In fact, at times, risking their own lives to keep this poison from the streets of our Nation and, ultimately, our citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions, and I greatly appreciate your support of the women and men who are the United States Coast Guard. Semper paratus.

[Admiral Abel's prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Vice Admiral Daniel B. Abel, Deputy Commandant for Operations, U.S. Coast Guard**

INTRODUCTION

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of this committee. It is a pleasure to be here today to discuss the United States Coast Guard's drug interdiction mission and our role in combating Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs).

Drug trafficking has destabilized regional states, undermined the rule of law, terrorized citizens, and driven both families and unaccompanied children to migrate to the U.S. To be clear, the flow of illicit drugs funds TCOs, which, in turn, pose a significant and growing threat to national and international security.

The Coast Guard leverages 229 years of experience addressing a full range of national security and safety concerns. The Coast Guard is a unique branch of the nation's five armed services, and serves as the United States' premier agency for maritime law enforcement, whose broad array of authorities, capabilities, competencies, and partnerships are vital to successful mission execution. The Coast Guard is the lead and only federal maritime law enforcement agency with both the authority and capability to enforce national and international law, including drug interdiction, on the high seas. The Coast Guard shares the lead for U.S. territorial seas interdiction and enforcement responsibilities with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Additionally, the White House's Director of National Drug Control Policy designated the Coast Guard Commandant as the Chairman of The Interdiction Committee (TIC). TIC is a senior interagency forum, with drug control representatives from twenty-six different departments and agencies, which meets to discuss and resolve issues related to the coordination, oversight, and integration of international,

border, and domestic drug interdiction efforts countering networks in support of the President's National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS).

TIC supports the NDCS by developing interagency recommendations to promote information sharing and integrating detection, monitoring, and law enforcement activities with interdiction efforts to more effectively disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking transportation and distribution systems.

In addition to national interagency partners, the Coast Guard maintains an extensive array of bilateral and multilateral agreements with nearly every coastal state in the Western Hemisphere. These agreements support the Coast Guard in effectively and efficiently leading maritime interdiction efforts in the region including a collaborative approach to the mutually beneficial fight against TCO networks.

For over two centuries, guided by the Coast Guard's motto, *Semper Paratus—Always Ready*, the Service has built a reputation as one of the most agile and adaptive agencies within the Federal Government. These qualities have served the Nation in the Coast Guard's efforts to combat smugglers' ever-evolving conveyances and tactics. Coast Guard interdictions routinely uncover linkages to drug trafficking organizations operating throughout South and Central America, including the Mexico-based Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation (CJNG) cartels and the Colombia-based Clan del Golfo cartel, with numerous criminal networks identified that operate independently of other named organizations. We have identified hundreds of actionable targets, from ground based coordinators, facilitators, financiers, recruiters, and others who facilitate the maritime transportation of narcotics to the United States and partner nations. Even the recent conviction of "El Chapo" links to evidence gathered through Coast Guard maritime interdictions. Over the last three years, over 1,800 smugglers apprehended at sea by the Coast Guard were delivered to the U.S. Department of Justice for their roles in enabling criminal activity and drug smuggling efforts. In fiscal year 2018, Coast Guard interdictions were instrumental in disrupting 82 percent of detected Consolidated Priority Organizational Targets, or drug kingpins, in support of Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South). The Coast Guard also partners with the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force's (OCDETF's) Maritime Strike Forces to combat national and international drug trafficking organizations, and has representation at the Associate Director level at the OCDETF Executive Office.

From 1973 through 1991, the Coast Guard removed over 26 million pounds of marijuana, targeting and interdicting a variety of smuggling conveyances including commercial fishing vessels, ocean-going cargo freighters, and pleasure craft. Beginning in the late 1990s through today, cocaine has been the predominant drug trafficked via maritime routes. During this time, drug traffickers have continued to find innovative yet increasingly risky ways to subvert Coast Guard counter-narcotics tactics. Cocaine cartels initially used some of the very same conveyances used by marijuana smugglers; they transported multi-ton loads of cocaine on slow vessels with high cargo capacity that were vulnerable to interdiction. These cartels quickly adapted to Coast Guard interdiction efforts and expanded tactics to include the ubiquitous "go-fast vessel," as well as more modern conveyances, including the purpose-built Self-Propelled Semi-Submersible (SPSS) and "low profile vessel" (LPV) to disperse loads onto conveyances that are even more difficult to detect.

According to multiple U.S. Government reports, Colombia is the number one coca producing country in the world. Following the end of Colombian aerial eradication efforts in 2015, cocaine production increased significantly leading to three straight years of 200+ metric ton maritime cocaine removals, the highest three years in Coast Guard history. Catching this toxic drug in bulk in the maritime environment proves much more efficient and effective than attempting to detect and seize that same cocaine when it is broken up into smaller loads coming across the land border or being sold on our city streets. To meet this growing threat and prevent these drugs from reaching the United States, the Coast Guard has dedicated additional attention and assets to the Transit Zone, invested in the people and platforms necessary to carry out an aggressive interdiction effort, and helped to build regional partner capabilities.

#### CURRENT THREAT: TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS, VIOLENCE, AND INSTABILITY

One of the goals of the Coast Guard's drug interdiction program is to interdict illicit traffic as close to the source as possible. This helps to stem the flow of drugs reaching Central America, Mexico, and the United States. Over the past five years, Coast Guard cutters and aircraft have removed more than 871 metric tons of high-

purity cocaine from at sea, with a wholesale value of approximately \$26 billion<sup>1</sup>. That equates to tremendous social and economic impacts, potentially preventing as many as 5,200 to 9,500 cocaine-related overdose deaths, 480,000 to 9.9 million new U.S. cocaine users, and the introduction of up to 67,000 U.S. drug-related offenders to the penal system, saving up to \$2 billion in costs of inmate care, and potentially preventing as many as 33,000 violent murders in Mexico and Central America. Despite these successes, TCO networks operate throughout Central America, vying for power through drug-fueled violence and corruption of government officials; in fact, eight of the ten countries with the highest per capita rates of homicide are along the cocaine trafficking routes in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>2</sup>

In response, the Coast Guard's Western Hemisphere Strategy identifies three priorities for the maritime domain in the Western Hemisphere: combating networks, securing borders, and safeguarding commerce.

#### COMBATING TCOs—A LAYERED APPROACH TO DRUG INTERDICTION

The Coast Guard uses a “maritime trident” of cutters, boats, and aircraft in a layered approach to combatting TCOs as they transport illicit goods from the source zone, through Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean, and into the United States. This approach confronts the threat beyond our land borders, on the high seas where traffickers are most exposed and drugs are most vulnerable to interdiction. This layered approach begins overseas, spans the offshore regions, and continues into our territorial seas and our ports of entry.

In the offshore transit zone, the Coast Guard is the major maritime interdiction asset provider to U.S. Southern Command through JIATF-South, which executes U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) statutory responsibility for the detection and monitoring of illicit drug trafficking in the air and maritime domains bound for the United States. The fixed-wing maritime patrol aircraft, provided by the Coast Guard, CBP, DoD, and partner nations, coupled with sophisticated intelligence cueing capabilities provided through JIATF-South, enables Coast Guard interdiction efforts. The most capable Coast Guard interdiction platforms include flight deck-equipped major cutters, embarked armed helicopters, deployable pursuit-capable boats, and Coast Guard law enforcement detachments embarked on U.S. Navy and allied ships.

In Fiscal Year 2018, the Coast Guard provided 17 percent of total maritime patrol aircraft, 74 percent of ships, 94 percent of armed helicopters, and all law enforcement detachment support to JIATF-South. Coast Guard collected interdiction data is then fed back to the apprehension effort to cue additional interdiction success. In Fiscal Year 2018, assets coupled with both intelligence targeting and dedicated maritime patrol aircraft support had nearly double the interdiction rate as opposed to those patrolling ships that had only one or neither of these supporting elements.

New assets are proving increasingly effective in this fight. During a 2018 deployment, the National Security Cutter (NSC) STRATTON, in support of JIATF-South, removed nearly nine metric tons of cocaine and apprehended 23 suspected smugglers as a direct result of their embarked small unmanned aircraft system (sUAS). The sUAS capability is a force multiplier—it expands the NSC’s detection radius, can provide persistent presence awaiting the Coast Guard’s arrival on scene, and provides situational awareness to boarding and helicopter teams. This fiscal year we will continue to deploy sUAS on NSCs, further increasing the effectiveness of our most-capable offshore patrol assets. This ability to organically target, detect, and interdict drug smuggling vessels is critical in an operating area greater than the size of the continental U.S. Since Fiscal Year 2017, interdictions from five NSCs alone have netted over 300 suspects to U.S. prosecution and removed over 123 metric tons of cocaine with a street value of \$3.7 billion,<sup>3</sup> accounting for nearly 25 percent of all cocaine removals that year.

One of our newest assets, the near-coastal Fast Response Cutter (FRC), is also a critical tool in our border security and interdiction posture. In 2017, the Coast Guard Cutter JOSEPH NAPIER, newly homeported in Puerto Rico, interdicted 4.2 metric tons of cocaine, the largest interdiction of any FRC.

Our interdiction capabilities continue to prove their value against TCO’s conveyance of choice: the go-fast vessel. In Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018, our Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) of armed helicopters—along with partner

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, *2013 United States Illicit Drug Prices*, DEA Intelligence Report, DEA-DCW-DIR-012-15, January 2015.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UNODC Research and Trend Analysis Branch, *Global Study on Homicide 2013*.

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration, *2013 United States Illicit Drug Prices*, DEA Intelligence Report, DEA-DCW-DIR-012-15, January 2015.

aircraft from the U.S. Navy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, operating under the Coast Guard's law enforcement authority—set a record of 126 at-sea interdictions, with over 115 metric tons of cocaine removed; more than any other two-year total in Coast Guard history.

In addition, the Coast Guard began providing high-speed pursuit boats and crews to U.S. Navy Patrol Coastal class ships operating in the transit zone in 2016 to increase interdiction opportunities. Coupled with Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments and other deployable specialized forces personnel, this innovative force package capability has netted 21 interdictions and removed over 14 metric tons of cocaine since its inception.

The importance of interdictions transcends the direct removal of drugs from the high seas; when the Coast Guard apprehends suspects from drug smuggling cases, the suspects disclose information during prosecution and sentencing that is used to help indict, extradite, and convict key criminal leaders and further disrupt and dismantle TCOs. Interdictions also take profits out of the pockets of criminal networks by denying them financial resources. The Coast Guard has recently refined its interdiction analytics to examine several measures of success to include the seizure rate of valuable non-drug evidence.

In Fiscal Year 2018, 70 percent of U.S. Coast Guard drug interdictions resulted in the collection of non-drug evidence that provide links between individual smugglers and related TCO activity. These critical elements contribute to actionable intelligence for future events, producing follow-on investigative leads, seizures, and arrests.

In total for Fiscal Year 2018, the Coast Guard removed 209 metric tons of cocaine and 25,200 pounds of marijuana from the transit zone, worth an estimated wholesale value of \$6.2 billion, with 602 suspected smugglers apprehended. This marked the third consecutive year the Service exceeded 200 metric tons of cocaine removed. Despite the tremendous quantity of cocaine removed in Fiscal Year 2018, the Coast Guard estimates that it, along with our entire domestic and international partners, were able to remove only 9.4 percent of the suspected non-commercial maritime cocaine flow in the transit zone. Interagency analysis shows a continued elevated flow of cocaine in the transit zone, and the subsequent maritime smuggling threat is projected through at least 2020. Increased flow, coupled with evolving conveyances and concealment tactics, this will continue to stress our ability to respond adequately to this threat.

While more than 90 percent of our 2018 interdictions were cued by intelligence, the limited availability of Coast Guard's aging major cutters and the number of limited assets available to detect all the cued drug events, ultimately restricted our ability to interdict more targets. Critical acquisitions like the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) are essential to the long-term success in the Coast Guard's fight against TCOs. Medium endurance cutters, some that were commissioned in the 1960s, are the critical "patrol cars" in maritime interdiction efforts and are desperately in need of replacement. Additionally, whole-of-government commitment of additional detection capability, particularly long-range patrol aircraft, remains critical to increasing the number of identified targets that can be interdicted.

#### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

In coordination with JIATF-South, the Coast Guard is engaged with partner nations, including key partners Colombia, responsible for 60 percent of critical movement alerts to JIATF-South, and Mexico, as well as countries throughout Central and South America, leveraging their capabilities and local knowledge to improve maritime governance in the littoral regions being exploited by TCOs. Among the efforts to foster international cooperation and build partner capacity, Coast Guard personnel are posted as attachés, liaisons, and drug interdiction specialists at several embassies in the Western Hemisphere. These personnel develop strategic relationships with partner nations that facilitate the coordination of real-time operations. The Coast Guard's law enforcement, legal, and regulatory expertise are in high demand from Central American partners, whose navies more closely resemble the U.S. Coast Guard, focusing primarily on maritime law enforcement rather than force projection. Coast Guard International Training Teams, as well as cutters deployed in the region, increase professional interaction, training in conjunction with operations, and maritime exercises.

Highlighting international cooperation and success, over the past year, the Coast Guard leveraged the U.S./Costa Rica Bilateral Agreement through a joint shiprider operation with Costa Rica from December 2018 through April 2019. Costa Rican Maritime Interdiction Units, supported by U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement personnel, enhanced their country's ability to conduct interdiction operations from the

newly acquired Libertadors (former US Coast Guard 110-foot patrol boats), resulting in the removal of over four metric tons of cocaine. More importantly, the training provided by U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement personnel, coupled with a bolstered surface fleet, enabled Costa Rica to emerge as a powerful force multiplier in the Transit Zone.

Increased cooperation with Panama and Costa Rica over the last few years have garnered substantial results in each country's role in the multi-national fight against TCOs. Over the past two years, Panama and Costa Rica have ranked one and two, respectively, in partner nation support to JIATF-South interdictions and cocaine removals, netting a total of more than 65 metric tons of cocaine spanning 83 interdictions. Furthermore, the Coast Guard has supported the strengthening of each country's systems to advance legal consequences, providing boarding officer testimony in six in-country trials, collectively enforcing rule of law in the Western Hemisphere.

Working in conjunction with the U.S. Departments of State and Justice, the Coast Guard negotiated, concluded, and maintains over 40 counterdrug bilateral agreements and operational procedures with partner nations throughout the world, the majority of which are in the Western Hemisphere. These agreements enable the Coast Guard to board suspect vessels, facilitate interdictions in under-patrolled territorial waters of partner nations, and coordinate interdiction and apprehension operations in the transit zone. Highlighting their importance to Coast Guard counterdrug efforts, 66 percent of all Coast Guard interdictions in fiscal year 2018 involved the use of a bilateral agreement or operational procedures agreement.

#### THE ARRIVAL ZONE

Closer to the shores of the United States, Coast Guard operational commanders work with the other operational components within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and across the Federal Government to provide a robust presence in the U.S. maritime approaches by deploying FRCs, high speed pursuit boats and aircraft. To achieve unity of effort, the Coast Guard is a major contributor to DHS' Southern Border and Approaches Campaign. The Coast Guard Atlantic Area Commander serves as the Director of Joint Task Force East, overseeing coordination efforts for DHS components operating in the maritime approaches in the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and eastern Pacific Ocean. This component of DHS is instrumental in the aggressive posture aimed at securing our maritime borders surrounding Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, including the approaches from South America, Hispaniola, and the Leeward Islands. Surge operations such as FULL COURT PRESS continue to leverage DHS targeting, detection, and interdiction capabilities, resulting in the removal of 44 metric tons of cocaine and apprehension of 156 suspected smugglers over the past two years.

#### CONCLUSION

The Coast Guard endeavors to secure our vast maritime border by identifying emergent threats and combatting them in a layered approach, utilizing strong international relationships and maximizing domestic and regional partnerships. The Coast Guard stands ready to meet offshore and coastal drug trafficking threats in the maritime domain posed by TCOs operating throughout the transit zone.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and thank you for your continued support of the U.S. Coast Guard. I would be pleased to answer your questions.

Mr. MALONEY. Thank you, Admiral.  
Admiral Poulin?

Admiral POULIN. Good morning, Chairman DeFazio, Chairman Maloney, Ranking Member Gibbs, and members of the committee. It is an honor for me to appear before you today. And I would like to note that, although I sit here wearing a Coast Guard uniform, I testify before you as the Director of Operations for the United States Southern Command, one of six DoD regional combatant commands responsible for all U.S. military operations in a region comprising Central and South America and the Caribbean.

I note that I was privileged to follow Vice Admiral Abel in this position at Southern Command, as he departed for his new responsibilities, his current responsibilities, as the Deputy Commandant for Operations. Thank you for inviting me to participate in this

hearing on behalf of Admiral Faller, the commander of the United States Southern Command.

Having a coastguardsman in this position is unique among combatant commands, and it demonstrates the vital partnership between the U.S. Southern Command and the Coast Guard, with the Coast Guard providing almost all of the maritime assets in the U.S. Southern Command region. These Coast Guard assets conduct a full suite of missions supporting United States Southern Command, ranging from counternarcotics detection and monitoring, national defense, humanitarian assistance, security cooperation, and training exercises.

The Coast Guard also conducts critical maritime force protection for our Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay that is responsible for the safe, legal, and humane treatment of detainees. Simply put, the Coast Guard is U.S. Southern Command's maritime service provider.

Although our partnership with the Coast Guard is most relevant to today's hearing, I would be remiss if I didn't highlight the incredible partnerships we enjoy with other U.S. Government agencies, as well as with willing and capable partner nations throughout the Western Hemisphere. These partnerships are particularly strong with respect to the detection and disruption of illegal narcotics. Nowhere are these partnerships on greater display than at Joint Interagency Task Force South, JIATF South, and Key West. Twenty partner nations and representatives from 16 agencies sit side by side in what has become the model for cooperation toward the common goal of stemming illicit trafficking.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you personally for taking the time to visit JIATF South recently to see firsthand how effective we are in pulling together all of our strengths. I invite all members of the committee to come down and see what a great collaborative international and interagency work that JIATF South is, and the great work that is being done in collaboration.

I would also invite and encourage you to visit our partner nations to get an indepth understanding of the importance of the region. I can tell you that others recognize its importance. China and Russia are here in a big way, and I say "here" purposely. The Western Hemisphere is our shared neighborhood. We are connected with our regional partners in every domain: land, air, sea, space, cyber, and values. The challenges that threaten our neighborhood are the same challenges that directly threaten our homeland, and the opportunities in this hemisphere are all of ours to foster and share.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps said it best and most powerfully, I think. As the Chinese establish presence in countries throughout this hemisphere, he noted—and I quote—"They are inside our interior lines."

So how do we counter that? We have to be good partners, and that includes being good partners in the counterdrug arena. The drug trade is connected to all facets of security. It creates instability in the region, undermines the rule of law, and corrupts governments and institutions. It creates a permissive environment that allows state and nonstate actors to conduct malign activities that threaten the peace and prosperity of the region.

The Coast Guard regularly commits more assets to the counterdrug mission than is required through our annual force allocation effort. The Coast Guard's commitment really enables the successes that you will hear about today.

Our partner nations are also in this fight with us. Colombia has increased its eradication efforts by over 50 percent since last August. They prevent coca from ever reaching the transit zone—from ever starting its journey north. Partners in the transit zone like Panama, Costa Rica, and Guatemala are taking the equipment and the training the U.S. provided them, and are taking cocaine off the high seas by the ton. Last year partner nations directly contributed to 700 American lives saved. Not only is this our neighborhood, but it offers a high return on investment that directly impacts our own national security.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to be here and I look forward to your questions. Thank you, sir.

[Admiral Poulin submitted the prepared statement of Admiral Craig S. Faller, Commander, U.S. Southern Command, as the statement for the U.S. Southern Command:]

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**Prepared Statement of Admiral Craig S. Faller, Commander, U.S. Southern Command, as delivered to the House Armed Services Committee on May 1, 2019**

INTRODUCTION

I want to thank the Congress, and especially this Committee, for your support to United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). The men and women of our team work every day to earn the trust of partners in Latin America and the Caribbean. We are friends and neighbors, bound together by shared values and a shared stake in our common future. The nations of this neighborhood are connected in every domain—sea, air, land, space, and cyberspace. Our partnerships are vital to security and prosperity in this hemisphere, and to our collective ability to meet complex global challenges. We recognize that the success and security of future generations depend on how effectively we build trust with allies and partners in the hemisphere today, working with and through interagency partners like the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Department of Justice (DOJ). Ultimately, we want enemies to fear us, friends to partner with us, and the Western Hemisphere to shine as a beacon of peace, prosperity, and potential.

The strengths and opportunities of our hemisphere—democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law, and military-to-military relationships rooted in education, culture, and values—are matched with a troubling array of challenges and threats to global security and to our homeland. These include natural and man-made disasters, weak government institutions, corruption, under-resourced security organizations, violent crime, criminal organizations, and violent extremist cells. China has accelerated expansion of its One Belt One Road Initiative at a pace that may one day overshadow its expansion in Southeast Asia and Africa. Russia supports multiple information outlets spreading its false narrative of world events and U.S. intentions. Iran has deepened its anti-U.S. Spanish language media coverage and has exported its state support for terrorism into our hemisphere. Russia and China also support the autocratic regimes in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua, which are counter to democracy and U.S. interests. We are monitoring the latest events in Venezuela and look forward to welcoming that country back into the hemisphere's community of democracies. Where threats are transregional, multi-domain, and global, the United States must renew focus on our neighbors and our shared Western Hemisphere neighborhood.

PARTNERSHIPS

Modest, smart, and focused investments in U.S. forces and security assistance continue to yield meaningful returns in the form of partners who are ready to address threats shoulder-to-shoulder with us. Strengthening partnerships is at the

heart of everything we do. USSOUTHCOM's mission is about the smart, focused use of force—not economy of force.

Working from a foundation of mutual respect and shared interests in regional co-operation and interoperability, we are enhancing our partnerships with Brazil, Colombia, and Chile, which are forces for regional and global security. Argentina has reinvigorated military-to-military interaction, and co-hosted our annual South American Defense Conference. Peru continues a tradition of strong liaison officer exchanges with USSOUTHCOM and recently conducted training with a Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF). We reinitiated security cooperation with Ecuador, and are moving forward with a renewed military-to-military partnership.

In Central America, partners like El Salvador and Panama have stepped up co-operation in the area of counter-narcotics (CN); in addition, El Salvador co-hosted our Central American Security Conference last year. Honduras hosts our Joint Task Force (JTF) Bravo at Soto Cano, providing a regionally-based security cooperation platform, the presence of which allows a rapid response capability. Our support to Guatemala's defense institution building efforts has helped its Ministry of Defense increase efficiency, transparency, and sustainability of its investments.

Across the Caribbean, our partners continue to look at USSOUTHCOM as their security partner of choice. Trinidad and Tobago co-hosted our annual Caribbean Nations Security Conference, and thwarted a terror attack with the support of U.S. special operations forces (USSOF). Jamaica has stepped up its CN efforts, recently purchasing a maritime patrol aircraft that will support regional drug interdiction operations.

We continue to expand our cooperation with allies and partners in humanitarian assistance/disaster response (HA/DR) missions and counter-threat efforts, such as drug detection and monitoring, and support to interdiction operations in Central America and the Caribbean. Allies and partners contributed to nearly half of the successful drug seizures credited to Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) last year. In addition to continuing cooperation in traditional areas like peacekeeping and drug interdiction, we are building interoperability for high-end expeditionary operations and in the space and cyber mission sets. In the past year, Brazil became the first Latin American country to sign a Space Situational Awareness Agreement, Colombia became NATO's first global partner in Latin America, and Chile led the maritime component of the world's largest international naval exercise, Rim of the Pacific—a first for a Latin American sea power. Later this year, Brazil will send a Major General to serve as U.S. Army South's next Deputy Commander for Interoperability, the first Brazilian officer to serve in this role.

The majority of nations in this hemisphere share democratic values—including respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of law—and interests in advancing democracy and countering radical ideologies. These shared values and interests are the foundation of our military-to-military relationships. We reinforce and build on these shared values and interests through institutional capacity building efforts, information and intelligence sharing, education, personnel exchanges, and exercises. In the past year, we have improved the quality, depth, and frequency of information and intelligence exchanges with partners, producing joint products on transnational issues of mutual concern.

We also build on those shared values by working with our partners to elevate and integrate all elements of professionalism as a foundational component of every security conference we conduct. The professionalism of U.S. armed forces is the bedrock of our legitimacy, both as a fighting force and in our ability to build trust with our own people. Professionalism encompasses human rights, jointness, gender integration, and non-commissioned officer development.

Education and training—funded by the Department of Defense's William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and the Department of State's International Military Education and Training (IMET) program—and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) purchases made possible by Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants are force multipliers. Our partners prefer U.S. education and training, and these exchanges facilitate mutual understanding of values, doctrine, and culture that enable us to operate together more effectively. Our participation in multinational exercises like UNITAS (a naval integration exercise), PANAMAX (defense of the Panama Canal), and Brazil's CRUZEIRO DO SUL (regional air exercise) is another important way we increase mutual understanding, interoperability, and collective readiness.

In the absence of an enduring U.S. military presence in most of Latin America and the Caribbean, recurring rotations of small teams of USSOF, soldiers, Marines,

and National Guard personnel<sup>1</sup> play central roles in building trust and enabling the exchange of critical expertise. By carefully tailoring these rotations, we ensure they build the readiness of U.S. forces as well as building partner nations' capabilities. On any given day, small USSOF teams conduct over 30 missions in support of about 12 partner nations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Many live and work alongside regional forces, building the trust, confidence, and lasting relationships that reinforce our status as the partner of choice and enhance our ability to respond quickly to contingencies.

Humanitarian support efforts like medical engagements, civil affairs activities, and the recent deployment of the hospital ship USNS COMFORT demonstrate our enduring solidarity and friendship with neighbors, while countering negative messaging by adversarial nations. The international medical team aboard COMFORT treated more than 26,000 patients in Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Honduras. This team conducted more than 100 training engagements, relieving pressure on regional health systems caused by the Venezuelan migration crisis and giving local medical providers more flexibility to deliver care. The integration of more than 100 military and non-governmental organization (NGO) personnel from 10 other nations helped us build trust, tell our story effectively, and enhance regional perceptions of the United States. The U.S. military medical and command staff also returned from the deployment more ready, able to operate with foreign partners, and prepared to provide critical care to U.S. warfighters. These impacts will far outlast COMFORT's 70-day deployment.

Strengthening our partnerships is our best bid for addressing regional and global threats. We work by, with, and through partners to enhance the security of both the United States and our partners, and to help grow bilateral security relationships into regional and global security initiatives. Our networked approach to countering threats recognizes that nothing happens without robust and enduring partnerships across the U.S. interagency, region, and civil society. Our ultimate advantage is using the power of our ideals, ideas, and people to build trust with friends and create dilemmas for competitor nations. This is the primary dimension in which we expand the competitive space.

#### THREATS

Six state actors (Russia, China, Iran, and their authoritarian allies in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela) and a system of interrelated threats challenge the security of our partners and the region. Threats like natural and man-made disasters and criminal networks feed and fuel drivers of instability, including weak institutions, poverty, corruption, and violent crime. Addressing these challenges requires whole-of-government efforts, led by partner nations at a pace they can sustain, to strengthen democratic institutions and expand economic opportunity. Often, improving security is the first step.

#### *Nation State Competition and Malign Actors*

Russia and China are expanding their influence in the Western Hemisphere, often at the expense of U.S. interests. Both enable—and are enabled by—actions in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba that threaten hemispheric security and prosperity, and the actions of those three states in turn damage the stability and democratic progress across the region. As the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world, Iran's activities in the region are also concerning.

Russia continues to use Latin America and the Caribbean to spread disinformation, collect intelligence on the United States, and project power. Russia's deployment of two nuclear capable bombers to the Western Hemisphere was intended as a demonstration of support for the Maduro regime and as a show of force to the United States. Russia has also deployed intelligence collection ships to the region, as well as an underwater research ship to Latin America capable of mapping undersea cables—information it could use to cut critical lines of communication during a future crisis. Additionally, Russia is establishing joint space projects with partners in the region, which it could eventually leverage for counter-space purposes in the event of a global conflict.

China utilizes the same predatory, non-transparent foreign lending practices it has implemented around the world to exert political and economic leverage in cer-

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<sup>1</sup>The State Partnership Program (SPP) links a unique component of the Department of Defense—a state's National Guard—with the armed forces or equivalent of a partner nation, leveraging National Guard capabilities for engagements that build enduring relationships and advance mutual defense and security goals. 24 of the SPP's 75 partnerships worldwide are in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility, including a partnership with Venezuela that is currently inactive.

tain countries. China has pledged at least \$150 billion in loans to countries in the hemisphere,<sup>2</sup> and 17 nations now participate in the One Belt One Road Initiative. However, many countries are beginning to recognize the long-term consequences of mortgaging their future to China, as we've seen in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Sierra Leone, Djibouti, and the Maldives. In the future, China could use its control of deep water ports in the Western Hemisphere to enhance its global operational posture. Particularly concerning is China's effort to exert control over key infrastructure associated with the Panama Canal.

China's presence and activities at Argentina's deep space tracking facility is also concerning. Beijing could be in violation of the terms of its agreement with Argentina to only conduct civilian activities, and may have the ability to monitor and potentially target U.S., Allied, and partner space activities. Additionally, Chinese firms like Huawei and ZTE have aggressively penetrated the region, placing intellectual property, private data, and government secrets at risk. If governments in Latin America and the Caribbean continue to gravitate toward using Chinese information systems, our ability and willingness to share information over compromised networks is likely to suffer.

Russia and China aggressively court students from Latin America and the Caribbean to attend their military schools, offering free training in cyber, policing, and CN. Since 2012, security officials from nearly all Central American countries and nearly half of South American countries have received Russian CN training. These engagements, combined with Russia's Counter Transnational Organized Crime Training Center (CTOC) in Nicaragua, potentially provide Moscow with a regional platform to recruit intelligence sources and collect information.

Russia and China also support their authoritarian partners in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, often through propaganda and other information-related tools. Moscow, for example, provides positive media coverage of its authoritarian allies, papering over repression and socioeconomic inequity in Nicaragua. Moscow also seeks to undercut U.S. policies and regional relationships through information operations and intelligence collection, and by influencing political systems, public opinion, and decision makers. Russia published hundreds of articles last year in its Spanish and Portuguese-language media that deliberately distorted our defense engagements.

The linkages between these malign actors are negatively reinforcing. Emboldened by Russian and Chinese<sup>3</sup> support, Venezuela is engaging in increasingly provocative actions, threatening Guyana's sovereign rights and jurisdiction and providing sanctuary for National Liberation Army (ELN) fighters that threaten Colombian stability. Russia and Cuba are both complicit in Venezuela's descent into dictatorship, but Cuba is particularly influential in supporting Maduro. Following the Cuban government's advice and assisted by its intelligence machinery, Maduro is adhering to the autocratic blueprint Cuban leaders have ruthlessly executed for over six decades. Nicaragua appears to be going down a similar path following Cuba's playbook, with Cuba, Russia, and Venezuela enabling President Ortega's repression of his political opposition. These relationships give Russia, in particular, a foothold close to our homeland. As tensions increase with Russia in Europe, Moscow may leverage these longstanding regional partners to maintain asymmetric options, to include forward deploying military personnel or assets.

Iran is also looking to reenergize its outreach after reducing its efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years. It has deepened its anti-U.S. influence campaign in Spanish-language media, and its proxy Hezbollah maintains facilitation networks throughout the region that cache weapons and raise funds, often via drug trafficking and money laundering. Last September, Brazil arrested a Hezbollah financier in the tri-border area near Paraguay and Argentina, and in recent years Paraguay, Peru, and Bolivia have arrested multiple Hezbollah-linked suspects.

#### *What We're Doing*

We are increasing cooperation with partners to better understand, expose, and counter the malign activities of Russia, China, and their authoritarian allies. We are also working more closely with other U.S. combatant commands and the Joint Staff to ensure that globally integrated plans and operations are informed by threats and opportunities in this hemisphere. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's globally integrated planning is exactly the right approach for addressing the transregional, transnational nature of today's threat environment.

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<sup>2</sup>Gallagher, Kevin P. and Margaret Myers (2017) "China-Latin America Finance Database." Washington, DC: Inter-American Dialogue

<sup>3</sup>For example, China is Venezuela's single largest state creditor, saddling the Venezuelan people with more than \$50 billion in debt, even as their democracy vanishes.

Within the region, we have to be on the playing field to compete. The same presence that strengthens our partnerships sends a powerful signal to Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua (the six negative state actors) that the United States is committed to the region and to the security of our neighborhood.

Strong partnerships—founded in effective and transparent institutions, intelligence and information exchanges, institutional capacity building, education, exercises, and presence—are our primary bulwark against the influence of malign actors in the hemisphere and are bolstered by our work together on military professionalism. Our work with partners to reinforce the hemisphere’s substantial, but incomplete, progress in human rights is even more critical in light of Russia and China’s own disregard for human rights. USSOUTHCOM’s Human Rights Initiative—which just celebrated its 20th anniversary—has conducted more than 200 human rights engagements that have enhanced the ability of partner nations to build professional forces that have legitimacy in the eyes of their populations.

As I have discussed in previous testimony, the Department of State’s security assistance programs—like IMET and FMF—are strategic game changers. Since 2009, IMET has provided opportunities for over 55,000 students from the region to attend schools like the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), the Inter-American Air Force Academy (IAAFA), and the Inter-American Defense College (IADC). These numbers aren’t just seats in a classroom. They represent *lifelong relationships* with future leaders<sup>4</sup> who trust us, understand our culture and doctrine, and are prepared to work with us on a range of challenges.

In addition to strengthening partnerships, we support interagency efforts to hold individuals accountable for supporting the activities of negative actors. For example, in collaboration with the Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), we provided information that supported the development of sanctions against Venezuelan government officials involved in drug smuggling, money laundering, corruption, and serious human rights abuses.

#### *Drugs and Transnational Criminal Organizations*

Drug trafficking threatens our national security and that of our regional partners. Drug overdoses killed more than 70,000 Americans last year, and nearly half a million people across the world in 2017.<sup>5</sup> Fueled by drug demand—especially ours—drug traffickers transported enough metric tons of cocaine (that we know of) from South America by air, land, and sea last year to cover four football fields—and the majority of it was headed for our streets. Upon landfall, this bulk cocaine is broken down into multiple smaller loads and smuggled into the United States, making large interdictions exponentially more difficult. In addition to cocaine, traffickers also transport heroin, synthetic opioids like fentanyl, and precursor chemicals from China. While Mexico remains the primary source for heroin smuggled into the U.S. (and China the prime source of fentanyl), the Dominican Republic is emerging as a regional transit point for opioid trafficking into major U.S. cities like Philadelphia, Boston, and Miami.

Established drug trafficking routes and techniques provide opportunities for the illegal movement of other commodities and people—including terrorists. Several years ago, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) dedicated an article to a scenario in which its followers could leverage established trafficking networks to make their way to our border. This remains a potential vulnerability we watch as closely as we can.

Drug trafficking comes with significant costs, in more ways than one. After marijuana, cocaine remains the second most valuable commodity in the global drug trade,<sup>6</sup> generating dirty money that flows directly into the hands of criminal groups. In many cases, these groups are better funded than the security organizations confronting them. Dirty money fosters corruption and insecurity that tear at the fabric of communities, erode institutions of governance, and drain the region’s potential. The vicious side effects of illicit trade also cost American taxpayers billions of dollars every year. This is more than a national security threat; it’s also an economic one that affects every nation in our neighborhood.

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<sup>4</sup> IMET has trained numerous individuals who have gone onto serve in key leadership positions, including the former President of Chile, Trinidad and Tobago’s Chief of the Defense Staff, and Argentina’s Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who helped foster our reengagement with the Argentine military after the political dynamics changed.

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control, National Health Statistics; United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *2018 World Drug Report*. Geneva.

<sup>6</sup> Global Financial Integrity, “Transnational Crime and the Developing World.” March 2017.

### *What We're Doing*

Leveraging capabilities like information-sharing, network analysis, and the Department of Defense Rewards Program, we support operations by DHS and the DOJ's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to interdict drug shipments and disrupt transnational criminal networks. For example, our intelligence support—enabled by our Army Military Intelligence Brigade—to operations by Homeland Security Investigations and other interagency partners helped dismantle one of the largest maritime illicit smuggling networks in Central America last year.

At the tactical level, JIATF-S continues to deliver steady returns on investment and improve its efficiency in targeting drug movements. Last year, it helped keep the equivalent of 600 minivans full of cocaine off U.S. streets. But even this isn't enough to keep pace with the increasing demand and the volume of drugs flowing north through the Eastern Pacific and Caribbean. While improving efficiency, we still only successfully interdicted about six percent of known drug movements.<sup>7</sup> Doing more would require additional ships and maritime patrol aircraft and greater participation by interagency and international partners that form the backbone of JIATF-S. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) provide the bulk of JIATF-S's maritime and air capabilities. The United Kingdom, Canada, France, and the Netherlands lead multiple interdiction operations in the Caribbean, while we focus U.S. assets on the Eastern Pacific. Last year, 17 international partners conducted nearly half of the interdictions supported by JIATF-S. U.S. Northern Command remains our closest and best Department of Defense partner and we continuously look for ways to enhance our teamwork, recognizing that threats exploit our geographic combatant command boundaries.

Our capacity-building activities, whether at the tactical, operational, or institutional level, play a key role in this fight. For example, after years of USSOF training, Guatemala's Fuerzas Especiales Navales (FEN) is now among Central America's most competent and responsive maritime interdiction units. U.S. training, equipment, and interagency teamwork have also enabled Costa Rican and Panamanian forces to partner seamlessly with the USCG in interdiction operations. Partners are also working with us to address their ability to sustain capabilities that we have developed together. For example, Colombia has increased its eradication and interdiction efforts while also conducting increased operations against the ELN.

### *Drivers of Migration*

Violence, unemployment, corruption, poverty, and impunity for gangs and transnational criminal organizations are some of the main drivers of insecurity that fuel migration to our southern border. 14 of the top 20 most violent countries in the world are in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>8</sup> Migration challenges are exacerbated by weak institutions, corruption, violence and instability wrought by authoritarian governments. Migration from Venezuela is on track to approach the scale of the Syrian refugee crisis, straining the capacity and resources of its neighbors. The United Nations estimates that 5.3 million Venezuelans will have fled their country by the end of 2019—with over 2 million leaving this year alone.<sup>9</sup> Last year, thousands of Nicaraguans fled to Costa Rica and other neighboring countries to seek protection, a number that will likely grow as President Ortega keeps a tight grip on power. Many Haitians continue to leave their country in hopes of finding economic opportunity elsewhere.

### *What We're Doing*

We are working closely with Central American and other partners to share information and provide training and equipment that enhance their ability to secure their borders. We assist partners in developing strong institutional foundations needed for legitimate, effective, and sustainable defense sectors through organizations like the William J. Perry Center<sup>10</sup>, the Center for Civil Military Relations, and the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies, which help our partners build

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<sup>7</sup>Figure based on JIATF South utilization of Consolidated Counterdrug DataBase (CCDB) data.

<sup>8</sup>Igarapé Institute (Regional think tank), “The World’s Most Dangerous Cities.” March 31, 2017 (available at <https://igarape.org.br/en/the-worlds-most-dangerous-cities/>)

<sup>9</sup>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), December 14, 2018.

<sup>10</sup>The Washington, DC-based William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, one of DoD's five regional centers, develops and engages the Western Hemisphere's community of defense and security professionals to seek mutually supportive approaches to common challenges in order to develop effective and sustainable institutional capacity, and promote a greater understanding of U.S. regional policy.

trust and confidence with their citizens. Through collaboration with the Department of State, USAID, and non-governmental partners, our civil affairs teams execute low cost, high impact civic action projects that help partner nations and extend governance to vulnerable communities.

#### TERRORISM

As Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan recently noted, transnational terrorism poses an immediate threat to the Western Hemisphere.<sup>11</sup> Groups like Lebanese Hezbollah, ISIS, and al-Qaida operate wherever they can garner support, raise funds, and pursue their terrorist agendas. ISIS and other groups have demonstrated their ability to inspire and recruit violent extremists to plan attacks in South America and the Caribbean. While the travel of foreign fighters from Latin America and the Caribbean to Iraq and Syria has diminished, the potential return of battle-trained extremists remains a threat. Another potential threat is posed by smuggling networks that move Special Interest Aliens from East Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia through the hemisphere to attempt entry into the United States.

#### *What We're Doing*

USSOUTHCOM leads several annual exercises with interagency partners and partner nations to improve interoperability, preparedness, and response for a possible terrorist attack. Our neighbors are taking increasing steps to address the threat of terrorism in the hemisphere, as evidenced by the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) development of a regional counter terrorism strategy in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State and USSOUTHCOM. In addition to these efforts, we work with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency to help regional partners build their capacity to combat weapons of mass destruction, another issue of growing interest to several partners.

We work closely with lead federal agencies and regional partners to detect and disrupt terrorist activity and strengthen counter-terrorism (CT) legislation. Trinidad and Tobago recently strengthened its CT legislation (including the creation of several new terrorism-related criminal offenses), and other countries are also updating theirs. In collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), DHS, and other interagency partners, we work with Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Chile, and others to share information and strengthen regional capacity to manage extremist threats. U.S. training and biometrics equipment are improving the ability of partners to control their borders, and in the past two years, we've helped interagency partners stop individuals with known or suspected ties to terrorism. Additionally, our small civil affairs teams work closely with U.S. embassies and USAID to counter radicalization and recruitment and amplify moderate voices in local communities.

Detention operations also play an important role in the global fight against violent extremism by keeping enemy combatants off the battlefield. The medical and guard teams at Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO) continue to conduct safe, legal, and humane detention operations. In line with Executive Order 13823, we are examining ways to address medical support, capacity, and infrastructure issues associated with continued detention operations.

#### *Natural Disasters*

Our ability to respond rapidly in crisis is an important aspect of USSOUTHCOM's mission. Our neighborhood experiences approximately 50 natural disasters every year, of almost every type—from hurricanes to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, mudslides, and more. Protecting citizens before and after disaster strikes is a core mission for every military in our hemisphere. The question is not whether, but when, we will face the next disaster, and we must be ready.

#### *What We're Doing*

Last October at the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas in Cancun, Mexico, the U.S. Secretary of Defense and his counterparts from across the hemisphere committed to strengthening regional military cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in support of lead civilian agencies. In support, USSOUTHCOM works closely with partner nations, Department of State, USAID, NGOs, and multinational organizations like CARICOM's Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the Regional Security System (RSS) to build national and regional response capacities. Our training, exercises, and low-cost humanitarian projects have helped our partners to be more prepared to respond to emergencies in their own countries, and more able to assist their neighbors in crisis. As an example, last year the Jamaican Defense Force deployed a team to Dominica

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<sup>11</sup> Remarks at the Western Hemisphere Ministerial on Counterterrorism, December 11, 2018.

for 60 days to provide medical aid and other emergency assistance in the wake of Hurricane Maria. We are assessing our authorities to ensure we can provide the necessary support for our partners to take on increasing responsibility for disaster responses.

When U.S. military support is required, our forward-deployed JTF-Bravo in Honduras, along with our annual SPMAGTF deployment, provide operational flexibility and agility. I'm proud to note that last year we integrated Chilean and Colombian officers into the SPMAGTF leadership team for the first time. Brazil will join the SPMAGTF this year, in addition to co-leading our UNITAS AMPHIB multinational naval exercise. This iteration of UNITAS will practice the establishment of a multi-national task force to support humanitarian response, a capability we haven't employed since the Haiti earthquake in 2010. Building on this initiative, we are working with allies and partners to develop a concept for a scalable multinational task force that works within existing security cooperation frameworks to enhance our collective ability to respond rapidly to crises.

#### **CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT FOR USSOUTHCOM'S MISSION AND THIS NEIGHBORHOOD**

I invite you to visit our neighbors and reinforce the message that we value this region—the only region that is tied to our homeland by all domains—and the role our partners play in keeping our neighborhood safe.

I also thank the Congress for providing the Department's FY 2019 appropriations prior to the start of FY 2019, which minimized the impacts of the current partial government shutdown to the Department of Defense. As we look ahead, confidence in stable budgets and ensuring all of our U.S. government security partners, like our USCG, are open for business will reassure friendly nations that we are reliable security partners.

#### *Support for our People*

After several years of running the detention facility at JTF-GTMO as a temporary mission, we have been directed to keep the facility open. Much of the current infrastructure used by the JTF has long outlived its useful lifespan. We are undertaking a comprehensive review of the existing facilities to determine requirements for mission success, the safety of our forces, and operational efficiency. Closer to home, we are working to find ways to better support our personnel, including exploring ways to mitigate the limited military support services in the Miami area. I will keep this Committee informed of our progress.

#### *Capabilities to Defend our Homeland*

We appreciate the support of the Congress to ensure the continued operations of the USCG, which provides the majority of U.S. maritime assets supporting JIATF-S operations. The new National Security Cutters have proven very effective in the drug detection and monitoring mission, leveraging increased intelligence collection capability and on-scene endurance. Maritime patrol aircraft are also crucial to detection, monitoring, and interdiction by the USCG and partner nations. Continued congressional support for the new Offshore Patrol Cutter will enable the USCG to maintain its capacity in the hemisphere. While those new ships are beginning construction, maintenance funding is essential to keep the aging Medium Endurance Cutters—some of which are close to doubling their planned 30-year service lives—hard at work supporting JIATF-S. We also appreciate the support of the Congress to resource our intelligence capabilities like human intelligence (HUMINT) and innovative analytic tools utilized by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's (DTRA) Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) that allow us to exploit publicly available information and intelligence.

Thanks to congressional support, we contracted a Multi Mission Support Vessel (MMSV) to help fill capability gaps. True to its name, the MMSV was used for SOF training exercises and will now be employed to support U.S. and partner nation law enforcement in CN and CT operations. Increased U.S. joint and naval presence in regional operations and exercises will encourage partner forces, to include navies, to participate in regional security efforts such as HA/DR, CN, and CT. The Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) is mission fit for this region and we welcome its deployment this year. We are also leveraging our growing science and technology portfolio—including innovative projects like small-satellite and aerostat surveillance programs—to mitigate our intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance gaps, and help the Services to test new capabilities that hone the U.S. military's technological advantage.

#### *Capabilities to Strengthen our Partnerships*

We appreciate congressional support for initiatives that streamline security cooperation processes and help ensure we remain the security partner of choice. Your

continued support to programs and capabilities that help build trust and long-term relationships with partners enhances our ability to defend the homeland by providing more capacity for defeating threats and sending a visible signal to our partners (and our competitors) about the depth of our commitment.

#### CONCLUSION

Partnership goes a long way in this part of the world. The right focused and modest investments in this hemisphere yield a solid rate of return for the United States and our partners. Our competitors benefit when we don't invest in our neighborhood.

Our partners share our vision of a hemisphere that is a beacon of peace, prosperity, and opportunity. They want to work with us to achieve this vision. It is in our national interest to work with them. Thank you.

Mr. MALONEY. Thank you, Admiral.

Mr. Padden?

Mr. PADDEN. Chairman Maloney, Ranking Member Gibbs, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Coast Guard's significant role in drug interdiction in the Western Hemisphere.

As the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator at ONDCP, it is my privilege and honor to work with our interdiction and law enforcement communities to reduce the availability of illicit drugs inside the United States.

Mr. MALONEY. Mr. Padden, excuse me, if I could just ask you to speak more directly into the microphone so that Members can hear you. If you just pull it—you can pull that box right towards you, if you want, that box will move, too. Go ahead, sir. Excuse me for interrupting.

Mr. PADDEN. Got it.

Mr. MALONEY. Thank you.

Mr. PADDEN. Our Coast Guard plays a primary role in the interdiction of drugs shipped by maritime means, and it is an integral part of the layered interdiction strategy aimed at intercepting drugs at all points in the smuggling routes.

Seven weeks ago, I was privileged to begin serving as the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator under the leadership of our drug czar, James Carroll. As USIC, my responsibilities include coordinating the interdiction activities of the National Drug Control Program agencies and developing the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan in coordination with The Interdiction Committee.

As we develop our interdiction planning and operations, we must ensure that we are reducing the availability of all types of drugs that are smuggled from all sources. The Coast Guard's maritime interdiction mission remains a principal means of intercepting drugs, and an integral part of the overall drug interdiction effort.

The administration's National Drug Control Strategy focuses on saving lives and protecting our citizens by reducing both the demand for and availability of illicit drugs. It presents clear guidance that is focused on the President's drug control priorities, which are preventing drug abuse before it starts; providing treatment that leads to long-term recovery; and reducing the availability of drugs in the United States.

Availability reduction plays an important role in supporting the prevention of drug abuse and the treatment of drug addiction. Reduced availability enables public health efforts to take hold and increases the potential for successful prevention and treatment ef-

forts. Drug availability is reduced through eradication, interdiction, and the dismantlement of criminal organizations that traffic drugs.

The strategy maximizes our reduction efforts across the spectrum of drug threats. It maintains continued focus on drug interdiction at our borders, where drug cartels attempt to smuggle methamphetamine, cocaine, opioids, and other drugs every day. Strategic emphasis is maintained on Coast Guard and partner nations' efforts to interdict multiton quantities of cocaine that are shipped by sea from South America to our country.

Following the strategy's guidance, the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan coordinates the activities of our agencies. The current plan guides our efforts across three broad geographic zones: beyond the border; the border region; and within the border. The plan emphasizes information-sharing between agencies to provide fused intelligence that guide our interdiction efforts. Shared information and intelligence between our law enforcement, defense, and intelligence agencies will continue to drive effective interdiction and the dismantlement of criminal organizations.

Coast Guard interdictions provide actionable investigative information and evidence to support Federal and State conspiracy prosecutions that more fully disrupt and dismantle these transnational criminal organizations. The Coast Guard investigative service is a significant partner in the joint law enforcement programs tasked with this mission.

The maritime drug threat within the Western Hemisphere continues to evolve as drug traffickers travel farther out to sea to avoid Coast Guard and partner nation interdictions. Traffickers employ semi-submersible and low-profile vessels, as well as encrypted communication technologies to avoid detection.

The increased use of containerized shipping to smuggle large quantities of drugs must also be addressed in our planning. Additionally, there has been an increase in the smuggling of opioids and other drugs at postal and express consignment ports, at ports of entry, and domestic facilities.

Given the changes in the drug interdiction environment since we last issued the plan, we are working to update it. As we update the plan we will ensure that our State interdiction agencies have a voice in the process through the HIDTA program to more effectively plan interdiction efforts inside our borders.

The maritime interdiction mission remains a primary element of the beyond-the-border line of effort. Coast Guard maritime interdictions in the Western Hemisphere keep multiton quantities of cocaine and other illicit drugs from reaching our borders. However, the United States is not the only country affected by the surge of illicit drugs, as all nations in the region face this threat. We must continue to work hand-in-hand with our partner nations to meet the magnitude of the threat that we collectively face.

It is an honor to support the dedicated and courageous coast-guardsmen who expertly execute the maritime interdiction mission every single day. I appreciate the subcommittee's attention to the Coast Guard's critical role in the interdiction strategy, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[Mr. Padden's prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Thomas W. Padden, U.S. Interdiction Coordinator,  
Office of National Drug Control Policy**

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Maloney, Ranking Member Gibbs, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the U.S. Coast Guard's significant role in drug interdiction in the Western Hemisphere. As the U.S. Interdiction Coordinator (USIC) at the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), it is my privilege and honor to work with our interdiction and law enforcement communities to reduce the availability of dangerous and illicit drugs in the United States under the leadership of our U.S. Drug Czar, James W. Carroll. Our U.S. Coast Guard plays a primary role in the interdiction of drugs shipped by maritime means, and it is an integral part of the layered interdiction strategy aimed at intercepting drug shipments outside our borders, at our borders, and inside our borders.

THE U.S. INTERDICTION COORDINATOR

Protecting our citizens from the threat of dangerous and addictive drugs is a mission to which I have dedicated much of my professional career. Seven weeks ago, I was privileged to begin serving as the USIC. In this role, I coordinate the drug interdiction mission as a part of the National Drug Control Strategy (Strategy), and I bring experience from 37 years of combined military and civilian Federal service. As a career prosecutor for the past 25 years, my civilian service has been primarily focused upon the counter-narcotics and organized crime mission.

The USIC's responsibilities, established by 21 U.S.C. 1710(a), include: coordinating the interdiction activities of the National Drug Control Program (NDCP) agencies; developing the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan (Plan) in coordination with The Interdiction Committee (TIC); assessing the sufficiency of assets committed to the drug interdiction mission by the NDCP agencies; and advising the ONDCP Director on the relevant agencies' efforts to implement the Plan.

As I begin my tenure as USIC, I understand the critical importance of working with the Interagency, including the U.S. Coast Guard and TIC, to coordinate the evolution of our interdiction planning and operations. We must ensure that we are fully reducing the availability of illicit drugs of all types and from all sources. The U.S. Coast Guard's maritime interdiction mission remains a principal means of intercepting drug shipments within the Western Hemisphere and is an integral part of the overall drug interdiction effort.

THE NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL STRATEGY

The Trump Administration's National Drug Control Strategy that ONDCP issued in January 2019 focuses on saving American lives and protecting our citizens from the threat of dangerous, addictive, and potentially lethal illicit drugs by reducing both the demand for, and availability of, these substances. The Strategy presents clear strategic guidance to our 16 NDCP agencies by focusing on President Trump's drug control priorities. These priorities are: (1) preventing drug abuse before it starts; (2) providing treatment that leads to long-term recovery for people with substance use disorders; and (3) reducing the availability of dangerous and addictive illicit drugs in the United States.

Under the Strategy, reducing the availability of illicit drugs plays an important role in supporting the prevention of drug abuse and the treatment of drug addiction. Reducing the availability of illicit drugs enables public health efforts to take hold and thereby increase the potential for successful prevention and treatment efforts. If it is easier to get drugs than it is to get treatment, our public health efforts become additionally challenged. Accordingly, our availability reduction efforts directly facilitate our prevention and treatment programs. The Strategy emphasizes that drug availability is reduced through eradication, interdiction, and the dismantlement of the criminal networks that traffic these illicit drugs.

The Strategy is structured to maximize our reduction efforts across the spectrum of drug threats. It maintains a continued focus on drug interdiction at our borders where drug cartels attempt to smuggle marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine, opioids, and other drugs every day. Additionally, strategic emphasis is maintained on U.S. Coast Guard and partner nations' efforts to interdict multi-ton quantities of cocaine and other illicit drugs and precursor chemicals used to produce illicit drugs, as well as drug profits being returned to the drug producing countries, that are shipped via maritime and other means from South America and intended for the illicit drug market in the United States.

#### THE NATIONAL INTERDICTION COMMAND AND CONTROL PLAN

In accordance with 21 U.S.C. 1710, as amended, a responsibility of the USIC is to develop a plan for coordinating the interdiction activities of the NDCP agencies, the National Interdiction Command and Control Plan (Plan). The existing Plan emphasizes that our interdiction lines of effort span three broad geographic zones: (1) Beyond the Border; (2) the Border Region; and (3) Within the Border. The Plan's emphasis on information sharing between agencies recognizes the importance of fused intelligence to guide our interdiction efforts, and its emphasis on dismantling and disrupting drug trafficking organizations. The Plan also recognizes the importance of coordinated, multi-agency investigations and prosecutions. Given the changes in the drug interdiction environment since we last issued the Plan in 2015, we believe it is essential to update this Plan, which we are developing.

The U.S. Coast Guard's maritime interdiction mission is a primary element of the Plan's Beyond the Border line of effort. Within the Western Hemisphere, U.S. Coast Guard maritime interdictions in the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and eastern Pacific Ocean are responsible for keeping multi-ton quantities of cocaine and other illicit drugs from reaching our borders. In Fiscal Year 2017, the Coast Guard removed over 223 metric tons of cocaine, and apprehended over 700 smugglers and referred them to prosecution. As the President has also stated, we need to continue working with our partners in the region to ensure they are increasing their interdiction efforts. The United States is not the only one affected by the surge of illicit drugs. It also affects transit countries as well. The United States and partner nations must work hand-in-hand to meet the magnitude of the threat we face.

It is important to note that maritime interdictions significantly reduce the volume of drugs that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers must interdict at our borders and ports of entry. Furthermore, these maritime interdictions reduce the volume of drugs that other Federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies must seize inside the United States.

Consistent with the Strategy's approach to drug availability reduction, the existing Plan includes emphasis on dismantlement and disruption of drug trafficking criminal networks. U.S. Coast Guard maritime interdictions provide actionable investigative information and evidence to support Federal and state conspiracy prosecutions that more fully disrupt and dismantle these transnational drug trafficking organizations. The Plan's Within the Border line of effort emphasizes the importance of participation in the multi-agency task forces charged with attacking criminal organizations. For example, the U.S. Coast Guard and its Coast Guard Investigative Service are active and significant partners in ONDCP's High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program and the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces program and its Maritime Strike Forces.

As we update the Plan, we must ensure that it includes and emphasizes interdiction of illicit opioids and other drugs at postal and express consignment ports of entry and at domestic facilities, and that it provides guidance to NDCP agencies to adapt our interdiction efforts to address the evolving methods that transnational criminal organizations use. These organizations use the dark web, cryptocurrency, and other technologically advanced means to traffic drugs and hide illicit profits. Given this increasing level of technological sophistication, it is important we include our domestic interdiction agencies as part of our Within the Border line of effort in order to attack the availability of illicit drugs at every point along the smuggling routes.

#### CONCLUSION

The maritime drug threat within the Western Hemisphere continues to evolve, as drug trafficking organizations travel farther out to sea to avoid U.S. Coast Guard and partner nation interdictions. Transnational criminal organizations employ semi-submersible and low profile vessels, as well as encrypted communications technologies, to avoid detection. Additionally, the increased use of containerized shipping to smuggle large quantities of drugs must also be addressed in our planning.

Shared information and intelligence between our law enforcement, defense, and intelligence agencies will continue to drive effective interdiction and the dismantlement of criminal organizations. Our interdiction planning must be guided by the need to continually advance our ability to effectively share relevant information to better coordinate multi-agency efforts.

In my role as USIC, it is an honor to support the dedicated and courageous men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard who expertly execute the maritime interdiction mission in support of the Strategy. U.S. Coast Guard efforts prevent multi-ton quantities of illicit drugs from reaching the U.S. user population, and produce the evidence necessary to dismantle and disrupt criminal organizations that threaten our

citizens. I appreciate the Subcommittee's attention to the importance of the U.S. Coast Guard's drug interdiction mission.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman and we will now proceed to Member questions. Operating under a 5-minute rule, I begin by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

Admiral Abel, Admiral Poulin, I did have an opportunity to visit with you all on the JIATF Operation Center down in Key West. Very impressive. Terrific international cooperation. It is amazing, the missions your Coasties perform, and all the partnerships involving other elements of the U.S. military.

One of the things that strikes me is the fact—you know, the vast area that you have responsibility for, twice the size of the continental U.S.—including parts of the Eastern Pacific is, I think, much more vast than people realize, and much more important than the Caribbean, in the scheme of things, in terms of interdiction. I am particularly interested in the fact that we are finally moving towards some new systems to assist you in your mission.

I know in 2018 is the first time the Coast Guard was able to contract for some unmanned aerial systems. Can you tell me how that is going? I know it was about a \$117 million contract.

I had the opportunity to serve on the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in another capacity, and therefore, I have a pretty good understanding of our country's extraordinary capabilities and intelligence surveillance reconnaissance, our ability to persist in surveillance, to identify meaningful targets from less meaningful ones.

What is the opportunity for us to be more efficient, given that we are only interdicting 6 percent of known drug movements? And can you tell me how that is going, particularly on UASs?

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. So I am very proud of the fact that we have awarded the contract. Every one of our National Security Cutters will have embarked a contractor-owned/contractor-operated system aboard. And our experience is typically they bring three or four platforms aboard to make sure they meet the availability.

We are contracting for 180 days, which is what the ship typically is underway for. Every single day she is underway she will have the ability of the small UAS to do that. That puts the technology risk and the tech refresh on the contractor to meet our requirements. That is seeing huge advantages. Like I mentioned, on cutter *Stratton* they got 24 interdictions using the UAS—not a substitute for manned aircraft, but it certainly can complement that.

We also have a joint customs Coast Guard MQ-9, or predator unit, in San Angelo, Texas, that is flying to the gulf coast. And right now she is actually deployed along the east coast of the United States. We offer pilots and operators—CBP offers platforms and the support, and we are both seeing the advantage of using those types of systems in the war on narcotics, sir.

Mr. MALONEY. I want to give Admiral Poulin an opportunity, as well, but I am curious. Are you tracking—is there a metric that we are following on that, in terms of the efficiency per interdiction, or per pound of drugs seized? Common sense will tell you that they are going to be a more efficient bang for the buck once you get that stuff fully deployed, won't it?

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. So we are just sticking our toe into this business, and so we are going to collect just that. Because the question would be, the so what, are we a better Coast Guard because— are we catching more drugs? Anecdotally, we would say the answer is yes. But we will look for data to support that, sir.

Mr. MALONEY. Admiral Poulin, do you want to comment on this?

Admiral POULIN. Mr. Chairman, having overhead surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft is absolutely critical to the detection and monitoring mission, and end-game interdiction. About one-third of all cases involve overhead Maritime Patrol Aircraft. The challenge is Maritime Patrol Aircraft have some limited duration and dwell time, and they have to return to base. There are crew risk factors and so forth.

So JIATF South is also looking at expanding into land base UAS with the MQ-9s. We have got a proposal on the Hill right now looking at MQ-9s, likely having two MQ-9s, forward-based in AOR, and that is going to provide the persistent coverage that we need. We think that we can get those up 24 hours to provide persistent coverage—

Mr. MALONEY. And as a percentage of that transit zone, what are you going to be able to cover with those? Is it still a small percent?

Admiral POULIN. Well, it will still be a small percentage, Mr. Chairman. And I will tell you the playing field has almost doubled. So, from what you saw, now we are seeing an increase, almost a 60-percent increase in traffic going further south—

Mr. MALONEY. Is it moving—

Admiral POULIN [continuing]. Past the Galapagos.

Mr. MALONEY. Past the Galapagos?

Admiral POULIN. So what we thought was the playing field has now doubled in size.

Mr. MALONEY. Can I—

Admiral POULIN. So the persistent ISR becomes even more critical.

Mr. MALONEY. So—because I only have less than 1 minute left, how about it, Mr. Padden? I read the 2019 Drug Control Strategy, all 20 pages of it. I didn't see a lot about UAS in there. What do you think?

Mr. PADDEN. No, sir. It didn't get specific about UASs, but sets the broader strategy that allows for our drug control agencies like the Coast Guard to employ the means and methods that they think are most effective. UASs would be among those ways and means.

Mr. MALONEY. I guess question, sir, would be whether the White House and ONDCP is going to push budget resources towards that kind of system in the Coast Guard budget. You would be hard pressed to find it if you looked in the budget that was sent up here a couple of weeks ago.

Mr. PADDEN. Yes, sir. We support the President's budget, and we support a multipronged and layered effort to interdict drugs, which would include UASs in our maritime interdiction effort, which is clearly a large piece of our interdiction effort.

Mr. MALONEY. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Gibbs?

Mr. GIBBS. I thank the chairman.

All three of you, in your testimony, you talk about how important it is to get this in the transit zone and interdict these drugs. And it makes a lot of sense.

And I know Admiral Abel has talked about a 10-percent interdiction rate, saves 9,500 cocaine-related deaths in the United States, and 67,000 drug-related offenders in U.S. prisons. And it goes on.

Mr. Padden talks about maritime interdiction produces the evidence necessary to dismantle and disrupt criminal organizations that threaten our citizens. We are all in concurrence that this is a very worthwhile project and initiative.

But the budget requests don't seem to reflect that. We see, you know—I guess the question to the admiral is why does the Coast Guard continually not request to get funding for assets to have more interdiction capabilities, higher than 7.4 percent that is out there in noncommercial vessels?

And then, for Mr. Padden, the administration is trying to fight this war on drugs. Why is the request essentially \$1 billion less than appropriated levels from a year ago?

And so I would just comment. Admiral, you go first, and then Mr. Padden.

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. The Coast Guard's budget for 2020, the President's budget, does include a couple of initiatives to get after this.

Number one is the Offshore Patrol Cutter, Hull number 3, long lead time for hulls number 4 and 5. There is some money for the ScanEagle—that is the small UAS that is on National Security Cutters.

Also there is some innovative stuff in there: a support to interdiction and prosecution. These are three-person teams that we put in-country to help that country exploit a crime scene and make sure there is a rule of law and a consequence within their own country. One more of those. We are adding more in DOMEX, which is where we exploit the electronics, the cell phones, the GPSs, the laptops. Turn that around, that becomes the intel, that becomes the 90 percent that feeds the next interdiction case.

So all of that is in there. And finally, we are also adding more intel analysts in our commands—in our intel centers to get after it, as well. And two more Fast Response Cutters, sir.

Mr. GIBBS. Just a second, Mr. Padden, I just want to follow up a little bit. In your testimony you talked about the partnerships you have with these other countries, especially in the transit zone. The numbers we are looking at, the interdiction, would that partnership—what you just said—could we anticipate those levels of interdiction going up? You know, because we are well under 10 percent. Could we get up to numbers that really make more sense?

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir, Ranking Member. So the struggle we have, of course, is the denominator keeps getting bigger and bigger. I mean we are on par this year for our fourth consecutive year of 200 metric tons of cocaine. So we are catching on a par of what we have caught. We are squeezing every efficiency we can out of the existing assets that we have on scene.

But the struggle we have is there is just more and more that is coming out there. And like Admiral Poulin mentioned, the area of responsibility gets bigger.

Mr. PADDEN. Yes, sir. To your question regarding the allocation of resources, again we have a multilayered interdiction plan interdicting outside of our borders, beyond our borders, with the Coast Guard and maritime interdictions playing a primary role at our borders and inside of our borders. So we support resourcing the interdiction mission in all three of those locations, because they are intertwined and very, very necessary.

With regard to our maritime interdictions, as my colleague has said, as Admiral Abel has said, we are working to make sure that those interdictions that we are making provide the most squeeze, or the most juice for the squeeze, to lead us to prosecutions that are successful against criminal networks, working on targeting those priority criminal networks and developing all the evidence that we can for every interdiction.

Mr. GIBBS. I guess the followup, Admiral, and a thought, you just said your—it is exponentially growing, the amount of drugs coming. We have made—I know a lot of work, good work in Colombia. So where is this increased coca products all coming from, then? Is it going—yes, go ahead.

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. So Colombia. Colombia made some choices on eradication a few years ago, and we are seeing the results of that, of—the plants are mature, they are at their max production. And therefore, it is almost predictable that you would have this amount of production coming from Colombia.

Colombia is very good partners with us. Sixty percent of our critical movement alerts—

Mr. GIBBS. But the amounts are still increasing from Colombia? Is that what I am hearing you saying, that the amount of cocaine or coca coming from Colombia is increasing? Is that what you are saying?

Admiral ABEL. It is on the rise, sir. Yes, sir. We can get you some statistics for the record, sir.

Mr. GIBBS. OK. I just—that was interesting. Because, you know, I thought—I know we are making good work there, but apparently we are not winning there still.

OK, I yield back.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Pappas?

Mr. PAPPAS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much to the panel for answering these questions, and for your testimony today, and for all the work that you do to keep us safe and to interdict drugs.

Critically important to my State—we are experiencing the opioid crisis about as bad as anywhere else in the United States. We have a death rate that is three times the national average right now. I was interested in Mr. Padden's comments about opioids and the increasing trafficking by boat. I am wondering if you could unpack that a little bit and let us know what you are observing, and if that also has to do with synthetic opioids coming from China.

Mr. PADDEN. Yes, sir, great question, sir. The trafficking that we are seeing with opioids, especially the synthetics, fentanyl and so forth, it is less on the water.

While there has been an incident or two where fentanyl has been seized as part of a maritime interdiction, it is really not coming to

the United States that way. It is coming across our southern border in both powder and pill form, and it is coming through our postal and express consignment package facilities. And there is increased efforts to work in a multiagency manner to target those entry points, particularly at the postal and parcel facilities, working with our express consignment carriers to help better target those packages coming in.

That is going to be a change in focus and emphasis in the upcoming national interdiction plan, as this threat has really evolved since the last time that the plan was issued.

Mr. PAPPAS. As we focus on the transit zone in terms of interdiction efforts, are we missing smaller crafts that are bringing shipments of synthetic opioids directly from Mexico to the U.S.?

Admiral POULIN. Sir, if I could take that one, we are not seeing increased maritime shipments of synthetic opioids from the transit zone. As Mr. Padden said, that is just not the way it is shipped. It is usually coming in as a precursor into Mexico, synthesized, and then transited or trafficked in other ways.

But I think there is an important point here, sir. Cocaine has become the delivery vehicle of choice for synthetic opioids. Over 70 percent of cocaine overdose deaths involve fentanyl. So cocaine laced with fentanyl, cocaine used with fentanyl, et cetera. So it is not easy to just divorce the two problems. I think the two problems are inextricably linked. So even though we are not seeing any kind of movement of opioids by sea, we have got to remain in the cocaine fight.

Mr. PAPPAS. I was recently with the captain and crew of the cutter *Tahoma* in Portsmouth Harbor, New Hampshire. And they were sharing some of their observations about the increasing technology of the cartels, and how it has been difficult to keep pace.

Could you comment a little bit about what we are seeing out there with respect to their advancing technology? You mentioned UAS and some other innovations that you hope to deploy. But how are we going to keep pace over time?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, so these multinational corporations that are TCOs are going to leverage every technology they can: GPS trackers on their vessels, the drugs, encrypted comms. The good news is what they rely on can become a vulnerability.

So I mentioned DOMEX, which is document and media exploitation. We are getting more and more into that business, which is taking everything we can off the electronics, turning that back around, feeding that in with basically what we get from the interviews with the folks, the suspects that we have collected. And then that drives what our tactics are for the next takedown. So we are using technology to find them, and we are using technology against them.

Admiral POULIN. Sir, if I could just offer that—

Mr. PAPPAS. Yes, sir.

Admiral POULIN. We face a very agile adversary with these drug trafficking organizations. They will make adjustments as we make adjustments.

One of the things that we are seeing is a change in tactics moving from go-fast to low-profile go-fast vessels, and the increased use of semi-submersibles, which are harder to detect. And it goes back

to the chairman's point, that we are only able to detect a small percentage of movement, only target about 20 percent of movement.

Mr. PAPPAS. Well, thank you. I know this committee stands ready to work with you to try to get a step ahead and try to improve those numbers. So let us know how we can help. Thank you.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Weber?

Mr. WEBER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Abel, in your comments earlier you talked about three things that were necessary. And you said intel cueing, patrol aircraft, and afloat presence. Do you have those divided out in the budget, how much money is allocated to each of those?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, we can certainly get that for you. I know that our aircraft, the helicopters, there is an investment this year with our acquisition money to upgrade the helicopters. The patrol aircraft, both the C-27s and the C-144s, are getting sensors and increased capability to do that.

We are also, on the operating side, we are going to go one more helicopter presence with the helicopter that shoots from the back of the cutter. We have increased that, as well. And we have more intel folks that we are going to be adding on to that particular—so we are adding onto the intel side, document and media exploitation, helicopters, and then, of course, the Offshore Patrol Cutter is the platform that carries them all.

Mr. WEBER. OK, if you don't mind getting me those numbers, get with my office a little later.

You said that the Guard was on track to interdict 200-plus metric tons of cocaine seizures. When you do that, if—and you also mentioned, I think, cash, and one of you mentioned getting the sums of cash, or whatever it was. Where does that money go?

In other words, if you interdict a drug trade, and the guy has got a \$100,000 in cash, whatever, where does that money go?

Admiral ABEL. I think Mr. Padden is going to take that one.

Mr. WEBER. OK. He has it in his back pocket, does he?

Mr. PADDEN. Yes, sir. Whenever cash is seized, bulk currency is seized, whether it is through a maritime interdiction, or at our borders, or within the country, it is a law enforcement seizure, and it goes through forfeiture proceedings. If it is coming from a Department of Homeland Security agency, it will go to the Treasury Asset Forfeiture Fund. If it comes from a Department of Justice seizure, it will go to the Department of Justice's Asset Forfeiture Fund.

Mr. WEBER. I am aware—and I didn't get to shake your hand, Mr. Padden, I apologize, I thought we were running shorter on time.

But I am aware of at the local level, for example—I am from Texas—when a lot of that money is seized it can go back to the different agencies. Do we get that money back to the Coast Guard for investment in those kinds of assets? Do you know?

Mr. PADDEN. Sir, I will find out the answer to that and get back.

Mr. WEBER. I mean it would make sense to me. I mean, if we are getting—if we are interdicting drugs, and we are getting the fruit of their efforts, however small or large that might be, it ought to go back to the agency. So you can find that and get back to my office?

Mr. PADDEN. Yes, sir.

Mr. WEBER. OK. And then, Admiral Poulin, you said—I have been to JIATF South. I went—I think it was 1 or 2 years ago with the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on the way down to look at some telescopes and stuff down in South America. We stopped there on Key West. We went through Colombia. And I remember seeing a map of—it looks like the targets all around, and you—and they were being tracked.

So two questions. Have you—do you know the percentages—of the governments that are helping us, Colombia, and you can go right down the list, and it was quite impressive, by the way, the coordination and cooperation as we viewed it—are they spending an inordinate amount of money in helping support this drug interdiction? Or are we spending the most of it? Do we know those percentages from those different countries?

Admiral POULIN. Sir, we have data on that and I will get back to you. But let me answer the question this way. Colombia is our strongest partner in the region.

I recently visited Colombia, I met with the head of the Caribbean fleet and also the Pacific fleets. And I tell you that the sailors there are fully committed to the counterdrug mission. As I mentioned in my opening statement, President Duque has increased eradication by over 50 percent.

And I think there is another point to emphasize here. Colombia is just not all in with their treasure and their assets. They are in with their blood. Just this past year there have been a number of deaths involved with IEDs for those that are trying to eradicate the cocaine. I think the number is 8 deaths and upwards of almost 30 injured, some of those permanently disabled because they are amputees. Not only that, Colombia is bringing the fight to the ELN, FARC dissidents, and drug trafficking organizations, and they are taking casualties, sir. So they are a strong partner and they are all in on this counterdrug fight.

Mr. WEBER. OK, that is good to hear.

And then, Admiral Abel, you said also that they are starting to rely on more and more electronics. And by doing that, it is becoming a liability because we are able to take advantage of—explain that. Elaborate on that.

Admiral ABEL. Well, sir, I really can't get into too much of that in the unclassified level. I would be happy to give you a brief on how we can certainly use it at sea. But then it is exploited when it is collected as evidence after the interdiction.

Mr. WEBER. Do they get tracking devices on their semi-submersibles?

Admiral POULIN. I am sorry. The question again, sir?

Mr. WEBER. Do they get tracking devices on their semi-submersibles when—you know, semi-submerged?

Admiral POULIN. Sir, the drug trafficking organizations will use whatever technique they can to avoid detection, leverage technology. We are trying to leverage technology, as well.

Mr. WEBER. OK. Well, I appreciate you all, wish you all the best, and we are glad to be somehow able to help. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Brown?

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you for being here today, and your testimony. And let me start by just saying that I truly appreciate the work of the men and women in the United States Coast Guard, and the men and women of the U.S. Southern Command, and the work that you are doing on behalf of our Nation.

But this will be the second time in the same number of hearings with the Coast Guard where I have expressed grave concerns about the extent of what we, as a nation, ask you to do. I think you are spread much too thin.

We heard testimony in the last hearing before this subcommittee about your participation in freedom of navigation missions to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. I just came from a National Security Conference in Singapore. I get the importance of that mission, but I question whether or not the Coast Guard should be in the Strait of Taiwan in the South China Sea, when the Navy, which has a budget 200 percent of your budget, ought to be doing that.

Earlier this year Admiral Schultz, in his State of the Coast Guard, recognizing that you are a modestly funded organization, stated that you are approaching a tipping point, and not only because of an aging fleet, but also because of a very small operating budget.

So, while the Coast Guard may have resources to interdict 20 to 30 percent of drugs flowing through the transit zone, the GAO noted that, for the period in fiscal years 2009 to 2013, the Coast Guard deployed cutters used for drug interdiction for fewer days than planned, and that Maritime Patrol Aircraft hours were below target levels. These factors likely contributed to the lower actual percentage of cocaine removed.

Since fiscal year 2009 the Coast Guard has set its own internal annual performance target for cocaine removal from noncommercial vessels in the transit zone. The Service has achieved its performance target only once since fiscal year 2009. And for fiscal year 2018 the Coast Guard set its annual performance target for cocaine removal at 10 percent. This is the lowest the Coast Guard has set its annual performance targets since fiscal year 2010.

Several factors impact the ability of the task force to meet the drug interdiction performance targets. One of them is the inability of allied nations to consistently commit assets, and the other is the insufficient inventory of vessels and aircraft available to support operations.

So my question, Admiral Abel and whoever would like to join in the response, can you talk a little bit about the allied nations' inability to consistently commit assets? And can you speak to—and that is probably where I would really like you to focus, because I think you have already begun to address the insufficient inventory of vessels. But tell us about our allied partners.

Admiral POULIN. Yes, sir. I will go ahead and start.

We have tremendous partnerships in the region. As I mentioned in my opening statement, Interagency Task Force South has up to 20 partner nations that are participating with representatives in JIATF South, helping us with detection and monitoring. We have

great relationships with almost all the countries in the region that are in some way affected by illegal narcotics.

I will give you a couple of vignettes. Guatemala has made maximum use of some of the 37-foot Boston Whalers that the U.S. helped them procure. They are taking those Boston Whalers out 200 miles to interdict illegal narcotics. And we have seen the interdiction rates for Guatemala skyrocket. They are being very effective. Same with Costa Rica. Costa Rica just participated in a joint international operation run by JIATF South. That operation, a 45-day operation, interdicted 36 metric tons. Costa Rica was involved in 10 of those metric tons.

Mr. BROWN. So let me just jump in here, and I definitely appreciate the illustrations of where they are doing well. But is it accurate to say that the inability of allied nations to consistently commit assets is what is one of the contributing factors to our inability to meet performance goals for drug interdiction?

Admiral POULIN. Sir, many of our partner nations have limited capacity, just as we have limited capacity to only target 20 percent of known movement. So there is a limited capacity throughout the region.

Mr. BROWN. OK. You know, I am not trying to get into the, like, are they doing 2 percent of the GDP, like we do, you know, with our NATO allies in Europe. But if our allies in the region aren't doing it, and you guys are spread way too thin—you are doing a wonderful job, but we are asking you to do a little bit too much. We need to get our allies to step up a little bit more.

Admiral POULIN. Yes, sir. And maybe the best way to answer the question is that JIATF South is sourced at about 29 percent of their ship requirements and about 21 percent of their aviation requirements. We need more ships and we need more planes. Those can be U.S. ships, U.S. planes, partner nation planes, and partner nation ships.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you. And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman.

Mrs. Miller?

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you, Chairman Maloney and Ranking Member Gibbs. And I want to thank you all on the panel for being here today. And I also want to thank you sincerely for the hard work you do to protect all of us from this terrible thing that is happening.

Like many communities in the country, my district has been ravaged by illegal drugs from the foreign countries. While the panel is focused more on cocaine smuggling, I worry about the opioids and fentanyl that I feel may soon be entering the country in a very similar manner. As President Trump and many of us here in Congress work to secure the southern border and improve detection technology at the ports of entry, opioid smugglers may turn to tactics used by the cartels to traffic these dangerous drugs in our communities.

So my question is very similar to ones that have been asked before. Currently, the main illegal drug seized by the Coast Guard is cocaine. In my district in southern West Virginia, which is ground zero of the opioid epidemic, as the President fights to secure the southern border and stop the flow of dangerous drugs, is it possible

that smugglers of opioids and fentanyl will turn to those tactics used by cocaine smugglers to transport opioids through the transit zone to the United States? And is there anything that Congress can do to help? Any one of you.

Mr. PADDEN. I will start, ma'am—a great question. As I think we said previously, and as you note, we are not currently seeing it come by the water, but it certainly is a means that could be employed. I think currently what we are seeing—and I would defer to my colleagues, my shipmates up here on the panel more specifically about the Coast Guard efforts in the Pacific side of INDOPACOM. But I think we are seeing precursor chemical movements by sea coming from China and the Western Pacific region to places like Mexico, where fentanyl is being produced.

However, the smuggling route of finished fentanyl coming to the United States is currently dominantly the U.S.-Mexico border. So our efforts to interdict finished fentanyl are properly placed along the southern border. And we are increasing our efforts at postal and parcel facilities, because we are seeing direct shipments from China coming by those means.

I think we do need to keep in mind the potential for the sea lanes to be used to move finished fentanyl; we are just not seeing it right now.

Admiral ABEL. And we do have a joint task force, Joint Task Force West, that is out in Hawaii that looks at precursor chemicals coming from Asia. So that pretty much is their focus.

But, as Mr. Padden said, these smuggling networks, they will seek a profit. And if there is a profit in it, and they get into this business, then they may be in the business. But we are not seeing it right now.

Admiral POULIN. Yes, ma'am. I, obviously, agree with Mr. Padden and Vice Admiral Abel. These drug trafficking organizations will take advantage of any opportunity that they can, and they will take advantage of the permissive environments that exist. So we are watching this very closely.

Joint Interagency Task Force South has a great relationship with Joint Interagency Task Force West, which Vice Admiral Abel mentioned. So we are in close collaboration, watching trends. We are watching the problem very, very closely, ma'am.

Mrs. MILLER. Vice Admiral Abel, I want to thank the brave men and women of the Coast Guard for their tireless efforts to stop the flow of the dangerous drugs in our country.

What are the biggest hurdles that the Coast Guard faces in meeting the performance targets for cocaine removal in the close future?

Admiral ABEL. Well, probably both—we are looking at readiness and recap, which is both of what we need right now. Our aging fleet that I mentioned, the fact that cutter *Dauntless* is my age, and I know what my age is, and I am in my fifties, and so is she. We need to get on—that is—those are the patrol cars of this fight.

Also, the Coast Guard, on the readiness side, is on the operating expenses. As a branch of the Armed Forces we have not benefitted from some of the rise in operating budget that we would hope. Our fellow services have seen about a 12 percent, and the Coast Guard has been about 4 percent.

We appreciate the recent hurricane supplemental that was passed last year, last year's budget. We understand there is a supplemental that may get passed soon. We appreciate the House and the Senate working on that, as well.

And I would say the last thing that we are struggling with, candidly, is we are still restocking and we are still getting dry docks and port side availabilities and parts that we need from a 35-day lapse of appropriation. We took a major hit. Our goal is to be hurricane-ready this summer, based on the impact of that lapse of appropriation.

Mrs. MILLER. Thank you so much.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentlewoman. Before I proceed to Mr. Garamendi, I just want to point out for the record my colleague from Maryland, Mr. Brown, mentioned that the Coast Guard budget—that the Navy budget is 200 percent of the Coast Guard budget. I think he meant that it is 20 times the Coast Guard budget, north of \$200 billion when you factor in OCO funding, the base budget of about \$170 billion, I believe, in the Navy. Yours is about \$11 billion requested, so I am sure you would appreciate having half the Navy's budget.

But, excuse me, Mr. Lowenthal has returned. Welcome back, sir.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you. I appreciate that. It is good to be back.

Admiral Abel, you know, thank you for your testimony, and also for the Coast Guard's continued efforts, as we have heard here today, to combat drug trafficking and criminal activity on the high seas.

And I am pleased that in March, Admiral Schultz announced that the first two Offshore Patrol Cutters will be home-ported at Base Los Angeles-Long Beach, which is immediately adjacent to my district. And I thank you for that. And I know these cutters will provide the capability that the Coast Guard needs to continue this important mission.

What you have mentioned today and also in your testimony, you highlight the importance of partnerships, especially with our Central American neighbors, to carry out the Coast Guard's drug interdiction mission. As you note, two-thirds of the interdictions in fiscal year 2018 were facilitated by an agreement with our international partners.

So I have a question with two parts. First part is what can Congress do to support the Coast Guard's efforts to strengthen these relationships that you have with our partner countries? And I am also concerned about our foreign aid to the Northern Triangle countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Has the President's plan to suspend payments to these countries affected the Coast Guard's ability to build partnerships? So the first one is what can we do, and has the potential shutting off of foreign aid to these countries, how will that affect your partnerships?

Admiral POULIN. Sir, let me maybe start responding to that question.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Which part?

Admiral POULIN. The issue of partnerships, sir.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. They were all—both partnerships. One is what we can do to strengthen them, and the other one is have we seen now, with cutting off of foreign aid, going to affect—

Admiral POULIN. So with respect to what Congress can do, as I mentioned in my opening statement, sir, I think it is important for Members to get down and meet with our partner nations, see what they are doing, get an appreciation, a more indepth appreciation for how committed our partner nations are.

With respect to the second question, sir, about our partnerships with Central American nations—

Mr. LOWENTHAL. And the cutting off of aid, foreign aid.

Admiral POULIN. Sir, what I can say is that we maintain strong military-to-military relationships with our South American and Central American partners.

I mentioned some of the successes with Costa Rica, the successes with Guatemala. We have a forward operating base in Soto Cano in Honduras that is critical for us to do all of our missions in the SOUTHCOM AOR: humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, attacking transnational organized crime. We have got a cooperative security location in Comalapa, El Salvador. So our partnerships with the militaries in the region are very, very strong, sir. Thank you.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you. I would like to ask now Admiral Abel. Can you tell me how cutting off our foreign aid potentially could impact these partnerships? And what should we do, here in Congress?

Admiral ABEL. Well, sir, as far as what Congress can do to help these partnerships, the first part of your question, step one would be presence matters in these countries, which means the Coast Guard needs the aircraft, the small boats, the larger ships to do that.

Also, the fact that, as we recap, we are finding with Costa Rica excess defense articles—which is a nice way of saying our retired cutters—become a major force multiplier for these countries. So, as we recap, we can hand down these assets and the support with that, as well, sir.

So Steve mentioned the mil-to-mil relationship we have with these countries. That is still very tight, and we still see a unity of effort—

Mr. LOWENTHAL. I just have 1 minute left, so I want you to follow—have you noticed anything with the President saying that we are going to cut off foreign aid to the Northern Triangle countries—has that impacted our relationships? And that is to Admiral Abel.

Admiral ABEL. Sir, I don't work with these countries on a daily basis. I do not know of any change in our relationship with them. Admiral Poulin certainly is a lot closer with them.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Well, I would like to follow that in the future. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. MALONEY. Mr. Larsen, do you have any questions, or are we proceeding to Mr. Garamendi?

Mr. LARSEN. I will pass. I have got a markup at 11 o'clock. So I will pass and follow up with QFRs.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman. The gentleman from California is recognized.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Larsen, thank you very much. I owe you one. And I know you will collect an additional one.

I want to get at this issue that was just raised by Mr. Lowenthal. There is a very serious question of priorities. In fact, Mr. Lowenthal, we do make choices here. And we make those choices in conjunction with the President. The President intends to spend some \$8 billion building a wall. And the question really revolves how best to spend our taxpayer resources. Is it best to spend it on a wall?

So therefore, the question of cocaine into the United States, does it come via the ocean, the water, or does it come via the land? And if it comes via the land, how does it get here? This is a question for Mr. Padden.

Mr. PADDEN. Yes, sir. Thank you. Cocaine is flowing to our country, both on the water and across our borders. So it is not exclusively—

Mr. GARAMENDI. When it comes across the borders does it come through the ports of entry, or does it come through a trail across a desert?

Mr. PADDEN. It comes predominantly through the ports of entry. But it does come from all points across the border.

Mr. GARAMENDI. What does predominantly—

Mr. PADDEN. Organizations do—

Mr. GARAMENDI. What does predominantly mean? Is that 70, 80, 100, 90 percent?

Mr. PADDEN. I am sorry, sir. Could you repeat the question?

Mr. GARAMENDI. You used the word “predominantly” through the ports of entry. Put a percentage to that.

Mr. PADDEN. I will need to get back to you with a more accurate percentage, but it is—

Mr. GARAMENDI. Take a shot. You used “predominantly.” I suppose that is more than 50 percent.

Mr. PADDEN. More dominantly, I would say over 80 percent is coming through the ports of entry.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Ports of entry. So if we are going to deal with drugs entering the United States through the land, then it is really the ports of entry that we need to spend the money on. Is that correct?

Mr. PADDEN. Sir, as I have testified before—

Mr. GARAMENDI. Let me just say my view is that is correct. If it is 80 percent of the drugs are coming through the port of entry, spend your money—spend 80 percent there, not 100 percent or 80 percent on the walls.

Secondly—

Mr. PADDEN. Sir?

Mr. GARAMENDI. With regard to the oceans, it was said that some 20 percent—the Coast Guard is able to interdict some 20 percent. That was 19, 17, 20 percent, in that range. Let's just say 20 percent. Is that OK, about right?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, right now we intercept and action 20 percent of the known drug flow that we know about.

Mr. GARAMENDI. And then there is more that you don't know about. But OK, let's just say 20 percent. So that means you are doing some 200 metric tons—so we have some 800 to 1,000 metric

tons of cocaine coming into the United States through the oceans. Is that correct?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, every day JIATF South has to make trade-off decisions. They have five or six vessels that they can action, and they have probably got 20 to 25 known targets with intel that they are moving in the transit zone.

Mr. GARAMENDI. So, once again, this is about choices. And we make those choices, as well as the President. The President has chosen to spend some \$8 billion on border walls, some smaller amount on enhancing the ports of entry. And yet we have some 800 metric tons of cocaine that is not interdicted that enters over the water. I think that is about the way the percentages work out.

So if we are interdicting 200 metric tons, and that is 20 percent, then we ought to multiply by 5, which would give us something near 1,000 metric tons. Correct?

Admiral POULIN. Well, sir, we—

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, that—

Admiral POULIN. I want to be careful on the statistics, because about 60 percent of movement out of the Andean Ridge lands first in Mexico or Guatemala. So there aren't direct shipments, per se, to the United States. There are some, but most of it first lands in either Mexico or Central America.

Mr. GARAMENDI. And then you interdict both after it leaves Guatemala, as well as when it gets to Guatemala. You interdict both sides of it. So the point is still there is about 800 metric tons of cocaine that you don't interdict. And we have already heard testimony that your budget is insufficient.

It is just a matter of choices. What I am making here is an argument that we are spending the money in the wrong place.

Admiral POULIN. Yes, sir.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I want to—

Admiral POULIN. To be clear on that, the statistics, we target—we can only target 20 percent of known movement. The interdiction is 6 percent.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Well, that makes my numbers even more—in any case, it is a question of choices. And what is going on here is the U.S. Government is making the wrong choice. It is spending the money in the wrong place. If it is about drugs then we have got to spend the money with the Coast Guard, and we have got to spend the money helping those countries—Guatemala, Colombia, and the Central American countries—beef up their own police, which you have made the argument already.

My time is up. Thank you very much, and I appreciate Mr. Larsen's—

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman. We have time for a second round of questioning, so I would proceed to that round, 5 minutes each. I would recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Gentlemen, just following up on that point, how many Coast Guard personnel are currently deployed to the southern border as part of recent border security operations?

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. As of this morning we had 155 Coast Guard members that are down there: medical team, general purpose, helping on the border. We have a helicopter that is occasion-

ally flying from Corpus Christi, and some small boats that are running up and down the Rio Grande, sir.

Mr. MALONEY. And what would that typically be? What does that represent, in terms of what would normally be deployed? Is anything normally deployed from the Coast Guard?

Admiral ABEL. No, sir. This is unique, but—

Mr. MALONEY. So that is a new mission for the Coast Guard.

Admiral ABEL. This is why there is a Department of Homeland Security. We are helping our shipmates in CBP and Border Patrol, just as their P3s helped us in the hurricane last fall and last summer. We are helping them. Out of a force of 42,000 active, 8,000 civilian, and 6,600 Reserves, I think 155 is a reasonable number, sir, and we are not seeing a huge impact on our operations.

Mr. MALONEY. I understand. What would those personnel normally be doing?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, the helicopter crews are deploying out of Corpus Christi; that is their home. The boat crews are from maritime safety and security teams from all around the Nation. They are bringing boats and bringing their capacity down there. As far as the general purpose that are helping in the actual processing centers, those are volunteers from around the Coast Guard.

Mr. MALONEY. And let me ask you a different version of Mr. Garamendi's question, because I don't want to put you on the hook for making policy decisions that aren't yours to make, or that you are simply in the position of having to implement—and quite properly so, that is your job. But if I gave you \$1 billion in addition to the \$11 billion you have requested, what would we do with that \$1 billion?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, it would have to be a mix of operations and recap, because both of those are what we are struggling with right now. The day-to-day maintenance of aging assets, getting what we need for our workforce, as well as buying the future of the Coast Guard. So it would be recap, as well as operations.

Mr. MALONEY. And if I gave you \$1 billion simply for drug interdiction efforts specifically—so forget the Polar Security Cutter and the other things that we all care about up here, as well. But if we were just talking about drug interdiction, if we were talking about border security more broadly, what would the Coast Guard do with \$1 billion?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, I mentioned the Offshore Patrol Cutters. We have got to get after that. That is—those Medium Endurance Cutters, 70 percent of the presence, they are aging, they are expensive. We are losing the operational days on those. We have to get after that.

Aircraft, I mentioned the triangle. Intel aircraft, patrol aircraft, and then the helicopters on the back of the cutter, as well as the small boats on the back of the cutter. All of those need investment.

Mr. MALONEY. Well, your entire drone program is \$117 million, isn't that correct? The entire drone program, the UAS we were speaking about earlier, it is \$117 million at this point, right?

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. That is a multiyear contract, though. That is not just this year. But it is an investment in the future. Yes, sir.

Mr. MALONEY. Thank you, great point. So how many years is that over?

Admiral ABEL. I can get back with you. I believe it is a 7-year contract, but I can get back with you on the terms of the contract. I am not—

Mr. MALONEY. We could increase our unmanned aerial capability by an order of magnitude with several hundred million dollars, let alone \$1 billion. Fair to say, right?

Admiral ABEL. We would need the platforms that they operate from, though. We—the smaller cutters don't have the room to have a UAS and a helicopter. And certainly the armed helicopter is part of the—

Mr. MALONEY. I understand the complexity, Admiral. I am talking about \$1 billion. We could have contractor-owned-and-operated systems that don't even involve Coast Guard ships, right? We could have a series of platforms out there, or barges, or contractor-operated vessels that were operating drones that were just feeding intelligence to the Coast Guard operation center JIATF, right?

You would be happy to have the data, right? And if we were better at distinguishing it, we could increase the number that Admiral Poulin has talked about if we also had the assets to go get them. Isn't that fair to say?

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. And, as I mentioned, we already have experience with the MQ-9 with the joint unit that we have with Customs.

Mr. MALONEY. In fact, one of the great capabilities you have are those kids who run those boats out and shoot the motors out of those drug vessels. I got to meet some of them. But when you think about it, there is no reason we couldn't do that with an unmanned platform in the future, isn't that correct? With the right eyes-on, human operator, but remotely operating an unarmed drone, we could do that, too, couldn't we?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, I really don't want to speculate about use of force. It took a lot to get Department of Justice approval for the armed aircraft that we have, and the accuracy of our marksmen, and to make sure that there is no collateral damage when we do employ use of force.

Mr. MALONEY. Yes, that is right. But a kid in the back of a boat with a gun shooting out a motor is not a lot different than a kid with a joystick operating a gun on a drone, just for the record. Because they are both highly trained and highly capable and follow extraordinarily rigid procedures around use of lethal force.

So Mr. Padden, just put in a plea for the fact that—the point Mr. Garamendi, I believe, was trying to make is that these dollars we are throwing at border wall construction that are coming out of other military priorities are desperately needed in the drug war that is being fought right now by the gentlemen to your left.

But I see my time is expired. Mr. Gibbs?

Mr. GIBBS. Thank you. One thing I would just say, we have heard a lot about how you are increasing your capabilities to gather intelligence and everything. That is good. But the problem is if you don't have the assets to go on and interdict before you get the intelligence, it is counterproductive.

The Offshore Patrol Cutters, there was the 2019 budget hearing for recapitalization—awarded a contract for the OPC. And there was supposed to be a report last Friday—because we had the hurricane go through there, it was being—and the surrounding area was being built—and the report was supposed to talk about the delays and the cost overruns. Did that report—is it finalized?

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. I am not the acquisition expert here. But as the operator I can tell you we do need the OPC. The material was submitted from Eastern Shipbuilding. It is being reviewed by the United States Coast Guard, and we will make the decision that is in the best interest of the United States Government, based on the material we have received.

Mr. GIBBS. Will that report be submitted to the committee, the report that was supposed to be due last Friday?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, it has some contract-sensitive material. We certainly can consider such.

Mr. GIBBS. OK. I got other—I am trying to get through this, but we had the High Endurance Cutters, mostly at the end of their useful life, right? And then the OPCs are going to replace them, if I got that right. And then the Medium Endurance Cutters. And then we have the question about maintenance on them to extend their life for them while we wait. And so there are all these other vessels.

I guess my question is on the medium cutters, close that gap—the OPCs are built, you know, what are we doing to help close that gap, and how many days conducting those missions are currently lost each year—the unavailability of the Coast Guard assets planned and mission days?

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. As I mentioned, last year we lost 300 cutter days. That is equivalent to two cutters.

The two dozen vessels that constitute the Medium Endurance Cutter fleet, the 210-foot cutters circa 1960s, we don't see a need to recap or do any service-life extension on them.

The 270s, which are circa 1980s, we do have a plan to do a service-life extension program. In fact, in our 2020 budget it is about \$11 million to start that program. The goal was the first one of those hulls will go into that program in 2023. We are dovetailing it closely with when the OPCs should be showing up, so we don't see too much of a dip in capacity. And we anticipate the Coast Guard yard in Curtis Bay will do the work on major systems of the 270s that need to have a recap. That is our plan at this point, sir.

Mr. GIBBS. OK, because I am just trying to drive home the fact that we need to get more assets out there, so we got to have—I think one of the criticisms that can be made—the Coast Guard's long-term planning issue—hasn't been any long-term planning where it really should be.

Is there any capability from contracting or leasing vessels from the private sector? Like, for example, the oil and gas industry, if there is a little bit of downturn there, to help the Coast Guard get more assets out there with Coast Guard crews to get the vessels that—to kind of fill a void? Is there any consideration of that, or is that a possibility?

Admiral ABEL. Sir, we certainly could take a look at that. There are some issues, being a warship, a law enforcement vessel from

which you do use of force and things like that. I know our friends in JIATF South do have a leased vessel that is doing logistics to enable the Coast Guard cutters to remain on station and be more effective.

Admiral POULIN. Sir, if I could just add to that, the naval combatants are absolutely essential to the detection and monitoring and end-game mission. I mentioned before that we need more ships and aircraft.

Mr. GIBBS. Yes.

Admiral POULIN. We need more Navy ships and we need more Coast Guard ships. We are very pleased that we will likely get a littoral combat ship working for the SOUTHCOTM in the SOUTHCOTM AOR this year. I was just up in Mayport, I got a chance to tour the littoral combat ship with Admiral Faller. I think that is going to be an incredible capability. Still not enough, but, again, we are looking for ways to shore up those gaps that we have in maritime assets.

Mr. GIBBS. OK. Just one quick question. We talked about the communication systems, the deepwater legacy. What is the status of that? There was talk previously in previous hearings about that, and I didn't know if it had really been implemented, or what is the status—

Admiral ABEL. You are saying as far as communication systems to and from our cutters?

Mr. GIBBS. Yes, the whole integrated system.

Admiral ABEL. Yes, sir. Obviously, like any modern organization, you know, IT is your spinal cord. And if you can't connect, you can't play.

Mr. GIBBS. That is right.

Admiral ABEL. This budget, our 2020 budget, is the first time the Coast Guard has put dedicated acquisition money in there to recap our mission enterprise, which is how we can act, how the system works, the backroom stuff. We are looking at using the cloud, all these various ways of doing it. But we are going from just repairing the existing software and hardware we have to recapping and looking the next generation forward to make sure that spinal cord is well connected amongst our assets.

Mr. GIBBS. Which I think would be really essential in the interdiction efforts, correct?

I yield back.

Mr. MALONEY. Thank you. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Lowenthal?

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Yes, I will be brief. I think we have done an excellent job, the panel, in terms of talking about the needs of the Coast Guard, unmet needs, what the budget will entail.

Also, on the importance—I think Admiral Poulin and also Admiral Abel talking about the importance of relationships with our Central American neighbors. I want to—and I think we have done—adequately covered that.

But I want to switch the topic a little bit, because I think, Admiral Poulin, you mentioned in your testimony the expanding influence of Russia and China in our hemisphere. And we really haven't talked that much—and I am particularly concerned, as one who represents the port area of Long Beach, and—China's investments

in ports and maritime infrastructure, especially around the Panama Canal.

Can you tell us what you are doing to combat this, what SOUTHCOM is doing to promote transparency, and how you are dealing with this growing presence of both Russia and especially China in our region? Explain that to us.

Admiral POULIN. Thank you for the question, sir. We are very concerned with the growing influence of both China and Russia in the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility, the Western Hemisphere.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Yes.

Admiral POULIN. I did bring with me two placemats that capture what we see as the growth and influence, and I am happy to share these with the committee, and I will leave these behind.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you.

Admiral POULIN. But what we are seeing is an increased intent to sort of crowd out the United States as a partner of choice in this region.

If you look at China alone, to your point about port investments, they have invested in about 60 port projects in the region. That is significant. They are—

Mr. LOWENTHAL. How many projects have we supported?

Admiral POULIN. What I can tell you is 60 port projects is a lot, and they are on both sides of the Panama Canal, sir.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Got it.

Admiral POULIN. So it is a great concern to us. The amount of investment that they are doing in infrastructure, the IT investment from Huawei and ZTE, which creates complications for us because that is now becoming a backbone of the IT infrastructure for many of our partner nations, compromises our ability to get in there and work with them about security concerns.

Russia's malign influence is growing, as well. They are mounting a huge disinformation campaign, changing the narrative about the goodwill and the good work that the United States is doing.

China is supporting the Venezuelan regime. They are the largest creditor of Venezuela, \$20 billion in loans and about \$1 billion in providing military equipment.

Russia and Cuba are malign actors, as well, that are propping up the illegitimate Maduro regime.

So those are just some small examples of how concerned we are about their influence. What we can do about it, sir, is we become good partners. Presence matters. Presence matters a whole lot. We need to continue to do international military education and training to make enduring partnerships in the region. We need to continue to be present with assets. We need to continue to be present with our special operations forces doing training. Military-to-military engagement and persistent presence is absolutely essential to making sure that we retain our status as a partner of choice and limit opportunities for malign influence by Russia and China.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. I want to ask Admiral Abel—I say again that, as I said before, the cutting off of foreign aid at a time when we are watching our enemies investing tremendously in this region is very frightening to me.

Admiral Abel, do you have anything else to add?

Admiral ABEL. So just to add on to what Admiral Poulin mentioned, the Coast Guard offers a very good model for these partner countries. If we have some excess defense articles that we can transfer to them, we can teach them on the maintenance, and if they model their coast guards or their navies like the United States Coast Guard, that is a good fit. The United States Navy, with large ships, is pretty intimidating. It is not a model that fits well with many of these Central and South American countries.

So the nation-building that our Coast Guard can do is just that, a force that is a little law enforcement, a little search and rescue, a little marine environmental protection. And the goal would be let's model that kind of a service for these countries, a maritime protection service.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. But you are also seeing the rise of China and Russia in the region. Is that not true?

Admiral ABEL. Absolutely, sir. I think Admiral Poulin characterized it well, which is checkbook diplomacy, as well as trying to squeeze out the United States. We need to be the partner of choice in this hemisphere.

Admiral POULIN. Yes, sir. And if I could just add, the predatory lending practices of China are profound. About 19 of 33 countries in the region have joined their Belt and Road Initiative. That is a huge concern of ours.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. MALONEY. I thank the gentleman. Are there any further questions from members of the subcommittee?

Seeing none, I would like to thank the witnesses for their testimony.

I would like to ask unanimous consent that the two placemats provided by Admiral Poulin be made part of the record of today's hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

[The information is on pages 47–49.]

Mr. MALONEY. I would also point out to the members of the subcommittee and to others that the subcommittee will be holding a hearing on China and the One Belt, One Road Initiative, particularly in the region, and the relevance for the issues of concern to this committee, which are many. But I appreciate the gentleman's comments very much.

I would also ask unanimous consent that the record of today's hearing remain open until such time as our witnesses have provided the answers to any questions that may have been submitted to them in writing.

And further, unanimous consent that the record remain open for 15 days for any additional comments or information submitted by Members or witnesses to be included in the record of today's hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

If no other Members have anything to add, I would like to thank the witnesses again for their service, for their extraordinary contributions to our country, to our Nation's security, to the war on drugs. I appreciate the participation of Mr. Padden, as well, of ONDCP.

And with that, the hearing stands adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:22 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]



## SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

### Prepared Statement of Hon. Sam Graves, a Representative in Congress from the State of Missouri, and Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Thank you, Chairman Maloney.

The Coast Guard, working through SOUTHCOM, leads the U.S. effort to remove drugs from the Transit Zone between the United States and South America.

Seizing drugs in the Transit Zone—in their purest form and closest to the source—is the most cost effective and efficient way to use U.S. law enforcement assets. The Coast Guard is the only Armed Service with law enforcement authority.

Unfortunately, the Coast Guard and its SOUTHCOM partners act on only a small percentage of known drug movements. This is part of the Coast Guard's overall challenge of carrying out an expansive number of missions with very limited resources.

In recent years, both the Service's target rates and actual rates for cocaine removal have been dropping, which is disheartening. In FY 2018, they dropped their target to 10 percent, and removed only 7.4 percent of cocaine from the transit route.

These drugs are eventually making their way into communities across the U.S. and devastating families and lives in the process.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses. I yield back.

### U.S. Southern Command Graphics Illustrating Growth and Influence of China and Russia in Western Hemisphere, Submitted for the Record by Hon. Maloney





**RUSSIAN INFLUENCE**

**RUSSIAN SECURITY FOOTPRINT**

Bejucal SIGINT Site  
Cuba

Training Center  
Nicaragua

**WEAPONS SALES**

Fighter Aircraft

Surface-to-Air Missiles

**INFORMATION WARFARE**

RT AMERICA

SPUTNIK

Disinformation

**DEPLOYMENTS**

Strategic Bombers  
Deployed in 2008, 2013, 2018

Warships  
Naval diplomacy/joint exercises

Intel Collection Vessels  
Focused on U.S. East Coast

Underwater Research Vessel  
Threat to Undersea Cables

UNCLASSIFIED

4/29/2019

The slide is a composite of several images and text blocks. At the top left is the US Department of Defense seal. The title 'RUSSIAN INFLUENCE' is on the left side. The first section, 'RUSSIAN SECURITY FOOTPRINT', shows two images: one of a building labeled 'Bejucal SIGINT Site' and another of a building labeled 'Training Center'. The second section, 'WEAPONS SALES', shows two images: one of a fighter aircraft and another of a missile launcher. The third section, 'INFORMATION WARFARE', shows logos for 'RT AMERICA' and 'SPUTNIK'. The fourth section, 'DEPLOYMENTS', shows four images: a strategic bomber with an upward arrow, two warships, and two intelligence collection vessels. A 'UNCLASSIFIED' stamp is in the bottom right corner.



## APPENDIX

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### QUESTIONS FROM HON. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY FOR VICE ADMIRAL DANIEL B. ABEL, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, U.S. COAST GUARD

*Question 1.* At the hearing on June 4th, we discussed the Coast Guard's drone program consisting of a contract of \$117 million over 7 years. Could you describe how this program compares with the other branches of the military as well as elaborate how the service could better utilize UAS?

*ANSWER.* The Coast Guard's UAS program is similar to the US Navy's in that it utilizes a service contract for contractor-owned and contractor-operated UAS. This model has proven efficient for the Coast Guard's smaller fleet size as compared to the Air Force or Army's larger government-owned and government-operated programs, which have additional personnel and logistics requirements.

The Coast Guard is having very positive initial results with the Service's National Security Cutter (NSC) UAS operations and is looking at ways to leverage a similar capability on the Polar Security Cutters and Offshore Patrol Cutters. These new Cutters are being designed with the necessary space, weight, and power capacity to support UAS platforms. The Coast Guard has also initiated a proof of concept operation to determine how the UAS capability could be utilized operating from land-based facilities.

### QUESTIONS FROM HON. BOB GIBBS FOR VICE ADMIRAL DANIEL B. ABEL, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, U.S. COAST GUARD

*Question 2.* Following up from the hearing, you mentioned that you would provide statistics behind the increase of cocaine coming from Colombia. Please provide that information.

*ANSWER.* The data provided by VADM Abel during his testimony on June 4, 2019, reflected the continued increase in coca cultivation / production potential from 2012 through 2017 as reported by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). Three weeks after VADM Abel's testimony, ONDCP released a report on 2018 data, stating that coca cultivation, while remaining at historically high levels, leveled off slightly in 2018, as stated in the report excerpt below:

"The estimate states coca cultivation in Colombia saw a minor decrease in 2018 to 208,000 hectares from 209,000 hectares in 2017. Similarly, potential pure cocaine production also saw a minor decrease in 2018 to 887 pure metric tons from 900 pure metric tons in 2017. Although coca cultivation in Colombia remained at historically high levels in 2018, it was the first year the crop did not increase since 2012."

This data shows a 0.5% decrease in estimated coca cultivation and a 1.4% decrease in production potential from 2017 to 2018.

Colombia consistently ranks atop three coca-producing countries. According to the Intelligence Coordination Center (ICC), Colombia produces about twice the amount of cocaine than Peru produces and triples Bolivian production. ONDCP expects to complete official 2018 production analysis for Peru and Bolivia later this month, which ICC expects, will be in alignment with previous years' analysis and confirm production estimates.

ONDCP's full breakdown of Colombia data analysis is below:

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
Cultivation (Hectares)	119,000	116,000	100,000	83,000	78,000	80,500	112,000	159,000	188,000	209,000	208,000
Production Potential (Metric Tons)	320	315	280	220	210	235	324	545	776	900	887

The Coast Guard assesses Colombia is the coca source for the vast majority of its cocaine removals. The Drug Enforcement Administration's Cocaine Signature Program conducts in-depth chemical analysis of cocaine exhibits obtained from bulk seizures. According to the DEA CSP 2019 report, the CSP assesses, with 96% accuracy that 90% of domestic cocaine seized and tested in 2018 originated in Colombia. JIATF-S analysis of known cocaine flow supports this figure. Approximately 94% of JIATF-S known flow (trafficked via maritime and air routes) originates from, or in close proximity to Colombia, via the eastern Pacific, western and central Caribbean.

To date, the Colombian bilateral agreement has been enacted 33 times resulting in removal of 36MT of cocaine. Of the 522 suspected smugglers detained by the USCG in 2019, 26 percent were Colombian nationals.

QUESTIONS FROM HON. RANDY K. WEBER, SR., FOR REAR ADMIRAL STEVEN D. POULIN, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

*Question 1.* At the hearing on the 4th of June, I asked if you knew the percentages of what other countries are contributing to interdiction efforts as well as whether they are spending an inordinate amount of money in helping drug interdiction efforts or if the United States is spending most of it. You indicated that you would get back to us with that information. Please provide that information.

*ANSWER.* Unfortunately, I cannot give you the amounts that each individual country is spending out of their own budgets toward drug interdiction, as that information is proprietary to each nation. However, I can tell you that we have very willing partners in this region, especially as the drug crisis directly impacts their own national security. The drugs that eventually end up on the streets of Texas, burn a path of violence and corruption through our partner nations (PNs), making this an existential threat for them. Our partners are committed to addressing this threat with support from the United States.

I can, however, give you an idea of what US Southern Command is spending to build our partners' capacity to counter the drug threat. The majority of our programs are designed to provide mitigation against one of our primary shortfalls—lack of maritime assets (both ships and planes). In the execution of our statutory mission to detect and monitor illicit drug traffic, we identify targets, but have limited capability to respond and interdict them. Our PN programs help fill that gap by building their capacity to interdict the targets that we identify. In calendar year 2018, PN participation was critical to 40% of all interdiction/disruption cases, stopping almost 120MTs of cocaine worth \$1.8B from reaching our streets. That translates into approximately 840 lives saved.

Below is information on our FY19 counterdrug programs:

In Central America, the total funding directly supporting PN interdiction efforts is \$41,818,000. The focus areas for these countries are border security, maritime and ground interdiction; Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR); and Command and Control (C2).

In South America, the total funding directly supporting PN interdiction efforts is \$23,947,000. The focus areas for these countries are ground and maritime interdiction, ISR, information sharing, and riverine interdiction.

In the Caribbean, the total funding directly supporting PN interdiction efforts is \$5,947,000. The focus areas for these countries are ground and maritime interdiction and border security.

QUESTIONS FROM HON. JOHN GARAMENDI FOR THOMAS W. PADDEN, U.S. INTERDICTION COORDINATOR, OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY

*Question 1.* At the hearing on June 4th, you stated that when cocaine crosses the border, it predominantly does at points of entry but were unable to give an accurate percentage. Please provide an accurate percentage of cocaine entering at points of entry at the U.S.-Mexico border in comparison to cocaine entering elsewhere along the border.

*ANSWER.* It is important to distinguish between the seizure of a drug and the flow of the drug. Seizure data do not reflect the actual flow of drugs into the United States, however, it is the only flow-related data that can be collected. Given the unknown amounts of drugs that are not seized, either at the border Ports of Entry (POEs) or between them, only an estimated picture of border drug flows is possible by using seizure data that is currently collected. Additionally, the data collected regarding seizures between POEs are not specifically limited to seizures made between POEs along the border, as seizures from Border Patrol checkpoints inside the United States are also included in this data.

Accordingly, data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) can be provided on drugs that are seized at and between all POEs by drug,<sup>1</sup> but this is not the same as the amount of that drug crossing the border.

CBP seizure data show that for the period from FY 2016 to FY 2018:

- approximately 89 percent of border cocaine seizures were made at the POEs, and approximately 11 percent outside the POEs;
- approximately 86 percent of heroin seizures were made at the POEs, and approximately 14 percent were made outside the POEs;
- approximately 82 percent of methamphetamine seizures were made at the POEs, and approximately 18 percent were made outside the POEs; and
- approximately 86 percent of the fentanyl seizures were made at the POEs, and 14 percent were made outside the POEs.

It also should be noted that the largest concentration of CBP personnel and detection technology is deployed to the POEs, so more drugs are able to be detected and interdicted at the POEs.

**QUESTIONS FROM HON. RANDY K. WEBER, SR., FOR THOMAS W. PADDEN, U.S.  
INTERDICTION COORDINATOR, OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY**

*Question 2.* Following up from the hearing, when money is seized from vessels, does the money go back to the Coast Guard for investment in assets?

*ANSWER.* USCG does not have forfeiture authority, so the proceeds of all their seizures, including currency seizures, are turned over for processing to law enforcement agencies with forfeiture authorities, such as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), DHS Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), or CBP. If the seized assets are connected to an ongoing DEA investigation, they are turned over to DEA for processing and deposit into the Department of Justice Assets Forfeiture Fund (AFF). The Attorney General is authorized to use AFF funds to finance expenses associated with the execution of asset forfeiture functions and, with specific limitations, certain general investigative costs. If the seized assets are not connected to an ongoing DEA investigation, then they are turned over to a DHS agency with forfeiture authority, such as HSI or CBP. Forfeitures processed by HSI or CBP are deposited into the Treasury Forfeiture Fund (TFF). Judicial forfeitures are deposited into the lead federal agency's corresponding forfeiture fund.

The Department of the Treasury's Treasury Executive Office for Asset Forfeiture (TEOAF) administers the TFF. The TFF is the receipt account for deposit of non-tax forfeitures made pursuant to laws enforced or administered by its participating Treasury and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies. DHS participating agencies include the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and U.S. Secret Service.

The TFF is a special fund. Special funds are Federal fund accounts for receipts that are earmarked by law for a specific purpose. The enabling legislation for the TFF (31 U.S.C. 9705) sets out those purposes for which Treasury forfeiture revenue may be used. Among other things, TEOAF, as the administrator for the TFF, promotes the consistent and strategic use of asset forfeiture by law enforcement bureaus that participate in the Fund to disrupt and dismantle criminal enterprises.

All forfeiture revenue deposited into the TFF composes the budget authority utilized to fund the costs of operating the forfeiture programs of Treasury and DHS law enforcement agencies. Funding is allocated based on priority needs, regardless of which agency contributed each specific forfeiture.




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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-enforcement-statistics>