

STRATEGIC COMPETITION AND SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

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STRATEGIC COMPETITION AND SECURITY CO- OPERATION IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022

UNITED STATES SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING
THREATS AND CAPABILITIES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m. in room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Mark Kelly (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Subcommittee Members present: Kelly, Gillibrand, Kaine, Peters, Ernst, Fischer, Scott, and Tuberville.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MARK KELLY

Senator KELLY. The Emerging Threats Subcommittee meets this afternoon to receive testimony from the Department of Defense on strategic competition and security cooperation in the Western Hemisphere.

I would like to welcome our witnesses today, the Honorable Melissa Dalton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Hemispheric Affairs; Mr. James Saenz, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics; Brigadier General Frank Bradfield, Deputy Director for Political-Military Affairs for the Western Hemisphere, J5 Joint Staff. I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for being here today.

The Western Hemisphere is seeing a growing set of challenges creating instability, undermining democratic institutions, increasing corruption, and threatening longstanding U.S. security relations in the region. Department of Defense (DOD) operations in the region have traditionally focused on counternarcotics and countering transnational criminal organizations, all while the resources for these missions have decreased.

At the same time, the opioid crisis continues unabated, with opioid and synthetic drug trafficking returning to pre-pandemic levels. We are seeing this in Arizona, where fentanyl seizures at or near the border continue to rise, putting a greater strain on local law enforcement, that is also stretched, at the same time, by the migrant crisis.

The Western Hemisphere is also increasingly the focus of strategic competition as near-peer rivals China, and also increasingly Russia, seek to expand their influence. China is using its investments throughout the region to create political influence it can leverage to weaken democracies. China is also exploiting the region's

resources, including through Chinese blue water fishing fleets, engaged in illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Russia is using military assistance and air and sea access agreements with Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba to create instability and challenge democratic governance in the region.

A key tool in this strategic competition is U.S. security cooperation with foreign military and security forces in the Western Hemisphere. During today's testimony, I hope you will address how the Department is using its security cooperation authorities, including its section 333 capacity-building authority and bilateral and multilateral training and exercises to strengthen our longstanding security ties to countries in the region, and also what more can be done to counter the growing malign influence of Russia and China in the region.

Lastly, I would be interested in how DOD is engaging with foreign ministries of defense to build longer-term capacity within those institutions in order to promote the rule of law, human rights, and respect for civilian control of the military.

I will now turn it over to Senator Ernst for any opening comments she may have.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JONI ERNST

Senator ERNST. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you all very much for appearing in front of the subcommittee today.

Despite the war raging in Ukraine, this hearing is always timely because it concerns the security of our own neighborhood, right here in the Western Hemisphere. The security of this region is not guaranteed. China clearly views the Western Hemisphere as critical to fulfilling its global ambitions and displacing the United States as the global leader. China's successful inclusion of 21 Latin American states in the Belt and Road Initiative, its efforts to bribe and bully countries into lopsided deals that give the Chinese preferential access agreements, and its significant investments in dual-use infrastructure like ports, as well as military capabilities like space tracking sites really should concern us.

It is clear China's efforts are not purely economic. They are following their tried-and-true playbook that uses strong-armed economic and diplomatic efforts to set conditions for an eventual military buildup. The China Communist Party's autocratic, oppressive model is not in the long-term interest of our hemisphere.

Make no mistake. China is on the offense in the Western Hemisphere, and I am worried our posture and policies are reactive at best, inert at worst.

During today's hearing I look forward to discussing how DOD can be more innovative and effective in competing with and countering our adversaries in the region and strengthening partnerships with key allies like Colombia.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will turn it back to you.

Senator KELLY. General Bradfield, Ms. Dalton, Mr. Saenz, I understand that all of you do not have a prepared statement, but if you have a joint statement I think one of you are prepared to deliver that.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE MELISSA DALTON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR HOMELAND DEFENSE AND HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS

Ms. DALTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on how the Department approaches strategic competition and security cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. I am delighted to be joined by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense James Saenz and Brigadier General Bradfield to provide our joint testimony today, and we would like to make two main points.

First, the Department is committed to maintaining strong defense relationships with our key partners in the Western Hemisphere, including Canada, Mexico, and the majority of the countries from the Caribbean and Central and South America. Security cooperation is a vital tool to maintain these relationships, as Russia and China continue expanding their influence and actively seek to compete with us in this hemisphere across multiple sectors.

Second, even as we engage in this competition, we must also support responses to threats posed by state or non-state actors, including drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and weapons, illicit financial flows, humanitarian disasters with natural and manmade causes, and malicious cyber activity. Our security cooperation partnerships serve as a critical way to counter transnational threats as part of a whole-of-government approach.

As DOD addresses multiple threats to international peace and stability, we are mindful that a relatively safe and secure Western Hemisphere helps give us the bandwidth to tackle challenges elsewhere in the globe. However, we cannot take security in this hemisphere for granted, especially as our strategic competitors seek to shift the balance in their favor.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the pacing challenge for the Department, including in the Western Hemisphere. The PRC continues to expand its diplomatic, technological, informational, military, and economic enticements to our partners in the region. We are concerned that PRC offers of military cooperation, scientific exchanges, and information technology assistance have nefarious objectives. We are also concerned that the PRC's economic investments are predatory in nature and may mask military purposes.

Russia continues to promote instability in the hemisphere with disinformation and by providing diplomatic, intelligence, financial, and military support to authoritarian regimes, and its activities could enter a new phase if Russia seeks to amplify these activities in reaction to the United States response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Iran's cooperation with the Venezuelan regime of Nicolás Maduro, among other countries, remains of great concern to us.

Responding to these threats requires attention, commitment, and investments. As the forthcoming National Defense Strategy will outline, DOD will need to maintain strong bilateral and multilateral defense partnerships in the hemisphere, enabled by engagements in presence, intelligence, and information exchanges, edu-

cation programs and exercises, and other tools of security cooperation.

In addition to state competitors, drug trafficking and other transnational criminal organizations continue to accrue billions of dollars in illicit profit at the expense of American lives and regional security. They engage in illicit activities such as trafficking in humans and weapons and illegal mining. These organizations undermine stability by enabling corruption, eroding democratic institutions, and hindering governments from exercising effective sovereignty within their countries.

Western Hemisphere nations, particularly in Central America and the Caribbean, face the threat of extreme natural disasters, in many cases exacerbated by climate change. These disasters often lead to a variety of destabilizing effects that compound economic hardship and insecurity and can help drive migration.

We have also seen the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the hemisphere. The pandemic's effects on political and economic stability and on public health will resonate across the region for decades to come.

Finally, there is concern across the hemisphere about the increasing threat of a range of malicious cyber activities, including unauthorized intrusions.

Addressing these strategic and transnational threats requires DOD to closely cooperate with other U.S. Executive branch partners and with our international partners. Building and strengthening these partnerships are key to maintaining the Western Hemisphere's security and stability. Our partnerships with other hemispheric nations are based on the essential principles of support for democratic institutions, civilian control of the military, and respect for human rights and dignity.

Dedicated training on human rights is a core component of our security cooperation activities with partners. Senior DOD officials have led multiple bilateral working groups and other senior leader engagements with our partners across the Americas, including several with Caribbean partners as part of our greater emphasis on cooperation with that vital region. We continue institutional capacity-building and professional military education programs with partners nations' defense and security ministries and militaries, including in Central America. Our defense and security cooperation with Colombia remains strong, and is a key component of the United States-Colombia Bicentennial Partnership that Presidents Biden and Duque announced on March 10th.

At the same time, we are expanding into new areas of cooperation to include cyber, climate resilience, and space. We also cooperate in multilateral settings to include the Inter-American Defense Board and the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, which Brazil will host this July. In addition, to help our U.S. law enforcement and international partners disrupt drug trafficking and other transnational criminal organizations, DOD continues to provide detection and monitoring, intelligence analysis, and other forms of support, using the counterdrug authorities and appropriations provided by Congress for more than 30 years.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, these are just some of the ways in which

DOD employs security cooperation to address strategic competition and transnational threats. Thank you, and we look forward to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of The Honorable Melissa Dalton, Mr. James Saenz and Brigadier General Frank Bradfield III follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE MELISSA DALTON, MR. JAMES SAENZ AND BRIGADIER GENERAL FRANK BRADFIELD III

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on how the Department of Defense (DOD) approaches strategic competition and security cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. We would like to make two main points:

First, the Department is committed to maintaining strong defense relationships with our key partners in the Western Hemisphere, including Canada, Mexico, and the majority of the countries from the Caribbean and Central and South America. Security cooperation is a vital tool to maintain these relationships, as Russia and China continue expanding their influence and actively seek to compete with us in this hemisphere across multiple sectors.

Second, even as we engage in this competition, we also must support responses to threats posed by state or non-state actors, including drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and weapons, illicit financial flows, humanitarian disasters with natural and man-made causes, and malicious cyber activity. Our security cooperation partnerships serve as a critical way to counter transnational threats, as part of a whole-of-government approach.

STRATEGIC COMPETITION

As DOD addresses multiple threats to international peace and stability, we are mindful that a relatively safe and secure Western Hemisphere helps give us the bandwidth to tackle challenges elsewhere in the globe. However, we cannot take security in this hemisphere for granted, especially as our strategic competitors seek to shift the balance in their favor.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is the pacing challenge for the Department in the Western Hemisphere. The PRC continues to expand its diplomatic, technological, informational, military, and economic enticements to our partners in the region. We are concerned that PRC offers of military cooperation, scientific exchanges, and information technology assistance have nefarious objectives. We are also concerned that the PRC's economic investments are predatory in nature and may mask military purposes. Russia continues to promote instability in the hemisphere with disinformation and by providing diplomatic, intelligence, financial, and military support to authoritarian regimes, and its activities could enter a new phase if Russia seeks to amplify these activities in reaction to the United States response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, Iran's cooperation with the Venezuelan regime of Nicolas Maduro among other countries remains of great concern to us.

Responding to these threats requires attention, commitment, and investments. As the forthcoming National Defense Strategy will outline, DOD will need to maintain strong bilateral and multilateral defense partnerships in the hemisphere, enabled by engagements and presence, intelligence and information exchanges, education programs and exercises, and other tools of security cooperation.

ENDURING AND EMERGING THREATS

In addition to state competitors, drug trafficking and other transnational criminal organizations continue to accrue billions of dollars in illicit profit at the expense of American lives and regional security. They engage in illicit activities such as trafficking in humans and weapons, and illegal mining. These organizations undermine stability by enabling corruption, eroding democratic institutions, and hindering governments from exercising effective sovereignty within their countries.

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We have also seen the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the hemisphere. The pandemic's effects on political and economic stability, and on public health, will resonate across the region for decades to come.

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STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AND EFFECTIVE SECURITY COOPERATION

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At the same time, we are expanding into new areas of cooperation, to include cyber, climate resilience, and space. We also cooperate in multilateral settings, to include the Inter-American Defense Board and the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas, which Brazil will host this July. In addition, to help our United States law enforcement and international partners disrupt drug trafficking and other transnational criminal organizations, DOD continues to provide detection and monitoring, intelligence analysis, and other forms of support, using the counterdrug authorities and appropriations provided by Congress for more than 30 years.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Ernst, and distinguished Members of the Committee, these are just some of the ways in which DOD employs security cooperation to address strategic competition and transnational threats. Thank you, and we look forward to your questions.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Ms. Dalton, for your statement. I will begin our first round of 5 minutes for questions.

Ms. Dalton, the Director of National Intelligence's (DNI's) latest annual Threat Assessment Report, issued in February of this year, highlighted the threat from illicit drugs, particularly synthetic drugs, has reached record levels, with more than 100,000 U.S. drug overdose deaths annually for the first time ever.

In Arizona, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has said that they seized a record amount of fentanyl in 2021, with the primary source being the Sinaloa Cartel. This has taken the lives of many Arizonans and many Americans and has put a strain on local law enforcement.

Secretary Dalton, do you agree that the threat from illicit drug trafficking is a national security threat and that the Department of Defense has an important role to play in assessing this threat?

Ms. DALTON. Chairman, thank you very much for the question, and yes, I do agree that this is a national security threat that we must be committed to addressing. It is a tragedy, the alarming rate of hundreds of thousands of Americans that are being affected by the illicit drug trade in states across America. DOD is committed to the important role that we play in detection and monitoring, in intelligence cooperation in the broader region as well as through our security cooperation efforts, to try to address this phenomenon

upstream, working closely with partners in the region and with our interagency partners, and then also in the Homeland, in support of Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Justice (DOJ), DEA, and other relevant civilian-led authorities. We are absolutely committed to this mission and it is a national security challenge.

Senator KELLY. I imagine the Chinese and the Russians are looking at this as a big opportunity for them. Is it your assessment that our near-peer competitors like China and Russia are taking advantage of this instability created by this illicit drug trade and are using this to expand their influence in the Western Hemisphere?

Ms. DALTON. Chairman, thank you for pointing out this important nexus. You know, as we look at the threats in the region and what our strategic competitors are doing and how they opportunistically may seek to ride upon other drivers of instability, I think this nexus is going to be increasingly important to watch, which is why we have dedicated elements within Southern Command, within the broader Department, to track the behavior of our strategic competitors and what the interrelationships might be with some of the transnational criminal organizations, and would be happy to follow up through classified channels to share more.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Mr. Saenz, the Department of Defense's budget for drug interdiction and counterdrug activities, as approved by the omnibus for fiscal year 2022, is over \$800 million, and two-thirds of that is focused on the Western Hemisphere and the U.S. Homeland.

Mr. Saenz, how effective would you say the Department's counterdrug activities have been in cutting off the flow of illicit drugs into our country?

Mr. SAENZ. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for that question and this opportunity to meet with all of you today. I think that the Department of Defense's activities, in conjunction with all of our partners, both interagency and international partners, work well together to help stem the flow of drugs into the United States, given our authorities and the funding provided by Congress.

I think that the authorities that are provided by Congress are really what shape what we are able to do, and I would like to thank all the Members of Congress and Members of the Senate and Members of this Subcommittee for those authorities that help assist us in shaping how we provide our part of interagency, international effort to stem the flow of drugs.

Senator KELLY. Can you give an assessment of its effectiveness? Is there any kind of metric that you use, any way to measure the effectiveness of the \$800 million budget, where most of that goes in the Western Hemisphere and the U.S. Homeland?

Mr. SAENZ. Thank you for this opportunity to clarify. Our budget that we provide, that \$800 million, is divided into several different areas. Part of that is for our own demand reduction activities within the Department of Defense. Some of that is for our primary mission, which is detection and monitoring, and part of that is for the support that we provide through intelligence and logistics support. Then a large portion of that is the support we provide through the National Guard in supporting local, state, and Federal law enforcement.

Each one of those categories has different metrics in areas that we look at for how we providing that support in conjunction with our law enforcement partners. In those various areas we do have metrics that we look at to see how we are providing that support, and in general, those metrics show that the support that we are able to provide is effective and points out ways where we can become more effective and efficient with the funds that are provided.

Senator KELLY. I would like to follow up. Maybe we can get some details on those metrics, and myself and my staff can take a look at it.

I appreciate that. I will recognize Senator Ernst for 5 minutes.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thanks again to our witnesses. General Bradfield, if I could start with you, sir. I am increasingly concerned about China's investments in our critical mineral markets in the Western Hemisphere. How could growing Chinese influence in South American mining become a security risk for us?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Yes, ma'am. Thank you, Senator, for the question. The Joint Staff is gravely concerned about any seemingly economic deals with China in the hemisphere because of dual-use purposes. Some of these companies could easily be used for military application later. So any access that they gain through a business deal in the hemisphere may be militarized down the road.

Senator ERNST. Mm-hmm. Yes. I do agree with that and I have grave concerns about it. Is there any coordination with our Department of State underway presently to counter the diplomatic pressure that China is putting on South American leaders regarding these critical mineral markets in South America, and particularly in Chile?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Ma'am, I would have to defer specifically to Department of State, but I can tell you that the Joint Staff works with the interagency to share information and concerns. As we detect and monitor and establish these well-founded relationships we have throughout the hemisphere with our partners and allies, to share that information with the appropriate entities. It is a whole-of-government approach, ma'am.

Senator ERNST. Can you maybe explain the risks that are associated with that as well?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Yes, ma'am. To understand your question then, the risk for—I am sorry. Can you restate—

Senator ERNST. Well, the pressure that China is putting on South American leaders to gain access to basically the mining infrastructure, are there risk then with allowing China to continue to put pressure on those leaders? Is it blocking any attempts that the United States might have to work with those South American leaders, those type of interactions? Are you able to observe any of that from the DOD perspective?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Yes, ma'am. Thank you for clarifying the question. So yes, ma'am. They appear to have different tactics to gain access to, as you stated, minerals and business deals, but often what we are hearing from partners and allies and witnessing is that strings attached. So it may appear to be a business deal but then it turns into something about longer-term access, or, you know, there are 14 countries in the world that still

recognize Taiwan. Eight of them are in the hemisphere, and we have heard that some of these deals come with, "We will give you this good deal if you denounce recognition of Taiwan."

Senator ERNST. Okay, and there is definitely a risk in that. In particular, I have heard of opportunities for American companies to engage in some of these mining activities. However, with the pressure that is coming from China we do not have that same level of interest from the United States Government in assisting some of our own companies, and access to these critical mineral resources are extremely important. I appreciate your feedback there.

General Bradfield, an increasing People's Liberation Army (PLA) presence in United States Southern Command's (SOUTHCOM's) area of responsibility (AOR) has direct implications for DOD requirements, given the strategic location along critical sea lines of communication like the Panama Canal and the Strait of Magellan at the southern tip of South America.

In your professional military judgment then, how could an increased Chinese military presence near strategic lines of communication impact DOD's ability to execute contingency operations, both in the region and in other places like United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM)?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Yes, ma'am. Thank you for the question. We are watching that closely and working with our allies and partners throughout the theater, not just Panama. But certainly your question is how could it impact? It could certainly impact if China, for example, had control of the port authority on either or both ends of the Panama Canal. It could restrict movement. They are also trying to gain access and strike a port agreement down in southern Argentina, and that could be of concern as well.

Senator ERNST. [Presiding.] Very good. I appreciate that. I am going to yield back my time. Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Ms. Dalton and General Bradfield, you noted in your written testimony that one way China attempts to expand its influence in the Western Hemisphere is strengthened by the PLA's ties with militaries in the Western Hemisphere. What arguments are we making to our Western Hemisphere neighbors that they should engage with our own armed forces over the Chinese? One issue that is related and not unique to the Western Hemisphere is corruption amongst the political leaders and other elites. Can you speak to how our adversaries are exploiting corruption to their advantage and what tools should we use to counter that?

Ms. DALTON. Senator Gillibrand, thank you so much for the really important question here. It is an issue that we are closely monitoring and seeking to counteract, given our longstanding defense relationships in the region. It is deeply worrisome to us that China is attempting to make these inroads.

In terms of the arguments that we are using, it is the fact that we have decades-long defense relationships in the region, that quality of the security cooperation that we provide in terms of training and equipment, in terms of sustaining, is second to none globally, and that are part of, therefore, a network of global U.S. allies and partners that share common interests and values. I

think that is a really compelling argument that most of our partners in the region, that continues to resonate with them.

But I do think we will need to redouble our efforts as China seeks to make these inroads to ensure that we continue to live up to our end of the bargain and continue to build the relationships in ways that are going to be helpful to them. I do think that, again, there is an interrelationship here, as we were speaking about earlier, in terms of some of the other drivers of insecurity. You mentioned corruption. There is also the Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO) dynamic, where actors like China and Russia, through disinformation, through cyber means, are looking to piggy-back on some of those dynamics and foster a sense of disconnection between the government and their people, potentially. This is an area that we continue to watch very closely.

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Senator, thank you for the question. The Joint Staff and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM) and SOUTHCOM are keenly aware of how China is maneuvering throughout the AOR and in our backyard.

So what are we doing about it? We stand shoulder to shoulder with our partners and allies. We are on the field. The Joint Force is on the field every day with our partners and allies. We have some longstanding relationships that many of you on this Committee may be well familiar with as well—a low-cost but high-return-on-investment program like Security Partnership Program through the National Guard. Four Members in this Subcommittee have states that work in the hemisphere, and we are proud of that. These are longstanding relationships where we build trust and we have earned the title of “partner of choice.”

While China will continue to do what they feel like they need to for strategy, our biggest strength in the hemisphere are our partnerships, our friends, our neighbors. So being on the battlefield and being in the space with them, both in training, exercises, and persistent engagements, is very important. We need to meet our partners and allies where they are, with their challenges. That is very important. The support of this Committee and Congress to find those activities is very important.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Acknowledging that we are in an unclassified setting, the efforts that China is making to train foreign militaries, are those efforts successful, and how would you rate them, and how do you think we should best counter it with the partnerships that we have forged over several decades in Latin America?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Yes, ma'am. Thank you. So we do get feedback from our partners and allies, and some do continue to send folks to training in Communist China, and again, you are right, at this level of classification—I could be more specific for the record later, ma'am. But it is effective because they keep going sometimes, because it is a free, paid-for school, but we do get the feedback that because we have an emphasis on human rights, a respect for civilian government and democracy, that we are the preferred partner of choice.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Senator ERNST. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you very much. Thank you for your testimony today.

You know, we have got a lot of bad things going on around the world. You know, we are all worried about Ukraine and the people there. It is a shame what is going on. We will lose more in the first 6 months of overdoses in this country than they will lose, and it does not seem like we are much worried about it. We do not hear people talking about it, and this is my second hearing today about drugs. I think we all need to get more and more concerned about. Senator Kelly obviously brought it up in his home state of Arizona.

At the end of the day, what have we got to do? I mean, we are losing. We are losing the war on drugs down at the border, and it is coming across right and left. We will have people die around here today, overdose, around our building here.

Ms. Dalton, what do you think? I mean, is there anything else we can do, any more emphasis? What are we spending—800—how much do we spend? What is our budget? 800?

Ms. DALTON. Eight hundred million.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Eight hundred million? Just elaborate on that a little bit.

Ms. DALTON. Senator, thank you for highlighting this challenge again, and I am really impressed by the focus that this subcommittee is giving to this issue, and you mentioned the other engagement going on here today, because I do think it needs more due attention, given the impact that it is having on Americans.

Again, I think the Department is absolutely committed to playing the important role that we do with our partners in the region to get after some of the upstream drivers of these illicit networks that are bringing drugs into our country. I think the Administration is giving a lot of emphasis to trying to come up with a comprehensive strategy that will address some of those upstream drivers.

The challenge is that, you know, some of those initiatives will take some time to manifest because it fundamentally is about governance, it is about corruption, it is about the seeds that lay the foundation for those networks to be able to take hold in the points of origin.

Through our security cooperation efforts in the region, continuing to work closely on the professionalization and capabilities and defense institutional capacity-building of our partners to try to address some of those upstream drivers I think is really critical, while, at the same time, bringing the focus here in the homeland to work with state and local authorities in our support capacity as a department, to support the important efforts of DHS, DEA, and other actors. I am grateful for Congress' continued support for our counternarcotics programs and our security cooperation programs, and in terms of what more we could do, I think additional congressional focus and funding for our civilian-led agencies, like DHS, like the State Department, like DEA, that need the capacity to get after this challenge.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Well, here is a problem, I see what has happened over the years. Marijuana, heroin—most of those things you have to grow, right? This fentanyl is synthetic, and this can right here of fentanyl could kill everybody in this city, and they are making it right and left. It is easy to get across the border, and

it is awful. I mean, it is absolutely awful, and nobody seems to be worried about it. I know that it is you all's job, but we have got to do something about it or we are going to have a catastrophe in this country of somebody putting it in our water supply, putting it in air systems. We have got to wake up and smell the roses.

A couple other things. On the African continent we have one military base. In COCOM we have 76 bases in Latin America. Is there anything else we need to do down there to help? You know, it looks like we are pretty well targeted, you know, in Latin America, to helping things like this. We are not concerned about it in Africa. Any thoughts on that?

Ms. DALTON. Senator, thank you. I believe that those key nodes that we have in the region support the longstanding defense partnerships that we have been cultivating the last 30-some years, and those are critical to supporting the ongoing training, exercising, and capacity-building that we are doing with our defense partners in the region in support of the civilian-led law enforcement efforts in the region as well.

So combining that, again, as part of increased support for our interagency colleagues and their capacities to also work with our partners I think is the pathway forward.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. One other quick question. We are hearing at the end of March title 42 is going to expire. Right now we are seeing 5,000 to 6,000 a week come across the border. I think that would probably enhance people coming across. It is going to be tougher to stop the drugs. It is going to be tougher to stop the human trafficking. It is really going to get bad. Do you all expect that?

Ms. DALTON. Senator, thank for highlighting that. We are closely coordinating with DHS and other interagency partners to anticipate the possible lifting of title 42 order. While we are committed to providing support at the southwest border, from a homeland perspective, and again continuing to work closely with partners in the broader hemisphere, the Secretary has not yet made a determination for onward support for fiscal year 2023. But I am happy to work closely with you all as the Secretary makes that determination.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Senator KELLY. [Presiding.] Senator Kaine is recognized for 5 minutes.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, and thank you to the witnesses for what you do. You guys do really good jobs at what you do. I am going to be critical, but I am not going to be critical of you, because I think my criticisms lie elsewhere. They lie with successive administrations and with us, Congress.

You do a good job with what you have. We do not give you very much. We do not give you very much. We have had testimony again and again before this committee that we can spot an awful lot of drugs coming to this country, in response to Senator Tuberville, but SOUTHCOM does not get the resources to interdict what we know is coming. SOUTHCOM has always been underfunded, even in terms of the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) they get. SOUTHCOM asks for help for cyber defense and United States Cyber Command (CYBERCOM) does not

have any resources to give to them. What they say is, "Use the South Carolina Guard. They will help you with cyber defense." Good on the South Carolina Guard. That is great. But CYBERCOM tells SOUTHCOM, "We do not have resources for you."

We act like there is an east-west axis to the world and there is not a north-south axis. This is not just defense. This is also in the diplomacy space. Vaccines. Eight percent of the population lives in SOUTHCOM, the global population. Thirty percent of the deaths were there. How about our distribution of vaccines? We sent 8 percent of our vaccines there. We sent what the population was, but not what the death toll was, and you could argue that because SOUTHCOM is so connected to us through migration, even if they did not have an unacceptably high death toll we should have been doing better by them.

Six of us went to Central and South America in July, three Democrats and three Republicans. We went at the time the U.S. was delivering vaccines. They were thrilled that we were delivering vaccines because Sinovac and Sputnik vaccines, China and Russia were really making a play. They like our vaccines better. We were giving them. China and Russia were selling them. They thought our quality was higher. If they said something good about Taiwan, China would suddenly cancel it.

We have a little open door with vaccine development, but even then I think we were under-distributing in the Americas when we could have been really building up powerful goodwill there because of the death toll there and because they really want to do business with us.

I am the chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee on Foreign Relations. Again and again, when we meet with heads of state they tell us, in Spanish, usually, when the translator is gone, they say, "We would much rather work with you than with China or Russia. We would much rather work with you. But they have resources on the table and you do not."

You have talked about the security cooperation funding, and this International Military Education and Training (IMET) funding. I am going to look really carefully. I think the President is going to send us a budget next week, and I would encourage everybody here, you guys have said we should do this hearing, look at that budget next week and see what happens to security cooperation funding and IMET in SOUTHCOM. I bet you are going to see it going down. I bet you are going to see that we are deciding to prioritize other parts of the world instead of SOUTHCOM. I am hoping I am wrong about that, and if I am wrong I am going to say publicly I was wrong. But I have a feeling we are going to see a continued devaluation of what we need to be doing in this region.

Now there are some bright spots. Ecuador, where we have virtually no presence for a very long time because they were pro-China, a year ago they swept out the president, they swept out 70 percent of their national assembly because China was ripping them off—building crummy projects, drying up rivers, vacuuming up fish around the Galapagos. Even though we really were not doing much with them, the Ecuadoran population decided to sweep out an old crew, and they put in a very potentially friendly United States Government. That is positive.

The Chilean elections have produced somebody who is not necessarily Mr. Pro U.S. He is a candidate from the left, but he has been willing to speak out against Cuba, speak out against Nicaragua, speak out against Venezuela, speak out against the Russian invasion of Ukraine. There is an opportunity there for us.

Honduras has replaced a president, one who was corrupt and complicit in the drug trade in the United States, again, to somebody who is not necessarily going to be an ally of ours but at least there is a chapter that is open to us.

The last thing that has happened recently is Panama, Costa Rica, and Dominican Republic have announced an alliance for democracy and development to try to counter the democratic backsliding in the region and lean forward and be more pro-democracy, and that gives us some opportunity.

But I guess I just want to say to my colleagues, when we get this budget next week let's take a look at what the allocation of resources are into this AOR. I think you are going to conclude that no matter what kind of good people we have trying to do a good job, it has not been a priority. It has not been a priority, and it needs to be a priority.

The only question I will ask is, do you agree with me? I mean, you testified to it essentially, but programs like IMET and security cooperation, they are not the real expensive ones, and it is some of the best things that we do in terms of building up alliances and friendships that can last for generations. Am I looking at this the right way?

Ms. DALTON. Senator, thank you so much for highlighting that. I think what I would say, in response, is with the resources that we do get for this region that we will be creative and innovative and make sure we get the best bang for our buck in terms of leveraging it through the security cooperation tools that we have at our disposal.

You know, through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) the Department also has an opportunity through this Strategic Competition Initiative to highlight, both for this region as well as, I believe, for United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), the ways that we are going to leverage security cooperation, irregular warfare, institutional capacity-building going forward, to achieve our objectives.

We will come up with a robust framework to be able to describe how we are going to innovate with the tools that we have.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Senator Peters.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Ms. Dalton, my first question is to you. This comes from my perspective as chairing the Senate Homeland Security Committee and overseeing DHS. As you are well aware, many of the security challenges that we face in Latin America are really more of a political and economic instability rather than the typical state-on-state competition. In fact, I think most of the security challenges that the United States faces in the region in dealing with Latin America is much more about homeland security than they are about national security, broadly.

My question to you, as a senior DOD official at the nexus of homeland security and national defense, how are you working with your DHS colleagues at home and abroad to proactively combat issues like human trafficking, drug smuggling, illegal weapons sales that are taking place in Latin America and impact us in oftentimes very direct ways?

Ms. DALTON. Senator, thank you for highlighting this, and I think there is actually a great opportunity in terms of the ethos that this Administration is bringing to trying to break down the traditional silos of how we think about foreign policy and domestic policy. This was highlighted in President Biden's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance as an imperative for all of us to kind of think differently about some of these transcendent issues that you illustrated just now so well.

For my part, I talk to DHS on a daily basis on this issue set, to see how we can work together on both ends of the equation, and frankly, also in terms of how, now in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) policy office, we are orienting the assistant secretaryship that I oversee, it allows us to work with DHS both on the homeland dimension, in support of their lead activities on the southwest border, but also working with DHS and other inter-agency partners in support of addressing the upstream drivers of migration that brings both legal and illegal migrants to our borders.

Senator PETERS. Great. Thank you.

Mr. Saenz, our Special Operations Forces have a very long history of working with Latin American partners to combat transnational criminal organizations, principally those related to the drug trade. Special Operations Command reorients itself, like the rest of the defense establishment, towards undertaking great power competition. I am concerned that this type of support and training may not be as readily available going forward.

My question for you, though, is can you discuss what Special Operations support for counternarcotics will look like in an era of constrained resources and competing priorities?

Mr. SAENZ. Well, Senator, thank you so much for your question and pointing out that area of concern. The support that we receive in our counterdrug and counter-transnational organized crime work that we do across DOD does have a component of Special Operations which supports those efforts, and that component looks to continue.

As you are aware, a lot of our Special Operations Forces are regionally oriented, and so they will continue to work within those regions. Within each one of those regions there are different sets of problems and challenges we want to get at. Certainly in the Western Hemisphere, transnational organized crime and drugs are a significant concern. There will always still be an opportunity for them to support.

Currently right now we do have lots of support from Special Operations Command when it comes to doing our counterthreat finance work, which really works with the Department of the Treasury to help identify, through intelligence analysis, ways where we can get after the financial side of these criminal networks. That support that they provide is through individuals who have been

specifically trained to do that work, and so they will always be focused on that type of work, as an example.

Senator PETERS. Right. Thank you.

General Bradfield, so much of the Chinese influence in the region is built on—and we are seeing this elsewhere around the globe—massive subsidies for construction of infrastructure by the Chinese Government. We see sea and airports, electrical grids, roadways. You can name all sorts of projects that are occurring.

My question for you is, should the United States re-evaluate the type of material support we provide our partners and allies in the region to ensure that our offers of assistance remain attractive in the wake of what we are seeing in terms of Chinese cash flowing into these countries?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Senator, thank you for the question, and this is a topic of discussion at many of our security conferences throughout the AOR. The short answer, sir, is yes.

You mentioned quite a bit there, and we are monitoring deals and influence that China has throughout the hemisphere in areas like 5G, finance, energy, construction, and port projects, and the list goes on to include foreign military sales. So the concern and the threat is about any access and long-term deals and access not only having strings attached, because typically it is not just about the headline of the deal. It is what else did they agree to, to get there, and then it is the enduring presence.

Then there is the dual use, of if it is an economic or a business entity from China, because of the way they are structured it could be used for military purposes as well.

So yes, sir, we are working with partners and allies, but also across the whole-of-government, interagency, private industry to address that.

Senator PETERS. Very good. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KELLY. Thank you, Senator Peters. We will now go into our second round of questions. I will start out here for 5 minutes.

A little bit different topic here. You know, Russia has been intensifying its outreach in the Western Hemisphere to both client states—Venezuela and Nicaragua and Cuba—and also to other states like now Brazil and Argentina, even. We have had long-standing relations with some of these states, particularly Brazil and Argentina.

If Russia uses offers of military assistance, bilateral military exercises, and air and maritime access agreements to create instability and undermine democratic governments throughout the region, they also have a strategy of offering a diplomatic lifeline to isolated states.

Secretary Dalton, how would you characterize Russia's motivations in aiding proxy states like Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, which engage in destabilizing activities regionally?

Ms. DALTON. Chairman, thank you so much for highlighting this issue. I think, you know, as we look forward as a Department in looking at the behavior of our strategic competitors we are trying to be mindful of the different approaches that the PRC and Russia are taking in the region. There are some similarities but they are also distinct.

Just to briefly draw that contrast because I think it is important, I think we would characterize the PRC's approach more as a long-term strategy that they have been building towards over the last 20 years, and is, frankly, more concerning to us. As I framed it in the opening statement, as the pacing challenge. Whereas Russia is pursuing more of an opportunistic approach, and some of that has to do with resourcing, some of that has to do with the appeal and perhaps even now with Ukraine, global impression that Russia carries with partners and other actors in the region.

To your specific question, you know, in terms of their support for authoritarian regimes like Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba, I think it exacerbates the trend lines and pathways that these states are already on in terms of the approach and example that they potentially set in the region, and looking to counteract that example, if you will, with the strong defense relationships that we have with the vast majority of countries in the region I think is so important.

You know, the case of Brazil is interesting. I believe that we are confident in our defense relationship there, although Russia and other actors are attempting to make inroads. But we are building upon a strong foundation there and do have, as I mentioned in the opening, an opportunity with the upcoming Inter-American Defense dialogue this summer. Brazil is going to host it, and I think that is a really important testament to the strong foundation that we have there.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. General Bradfield, do you have an assessment from the Joint Staff on the impact of Russian arms sales in the Western Hemisphere, including weapons to Cuba and Nicaragua, and aircraft and any missile systems to Venezuela? Can you speak to that?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Sir, thanks for the question. I would like to provide a more full answer at a classified level, so I would like to take that for the record. But I can tell you that we are watching very closely the current crisis in Europe, and with embargos and sanctions how it is affecting partners and allies. Some of our partners and allies did purchase Russian equipment decades ago, when it was an economically good deal, but they are using them for good, for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and security cooperation. If they are not able to maintain that equipment and use that equipment that is certainly something of concern and be seen as both a risk yet an opportunity for those that might want to step in, but also an opportunity for other adversaries. We are watching that closely, sir.

Senator KELLY. I will have some more follow-up on this area here in a second, but I want to recognize Senator Ernst for 5 minutes.

Senator ERNST. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and General Bradfield, how are the Chinese and Russians using disinformation and information operations in the region? How are they doing that, and are they undermining U.S. credibility and maybe those of our partners? Are they being effective if they are doing that?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Thanks for the question, ma'am. So certainly that is part of the campaign, misinformation, disinformation, and with Spanish-speaking countries they do have internet and also television and radio broadcasts. Fortunately, due to the atrocities in Europe some countries have decided to stop

broadcasting, but our adversaries do find other ways to spread mis- and dis-information.

I cannot give any kind of metric on how effective, but we are working hard to work across the diplomatic, information technology, military, and economic (DIME)—I do mean the whole-of-government—and the whole DIME. But we are basically, because we follow the rule of law and we work so closely with our partners and allies that we are trying to spread the truth through those relationships and trust.

Senator ERNST. Good. Ms. Dalton, did you have any thoughts on that as well?

Ms. DALTON. Thank you, Ranking Member. I do think that this is an important area to watch. We have seen Russia, in particular, providing support to local media, and Russia Today is broadcast in the region, I believe, in five different broadcasting areas, and through that is able to perpetuate disinformation campaigns through that medium.

It is an important area to watch, and I think Congress' support for State Department and for United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and for other mechanisms to promote the free and open expression of media more broadly in these societies is really important to counteract that.

Senator ERNST. Right. Thank you, and for any of you, we do know that Russia and China are actively trying to influence different elections in the region to put in place leaders that are more sympathetic their particular interests, and, of course, those that are hostile to the United States, and particularly as we look at the upcoming Colombian and Brazilian elections.

What is your assessment of Chinese and Russian efforts, and again, are they being effective in doing so?

Ms. DALTON. Thank you, Ranking Member. I am happy to take a start at that and welcome other comments from my fellow panelists. I do think that there are active attempts, both by the PRC and Russia, to shape the political debate in democracies in the region. I believe, though, that among the two that you mentioned, both Colombia and Brazil, the fact that we have such a strong defense relationship with both countries and the fact that the people themselves are committed to their democratic process I think bodes fairly well in terms of where things will be headed, vis-à-vis U.S. interests, as we move forward.

But it is an important area to watch, and I think both competitors are seeking to be influential and opportunistic in shaping the debate in these countries.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. General Bradfield, did you have any thoughts?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Yes, ma'am. I was fortunate enough to be able to travel in the AOR last year, to include going to Colombia. The President told the SOUTHCOM commander that he was very concerned about the elections and the influence and mis- and dis-information and influence in cyber. He did say that he was interested in seeking assistance in countering that, but it is certainly a concern.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, and of course we have watched everything that is going on in Europe right now with Ukraine, and

our partners there have really been quite effective in pushing back against the misinformation that is put out there by Vladimir Putin and the Russian military. They are exposing what they can, as they can. What lessons should we be taking from what the Ukrainians are doing and how can we apply that here in the Western Hemisphere with some of our partners in Central and South America?

Mr. SAENZ. Well thank you, ma'am. I think that is a very important point you make there, and I think there are lots of lessons that we can learn from the situation in Ukraine and how things are evolving and how that can be applied in the Western Hemisphere.

To the point that you made there about the disinformation and the misinformation, I think it supports when we have all of our partners working together instead of just one nation, with one bilateral partner, us, the United States, trying to work against whatever that challenge may be, whether it be disinformation, whether it may be our counternarcotics work. Whatever we are working against, if we can attack that not only as a whole-of-government but as a community with all of our other partner countries in the area working together, I think we have a better chance of combating these things.

Senator ERNST. Very good. Okay, and with that I will yield. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator KELLY. I want to follow up again on Russia. We have been able to impose some significant economic and financial costs for their unlawful and unprecedented invasion of Ukraine. Do you see any way for us to impose additional costs in the Western Hemisphere, maybe with our partners, you know, for their destabilizing activities in the Western Hemisphere but maybe also as a follow-on to what we have been able to do to their economy through economic sanctions?

Ms. DALTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is worthwhile to think holistically about the approach to Russia and the fact that, you know, based on, I think, the inspiration of the Ukrainian people there is this global mobilization to push back on Russia and what it is doing in Ukraine currently.

You know, I think the sanctions regime that has been put in place by the United States and our allies is significant and it is going to have impacts in terms of what Russia is able to do within the Western Hemisphere and also, frankly, vice versa, in terms of what our partners are going to be able to do in certain respects.

In terms of what specific steps we may want to take on top of that in the hemisphere I think we will want to be able to walk forward both the cost benefit analysis for horizontal escalation, vis-à-vis Russia, and how they will perceive it and ensuring that that is supportive of our overall deterrence aims, while also ensuring that we are doing that in close coordination with partners in the region so that it does not have unintended effects on their economies, their democracies.

Forgive me for not having the specific answers there in terms of ideas. I would be happy to take that back and follow up. But I think having an overall framework that is able to calibrate that cost benefit analysis will be important.

Senator KELLY. Have you seen any change in their activities in the Western Hemisphere in the last, let's say, 2 or 3 months, just leading up to the invasion, and since then? Has anything been noticeable in what the Russians have been involved in?

Ms. DALTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you. What I would say is that we are closely watching, as a Department and as a Government. What Russia is doing globally and how it is posturing its military to be able to be cognizant of potential escalation factors, and I am happy to follow up more in classified channels.

Senator KELLY. Okay. I want to switch back to China and on space competition in the Western Hemisphere. In the past few years China has built space tracking facilities, including in Argentina. The purpose of these facilities is unclear to us, at least unclear to me at this time. You know, I think that this point we do not have a solid picture of the purpose of their tracking stations. Under the terms of a bilateral agreement that the Argentinians have with the Chinese they have no oversight over what this tracking station does.

Secretary Dalton, are Chinese space-related activities in the Western Hemisphere a cause of concern for the Department, and is there a potential use for these facilities for malign purposes?

Ms. DALTON. Senator, thank you for raising this important question. As I mentioned in my opening statement this is an area that we are concerned about, so yes, in answer to your first question, and then the answer would also be yes in terms of potential dual use or malign purposes, and again, I am happy to follow up in classified channels.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Senator Ernst do you have any other—

Senator ERNST. I am done. Thank you.

Senator KELLY. I have got a few more questions. That does not mean you have to stay. I know you have got a busy day.

United States Southern Command has announced its intention to expand space-related engagements in the Western Hemisphere as a counter to the activities of Russia and China. Potential partners on space include Brazil, Chile, maybe Argentina, and Peru. Do you see this as potentially a productive area of cooperation with these countries?

Ms. DALTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you for highlighting this area of cooperation. I do think that this is a future pathway that we are exploring actively with our partners, including also cyber and information domains and how those are all interconnected.

Do you want to add anything?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Yes, ma'am. Thank you. Senator, thank you. Yes, we definitely see value, and it is an important part of integrated deterrence, but also in our quest for better domain awareness. So it is critically important.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for being late. I was at an Intelligence Committee meeting that ironically overlaps.

One of the things that was mentioned at the hearing that I was just at, and I keep running into this, is a lack of ISR. The testimony was a very limited amount of ISR available in the Latin

American region. I guess my question is, why is that? Why can we not build more Global Hawks? What is the problem? I mean, it seems to me that is a very solvable problem that is not—it is math. You have more resources to watch, whether it is satellites or other assets. Give me some thoughts on what appears to be a lack of ISR, particularly in the Southern Hemisphere.

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Senator, thank you for the question. In my 11 months on the job and working with SOUTHCOM I have never heard them say that they could not use more ISR. So to your point, sir, the Joint Staff allocates ISR based on global priorities, and SOUTHCOM is certainly very important to the hemisphere.

What they are doing, sir, is through integrated deterrence and working with partners and allies and also innovation and private industry and other aspects of the interagency, they are working very hard to come up with other ways for domain awareness. But, sir, they have told me repeatedly that they can always use more ISR.

Senator KING. Well here is what is bothering me. If this were a terrorist cell in Latin America, killing 100,000 Americans a year, we would not be sitting here talking about not enough ISR and allocating it. I am really absolutely sick of this. The drug trade is one of the primary threats to this country. It is killing two people a day in my state. I mean, we need to think about it as an attack. It is an attack on our country, just as sure as it is an attack that came from Russia or Iran or anywhere else, and we are saying, oh well, we have got other needs. If we have got other needs in other places, let's buy some more resources to have them here.

I realize this is not your job, but this is, I think, a gross misallocation of priorities. The reason I seem frustrated is because I am, because I have been on this for 5 or 6 years and nothing seems to change. Did you want to comment?

Mr. SAENZ. Yes, Senator King. Thank you very much, and you do raise a very significant point about the need for ISR. When it comes to the counterdrug work, we are trying to find ways we can better approach that, and so what we have done with our funding provided is in the past we have purchased four De Havilland Dash 8 Pale Ale aircraft to do that ISR mission for the counterdrug effort.

What we are doing now is we are looking through our budget process to see if we are able to buy a fifth aircraft that will add another 1,800 hours of ISR capability per year, and those are U.S. Government-owned by run by contractors for us.

Senator KING. I understand. I think the problem is, counterdrug is over here and military challenges are over here, and they are just separate. No. We have got to change our imagination here. This is an attack, and we have got to put the resources on.

The second problem is—and we are going to have testimony coming up from SOUTHCOM—even with the limited ISR we have, we are only interdicting 25 percent of the shipments that we know of—that we know of. That is inexcusable. We know 100 ships are coming and we interdict 25 of them because we cannot get the Coast Guard and the Navy and their partner nations together in such a way as to deal with this.

I am really tired of—this is the sixth or seventh year this question has come up, and, you know, when you know where the shipments are, even with the limited ISR, and you cannot stop them because we do not have enough ships or airplanes that is inexcusable, given the state of the threat.

Ms. Dalton, what are we going to do about this?

Ms. DALTON. Senator King, thank you for your commitment to this issue, and it is an absolute tragedy that hundreds of thousands of Americans are dying and have lives that are being devastated by this phenomenon, and it is a national security threat, plainly.

I would say that the Department is committed to playing an important role, both in the region, in working with our regional partners to strengthen their own capacity to address the transnational criminal organizations that are bringing these drugs into our country, and also we are committed to working closely with our inter-agency partners on the southwest border and within the United States to be able to detect and monitor and provide intelligence-sharing and support to that important mission. We are absolutely committed to that.

I do think that when it comes to the ISR question, Senator, there is not enough ISR to cover China, Russia, Ukraine, Iran. It is a global challenge.

Senator KING. Well let's buy more Global Hawks.

Ms. DALTON. Senator, thank you for highlighting that, and I know through—

Senator KING. I will write a letter to the Appropriations Committee.

Ms. DALTON. Senator, thank you, and through the program budget review process I know that this was an issue that the Secretary and senior leadership of the Department looked closely at.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KELLY. Well, ISR is part of the puzzle. It is like what do we do after we identify it, right? It seems like everybody, at least in this room right now, probably agrees, we need to be doing a lot more. You know, the interagency cooperation is important, but can we get like to some specifics? Like what do we think DOD—what more beyond identifying shipments, what are the other levers we can push on here through the Department of Defense? What are the other things that DOD could be doing to undermine these transnational criminal organizations, to interdict drugs coming into our country, whether through the southern border or through our coasts? What more, specifically, could DOD be doing?

Mr. SAENZ. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for that question, and you are absolutely correct that we need to always continue to look at all the different options we have and what more we can do to help support getting after this very difficult, very challenging, and very troublesome problem.

There are different areas in which we support beyond just the detection and monitoring. We provide a lot of support when it comes to intelligence support, and we do provide a lot of support down with our partner nations when it comes to doing security cooperation work and some other logistical support work.

We work with the entire interagency and our partner nations to try and help provide better processes and better tools for identi-

fyng targets and then helping our law enforcement partners effect those targets.

Some of the things we are looking at right now is we are looking at how we can take some of the best solutions that have been developed in different regions and then invest in that solution so they can provide global support across all of our COCOMs and across all of our efforts. We are also looking at new ways of leveraging artificial intelligence and machine learning to take large amounts of data that is almost impossible for an analyst to get through in a reasonable amount of time, using machine learning, so that that can be dealt with quicker, and taking analysts from a time that took them 6 months down to a time that takes them just a couple of days to help identify targets that they can go after.

We are looking at ways to be able to leverage. Also a lot of information that is available in the public sector. We are trying to use geospatial information that is open to the public sector, interlay those altogether to produce a product that is very easy for people to understand and therefore very easy for us to hand off to law enforcement, both U.S. and international, who can take that information and quickly act upon it, and also be able to use it in future proceedings in court, because it is no longer classified.

There are a lot of different things like that that we are looking at in how we can best improve the processes that we are using as a whole-of-government to get after this problem set.

Senator KELLY. Do we feel that DOD has all the authority it needs to be as effective as it could be with the resources at the Department's disposal?

Mr. SAENZ. Mr. Chairman, thank you. That is a very good point. Yes, we think we have the authorities that we need to do what we need to do to support everyone in getting after the counterdrug problem. We would like to thank Congress specifically for the authorities of 1021 and 1022, provided through the NDAA. Those have helped us greater. 1021 helps us in Colombia to counter illegal armed groups that threaten a lot of our interests and work to move a lot of the illegal drugs who may or may not be associated any longer as a terrorist organization. We appreciate Congress extending that through fiscal year 2023, and we would like to work with Congress to extend that through fiscal year 2025.

The 1022 authorities allows us to use counterdrug authorities and funding to support law enforcement in its efforts against terrorist organizations, transnational organized crime organizations that are identified through a specific process. We appreciate that those have been extended through fiscal year 2027, and we would like to continue to work with Congress to see if we can make that a more permanent authority.

I think all the authorities that we have through U.S. Code and these additional authorities make a great set that we need to be able to do our job.

Senator KELLY. Thank you. Senator King?

Senator KING. One of my principles of management is that you always want one throat to choke. Who is in charge? What individual in the United States Government is in charge of stopping drugs coming from Latin America? Mr. Saenz, is it you? Do not worry—I will not choke you.

Mr. SAENZ. Senator King, thank you very much for that question. I appreciate that you will not choke me.

We do work as an interagency and we do work closely together.

Senator KING. See, that bothers me. When I hear “interagency” and “whole-of-government,” to me that means nobody is in charge. Is there one person—if the President calls and says, “I want to talk to the person who is in charge of keeping drugs out of the United States,” who is going to show up in the Oval Office?

Mr. SAENZ. Certainly the President has his Director of National Drug Control Policy, Mr. Gupta, who is responsible for our policies for controlling both the supply and demand of drugs in the United States at a strategic level.

Senator KING. The policy. How about operations? That is what I am after. Who is in charge of the operations, going after the transnational organizations, going after the drug shipments? There is not anybody, is there?

Mr. SAENZ. The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for the flow of drugs and those organizations that flow those drugs into the United States. They certainly cannot do it alone and they rely on the rest of us to support them and help them.

Senator KING. How do we measure success? Do we have any metrics? You are getting a fairly sizeable budget. What constitutes success?

Mr. SAENZ. Senator, if you are speaking about success of the overall problem of the supply of drugs coming into the United States, certainly a measure of success would be how much of those drugs we are able to stop from coming into the United States. That becomes a very challenging question, a challenging problem, when we are dealing with illicit trafficking, and so it is hard to put an exact number of what the overall amount of drugs coming this direction are and how many are stopped.

Senator KING. Final question. It appears that a lot of the—a lot, a great deal of what is coming in is coming through Mexico, not through the water, although that is something we can certainly do better on. A lot of the fentanyl is coming in from Mexico. What authorities or what power or what leverage do we have over Mexico to force them to take this seriously and stop this horrible crime in progress? My sense is it is open season in Mexico.

Mr. SAENZ. Senator King, thank you so much for that observation. Certainly the vast majority of drugs coming into the United States are coming from Mexico, across our southwest border.

Senator KING. Is the Mexican Government serious about trying to stop it?

Mr. SAENZ. Certainly there are a lot of things that we would like the government of Mexico to do and to support countering that flow of narcotics into the United States. I would have to defer to the Department of State and their efforts in working with Mexico on how to best motivate the country of Mexico to do additional efforts, different efforts, whatever it takes to assist.

Senator KING. Thank you. We have got a problem, Mr. Chairman.

Senator KELLY. We do.

I have two final questions and then we will conclude here. How often does DOD have some kind of direct action with a transnational criminal organization?

Mr. SAENZ. Mr. Chairman, thank you for that question about our direct action with a criminal organization. The Department of Defense does not have authority to interdict drugs or to make arrests or to stop any criminal organization. Our support, our defense-unique support is in providing the information, is helping to assess that information, and analyze that information to law enforcement who has that authority and that capability.

Senator KELLY. If you had that authority do you think DOD could be effective engaging directly with transnational criminal organizations (TCOs)?

Mr. SAENZ. Mr. Chairman that is a very interesting question. Thank you for that question. I think that has lots of areas of opportunity and lots of areas of risk that need to be considered. When the Department of Defense, when the militaries start engaging in what would otherwise be law enforcement activity, when they start engaging on those type of on-the-ground operations in foreign countries, there are a lot of different factors that need to be taken into consideration before we should consider doing something like that.

Ms. DALTON. Mr. Chairman, may I add to that?

Senator KELLY. Yes.

Ms. DALTON. Thank you, and thank you for the question. The Department of Defense, of course, brings tremendous capabilities to any equation, but just to complement Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Saenz's comments, I think we need to be cognizant too about how that would play out in this particular region where the role of the military, particularly in democracies, has had a particularly checkered past. So given that our efforts in the region would be a by-with-and-through approach, typically, that could then enhance the military's role in what is principally a civilian function in democracies I think is a pathway we would need to be very careful in walking down, in which I would be very cautious.

Senator KELLY. I want to come back to something Senator King said, as we have 100,000 Americans dying each year. I think at the beginning of the hearing we established that this was a national security threat to our country, so we should be looking to do more. Just doing the same thing every year, we should not expect to get a different result. I think we should be looking for other opportunities to be effective.

Finally, is there anything else you think we possibly could be doing that we did not bring up during this hearing today?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Sir, I think it was pointed out earlier that there is certainly a limit of resources. But I would like to drive home again that integrated deterrence is not just a catch phrase. It is a powerful tool and a lever at our disposal. Empowering our partners, making sure they are trained and equipped and have the information that they need to help us, because we cannot do this alone, is a force multiplier.

I think that is one area that we are making strides. I will note that so far this year partner nation narcotic interdictions are up 62 percent, and we hope that trend continues. But this is just one of the many challenges in the hemisphere. Thank you, sir.

Senator KELLY. Well thank you, all of you. I really appreciate you taking the time. This has been an informative discussion. It is clear that this has national security implications, strategic importance. I want to thank our witnesses for participating, and I look forward to some follow-up from us. I think there is more we certainly can do. That is clear. We need to continue to find new ways to fight this threat in the Western Hemisphere.

So with that the hearing is concluded. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:02 p.m., the Subcommittee adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MARSHA BLACKBURN

VENEZUELA

1. Senator BLACKBURN. General Bradfield, how can the United States and its allies and partners strengthen counterterrorism collaboration to deter Hizbollah activity in Venezuela?

General BRADFIELD [Deleted.]

2. Senator BLACKBURN. Brigadier General Bradfield, what are the current vulnerabilities in deterring Hizbollah's illicit financial networks in Venezuela?

Brigadier General BRADFIELD. Officially, Lebanese Hizballah (LH) denies involvement with drug trade and when it has discovered internal drug operations in the past, it has turned its members over to law enforcement. LH supporters' activities in Latin America are mostly limited to illicit financial and criminal activities, including money laundering-sometimes with Latin American drug cartels-and smuggling. Weak regional law enforcement enables LH to maintain its illicit revenue system in Latin America. Exposure of these narcotics networks' ties to LH could enable local criminal arrests, and encourage LH to take greater efforts to cease participation in these activities, or stop accepting donations from supporters publicly associated with the drug trade.

3. Senator BLACKBURN. Ms. Dalton, how do Hizbollah's operations in the region fit into the larger strategic picture of illicit networks within President Maduro's regime?

Ms. Dalton did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in committee files.

4. Senator BLACKBURN. Ms. Dalton, what shortfalls do you identify in the United States counterterrorism policy in Venezuela that allow the proliferation of Hizbollah operations and influence?

Ms. Dalton did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in committee files.

5. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Saenz, how do current counternarcotic operations in Venezuela mitigate both the government and Hizbollah's ability to turn the region into a central hub for transactional organize crime and international terrorism?

Mr. SAENZ. DOD supports counterdrug operations in the Western Hemisphere primarily in three ways: 1) the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States, including from Venezuela; 2) supporting U.S. law enforcement efforts to counter Western Hemisphere-based transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) that participate in drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, illegal trade in natural resources and wildlife, and weapons smuggling; and 3) and security cooperation efforts focused on key regional security partners, such as Colombia.

HEZBOLLAH AND CRIME-TERROR CONVERGENCE

6. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Saenz, how do you assess Hizbollah's External Security Organization (ESO) influence in the Tri-Border Area?

Mr. SAENZ. LH's Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO)—also known as the ESO—is the group's primary overseas unit and remains an integral element of Iran's threat network. LH sympathizers are concentrated in the tri-border area (TBA) between

Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay. LH sympathizers primarily conduct illegal fund-raising activities in the TBA, ranging from drug and weapons smuggling and money laundering to illegal sales of textile and electronics. The porous borders in the TBA enable ease of access for traffickers' transport and sale of illegal items while corrupt officials at the local level allow the free flow of illicit goods.

7. Senator BLACKBURN. Mr. Saenz, what vulnerabilities currently exist in Hizbollah's ESO narcotic operations?

Mr. SAENZ. LH activities in Latin America are mostly limited to illicit financial and criminal activities, including money laundering—sometimes with Latin American drug cartels—and smuggling, by LH supporters. LH takes advantage of weak regional law enforcement to maintain its illicit revenue system in Latin America. LH activities could be constrained by increased anti-trafficking actions, such as drug interdictions by regional partners, anti-money laundering activities, including sanctions and related designations, and law enforcement cooperation throughout Latin America.

8. Senator BLACKBURN. Brigadier General Bradfield, to what degree, if any, are Hizbollah and the People's Republic of China (PRC) collaborating in Latin America? What are their shared interests, and what fissures can we exploit?

Brigadier General BRADFELD. Lebanese Hizballah supporters' activities in Latin America are mostly limited to illicit financial and criminal activities, including money laundering and smuggling. The PRC's primary engagements in the region are economic and infrastructure development, and persuading countries to switch their diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the PRC. We see little collaboration between the two in terms of their Latin American activities.

9. Senator BLACKBURN. Brigadier General Bradfield, to what degree, if any, are Hizbollah and Russia collaborating in Latin America? What are their shared interests, and what fissures can we exploit?

Brigadier General BRADFELD. Lebanese Hizballah supporters' activities in Latin America are mostly limited to illicit financial and criminal activities, including money laundering and smuggling. Russia's primary engagements in the region are military sales, security cooperation, and ideology. Both are concerning, but there is little collaboration between the two in terms of their Latin American activities.

10. Senator BLACKBURN. Ms. Dalton, what effective measures have the United States and its allies and partners taken to mitigate Hizbollah's ESO globalized outreach and collaboration?

Ms. Dalton did not respond in time for printing. When received, answer will be retained in committee files.

CHINA IN LATIN AMERICA

11. Senator BLACKBURN. Ms. Dalton, what global logistics and infrastructure advancements have China made in Latin America? Which investment poses the greatest threat to U.S. access and placement in the region?

Ms. DALTON. The People's Republic of China (PRC), our most consequential strategic competitor and pacing challenge, continues its efforts to expand economic, diplomatic, technological, informational, and military influence in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Department of Defense is concerned by PRC investments in potentially dual-use infrastructure. These include deep-water ports and infrastructure on both sides of the Panama Canal that could enable the People's Liberation Army to threaten sea-lanes vital to global commerce and the movement of United States Forces. Equally concerning is the PRC's pursuit of additional access to regional space infrastructure, particularly in South America because of its strategic location with regard to space operations.

12. Senator BLACKBURN. Ms. Dalton, how can the United States and its allies strengthen economic and infrastructure security in the region to deter collaboration with China?

Ms. DALTON. The Department bases its partnerships in the region on shared values of democracy, respect for human rights, sovereignty, and respect for the rule of law. The PRC seeks to incrementally undermine these partnerships with offers of no-cost training and favorably financed sales of military equipment. The Department remains committed to strengthening and deepening our bilateral and multilat-

eral defense partnerships to minimize PRC activities when they occur, and to remain the most trusted partner in the region.

13. Senator BLACKBURN. Ms. Dalton, what is your assessment of recent successes by the PRC in influencing Latin American countries to abandon diplomatic relations with Taiwan?

Ms. DALTON. The PRC has spent decades encouraging countries that have diplomatic ties with Taiwan to switch diplomatic relations to the PRC, often by offering financial and diplomatic incentives. Nicaragua was the most recent country in the region to switch its diplomatic ties from Taiwan to the PRC in early December 2021. During the height of the pandemic, the PRC attempted to use vaccine diplomacy combined with economic influence to pressure the Government of Paraguay to change its diplomatic relations. The PRC will continue to seek ways to use its investments in the region to pressure governments to end diplomatic ties with Taiwan, since 8 of the 14 partners that have official ties with Taiwan are in Latin America and the Caribbean. I defer further questions regarding the diplomatic perspective to the Department of State.

14. Senator BLACKBURN. Brigadier General Bradfield, nineteen governments across Latin America and the Caribbean have joined Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). What short and long-term threats does the BRI pose to United States national security and interests?

Brigadier General BRADFELD.

- Beijing uses its One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative to support its grand strategy of national rejuvenation, and the PRC's overseas development and security interests under OBOR will drive the PRC toward expanding its overseas military footprint to protect those interests. The PRC seeks to expand its OBOR infrastructure and investment mega project, build partnerships, and gain commercial access to ports in Latin America.
- Although the United States remains the preferred defense partner in most of the hemisphere, the PRC has made repeated overtures toward United States strategic partners, including Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Panama. The PRC invites military leaders to attend professional military education, donates military and security equipment, and offers subsidized arms sales to build closer ties with potential partners.

15. Senator BLACKBURN. Brigadier General Bradfield, to what degree, if any, are China and Russia collaborating in Latin America? What are their shared interests, and what fissures can we exploit?

Brigadier General BRADFELD. The PRC's primary engagements in the region are economic and infrastructure development, and persuading countries to switch their diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the PRC. Russia values its defense relationships and influence in Latin America, primarily focusing on strengthening relations with its traditional regional partners of Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

