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Thank you Chairman Engel, Ranking Member Mack, Members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before this Subcommittee today having recently assumed my responsibilities as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for WHA in charge of Central American, Caribbean and Cuban Affairs. I am pleased that the Subcommittee has requested this hearing to discuss one of the Administration's priorities in the Americas – the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative or CBSI – which President Obama highlighted earlier this year at the Summit of the Americas.

CBSI embodies an approach, and a tangible commitment, to greater shared security throughout the Caribbean. This initiative will help the Caribbean nations address a wide spectrum of issues affecting the safety of our citizens, across a 15-nation region with which we share close historical and cultural ties. In fostering healthier, more resilient and safer communities among our neighbors, we also foster the conditions for sustained growth, democracy and political stability, all important elements contributing to the security and prosperity of the United States.

Our efforts with the countries of the Caribbean arise in the context of our effective partnerships with Mexico, Colombia, and Central America. Success in one area cannot simply mean moving the problem to another. It is thus critical that the Caribbean—the heart of key trafficking routes, and an area with which we have such important human and economic links—also be part of this broader network of cooperation that helps protect all of our peoples and institutions.

Citizen Safety

A defining purpose of our policy in the Western Hemisphere is to build effective partnerships—partnerships that can better develop, mobilize, apply, and sustain the capacity of the region to accomplish our shared objectives. In the security sector, this is reflected in a commitment to advance **citizen safety**.

By talking about citizen safety we recognize that while security is a key priority throughout the region, people perceive security in localized, personal ways. In short, security concerns ultimately boil down to care about the safety of human beings—whether in our country, or anywhere else in the region.

Thinking about the issue this way also makes it easier to understand something fundamental to the wide partnerships we want to build: while the security challenges in this region vary from country to country, they are increasingly interconnected. If they aren't addressed in a coordinated, integrated fashion, with a whole-of-government approach, progress in one area may be more than offset by losses in another.

We cannot take, however, a “one size fits all” approach to the hemisphere. Instead, we are implementing distinct, tailored initiatives to address the different circumstances prevalent in different sub-regions. By keeping these initiatives separate but coordinated, we will ensure that the individuals responsible for developing and implementing our programs have the regional expertise required to succeed, we will avoid a focus on the more prominent countries at the expense of other important partners, and we will ensure that these initiatives are both complementary and knit together into a seamless hemispheric approach.

Threats and Challenges

Stemming the flow of narcotics remains forefront in our national interest. The majority of drugs transiting the Caribbean flow to the United States through Hispaniola and Jamaica. Granted that most of the drugs coming into the United States now pass through Central America and Mexico, as the Merida Initiative makes progress in Mesoamerica, we anticipate that traffickers will seek more reliable smuggling routes in the Caribbean – a concern shared by many in Congress. The situation in Haiti is of particular concern. More so than other governments in the region, the Haitian government lacks the capacity to counter international criminal organizations or fully adjudicate the crimes. As a result, the destabilizing effects, both internally and regionally, of trafficking and related corruption are significant.

In this region, vulnerable nations are already buffeted by narcotics-driven crime waves. According to a joint UN/World Bank Report released in 2007, “murder rates in the Caribbean are higher than in any other region of the world, and assault rates are significantly above the world average. Narcotics trafficking is at the core of these high rates.” The study confirmed what our Caribbean partners and

embassies have long claimed – that “narcotics-trafficking diverts criminal justice resources from other important activities, increases and embeds violence, undermines social cohesion and contributes to the widespread availability of firearms in the region.” This problem will likely worsen as more trafficking routes are pushed into the Caribbean.

Caribbean leaders’ efforts to work with us on counternarcotics and counterterrorism issues are hampered by a lack of human, technical, and physical capacity. Porous land, air, and maritime borders and limited domain awareness challenge poorly-resourced law enforcement agencies; many governments cannot keep pace with cash-flush transnational criminal networks. Caribbean governments share our commitment to democratic principles and norms. Protecting the region’s democratic institutions will remain a hallmark of CBSI and our security partnership.

Violent crime throughout the region also directly threatens American citizens; an estimated 6 million American citizens visit the Caribbean annually. Unfortunately, as reported by the New York Times last week, visitors to the region are increasingly becoming victims of crime. In short, the threats are real and immediate, only a short distance from our shores.

The danger of increased trafficking and negative spillover effects are too great to ignore. If the problem is not addressed now, traffickers will continue to expand operations throughout the region by exploiting these vulnerable transit routes, undermining local governments and increasing the likelihood of political instability. The question is not *should* the United States take action but *how* best to do so in partnership with our Caribbean allies and other international partners.

Foundation and New Opportunities

Mr. Chairman, I thought it might be useful to recap the origins of this new partnership and the opportunities that opened before us over the past two years. Work on CBSI began in earnest following unprecedeted efforts by Caribbean countries, the United States and international partners to provide security for the 2007 Cricket World Cup -- that year’s largest international sporting event held in ten countries throughout the Caribbean. At the time, Caribbean partners highlighted the importance of the Advance Passenger Information system (APIS) and Advance Cargo Information System (ACIS), which were developed in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security for the Cup and continue to provide useful border security screening.

In December of 2007, Caribbean and U.S. leaders adopted a common strategy to tackle illicit trafficking in arms entitled the CARICOM-U.S. Initiative to Combat Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light Weapons. Since then, all Caribbean nations except Haiti have become end-users of the ATF “e-Trace” program which has expanded our cooperative efforts to address trafficking. The USG is currently exploring ways to develop other joint automated law enforcement systems.

In April 2008, in response to a rising wave of domestic violent crime, Caribbean leaders agreed in the Caribbean Declaration of Crime and Violence to develop a regional security strategy and plan of action that focused on strengthening both institutional and operational cooperation throughout the region and externally with international partners. We seized the opportunity presented by their initiative to investigate ways in which we could foster a stronger security partnership with the Caribbean – one which builds upon existing law enforcement, defense, and development assistance programs developed over the years. In coordination with our embassies in the region and our U.S. interagency colleagues, we began taking stock of the threats and vulnerabilities as well as the region’s existing capacities.

Caribbean nations themselves began ratifying a series of institutional arrangements such as the Caribbean Regional Maritime Agreement which will allow greater maritime interdiction cooperation throughout the basin. Some governments began developing procurement strategies after having identified specific capabilities required to strengthen their law enforcement and defense systems.

Preparations for the April Summit of the Americas presented another opportunity to advance our cooperative efforts, when the government of Trinidad and Tobago asked for assistance in securing the Summit. Caribbean partners provided law enforcement personnel and the Canadian government provided significant logistical support. The U.S. Department of Defense, Coast Guard and FBI provided maritime and air defense capabilities, maritime security and bomb detection support, respectively.

The U.S. Agency for International Development’s longstanding efforts to cooperate with regional governments to ensure citizen safety in the region have laid the groundwork for future institutional strengthening and community resilience-building. The regional Caribbean Youth Empowerment Program provides young male school leavers aged 17-25 – a group at high risk of involvement in crime and violence – with the skills they need to enter the working world and promote positive change in their communities. Also, the Community

Empowerment and Transformation project in Jamaica brings together community members, authorities and civil society to improve citizen security through dialogue, police training, economic opportunities for community members and other activities. It is a valuable example of the kind of work that can be scaled up to the regional level.”

I mention these examples and agencies to demonstrate not only the extraordinary confluence of events surrounding the genesis of this partnership, but also to illustrate how many U.S. agencies have been and continue to play active roles in this new partnership. These examples of activities and interaction serve as a foundation and prelude toward what we can achieve with greater resources.

Launching CBSI

President Obama recognized the need for deeper security cooperation with the Caribbean from the beginning of his administration. When he met with leaders from the hemisphere at the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, he announced an investment toward this effort; the FY 2010 request of \$45 million for CBSI, if approved by Congress, will be our first installment in support of this. Of course, the U.S. effort could never be successful without a healthy collaboration and consultation between the Department of State, other implementing Departments and Agencies, and Congress. In the case of CBSI, the President’s initial commitment announced at the Summit of the Americas, along with support expressed by Congress, has spurred unprecedented cooperation and collaboration with and among our Caribbean partners.

Following the April Summit, the State Department led interagency teams to meet with our Caribbean partners on three different occasions in a consultative process to plan a bold initiative built on the fundamental premise of shared responsibility and unity of purpose. Together, we have already developed a common regional strategy and operational framework and a *comprehensive* needs assessment which identifies the challenges, available resources and institutions to address them, and what will be required to sustain a long-term approach focusing on three strategic objectives -- *Substantially Reduce Illicit Trafficking, Advance Public Safety and Security, and Promote Social Justice.*

More than technical, financial and program assistance, our CBSI activities will reflect a unique mix of institutional and operational partnerships. At this stage of CBSI development, the U.S. and our Caribbean partners have outlined the scope of

operational capabilities required to develop a sustained campaign against regional crime and violence.

Next Steps

Assistant Secretary of State Arturo Valenzuela is actively involved managing the development and implementation of all our hemispheric security partnerships. Right now, he is preparing to host the inaugural Caribbean-U.S. Security Cooperation Dialogue in early 2010, officially launching this important partnership with his Caribbean counterparts. Ideally, he would subsequently meet with his counterparts on an annual basis to review progress made in implementing CBSI and developing this partnership.

We envision CBSI as a multi-year, multi-faceted security partnership – one which may require sustained resources and continued political will to succeed. As I mentioned, Caribbean leaders have already agreed to an integrated approach to regional security; as such, our approach must be specific to the Caribbean but sufficiently flexible to achieve our shared objectives.

We recognize that difficult economic times require difficult economic choices. The President's FY 2010 request of \$45 million represents an investment needed to achieve sustained progress in each strategic objective. We are planning programs based on realistic budget appraisals, and keeping in mind that the United States cannot bear all the costs. Regardless, with this investment we hope to address the most pressing security threats in the region by building on existing partnerships in consultation with our Caribbean partners. We understand that the conference report includes \$37m for CBSI and we are optimistic that Congress will pass it in the coming week. We are pleased that Congress recognizes the importance of partnering with the Caribbean states on security. We look forward to working with you on further developing CBSI.

In his speech at the Summit of the Americas, President Obama said, "And let me add that I recognize that the problem will not simply be solved by law enforcement if we're not also dealing with our responsibilities in the United States. And that's why we will take aggressive action to reduce our demand for drugs, and to stop the flow of guns and bulk cash south across our borders." As in the Merida Initiative and our partnership with Colombia, a guiding principle of CBSI is that our security concerns are shared and so must be the responsibility to address these challenges. With your support, CBSI will reflect a two-way commitment where our investment in resources is matched by our partners in terms of political will and resources.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate an important element of this partnership – our close ties to the Caribbean. Ten percent of the foreign-born population in the United States has roots in the Caribbean. Many of you know this because of the vibrant diaspora communities in your constituencies. And these communities are not limited to one or two states. Caribbean-Americans have built lives throughout the United States, enriching our society and communities. I myself am Caribbean-American and have the privilege to serve our country like other Americans of Caribbean descent including Attorney General Eric Holder and former Secretary of State Colin Powell. Together, through greater security and safety cooperation with the people and governments of the Caribbean, we can provide the next coming generations of Caribbeans and Americans the safety and security they are inalienably entitled to.

Thank you and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.