

The Central America Regional Security Initiative: Safe Streets



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“Everyone knows the statistics, the murder rates surpassing civil war levels, the citizens who rank insecurity as their top concern, the violence that burdens economic development and foreign direct investment, the threats to democracy, the impacts on society’s most vulnerable populations, especially women and children.”

– Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

CARSI – An Integrated, Collaborative Regional Security Program

The Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) responds to regional threats by supplementing the strategies and programs Central American nations implement on their own and in cooperation with other countries. CARSI is coordinated with other nations, international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society, and the Central American Integration System (SICA), and draws upon the expertise and efforts of like-minded donors supporting the citizen safety goals of Central American countries.

Citizen Insecurity Diminishes Economic and Social Opportunity

The deteriorating security situation in Central America is evident on the streets and within the neighborhoods of the region and has led to a rapid decline in citizen safety. In addition to increases in all types of crime, the region has some of the world’s highest per capita murder rates. The sense of insecurity on the streets of Central America reduces economic opportunity for citizens as they avoid taking public transportation and conducting basic daily tasks, such as shopping at public markets, for fear of being the victim of random or targeted crimes. Declining state security deters businesses from investing in the region and limits economic growth for the countries of Central America. Criminal groups exploit limits in law enforcement capabilities in the region, weak rule of law institutions, and official corruption. Criminal groups exercise control over neighborhoods and territory through intimidation and reduce the ability of governments to provide basic services such as health care and education services, to their citizens.

U.S. Assistance – Ensuring Citizen Safety – Taking Back the Streets

Through CARSI, the United States is assisting the governments of the region in their effort to take back the streets and create an improved citizen security environment with safer communities and a culture of lawfulness. CARSI programs enable Central American governments to weaken the structure – and diminish the influence and violence – of drug cartels, gangs, organized crime, arms traffickers, and other transnational criminal organizations. Through CARSI, the United States is implementing sustainable, high-impact programs in law enforcement training and professionalization, anti-gang activities, equipping police and security forces, sharing information within the region for the investigation and disruption of criminal activities, and assisting in the interdiction of narcotics, firearms, bulk cash, and smuggling.

For more information related to the Central America Regional Security Initiative, please visit our website at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/carsi/index.htm>

The Five Goals of CARSI in Central America:

- 1. Create safe streets for the citizens of the region;**
2. Disrupt the movement of criminals and contraband to, within, and between the nations of Central America;
3. Support the development of strong, capable, and accountable Central American governments;
4. Re-establish effective state presence, services and security in communities at risk; and
5. Foster enhanced levels of coordination and cooperation between the nations of the region, other international partners, and donors to combat regional security threats.