

Testimony of Kevin Whitaker
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House Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations
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Introduction – Overarching Objectives:

Chairwoman Granger, Ranking Member Lowey, Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor and privilege to be here today to address citizen security in the Western Hemisphere. I am pleased to be here today, testifying with both Ambassador Brownfield and Assistant Administrator Feierstein, both of whom work closely with us on our approach to citizen security. We greatly appreciate this subcommittee's engagement and support for U.S. assistance programs in the Western Hemisphere. Addressing the insecurity and violence plaguing many countries in our hemisphere is a critical policy imperative. The risks posed by these threats directly impact U.S. interests and our own national security.

I would like to take this opportunity to place our approach to enhancing citizen security in the region in the perspective of our broader foreign policy objectives and our national security. In particular, I will highlight our priority citizen security programs for the Western Hemisphere – the Merida Initiative in Mexico, Colombia's Strategic Development Initiative, the Central America Regional Security Initiative, and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative – including requested FY 2013 funding for these initiatives. Our approach is highly integrated, relying on both our U.S. interagency partners, and the governments and citizens of the region.

This Administration has outlined four strategic priorities in this hemisphere that guide our policy development, strategic thinking, and budget requests: effective institutions for democratic governance; strengthened citizen security; expanded economic and social opportunity for all; and a clean energy future. To advance in each of these areas, we have forged pragmatic, flexible partnerships. However, without success in strengthening citizen security, we cannot achieve our key objectives. In addition, we are also ever vigilant to the prospect of the involvement of external actors in ways that could threaten stability in the hemisphere.

Throughout the Americas, we are building strong partnerships to meet the global security challenges we confront today. The Americas are playing a more active role than ever on the global scene; Canada provided leadership for the NATO effort in Libya; Uruguay is the largest per capita contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations in the world; Brazil is sharing best practices on conditional cash transfer programs and providing assistance in Africa. Our partners in the region have developed innovative partnerships for the common good. These include South American leadership in Haiti, including in MINUSTAH, and Colombia and Mexico offering security expertise to Central America in support of our joint efforts to address transnational crime.

The April 2012 6th Summit of the Americas, to unfold in Cartagena, Colombia, provides a useful context for the President to build on this partnership agenda. Colombia's Summit theme, "Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity," reinforces the spirit of partnership that has been at the core of the Obama administration's policy since 2009.

Through equal partnership and the power of proximity, the United States is working effectively with an increasingly capable set of partners to address key challenges facing the people of the Americas – from energy and citizen security to more inclusive economic growth – while also advancing core U.S. interests, both in the region and beyond.

We intend to showcase the strong record of progress, growth, inclusion and security that we have developed with regional governments as we continue to confront threats and challenges.

As the global profile of nations in this hemisphere grows, we recognize that we cannot address long term impediments to economic growth such as inequality, poverty, and inadequate education systems in an environment of insecurity and violence. Indeed, insecurity and violent crime are near the top of citizens' concerns in most countries in the Americas; the 2010 Latinobarometro survey found that Latin Americans identified crime as the most pressing problem in their country. U.S. policy and assistance toward the region must complement host nation efforts to counter threats to the rule of law if we are to build a more prosperous hemisphere for all.

Citizen Security

Toward this end, the President has committed the United States to creating practical partnerships in the hemisphere to offset shared threats and advance common interests, the most fundamental of which is to protect our citizens. This strategy is grounded in our shared responsibility for addressing such challenges, and implicates the critical importance of political will, respect for the rule of law and effective institutions of governance; and shared aspirations for secure, prosperous, and inclusive societies.

It also recognizes that communities and law enforcement must work together in an environment of trust and cooperation. Confronting impunity and corruption, which undermine trust and facilitate lawlessness, is a critical component of our strategy. It also emphasizes greater reliance on our partners in the region that have extensive experience in improving citizen security including Colombia, Chile, Canada, and Mexico.

Our view of citizen safety takes into account the transnational threats that blur the lines between crime and terrorism that can directly threaten U.S. interests and security as well as those of our neighbors. We are moving in the direction of a next-generation citizen security strategy that emphasizes an integrated and multilateral partnership to strengthen the institutions that will build and sustain the rule of law, address the root causes of crime, and guarantee long-term public security.

The Merida, Central America Regional Security, Colombian Strategic Development, and Caribbean Basin Security initiatives are the concrete manifestations of this approach. These partnerships have particularly focused on protecting citizens and strengthening the institutions responsible for ensuring citizen safety. In each case, the United States seeks to support host nations, which have the responsibility for creating the strategic legislative, fiscal and rule of law environments conducive to citizen security.

Our approach requires greater harmonization of existing and planned U.S. assistance programs, from traditional law enforcement programs, counternarcotics programs and defense efforts to build partner capacity to anti-corruption, judicial reform, anti-gang, community policing and prevention efforts. In each of our citizen security initiatives, we work with our partners to strengthen the institutions of governance, including the

judiciary, law enforcement, and defense institutions. Strengthening these institutions of democratic governance should result in all citizens being able to seek and find justice as equals before the law. This long-term view of citizen security pairs institution-building and counternarcotics programming with development assistance to bolster the livelihoods of the most vulnerable citizens such as youth and women. In this highly integrative approach, we seek not only greater U.S. interagency coordination on our efforts in the hemisphere, but also seek opportunities for diplomatic dialogue with regional governments and foreign donors to encourage them to play an active role in enhancing hemispheric citizen safety.

As we make the investment of U.S. assistance, we are also seeing our partners stepping up to contribute more to their own stated goals and to apply their increasing capacity to others in the region, particularly in Central America and the Caribbean. In Central America for example, we have seen concrete indications of increased political will through the passage of seized asset laws in Guatemala and Honduras; a new extradition law in Honduras to permit the extradition of its nationals for offenses involving terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crimes; the creation of new security taxes in Costa Rica and Honduras; and the passage and implementation of judicially-authorized wire intercept laws in Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras.

U.S. Security Assistance

U.S. citizen security assistance for the priority regions of Mexico, Colombia, Central America, and the Caribbean seeks to increase the capacity and interoperability of law enforcement and judicial institutions, foster prevention, and to strengthen rule of law for the long term against the threats of corruption and impunity. Our FY 2013 request levels reflect a continued trend toward lower cost, security-related institution building programs, particularly for Mexico and Colombia. The request levels reflect this balanced approach to citizen security and the growing capacities of institutions in each country, recognizing the work of USAID, and both the Departments of State and Defense – full funding in each of the requested appropriation accounts is critical to the success of our efforts.

For the Merida Initiative in Mexico, the FY 2013 request of \$234 million continues a shift from equipment items toward lower-cost institutional capacity building assistance. We are focusing on programs that will further strengthen Mexican capacity to sustain rule of law and respect for human

rights, strengthen institutions, encourage full participation of civil society and expand the provision of services to at-risk youth. We continue to shift our emphasis from the federal level to the state level, as more and more communities tackle the crisis in focused efforts at state and municipal level. Full support for our request for Mexico will help ensure that the government that follows President Calderon will have the assistance it both needs and deserves for our shared responsibility in combating transnational organized crime.

In Colombia, U.S. assistance and our FY 2013 request of \$332 million will support Colombia's whole-of-government efforts to expand state presence in former conflict areas, while also protecting human rights and promoting economic development. Colombia's increased ability to provide critical services to its citizens is having long-term positive effects. We are able to support on-going reductions in annual U.S. assistance levels for Colombia because of the ongoing transfer to Colombia of financial and operational responsibility for defense, counternarcotics, and security programs. It is important to note that this remarkable progress is not irreversible; our budget request is intended to ensure support for Colombia's efforts to maintain its hard-won gains.

Central America is under serious threat from a number of quarters and therefore is a vital concern. Our FY 2013 request of \$107.5 million for the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) seeks to continue efforts to build Central America's capacity to prevent crime in the most vulnerable communities and ensure respect for the rule of law and counter threats posed by trafficking and transnational crime, particularly in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. FY 2013 funding will continue this rule of law capacity-building approach. CARSI assistance is heavily oriented toward training, mentoring, professionalization and capacity-building for law enforcement personnel and rule of law institutions. Community action and municipal crime prevention activities address at-risk segments of society and marginalized communities. At every opportunity we communicate our concern to the governments of the region and stress that their own efforts to address citizen security and promote human rights are vital to our joint success.

In the Caribbean, U.S. assistance for the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative aims to reduce trafficking, improve public safety and security, and promote social justice. The \$59 million FY 2013 CBSI request reflects a

transition from initial investments in the acquisition of new equipment systems and hardware toward sustainment of those systems, follow-on training and capacity building, and on-going prevention activities, all of which are lower cost. Our support for the nations of the Caribbean is aimed at combating illicit trafficking and providing opportunities for youth for gainful employment.

Conclusion

Madam Chairwoman and Members of the Subcommittee, in spite of tremendous challenges we face in helping our partners ensure the safety of all of our citizens, I am convinced that our efforts to build enduring partnerships based on equal respect, shared responsibility, and common interest will lead to enduring change.

This subcommittee has recognized the need to improve citizen security in the Western Hemisphere and I want to thank you for your sustained support. I look forward to our continued cooperation as we move to improve citizen security across the hemisphere. Thank you and I look forward to answering any questions you and the subcommittee may have.