The Central America Regional Security Initiative: Citizen Safety – A Shared Partnership

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"The U.S. is committed to citizen safety in Central America...We are doing everything we can in the fight against corruption and impunity, in providing the equipment and the support that law enforcement and the military require, and helping to build civil society to stand against the scourge of drug trafficking."

– Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

Citizen Safety Under Siege

Within Central America, a rapidly deteriorating security situation has led to significantly decreased levels of citizen safety, and to the social and economic exclusion of large populations unable to fully participate in thriving, safe communities. Narcotics traffickers continue to establish trafficking routes to and through Central America. The widespread availability of firearms, including those trafficked into the region, has increased their use in the commission of crimes. The continued expansion of national and transnational gangs has created communities of fear where gangs effectively control entire neighborhoods. Organized crime – which takes many forms, from the extortion of money from bus drivers, to corruption by government officials – robs citizens of their confidence in their ability to earn a livelihood and trust in their public officials for solutions to their problems.

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 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 and security in communities at risk; and
5. Foster enhanced levels of security and rule of law coordination and cooperation between the nations of the region.

CARSI – An Integrated, Collaborative Regional Security and Rule of Law Program

The Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) responds to the region's threats and builds upon existing strategies and programs, both on a bilateral and regional basis. It is designed to stop the flow of narcotics, weapons, and bulk cash generated by illicit drug sales, and to confront gangs and criminal organizations. CARSI envisions strengthening and integrating security efforts from the U.S. Southwest border to Panama, including the littoral waters of the Caribbean. The desired objective of CARSI is to produce a safer and more secure region where criminal organizations no longer wield the power to destabilize governments or threaten national and regional security and public safety, as well as to prevent the entry and spread of illicit drugs, violence, and transnational threats to countries throughout the region and to the United States.

U.S. Assistance – Meeting the Threat – Building Capacity

The $260 million in U.S. CARSI assistance committed to date (Fiscal Years 2008-2010) seeks to support the following programming in Central America:

- Law enforcement and security force assistance to confront narcotics and arms trafficking, gangs, organized crime, address border security deficiencies, as well as to disrupt criminal infrastructure, such as money laundering and trafficking routes and networks;
- Capacity enhancements for public security, law enforcement and justice sector actors and institutions, and rule of law agencies and personnel to provide the skills, technology and expertise to address the threats of the region; and
- Community policing, gang prevention and economic and social programming for at risk youth in areas adversely impacted by crime.