

# The Central America Regional Security Initiative: Countering Corruption and Fostering Transparency



***“...curbing corruption is a serious global challenge, and so it will take global partnerships to meet it...”***

– Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

## **CARSI – An Integrated, Collaborative Regional Security and Rule of Law 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). CARSI is aligned with SICA’s Regional Security Strategy and also draws upon the expertise and efforts of like-minded donors supporting the citizen safety goals of Central American countries.

## **Corruption Erodes Faith in Public Institutions and Facilitates Organized Crime**

Corruption is ever present in the lives of Central Americans. Impunity for criminals due to corruption causes citizens to lose trust in public institutions and threatens the rule of law. Citizens are less likely to report crimes or turn to the police and the courts when they see these institutions collude with the very criminal groups that threaten them on a daily basis. Corruption also fuels and is fueled by organized crime, with transnational criminal organizations bribing police, customs, and border officials to facilitate smuggling across borders and gangs paying the police to allow them to operate in neighborhoods throughout the region. According to the United Nations, corruption increases the cost of doing business by up to 10 percent, reducing a country’s capacity to leverage scarce resources for public services and economic growth. The end result is increased insecurity and decreased opportunity for the citizens of Central America.

## **U.S. Assistance – Tackling Corruption and Promoting Transparency**

The United States, through CARSI and complementary U.S. assistance programs, supports efforts to prevent and combat corruption and to strengthen rule of law institutions that are transparent, accountable, and responsive to their citizens. CARSI assistance has helped initiate internal affairs sections within host nation police forces, improving the process for receiving and investigating complaints made against the police. CARSI also supports the establishment of vetted police units, comprised of host country law enforcement officers who undergo a rigorous background check, including polygraph examinations, to ensure their integrity. Through CARSI-funded grants, we also support training of the private sector, civil society groups, and journalists on the negative effects of corruption and ways in which citizens can report corrupt practices, both to the government and through already established civil society avenues. All citizens deserve governments that work for the people – and through CARSI, we are helping make this a reality for the people of Central America.

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.