AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

THE BIDEN ADMINSTRATION'S EFFORTS TO DEEPEN U.S. ENGAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY,
MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC
POLICY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

June 23, 2021

Serial No. 117–52

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

Available: http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/, http://docs.house.gov,
or http://www.govinfo.gov

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

46–573PDF WASHINGTON : 2022

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

GREGORY W. MEEKS, New York, *Chairman*

BRAD SHERMAN, California
ALBIO SIRES, New Jersey
GERALD E. CONNOLLY, Virginia
THEODORE E. DEUTCH, Florida
KAREN BASS, California
WILLIAM KEATING, Massachusetts
DAVID CICILLINE, Rhode Island
AMI BERA, California
JOAQUIN CASTRO, Texas
DINA TITUS, Nevada
TED LIEU, California
SUSAN WILD, Pennsylvania
DEAN PHILLIPS, Minnesota
ILHAN OMAR, Minnesota
COLIN ALLRED, Texas
ANDY LEVIN, Michigan
ABIGAIL SPANBERGER, Virginia
CHRISSY HOULAHAN, Pennsylvania
TOM MALINOWSKI, New Jersey
ANDY KIM, New Jersey
SARA JACOBS, California
KATHY MANNING, North Carolina
JIM COSTA, California
JUAN VARGAS, California
VICENTE GONZALEZ, Texas
BRAD SCHNEIDER, Illinois

MICHAEL T. MCCAUL, Texas, *Ranking Member*
CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, New Jersey
STEVE CHABOT, Ohio
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania
DARRELL ISSA, California
ADAM KINZINGER, Illinois
LEE ZELDIN, New York
ANN WAGNER, Missouri
BRIAN MAST, Florida
BRIAN FITZPATRICK, Pennsylvania
KEN BUCK, Colorado
TIM BURCHETT, Tennessee
MARK GREEN, Tennessee
ANDY BARR, Kentucky
GREG STEUBE, Florida
DAN MEUSER, Pennsylvania
AUGUST PFLUGER, Texas
PETER MEIJER, Michigan
NICOLE MALLIOTAKIS, New York
RONNY JACKSON, Texas
YOUNG KIM, California
MARIA ELVIRA SALAZAR, Florida
JOE WILSON, South Carolina

SOPHIA LAFARGUE, *Staff Director*
BRENDAN SHIELDS, *Republican Staff Director*

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY, MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY

ALBIO SIRES, New Jersey, *Chairman*

JOAQUIN CASTRO, Texas
ANDY LEVIN, Michigan
VICENTE GONZALEZ, Texas
JUAN VARGAS, California

MARK GREEN, Tennessee, *Ranking Member*
AUGUST PFLUGER, Texas
MARIA ELVIRA SALAZAR, Florida

ALEXANDER BROCKWEHL, *Staff Director*

CONTENTS

Page

WITNESSES

Lochman, Laura, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. Department of State 7
Feinstein, Barbara, Acting Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development, Bureau of Latin America and the Caribbean 12
Fulton, Heide, Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs 21

APPENDIX

Hearing Notice 41
Hearing Minutes 42
Hearing Attendance 43

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Statement submitted for the record from Chairman Sires 44

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Responses to questions submitted for the record 47

THE BIDEN ADMINSTRATION'S EFFORTS TO DEEPEN U.S. ENGAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Wednesday, June 23, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
CIVILIAN SECURITY, MIGRATION, AND INTERNATIONAL
ECONOMIC POLICY,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Albio Sires (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. SIRES. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. This hearing, entitled "The Biden Adminstration's Efforts to Deepen U.S. Engagement in the Caribbean," will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any point. And all members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous materials, and questions for the record subject to the limitation in the rules. To insert something into the record, please have your staff email the previously mentioned address, or contact the subcommittee staff.

As a reminder to members joining remotely, please keep your video function on at all times, even when you are not recognized by the chair. Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves. And please remember to mute yourself after you finish speaking.

Consistent with H.R. 8 and the accompanying regulations, staff will only mute members and witnesses as appropriate, when they are not under recognition to eliminate background noise. I see that we have a quorum, and I now recognize myself for opening remarks.

I am glad we are holding this hearing to talk about the region that is too often overlooked. The countries of the Caribbean are among our closest neighbors. Yet we frequently fail to pay enough attention to this region. As chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, I am committed to ensuring that we focus more on the Caribbean going forward. I also want to commend my friend, Greg Meeks, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee who has been very clear since the start of this Congress that the Caribbean should be a top priority for the United States. I know Chairman Meeks agrees with me that the best way for us to show we are ready to elevate the Caribbean in our foreign policy is by sending vaccines to the region as quickly as possible. I applaud the

Biden Adminstration for its announcement that it will donate 80 million vaccines globally by the end of June. However, today, I am urging the Adminstration to quickly step up our efforts in the Caribbean.

Many countries in the region are relying on Chinese vaccines because we aren't providing any alternative. Other countries like Haiti have yet to distribute a single vaccine dose while the pandemic claims more lives each day. Given the direct travel routes between the Caribbean countries and the U.S., and the close ties between our diaspora communities in our countries and throughout the Caribbean, it is vital to U.S. national security that we help Caribbean overcome this pandemic. We should be proud of the fact that the vaccines for those in the United States are the most effective in the world.

While I understand that the Biden Adminstration wants to strengthen COVAX, I believe that we should be sending vaccines directly to countries in need. We should get the credit for the vaccines we donate.

Beyond vaccines, we need to work with our Caribbean friends on the long road to recovery in the wake of the pandemic. Many of these countries depend heavily on tourism, an industry that has been crushed by the pandemic which is likely to rebound slowly.

In the Dominican Republic, we have a government that is eager to deepen engagement with the United States. But so far, they have had to rely on vaccines from China. We should step up and send vaccines to our partners in need. We should also help support their fight against corruption and deepen our security cooperation under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.

In Guyana, where I traveled last year, we should work to ensure the profits of oil revenues benefit the entire population. As I said during the trip, we want to engage all actors in Guyana, including businesses, civil society, the current government, and the opposition to advance inclusive economic growth.

The severe flooding that Guyana has faced in recent months is a reminder that climate change is having devastating impacts on our friends in the Caribbean. We need to step up our efforts to support climate resilience and energy security in the region.

In Haiti, I am deeply concerned about the gang violence that has spiraled out of control under a government that is no longer able to carry out its most basic functions. In just 2 weeks, over 8,000 women and children have been forced from their homes in Port-au-Prince due to this violence according to the United Nations. I am glad that Secretary Blinken spoke out against a constitutional referendum there. We must do more to help the Haitian people overcome the economic and political security crisis they are facing.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how we can deepen our economic and security cooperation with partners in the region and harness the Development Finance Corporation to counter China's influence in the region and help advance a rapid economic recovery.

The COVID–19 pandemic has created tremendous challenges for the Caribbean, but it also provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to this region. I truly help hope that we

will sieze this opportunity. Thank you, and I will now turn to the ranking member, Mr. Green, for his opening statement.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Chairman Sires. I really appreciate you holding this committee. And I want to thank our witnesses for being here today. Thank you. Thanks for your service to the country.

I am glad we are hosting this hearing and convening this discussion. For too long, the United States Caribbean policy has lacked a strategic focus. The region is a key gateway to the United States, it is an important economic partner and for trade and tourism, it is a vital component of U.S. national security, and it holds the largest block of Taiwan's diplomatic allies. I hope the full committee will hope to prioritize the Caribbean basin moving forward.

In 2021, the region's future is bright, but not without significant challenges impacting both the United States and the greater Latin American community. The Caribbean struggles with persistent violence, transnational criminal networks, drug trafficking. In 2019, roughly 24 percent of the cocaine departing South America transited through the Caribbean Sea, including both maritime vessels and illicit aircraft. That is why the United States launched the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, or CBSI, a regional security initiative to reduce drug trafficking and promote safety and security. I am proud to co-lead the reauthorization of the CBSI this Congress with Congressman Espaillat—we must double-down our efforts against drug trafficking that wreaks havoc in our region and a corruption that allows them to survive. Our bill helps do just that by providing the resources necessary to improve security cooperation and combat the criminal organizations that victimize their own countries as well as our own.

The COVID–19 pandemic has disseminated key resources, economic growth, trade, travel, tourism. According to the World Travel Tourism Council, the Caribbean was the world's most tourism-reliant region before the pandemic. But in 2020, these sectors took the largest hit, of course, experiencing a 58 percent decrease when compared to 2019.

As countries continue to get vaccinated, we must prioritize resuming the longstanding U.S.-Caribbean travel and tourism industries. And while the 2020 hurricane season wasn't that significant, 2021 remains an unknown. And the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminstration has predicted that there may be as many as 10 hurricanes this season. An average season sees seven.

I look forward to hearing from USAID on how you guys are working with regional partners on disaster preparedness and response management. 2020 also proved to be a pivotal year for the Caribbean's energy resources with Guyana's oil sector growing and potentially providing an alternate to Venezuela's. The oil and gas sector is critical to their country and could transform it from one of the Caribbean's poorest countries to its wealthiest.

The Chinese Communist Party has vastly increase its influence in the Caribbean over the past 20 years with 13 Caribbean countries having signed on to China's Belt and Road Initiative. The CCP has expanded its network of loaned-back infrastructure projects to resume in telecom investment and relationship with regional defense counterparts. China's disregard for the environment

is a huge threat to the Caribbean tourism industry. That is why I am drafting a bill to move supply chains away from Communist China and into the Western Hemisphere. Our dependence on China is a threat to our national security, and the Western Hemisphere must become more economically independent if we are to safeguard our future.

The Caribbean is a region of strategic importance and numerous challenges. I am hopeful that today's hearing can shed some light on the region as we work to prioritize our Caribbean partners. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you very much, Ranking Member Green. I will now introduce Ms. Laura Lochman. She is the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. Ms. Lochman is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with over 30 years' experience in policy analysis and implementation. Most recently, she was the director of the Office of Canadian Affairs. She has served in overseas assignment in Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil, and in Washington, and the Office of Cuban Affairs—wow—and the Bureau of South Asian Affairs. She holds a bachelor of arts from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

Ms. Lochman, we welcome you to our hearing. You have to tell me about this Cuban thing you have here.

We will then hear from Ms. Barbara Feinstein. She serves as the Acting Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator with the USAID Bureau of Latin America and the Caribbean. Ms. Feinstein overseas the agency's development priorities in Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Before joining the LAC Bureau, she was the Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for Legislative Affairs in USAID Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs. She holds a master's degree in international and political affairs from Princeton University and a bachelor of arts from the University of California Berkeley.

Ms. Feinstein, thank you for joining us today.

Finally, we will hear from Ms. Heide Fulton. She is currently the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Programs in the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement. Ms. Fulton most recently served as the director of the Office of the Mexican Affairs. Before that, she led the U.S. Embassy in Honduras and as Deputy Chief of Mission and then as Chief of Mission from 2016 to 2019. She also served as a Director of Counternarcotics at the Kabul Embassy in Afghanistan and as a counselor for public affairs in Quito, Ecuador. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, she served in Active Duty in Iraq. She retired from the U.S. Army Reserve in June 2020 after 28 years of service. She is a graduate from Boston College and earned her master's from Troy State University.

Ms. Fulton, thank you for your service and for joining us today.

I ask the witnesses to limit your testimony for 5 minutes.

Without objection, your prepared written statements would be made part of the record.

Ms. Lochman, you are recognized for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF LAURA LOCHMAN, ACTING DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. LOCHMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Green, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify before you today on this important issue. For decades, the United States has partnered with the Caribbean people to promote stronger and more vibrant communities. Today, the Caribbean region is experiencing a sharp economic downturn caused by the COVID–19 pandemic. This has devastated government revenues and caused rising unemployment, which could bring more crime, irregular migration, and malign activity by State and non-State actors unless we continue our support.

Through the U.S.-Caribbean 2020 strategy, we have sought to increase and deepen U.S. engagement with Caribbean nations. We are now building on that strategy to guide interagency activities into the future. On April 21, Secretary Blinken met with CARICOM foreign ministers to highlight our commitment to working with all countries in the region to advance bilateral and regional interests. We also actively engaged Caribbean nations multilaterally to confront some of the region's most pressing challenges, including the growing threat to democracy and human rights in Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Haiti.

In response to the COVID–19 pandemic, on June 3, the Adminstration announced plans that the global distribution of 25 million U.S. vaccine doses, of which approximately 6 million doses are designated for Latin America and the Caribbean. On June 21, the Adminstration announced its plan for the remaining 55 million of the 80 million doses President Biden pledged to allocate by the end of June, including an additional 14 million doses for Latin America and the Caribbean to be shared through COVAX. Moreover, the United States is purchasing an additional 500 million doses of Pfizer vaccines and donating them to 92 low and lower middle income countries as defined by Gavi's COVAX advanced market commitment.

The United States is an important commercial and trade partner of the Caribbean region. We are the Caribbean Basin Initiative, CBI, we maintain a positive impact on a number of Caribbean basin economies. On March 22, the House—excuse me—the White House launched the Small and Less Populous Island Economies, or SALPIE, initiative, which is a framework designed to further strengthen U.S. economic collaboration with island countries and territories in the Caribbean, North Atlantic, and Pacific regions.

On energy, USAID's Caribbean Energy Initiative marks a planned 5-year $25 million investment in a more sustainable, reliable, and resilient energy future for the Caribbean. We have also identified a need for diversification of energy supplies and promotion of U.S. exports to address challenges and promote Caribbean energy security.

Through the State Department-led U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership, USCRP, we seek to strengthen Caribbean partner resilience to the impacts of climate change and severe weather-related events. USCRP guides efforts to advance and coordinate U.S.

and partner country resilience around the objective of supporting adaptation to climate change, enhancing regional disaster preparedness, providing geological hazards monitoring, and disaster mapping, and developing resilient infrastructure.

On education, we seek to build human capital in the region through increased educational activities by coordinating regionwide engagements through academic and professional exchange programs, and massive online open courses, as well as increasing opportunities with diaspora and education stakeholders to build networks between the U.S. and the Caribbean.

Finally, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, CBSI, a regional security partnership with 13 Caribbean countries co-led by the U.S. Government, CARICOM, and the Dominican Republic, remains the centerpiece of our security efforts. CBSI programs advance our goals to reduce illicit trafficking, improve public safety and security, and prevent youth crime and violence.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lochman follows:]

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Laura Lochman's
Written Testimony for HFAC Subcommittee on the Caribbean
June 23, 2021, 3:00 p.m., 5 minutes

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Green, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify before you today on this important issue.

For decades, the United States has partnered with the Caribbean people to advance economic development, prosperity, education, health, and security to promote stronger and more vibrant communities. Today, the Caribbean region is experiencing a sharp economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The IMF estimates that GDP for the tourism-dependent Caribbean economies contracted by 9.8 percent in 2020. This has devastated government revenues and caused rising unemployment, which could bring more crime, irregular migration, and malign activity by state and non-state actors unless we continue our support.

Through the U.S.-Caribbean 2020 strategy, we have sought to increase and deepen U.S. engagement with Caribbean nations. We are now building on that strategy to guide interagency activities in diplomacy, security, prosperity, energy, education, health, and resilience.

On April 21, Secretary Blinken met with CARICOM foreign ministers to highlight our commitment to working with all countries in the region to advance bilateral and regional interests. National Security Advisor Sullivan met with the same group on May 7. Other high-level bilateral discussions continue to take place across the region.

We also actively engage Caribbean nations multilaterally to confront some of the region's most pressing challenges, including the growing threat to democracy and human rights in Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Haiti.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on June 3 the Administration announced plans for the global distribution of 25 million U.S. vaccine doses, of which approximately 6 million doses are designated for Latin America and the Caribbean, including Haiti, the Dominican Republic and CARICOM countries. Moreover, the United States is purchasing an additional 500 million doses of Pfizer vaccines and donating them to 92 low- and lower-middle-income countries and economies as defined by Gavi's COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) and the African Union. Our approach is to ensure vaccines are delivered in a way that is efficient, equitable, and follows the latest science and public health data.

The United States is an important commercial and trade partner of the Caribbean region. In 2020, U.S. exports to CARIFORUM countries (CARICOM plus the Dominican Republic) totaled $19.1 billion.

The Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) continues to have a positive impact on a number of Caribbean Basin economies. By one measure, Haiti has been the largest beneficiary of CBI trade preferences in recent years. In 2018, CBI beneficiary countries supplied $6 billion of U.S. imports, ranking 44th among U.S. import suppliers, and U.S. imports under the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act (CBERA) accounted for 27.8 percent of all imports from CBERA

beneficiaries. In 2020, over $1 billion worth of goods were imported into the United States under CBI.

Understanding that Caribbean nations faced significant challenges due to COVID-19, the United States used its leadership at the IMF to support a total of $1.7 billion in new emergency financing specifically for Caribbean countries.

On March 22, the White House launched the Small and Less Populous Island Economies (SALPIE) Initiative, an economic cooperation framework designed to strengthen U.S. collaboration with island countries and territories in the Caribbean, North Atlantic, and Pacific regions. This initiative signals the U.S. government's prioritization of cooperation with these economies to counter COVID-19 economic challenges, promote economic recovery, respond to the climate crisis, and advance longer-term shared interests.

We will continue to explore the use of bilateral tools, such as U.S. Export-Import Bank trade financing, U.S. International Development Finance Corporation financing, and assistance through USAID, to provide needed economic and technical support.

Collectively, these efforts strengthen our ability to work with likeminded partners and allies to offer higher-standard, transparently governed investment alternatives that uphold environmental and social standards, in part to help counter the People's Republic of China's (PRC) attempts to gain recognition and influence in the Caribbean through malign actions.

We also seek to help deepen cooperation between constructive actors who share our values, like Taiwan and its Caribbean diplomatic partners.

On Energy, USAID's Caribbean Energy Initiative marks a planned five year, $25M investment in a more sustainable, reliable and resilient energy future for the Caribbean. We have also identified the need for diversification of energy supplies and promotion of U.S. exports to address challenges and promote Caribbean energy security. Energy sector development can stabilize or reduce electricity prices, increase economic growth, and create opportunities for the private sector, including U.S. companies.

The U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership (USCRP), is the State Department-led U.S. interagency effort to strengthen Caribbean partner-country resilience to the impacts of climate change and severe weather-related events. Through USCRP we are advancing and coordinating complementary U.S. and partner-country resilience efforts around the objectives of Supporting Effective Regional Adaptation to Climate Change; Enhancing Regional Disaster Preparedness; Providing Geological Hazards Monitoring and Disaster Mapping; and Developing Resilient Infrastructure.

The participation of Caribbean nations at the Leaders' Summit on Climate, follow-on engagements with Special Envoy Kerry, and programs like the State Department-funded Local 2030 Island Network are testaments to the work that continues.

On Education, we seek to build human capital in the region through increased educational activities by coordinating region-wide engagements through academic and professional exchange

programs, and Massive Online Open Courses, as well as increasing opportunities with diaspora and education stakeholders to build networks between the United States and Caribbean.

The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), a regional security partnership with 13 Caribbean countries co-led by the U.S. government, CARICOM, and the Government of the Dominican Republic, remains the centerpiece of our security efforts. CBSI programs advance three overarching, complementary goals: reduce illicit trafficking, improve public safety and security, and prevent youth crime and violence.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you very much.

I now turn to you for your testimony, Ms. Feinstein.

STATEMENT OF BARBARA FEINSTEIN, ACTING SENIOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, BUREAU OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Green, and distinguished members of the subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development. Over the past several months, the United States has heard from leaders across the Caribbean on their most pressing needs as they work to increase their resilience to natural disasters and climate change and overcome the challenges of COVID–19, either health, economic, or security-related.

Caribbean leaders seek enhanced investment in disaster resilience and hurricane preparedness, increased support for crime and violence prevention, help to strengthen health and education, and, above all, access to COVID–19 vaccines. And as a neighbor, partner, and friend of the Caribbean, the United States stands ready to respond, both because it is the right thing to do and because doing so is in our national interest.

As we begin the hurricane season, USAID is well poised to support the region in its time of need. With a team of 100-plus disaster experts located across the Caribbean and pre-positioned emergency relief supplies to prioritize humanitarian needs during major storms and other emergencies. USAID is already providing nearly $5 million to assist more than 20,000 people displaced by the recent eruption of the La Soufriere volcano in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. And in Guyana, we are supporting more than 36,000 families as they recover from devastating floods. In Haiti, where escalating violence continue to paralyze economic activity and trigger the displacement of individuals in whole communities, USAID has provided more than $34 million to address emergency food security needs and prevent malnutrition, reaching over 580,000 Haitians.

But while we support countries during their time of crisis, we are also helping the Caribbean to build greater resilience at the national, regional, and local levels by improving disaster risk reduction, promoting biodiversity conservation, generating data to improve climate forecasting and strategic planning, and supporting communities to plan for and adapt to shocks.

USAID is also increasing energy resilience in the region—in this region, which, as you know, has some of the world's highest energy costs. Through our $25 million 5-year Caribbean Energy Initiative, the agency is working to help diversify the energy sources used in the region's grids, strengthen infrastructure to withstand major shocks, and enhance the ability of utilities to manage their grids for greater resilience.

Of course, the most pressing issue facing the Caribbean today is COVID–19, whose impacts stretch well beyond the health sector. To date, USAID has provided more than $28 million in health, humanitarian assistance, vaccine support, and economic growth funding to respond to COVID impacts in the Caribbean.

On June 6, as my colleague mentioned, the White House announced its plans to purchase and donate 500 million doses of COVID–19 vaccines to 92 countries, several of which are in the Caribbean. And the region will also benefit from the White House's announcement of more than 20.6 million excess doses from the U.S. domestic supply.

USAID is well-positioned to complement these deliveries with technical assistance to support equitable vaccine distribution and planning.

As members of this committee are well aware, high rates of crime and violence remain endemic in the region. Through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, USAID is helping to improve the efficiency of judicial systems, promote governance, and fight corruption. Importantly, our work also helps to provide at-risk youth from the highest crime municipalities with educational, economic, and social opportunities to ensure that they can live productive and peaceful lives.

In Saint Kitts and Nevis, for example, we have seen a sizable increase in target communities' perceptions of safety as a result of our efforts with perceptions increasing from 54 percent in 2018 to almost 70 percent just 2 years later. And approximately 60 percent of eastern and southern Caribbean youth who completed USAID-sponsored work force development programs have now secured employment in the retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors.

Yet, while these results are heartening, we recognize that much more remains to be done. And with this committee's strong support, we stand ready to continue to respond.

To that end, it is important to note how our model of assistance differs from others, namely, that of the People's Republic of China, which furthers dependence or unsustainable debt. By contrast, the U.S. model is one of partnership with the countries in which we work. Our assistance promotes a country's own development path consistent with our shared values and interest. Again, thank you for your commitment to the Caribbean, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Feinstein follows:]

TESTIMONY OF BARBARA A FEINSTEIN
ACTING SENIOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
CIVILIAN SECURITY, MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY
JUNE 23, 2021
"THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S EFFORTS TO
DEEPEN U.S. ENGAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN"

Introduction

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Green, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The United States and our neighbors in the Caribbean remain strong partners with shared values and interests. For the past 16 years during the month of June, we have celebrated these values and the countless contributions of the Caribbean-American diaspora community as part of Caribbean-American Heritage month. And we look forward to deepening these ties in the months and years ahead.

Our partnership with the Caribbean is based not only on shared culture and values, but also on the understanding that what affects one of us, affects all of us.

USAID remains steadfast in our commitment to building a stronger and more prosperous Caribbean. For decades, and thanks to the strong and bipartisan support of this Committee, we have worked alongside our partners in the Caribbean to promote disaster preparedness, health, education, economic development, and citizen security.

Disaster Preparedness

While June is a time for celebration, it also marks the beginning of hurricane season. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is forecasting an active 2021 Atlantic hurricane season, predicting 13-20 named storms, including three to five major hurricanes.

USAID stands ready to respond, with a team of disaster experts and pre-positioned emergency relief supplies strategically located throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. USAID currently has more than 100 surge staff deployed across the Caribbean, poised to quickly assess conditions on the ground, and help the Agency prioritize humanitarian needs during major storms and other emergencies. Further, and due to the added complications of COVID-19, USAID is pre-positioning two senior disaster response experts to The Bahamas and Barbados this hurricane season to work with local response agencies and mobilize swiftly in the event of a disaster.

USAID also maintains emergency relief items and non-perishable food supplies at its warehouses in Miami, Houston, and across Haiti, that can be deployed at a moment's notice.

While hurricane preparations are critical, USAID is also anticipating and responding to new and developing humanitarian needs across the Caribbean. As the security crisis worsens in Haiti, the Agency is supporting the World Food Program and the International Organization for Migration to use pre-positioned stocks to provide food and relief items to more than 2,000 people who have had to flee their homes in response to recent security challenges. In Guyana, USAID is providing $30,000 to procure and transport supplies, including cleaning and personal hygiene items to respond to recent floods that have affected more than 36,000 families. And in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, USAID has provided approximately $4.7 million to assist more than 20,000 people affected by the April 22, 2021 eruption of the La Soufriere volcano, including support to meet needs in health, water sanitation and hygiene, shelter, food, and logistics. Through a long-term volcano monitoring program, USAID, in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey, provided equipment that helped monitor the seismic activity of the volcano ahead of the eruption, allowing local officials to give early warnings and evacuate more than 20,000 people in at-risk areas to prevent loss of life.

Climate Change and Resilience

Like other low-lying island nations around the world, the Caribbean remains extremely susceptible to natural disasters. 2020 broke the record for the most named storms in Caribbean history. Rising sea levels and dwindling rainfall make water scarcity a real threat to lives and livelihoods. These environmental shocks are having devastating impacts, as many of these countries' economic gains are tied to industries vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as tourism. As climate change intensifies natural hazards, making them more frequent and catastrophic, we must support countries in their efforts to build resilience.

Thanks to the Congress' strong bipartisan support, USAID has been a committed and dedicated partner to the Caribbean. In particular, our work with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre has enhanced the region's data capture architecture and network at lower costs. Through a public-private partnership, USAID helped facilitate the region's acquisition of the region's first owned LiDAR instrument, thereby expanding Caribbean nations' access to seascape and topographic data.

USAID also supports countries' ability to better forecast and disseminate climate information and trends. For example, USAID partnered with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), to help the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) acquire formal accreditation as the world's first Regional Climate Center. Due to this certification, CIMH now generates long-range forecasts, early warning systems, and improved weather modeling capacity for the Caribbean region. With this data, governments and other organizations are better equipped to make decisions related to disaster risk management and climate change.

Building upon this work, USAID is currently employing several approaches to combat climate change and promote greater resilience, including improving disaster risk reduction, promoting biodiversity conservation, and increasing energy resilience. Under the framework of the U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership, USAID's disaster risk reduction interventions are strengthening the ability of Caribbean countries to respond to emergencies while also helping communities adapt to the impacts of hurricanes, earthquakes, and droughts in the long term.

To do this, USAID is working at the regional, national and local levels. For example, USAID awarded $4.5 million to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency to strengthen local, national, and regional plans and approaches to mitigate and build resilience to natural disasters. This includes training local first responders, coordinating disaster preparedness standards across the region to provide more cohesive responses, and strengthening operational readiness and recovery systems. We are improving risk and damage forecasting and the ability to predict floods and droughts throughout the region through a $1.8 million award to the aforementioned CIMH. USAID is also partnering with the Inter-American Foundation to strengthen community-led disaster preparedness by channeling direct, flexible funding to grassroots organizations and mobilizing matching local resources.

The Caribbean region has some of the world's highest energy costs and is predominantly dependent on fossil fuels, which contributes to the region's high cost of doing business, increases its vulnerability to external sector shocks, and constrains economic growth and competitiveness across most Caribbean economies. However, the islands have great potential in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources including solar, geothermal, and wind, making the sector ripe for reform. USAID is building energy resilience across the region by helping island energy sectors bounce back more quickly from both environmental and market shocks. Through our $25 million, five-year Caribbean Energy Initiative (CEI), USAID is diversifying the energy sources used in the region's grids and the locations from which they originate, strengthening infrastructure to withstand major weather shocks and earthquakes, and enhancing the ability of utilities to manage their grids for resilience. Under this initiative, USAID has signed a co-financing agreement with the Jamaica Energy Resilience Alliance (JERA) to invest up to $50 million in renewable energy in Jamaica. JERA works with local and international firms to increase knowledge of clean energy options, make financing easier, and is also launching a commercial solar and battery storage pilot -- all aimed at increasing uptake of renewable energy in Jamaica's tourism sector and other essential industries. In St. Lucia, we are helping the country's electricity regulator develop a new draft grid code, which lays out the technical specifications for how new, renewable energy power generators can connect to the St. Lucia grid. Expanding and providing reliable energy also means boosting security in the energy sector. Through CEI, USAID is also offering utility-specific technical assistance to host country nations and the private sector to address cybersecurity threats to the region's power grids.

COVID-19

Of course, the most pressing issue facing the Caribbean today is one that has also heavily impacted us here at home: COVID-19. The timeline for the Caribbean's recovery from the pandemic, like in many places, continues to be uncertain. The International Monetary Fund estimates that tourism-dependent economies in the Caribbean contracted by over 10 percent on average in 2020, with the economic contraction reaching upwards of 19 percent last year in some Caribbean countries.

As we know, the impacts of COVID-19 stretch well beyond the health sector. COVID has reduced education outcomes, devastated local economies, and jeopardized citizens' livelihoods. And with the generosity of the Congress, USAID stands ready to help address these challenges.

To date, we have provided more than $28 million in health, humanitarian assistance, vaccine support, and economic growth funding to the region to respond to impacts of the pandemic.

Through our health support, the Agency has provided much-needed personal protective equipment, laboratory diagnostic capacity, clinical management training, and risk communication activities. We have worked with 12 multilateral, bilateral, and local partners to rapidly mobilize support to the Caribbean region. To strengthen national COVID-19 responses, we continue to increase access to testing and surveillance tools, improving clinical management capacity by training health workers, and developing triage protocols to respond in a timely manner to COVID patients.

USAID continues to monitor the pandemic's trajectory to be responsive to surges. To address an acute problem with the oxygen supply to hospitals in Haiti, for example, USAID recently provided their Ministry of Health with 50 oxygen concentrators. The Agency also is providing technical and clinical training to ensure proper maintenance and care of these concentrators and related materials.

At the same time, we are expanding vaccination efforts in the region. On June 6, the White House announced its plans to purchase and donate 500 million doses of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccines to eight member states in the African Union and 92 low-and lower middle-income countries and economies party to Gavi's COVAX Advance Market Commitment, including Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Latin America and Caribbean region will soon also benefit from excess doses from the U.S. domestic supply, including from the 80 million pledged by the White House. USAID's support for vaccine efforts in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean includes distribution planning, policy, and coordination; supply chain and logistics technical assistance; data management, communication and advocacy; and community engagement.

Caribbean countries need more than just health assistance to recover from this pandemic, which is why we are also providing support in areas such as economic security -- including education, and resuscitation of the tourism sector, which is so vital to the region's recovery. In the Dominican Republic, USAID is promoting sustainable economic livelihoods through ecotourism activities in the northern part of the country and along the Haitian border. Our efforts help preserve endangered mangroves, diverse ecosystems and other protected areas while also helping communities along the border region earn sustainable incomes.

When COVID-19 prompted school closures in Haiti, USAID acted quickly to maintain student learning during the crisis. Working in partnership with the Haitian Ministry of Education, the Agency developed radio-based French and Creole reading lessons and episodes for children in pre-school, first, and second grades. To facilitate remote learning in an insecure environment where families frequently lack access to regular electricity, the Agency distributed more than 15,200 solar-powered radios to families, enabling more than 36,000 students to continue their studies.

Promoting Security, Crime Prevention, Democracy and Justice

The Caribbean remains one of the most violent regions in the Americas. With 47 homicides per 100,000 people, Jamaica has one of the highest homicide rates in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

To address this, USAID has provided more than $249 million to improve citizen security over the past ten years, reduce crime rates, and promote safer communities through the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

USAID is helping communities become safer by working with our Caribbean partners to provide youth in high-crime communities with educational, economic, and social opportunities that will guide them on a path to more productive, peaceful lives.

Since 2015, USAID has reached nearly 200,000 at-risk young people across the Caribbean through crime and violence prevention programs. As a result, approximately 60 percent of Eastern and Southern Caribbean youth who completed workforce development programs secured new employment in retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors.

We are also helping Caribbean governments develop and implement their own crime and violence prevention initiatives. For example, as a result of USAID programming under CBSI, eight countries in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean have developed regional standardized crime indicators and seven have piloted digital police data collection and analysis systems that will allow regional comparisons and the identification and implementation of best practices.

With USAID's support, in Barbados and Grenada, digital police information systems have been incorporated into 100 percent of police stations. USAID also supported the foundation of the Sub-Regional Crime Observatory (SRCO) in Barbados to inform host-country governments' decisions on key policy issues. The Observatory is now the region's leading data collection unit for crime and violence statistics. In 2020, the SRCO created its first, region-wide report that compares crime statistics in each country — a significant milestone. With this information, countries can now identify the root causes of youth violence and crime, perform crime forecasting, and develop regional and country-specific policies and programs to decrease crime and violence.

Our security and crime prevention efforts are paying off. In Guyana, surveys in target communities measuring residents' perception of safety showed an increase from 44 percent in 2018 to 50 percent in 2020 following USAID interventions. And in St. Kitts and Nevis, they increased from roughly 54 percent in 2018 to almost 70 percent in 2020.

USAID also supports critical justice, governance, and anti-corruption measures throughout the region. For example, in 2019, USAID supported legal and mediation services in the Dominican Republic, reducing national criminal and civil case backlogs by 38 percent. Over the past five years, it is estimated that USAID support for these services has saved the country more than $36 million. These savings have since freed up resources for the national court system to address more serious and complex crimes.

In Jamaica, USAID's anti-corruption efforts are taking root. Building on the passage of a Political Party Registration Act passed in 2014, USAID programs have supported key policy reforms, including the passage of two additional laws: the Integrity Commission Act and Campaign Finance Regulation Act. Both laws helped increase public discourse around corruption and transparency, resulting in the resignation of several high-profile ministerial leaders. Over the past six years, Jamaica has seen a steady improvement on the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, improving its rank, from ranking 83 out of 176 countries in 2016 to a ranking of 69 out of 180 countries in 2020.

In Guyana, USAID is building the capacity of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative Secretariat and civil society to encourage better governance related to the extraction of natural resources, such as oil, gold, and timber. In Guyana, the oil industry alone is valued at over $80 billion, compared to the country's 2019 Gross Domestic Product of $5 billion. With our assistance, the Secretariat is now better equipped to publish information on tenders in the oil sector -- an important action to promote greater transparency in a sector often mired by corruption. Now, citizens, local organizations, and journalists will be able to access current and historical tenders to keep the government accountable.

To combat trafficking in persons, USAID is providing technical support to governments across the region to address recommendations from the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report. For example, we are helping the Government of Barbados institutionalize victim identification for law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judges; supporting the creation of an anti-trafficking policy manual; and training law enforcement on identifying, referring, and protecting potential trafficking victims.

In the Dominican Republic, USAID trained more than 200 Dominican National Police officers to better detect signs of gender-based violence and provide enhanced support to victims. As a result of this USAID support, the number of enforced arrest warrants for gender-based violence cases in a suburb of Santo Domingo increased from 13 to 60 percent, providing a model for other jurisdictions.

Addressing Instability in Haiti

As we all know, the current situation in Haiti is both challenging and complex. Political instability, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic and a deteriorating security situation, threatens the safety and health of Haitians and democratic institutions. COVID-19 also has further weakened an already fragile economy.

The United Nations estimates that 6.5 million people in Haiti are currently in need of humanitarian assistance. Food insecurity remains one of the largest concerns in the country. To help address these needs, in FY 2020, USAID provided $34 million in Haiti to address emergency food security needs and prevent malnutrition, reaching over 580,000 Haitians. USAID has leveraged a combination of tools, including Title II in-kind commodities procured in the United States, for hurricane preparedness and food vouchers that allowed the most food-insecure families access to locally produced nutritious foods while supporting local businesses. While this will help address immediate needs, USAID also continues to focus on combating child malnutrition in the longer term by providing nutrition support to more than 662,000 vulnerable children under five years old and 213,000 pregnant and lactating women in 2020.

Despite the ongoing instability in Haiti, we have made important gains. Over the past 15 years, infant mortality has dropped, from 80 to 59 deaths per 1,000 live births; and under-five mortality has dropped from 119 to 81 deaths per 1,000 live births. In 2020 alone, USAID supported the vaccination of more than 75,000 children; 22,800 births were attended by skilled providers; over 31,000 women received antenatal care; and nearly 70,000 mothers and newborns received postnatal checks.

We also have seen significant improvement in the agricultural sector thanks to USAID interventions. In the last decade, USAID's agriculture and reforestation programs in Haiti have increased product yields and incomes, mobilized investment, improved irrigation systems, and resulted in the planting of over

seven million trees. USAID investments have supported 105,000 farmers to adopt new technologies, generating nearly $30 million in agricultural sales.

Conclusion

While the challenges before us are great, our commitment to the Caribbean remains strong. Where other countries' assistance models further dependence or unsustainable debt, the United States' model is one of partnership with the governments, civil society, and private sector in countries in which we work. Our development assistance promotes a country's own development path, consistent with U.S.-supported universal values and interests. USAID remains steadfast in our commitment to working with the Caribbean people to build a better future for themselves and their families.

Again, thank you for your commitment to the Caribbean and I look forward to your questions.

CLEARANCE PAGE FOR TESTIMONY

APPROVED BY: A-SDAA/LAC BFeinstein 6/17/2021

DRAFTED BY: ETynerLAC/SPO

LAC/CAR: BCollins	clear w/edits	6/16/2021
LAC/RSD RArellano	clear	6/15/2021
LAC/SPO: EMeans	clear	6.16.2021
COVID/COM: RLee	clear w/edits	6/15/2021
BHA/FO/MD: DMutone-Smith	clear	6/17/2021
BHA/ALAC OD JFleming	clear	6/15/2021
BHA/A-US Engagement Division Chief KMcKenna	clear	6/15/2021
BRM: CChate	Clear	6/16/2021
LPA/CLO SAcosta Cox	Clear	6/17/2021
DDI/EEI: Kathryn Stratos	clear	6/16/2021
DDI/EEI: Alex Lane	clear	6/16/21
RFS/FO: Ann Vaughan	clear	6/17/21

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Ms. Fulton, you are recognized for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF HEIDE FULTON, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AFFAIRS

Ms. FULTON. Thank you, Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Green, and distinguished members of the panel. Thank you for calling this hearing and for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the progress of U.S. diplomatic and foreign assistance in the Caribbean, our third border.

Today's hearing comes at a difficult time for our Caribbean partners who face violent crime and high homicide rates driven by increased gang-related violence, illegal firearms trade, and impunity as a result of ineffective criminal justice institutions. Our security partnership with our Caribbean neighbors remains fundamental to combating these shared challenges that threaten the safety and security of citizens across the region and in the United States.

The mission of the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, or INL, is to keep Americans safe by countering crime, illegal drugs, and instability abroad. Under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, or CBSI, which was established over a decade ago, we work in partnership with 13 countries and regional security institutions to build law enforcement and justice sector capacities, to reduce drug trafficking and criminal threats to the United States, to enhance citizen security, and to hold criminals accountable.

While the challenges are immense, I am confident that the partnerships we have developed under CBSI and bilaterally with Haiti have better positioned our Caribbean neighbors to confront drug trafficking, undercut the profits of gangs and criminal groups, and to build more effective criminal justice institutions.

Maritime security is central to INL's efforts to combat drug trafficking in the region. For several years, INL has partnered with the Coast Guard on a multiprong maritime capacity-building program to improve vessel maintenance, develop interdiction capability, and enhance investigations and prosecutions. Regional Coast Guard advisors based in the Dominican Republic support sustainable improvements for interdiction operations and investigations and will soon expand across efforts across the region.

Combined with Coast Guard technical assistance and training, in Fiscal Year 2021, these joint efforts have already contributed to 29 drug interdictions and 159 individuals arrested by Dominican Republic partners. We are also working to enhance subregional cooperation, improve maritime domain awareness, and develop a regional maritime security strategy.

We prioritize building partner capacity to target illicit finance and undercut the profits of gangs and criminal groups that drive violence and instability across the region. In partnership with the National Center for State Courts, INL is implementing a civil asset recovery project that works with partner governments to draft model legislation and train financial investigators, attorneys, and judges. The six CBSI countries implementing such legislation have recovered more than $1.27 million in cash and $2.5 million in prop-

erty since 2013, which is reinvested into strengthening Caribbean security criminal justice sector institutions. A host of larger actions valued at more than $60 million are currently underway.

Building the capacity of regional institutions is critical to INL's efforts in the Caribbean. The Caribbean Community's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, or IMPACS, the regional security system, and Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, are decades old trilateral counternarcotics partnership are each integral partners in multiplying and sustaining our programmatic efforts.

Since CBSI's inception, annual cocaine seizures in the region have increased more than 200 percent due in part to the strong regional collaboration which is enabled by the program. INL recently transferred management of CBSI-Connect, a regional online law enforcement training program, to IMPACS. Since 2012, INL has supported the development, maintenance, and installation of a CBSI-Connect at 17 Caribbean law enforcement academies, including all CBSI countries, Belize and Haiti. CBSI-Connect provided Caribbean criminal justice sector institutions connectivity to ensure key functions continued during COVID lockdowns, and convinced previously hesitant justice sector actors of the platforms valued to ongoing training.

In Haiti, we continue to invest in the professionalization and expansion of the national police, which, since 2019, has been the sole guarantor of citizen security. The Haitian police continues to mature even if they face intensifying gang threats to law and order and citizen security.

Transnational crime, violence, and insecurity are threats that we share with our Caribbean neighbors and require our coordinated and sustained efforts. Where our programs are matched with committed partners in the region, we see results, and we will continue to work to ensure the effectiveness of future programs to build capacity and enhance regional security cooperation. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Fulton follows:]

Statement of

Heide Fulton

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for

International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

Before the

House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, Migration, and International Economic Policy

"The Biden Administration's Efforts to Deepen U.S. Engagement in the Caribbean"

June 23, 2021

Chairman Sires, Ranking Member Green, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: thank you for calling this hearing and the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the progress of U.S. diplomatic and foreign assistance to the Caribbean. Today's hearing comes at a difficult time for our Caribbean partners; COVID-19 continues to spike throughout the region, hindering recovery in heavily tourist-based economies and enabling nefarious and opportunist actors to take advantage of strained government resources. The economic fallout from COVID and natural disasters such as Hurricane Dorian which devastated the Bahamas in 2019 has also created opportunities for China to expand its diplomatic and economic presence in the region with offers of assistance to cash-strapped governments. The United States' security partnership with its Caribbean neighbors remains essential to ensure the United States remains the security partner of choice and is fundamental to combat the shared threat posed by transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) across the Western Hemisphere.

Since 2010, the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has supported Caribbean nations under the auspices of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), [1] working in partnership with 13 countries to build law enforcement and justice sector capacities to reduce drug trafficking and criminal threats to the United States, enhance citizen security, and hold criminals accountable. INL's strategic objectives under CBSI are to: (1) reduce the flow of illicit narcotics; (2) disrupt organized crime; (3) bolster citizen security and the rule of law; and (4) promote cooperation by working with regional institutions. Through CBSI, INL maintains strong partnerships with key regional institutions such as the Caribbean Community's Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS) as well as the Regional Security System (RSS) in the Eastern Caribbean.

Beyond CBSI, INL's priorities in the region also include bilateral programming in Haiti where we are focused on developing the Haitian National Police as a professional and accountable institution capable of managing Haiti's internal security. Insecurity in Haiti has a direct impact on migration to the United States, the safety of an estimated 86,000 U.S. citizens in Haiti, and the flow of illicit narcotics through Haiti to the United States.

---

[1] CBSI partner nations include The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic (DR), Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean States, (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines), Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Counternarcotics and Maritime Security: Investing in Our Third Border

The Caribbean represents our "third border" and is a significant trafficking route for cocaine from South America destined for the United States, accounting for approximately 10 percent of the hemisphere's narcotics flow in 2020. The volume of drugs and number of migrants coming through the Caribbean are smaller than other regions in the Western Hemisphere, but maintaining security and stability in the Caribbean, at our doorstep, is crucial: The Bahamas is 47 nautical miles from Florida. Through INL's CBSI investments to date, our Caribbean partners have greatly expanded their interdiction capacities, with seizures increasing from 5.5 metric tons (MT) during CBSI's launch in 2010 to 22.6 MT in 2017 and more than 17 MT in 2020. INL also partners with the Organization of American States' Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission to provide counterdrug officers specialized training on intelligence-led investigations, which enhances Caribbean countries' ability to investigate and dismantle drug trafficking criminal networks. Further gains against transnational organized crime (TOC) requires continued U.S. commitment to investing in criminal justice institutions throughout the region to hold drug traffickers accountable and effectively deter crime.

Maritime security, and increased maritime cooperation with and among our Caribbean partners, are key elements of INL's strategy to disrupt illicit drug trafficking and deny transnational criminal groups the ability to operate in the Caribbean. The majority of the Caribbean's territorial domain is water, an asset supporting billions of dollars in tourism revenue and a liability enabling transnational criminals to traffic goods undetected, compounding climate-related security risks.[2]

For several years, INL has partnered with the United States Coast Guard (USCG) on a multi-prong maritime capacity-building program for the region to improve vessel maintenance, develop maritime interdiction capacity, and enhance maritime investigations and prosecutions. Regional USCG advisors based in the Dominican Republic support sustainable improvements to the Dominican Republic interdiction operations and investigations, including developing and providing training on a manual for interdiction operations. These new processes, combined with USCG technical assistance, contributed 29 drug interdictions and the arrest of 159 individuals by Dominican Republic partners in fiscal year 2021. INL supports programs to enhance sub-regional cooperation, improve maritime domain awareness, train prosecutors on maritime crime, and develop a regional maritime security strategy. INL also invests in bilateral maritime capacity building. For example, in The Bahamas, INL provides enabling support to the Royal Bahamas Police Force to bolster its participation in Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos (OPBAT), a decades-old trilateral counternarcotics partnership between The Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, and U.S. military and federal law enforcement agencies.

---

[2] Fetzek, S.2018. 'Caribbean policy brief draft – Climate security drivers in the Caribbean.' *Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency*, *https://www.cdema.org/Caribbean_policy_brief_%E2%80%93_Climate_security_drivers_in_the_Caribbean.docx.pdf*, Accessed 10 June 2021, (asserting while the Caribbean has expertise in disaster and economic resilience, governance and security challenges risk amplifying climate impacts).

Gangs, Guns, and Governments: Threats and Opportunities

Despite having less than 1 percent of the world's population, the Caribbean has a regional homicide rate that qualifies as an epidemic.[3] For example, in 2020, Jamaica, led the Latin America and Caribbean region with a homicide rate of 46.5 per 100,000 persons, and ranks consistently among the top five countries with the highest homicide rates both regionally and globally.[4]

Countering societal-level violence and crime in the Caribbean is important not only to eliminate the permissive environment that enables transnational crime but also to protect the Caribbean's vital tourism industry and the millions of American tourists who visit the Caribbean each year. Drivers of high homicide rates in the region include increased gang-related violence, a pernicious illegal firearms trade, and ineffective criminal justice institutions, all of which affect the United States by creating new avenues for drug trafficking, firearms trafficking, financial and cyber-enabled crimes, human smuggling, and corruption. Through criminal justice actor capacity building, reform, and community engagement, INL programs aim to diminish the corrupting influence of criminal gangs and their deadly violence.

Gangs

In Caribbean countries, gangs drive corruption and undermine fundamental institutions, including in law enforcement and rule of law, and co-opt the legitimate role of the state. There is strong evidence Caribbean gangs are involved in drug and weapons trafficking. TCOs like the Shower Posse in Jamaica and the Trinitarios in the Dominican Republic have trafficking and distribution operations in the northeastern United States. In Haiti, criminal gangs were responsible for a recent surge in ransom kidnappings—which included U.S. citizens—as well as multiple massacres and rapes. Gangs provide services in impoverished communities in the absence of an effective government. They partner with politicians and businesses to organize political support, threaten rivals, and commit violence in exchange for money, weapons, and protection from prosecution. Gang violence also is a factor in Haiti's recent economic downturn.

To address the increasing threat of gang violence, INL invests in holistic, community-oriented, anti-gang programs that incorporate lessons learned from INL's experience elsewhere in the

---

[3] The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime cites a rate of 10 homicides per 100,000 as an "epidemic" and reports the compiled homicide rate for the region in 2017 was 15.1 per 100,000. UNODC. 2019. UNODC Global Study on Homicide, p.18.n17; p.11. *https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/gsh/Booklet2.pdf,* Accessed 10 June 2021.

[4] Insight Crime. 2021. 'Jamaica: InSight Crime's 2020 Homicide Round-Up,' *https://insightcrime.org/news/analysis/2020-homicide-round-up/,* Accessed 10 June 2021 (identifying Jamaica as having the highest homicide rate in Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by Venezuela, Honduras, and Trinidad and Tobago); Economist Intelligence Unit, "Jamaica Ends 2020 with Latam's Highest Murder Rate." *Country Report Jamaica* 1(1), *https://country.eiu.com/Jamaica/ArticleList/Updates/Politics,* Retrieved June 14, 2021. *See also*, U.S. Department of State Overseas Advisory Council. 2020. "Jamaica 2020 Crime & Safety Report," *https://www.osac.gov/Country/Jamaica/Content/Detail/Report/d4b8403a-3feb-427b-bd36-18f1af0b746a,* Accessed 11 June 2021, (noting in 2018 Jamaica's homicide rate was 47 per 100,000 residents which increased 3.4% in 2019, a homicide rate three times higher than the average for Latin America and the Caribbean); The World Bank, 'Intentional homicides (per 100,000 people) - Jamaica,' Accessed 11 June 2021, *https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/VC.IHR.PSRC.P5?locations=JM,* (Jamaica homicide data from 1990-2018 based on UN Office on Drugs and Crime's International Homicide Statistics database).

hemisphere and around the globe. Effective programs address the causes of gangs, disrupt the criminal financial operations that fuel their enterprises, and provide law enforcement and criminal justice officials modern skills to counter and deter gang-related crime. Programs include a mix of community policing, place-based interventions, strengthening anti-gang and firearms trafficking legislation, and coordinating with USAID to complement their youth crime and violence prevention efforts. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service credited INL's Resistance and Prevention Program (RAPP), an anti-crime community policing initiative, with helping reduce homicides in Enterprise, a high-crime community. Homicides fell from 15 in 2016 to just one in the first half of 2019. Trinidad and Tobago launched its own nationwide crime prevention program based on RAPP.

Guns

Trafficking in small arms and ammunition compounds homicide rates across the Caribbean. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, firearms are used in 68 percent of homicides in the region, a higher rate than the global average.[5] Since 2015, INL programming has built Caribbean capacity to seize, track, and investigate firearm crimes; interdict illegal firearms and other contraband in shipping containers; and develop coordinated national policy frameworks to counter trafficking. CARICOM reports that between 2009 and 2018, law enforcement agencies seized over 22,000 illegal firearms and over 300,000 rounds of ammunition in the Caribbean.

Our investments have also increased our partners' ability to collaborate with U.S. law enforcement on firearms trafficking crimes and are yielding results. For example, on April 20, Trinidad and Tobago's Transnational Organized Crime Unit (TOCU) executed a controlled delivery of firearms resulting in the seizure of 17 handguns, 17 magazines, and two rifle lower receivers, and one local arrest. Homeland Security Investigations collaborated closely with the INL trained and equipped TOCU in this and other operations to counter the illicit flow of firearms, firearm parts, and ammunition into the region.

Countering Corruption

Countering corruption is a top priority of the Administration, and recent elections in the Caribbean may offer a new opportunity to make progress on this key issue. In 2020, elections were held in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Most of the election winners, whether newly instated or re-elected, included strong anticorruption messaging in their campaigns and national speeches.

Surinamese President Santokhi, a former police chief and minister of justice, took office in July 2020 and by January of 2021, INL had initiated new anticorruption training for prosecutors and judges to support his administration's effort to implement anticorruption legislation and pursue high-profile cases. In the Dominican Republic, the Abinader administration publicly committed to tackling drug trafficking, corruption, organized crime, and financial crimes, and to partnering with us on justice sector capacity building. INL is working to enhance port security, building the counternarcotics capacity of both the Dominican National Drug Control Directorate and the Dominican National Police (DNP), and advising on draft proceeds of crime legislation.

---

[5] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2016. 'Homicide rate by mechanisms, victims of intentional homicide by mechanisms,' *https://dataunodc.un.org/data/homicide/Homicide%20rate%20by%20mechanisms*. Accessed 10 June 2021.

Financial Crimes

INL counters corrupting influences by building partner capacity to target illicit finance. Our projects build capacity of Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs) to counter financial crimes and money laundering. This empowers justice sector institutions to seize and recover the illicit proceeds of drug trafficking through civil litigation, which undercuts the profitability of drug trafficking and related transnational crime. INL support to FIUs includes equipment, training, and advisors.

INL and the National Center for State Courts' civil asset recovery project works with partner governments to draft model civil asset recovery legislation, which has been formally adopted by six CBSI partner nations to date.[6] This effort also provides training to financial investigators, attorneys, and judges on the new laws and mentoring for financial investigators and attorneys on cases. These nations are now implementing the legislation and have recoveries of more than $1.27 million in cash and $2.5 million in property for reinvestment into Caribbean criminal justice sector institutions. A host of larger actions are pending.[7]

Investing in Caribbean Institutions

U.S. assistance is often most effective when matched to regional cooperation. Critical to our efforts in the Caribbean is an articulation of U.S. and Caribbean shared goals for the region alongside a mutual understanding of our shared threats.

The United States and its Caribbean partners hold regional high-level technical security working groups, or TWGs, and meet annually for the CBSI High-Level Dialogue to discuss ongoing and new areas for cooperation. The TWGs have identified opportunities critical to our efforts against firearms, maritime security cooperation, combating financial crimes, and will be convening virtually this fall to discuss access to justice and improving court efficiencies.

Caribbean Regional Security Institutions

Caribbean regional security institutions are integral to INL's strategy and ability to build sustainable and effective criminal justice institutions. CARICOM IMPACS works with INL on shared projects to build regional capacities and, more recently, serves as a regional implementer for INL programs. INL also invests in the RSS through investments in its Air Wing, forensic lab, police training academy, and a new TOC task force. Building regional institutions yields results beyond an individual program. INL recently transferred management and sustainment of the regional online law enforcement training platform, CBSI-Connect, to IMPACS. Since 2012, INL supported the development, maintenance, and installation of the system at 17 Caribbean law enforcement academies, including the CBSI countries, Belize, and Haiti. Crucially, CBSI-Connect empowered Caribbean criminal justice sector institutions to keep functioning during COVID-19 lockdowns, and convinced previously hesitant judges, court administrators, law enforcement, and corrections officers of the platform's value. In its first year managing CBSI-Connect, IMPACS

---

[6] Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

[7] In 2020, Antigua and Barbuda filed an application to freeze $59 million in a pending criminal property case. In May 2021, pending claims filed for recovery include one for $4 million in Grenada; a forfeit of $20,000 in criminal cash in Dominica; a ruling by the High Court in Dominica that supported a state civil asset recovery case involving $300,000 in criminal assets; and two applications to freeze $50,000 and $58 million in two pending criminal property cases in Antigua and Barbuda.

has increased the number of active users five-fold and virtual trainings on CBSI-Connect have saved more than $18 million in travel costs.

Law Enforcement Institutions

INL enhances law enforcement effectiveness though police professionalization, anticorruption training, community-based policing support, and sharing regional ballistics fingerprint information. INL also provided equipment and training to enhance the region's polygraph capacity, such as in Jamaica, and has cultivated technical law enforcement expertise through specialized training. INL supports specialized and vetted units that conduct complex investigations, anti-gang initiatives, anti-money laundering operations, cyber-enabled crimes, and financial crimes.

Recognizing sustainable law enforcement training requires institutional structures to support it, INL has invested in programs to stand up internal affairs departments and reform human resources practices and hiring. For example, INL support for the DNP has focused on professionalization and has resulted in significant progress in modernizing the DNP human resources, internal affairs, and educational systems. Improvements to the internal affairs and inspector general's offices further strengthened anticorruption efforts and have led to the removal of over 1,000 police officers in the first year alone.

To develop strong law enforcement institutions at both the national and regional level, INL is launching a police academy support grant that will assist Caribbean police forces with assessing and modernizing their new recruit basic training courses, recruitment practices, in-service training offerings and requirements, career tracks, and pursue accreditation through international law enforcement bodies as well as universities.

Justice Sector Professionalization and Court Case Management

Case backlogs and large pre-trial detention populations plague criminal justice systems throughout the Caribbean. In some countries, it is not uncommon for cases to take more than four years to be adjudicated—which is often longer than the sentence the accused would have received. This impacts overall criminal justice system effectiveness, infringes on the rights of the accused, and damages public confidence. While many courts were able to utilize virtual platforms, including CBSI-Connect, to continue essential court functions during COVID-19 restrictions, the pandemic has exacerbated case backlogs in most Caribbean courts.

For more than eight years, INL has worked with CBSI partner countries to strengthen the capacity of justice sector actors to respond effectively and efficiently to criminal justice challenges, combat crime, and uphold the rule of law. Through a partnership with the National Center for State Courts, INL has trained nearly 4,000 justice sector officials—55 percent of whom were women—including attorneys, judges, magistrates, law enforcement officers, and other justice officers in critical skill areas including case management, investigation and prosecution of gangs, financial crimes, and legal aid.

In addition to extensive training, INL has invested in modern court case infrastructure to enable courts to keep accurate, accountable, and efficient case records and calendars. Major investments in Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, and Barbados demonstrate the promise and potential of these case management systems.

Future of U.S.-Caribbean Security Cooperation

INL recognizes significant challenges remain for the Caribbean, particularly given the high rates of homicide and gang violence and compounded with government budget and service deficits exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Foreign assistance investments will be key in the Caribbean and are an opportunity for the United States to reinforce its position as the partner of choice.

U.S. investments, when coupled with political will, can shore up regional and national institutions and promote sustainable, incremental improvement. We will seek opportunities to have an impact and continue to work closely with our Caribbean partners to cement the United States as the security partner of choice.

INL Project Design Builds Opportunities for Partner Ownership

We constantly look to improve our programs to ensure lasting impact in the Caribbean and to demonstrate good stewardship of U.S. taxpayer dollars. Investing in project design and being clear about our goals will increase the value of our investments in the Caribbean. After more than a decade of investment in CBSI, INL is focused on projects that not only seek to build shared commitment to tackle problems and build a pathway toward ownership.

Conclusion

Transnational crime, violence, and insecurity are threats we share with our Caribbean neighbors, our third border, and require our coordinated, sustained efforts. Over the past decade, our security partnership through CBSI has adapted to changing priorities and regional contexts and must continue to adapt to meet future threats such as climate change and an increasing Chinese donor and economic presence. Where our programs are matched with committed partners in region, we see results, and we will continue to work to enhance regional cooperation.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you. We would now go to questions. I guess my first question is to you, Ms. Lochman and Ms. Feinstein.

And I welcome the news that the Biden Adminstration is doing 30 million vaccines that it will send out by the end of June, and they will go to Latin America and the Caribbean. How are they distributing these vaccines in this region?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Thank you very much for that question, Mr. Chairman. Yes, we are now in the process of working with partners in the region, both on a——

Mr. SIRES. Who are the partners?

Ms. LOCHMAN. CARICOM's public health agency, CARPHA, as well as directly with certain of the bilateral governments to work out the modalities for the transfer of these vaccines. So these discussions are ongoing right now, and we are trying to make sure that we can ship them in a way that they arrive safely and that they maintain their effectiveness, since, as was pointed out earlier, the U.S. does produce the most effective vaccines in the world. And we are working with the recipient countries to make sure that they have the means to store them in the proper conditions and distribute them. And, in that regard, USAID is helping on the ground.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Thank you, just to complement that response, I would add, the White House, as we speak is working very closely with the State Department, with Gayle Smith's office, as well as USAID, CDC, et cetera, and partners on the ground to try to figure out how to navigate the complex modalities of all of this. Part of it depends on the particular vaccines that are used. Obviously, as you know, if Pfizer is going to be used, then that requires ultra-cold chain storage and certain levels of logistics. If different ones are used, then that requires different modalities. So these are all questions that right now the White House is working through. And my understanding is that there is a commitment to the allocations being completed by June, and then, shortly thereafter, we will expect to see those deliveries begin.

And just to reference, as colleague said, USAID is working with these host country governments, with CARICOM, in particular, to work on equitable distribution strategies, and to try to work with the strategic planning.

Mr. SIRES. See, I do not have much time left. Here is where I have a problem. You have China going in and giving directly to these islands, the vaccine. They take all the credit. Why can't we do the same thing and take the credit instead of giving it to COVAX or CARICOM? They may be great organizations, but I am not looking to build those organizations, rather I am looking to build our position in the Caribbean. And our position in the Caribbean should be that we should send the vaccines directly to these people, let them know that it is the United States that is helping. And the Adminstration probably wants to buildup COVAX, whatever, but I am not interested in doing that. I wish the Adminstration would directly do that. And we have plans; we do things better than most people. Our vaccine is the best vaccine. And China goes into, for example, Dominica, they gave them 35,000 vaccines. They have 70,000 people on the whole island. I mean, why can't we do that and get the credit? That just bothers me too much to let it go.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think your concerns are very well-founded in terms of the United States being able to get the credit for the generosity of these vaccines. And all I can tell you on that front is I know that the White House is very focused on communication strategies that are tailored to each donation that goes out to ensure that it is very clear to the people of those countries that this donation is coming from the U.S. Government. In addition, all of the vaccines that are going through Gavi COVAX will be branded with the American flag on there as a further investigation that this is coming from the United States.

Mr. SIRES. That is a good step. Now, the other issue that I have is that there are all these loans that China is giving to these islands. What are we doing to offset that, some of these places, that they do not take all the credit from China, you know?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Thank you very much for that question, Mr. Chairman. The United States is the natural partner of the Caribbean due to our strong historical, economic, commercial, cultural ties. And we are very present in the region. But you are correct that the PRC has, you know, made it a point to try to gain more of a foothold in the Caribbean region. And they have done this through, as you say, loans, grants, Belt and Road Initiative, as well as COVID-related assistance and weather disaster-related also. So the United States is advancing our positive agenda, particularly on the economic side, to try to counter this and to be the best partner possible to the Caribbean. And this includes supporting infrastructure investment that is competitive, transparent, and upholds the highest standards, environmental, social, labor standards, which right there distinguishes our investment. We also promote resilience to the impacts of climate change, which, as you noted, is a very significant concern of the Caribbean. And this is through the U.S. Caribbean Resilience Partnership.

In addition, we provide assistance in promoting energy supply diversification in helping them build more resilient energy systems. And related to telecommunications, as this is the concern as well, we encourage our partners to prioritize security as they build out their 5G networks and to specifically exclude untrustworthy high-risk vendors as they do so.

We also have deepened cooperation between Taiwan and the region. It was mentioned earlier they are partners. Yes, sir?

Mr. SIRES. Yes, my time is way past, and I want to make sure all of the other members have the same amount of time. Thank you.

Ms. LOCHMAN. OK. Thank you.

Mr. SIRES. Congressman Green?

Mr. GREEN. Well, Chairman, that was my question.

My question, No. 1, from Ms. Lochman. But sort of continuing on that theme with the CCP, as we move supply chains from China to Latin America and, specifically, the Caribbean, what are some segments or particular industries that you think the Caribbean would—that American companies and other companies should look to move to the Caribbean both for opportunity there and decreasing our dependence on Chinese manufacturing?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Ranking Member, for that question. You know, we agree the United States can't address

its supply chain vulnerabilities alone. Even as the U.S. makes investments to expand domestic production capacity for some critical products, we must work with allies and partners, including in the Caribbean, to secure supplies of critical goods that we will not make in sufficient quantities at home. So we will work with allies and partners to strengthen our collective supply chain resilience while ensuring high standards for labor and environmental practices are upheld. And I——

Mr. GREEN. Is there a particular industry or segment that you think we could target for moving to the Caribbean area? That is really my question.

Ms. LOCHMAN. And I think this is something that, along with other U.S. Government agencies, we can be looking at and work in tandem with you as well to identify some of these sectors.

Mr. GREEN. Yes, that is—I mean, it is time to roll the sleeves up and get it done, right? So let's motivate garment—the garment industry. Or let's—you know, certain agricultural industries, or other things. We got to get manufacturing, specifically, moved from China to Latin America.

But, Ms. Fulton, a quick question for you. And, first, thanks for your service in the Army. Which aspects of CBSI have seen the greatest success? And how can our security cooperation be improved in the Caribbean?

Ms. FULTON. Thank you, sir. Overall, cocaine seizure from CBSI countries have risen substantially since the beginning of the initiative, rising from 5.5 metric tons in 2010 to a high of 22.6 metric tons in 2017. Even last year, despite COVID constraints, more than 17 metric tons were seized. So there has been a tangible impact in terms of——

Mr. GREEN. That is a 400 percent increase. OK.

Ms. FULTON [continuing]. Yes, sir. As the partnership has matured, we have been focused on strengthening regional security institutions so as to enable our partners to more effectively confront the challenges that they face. And this is where our partnership with CARICOM IMPACS has been, I think, quite successful. The training that has been sustained through the COVID period on the virtual platform that I mentioned during my remarks I think has substantially enabled the partners, despite the challenging conditions of the pandemic.

We have continued on with our work in areas, for example, with the Dominican Republic, which is a location where approximately 90 percent of the cocaine that does go through the Caribbean, the percentage that you mentioned earlier, it does go through the Dominican Republic. We have yielded a substantial increase in cocaine interdictions. The government of the Dominican Republic has performed admirably in this regard. Their security forces seized more than 15 metric tons and—in 2020. And then, so far in 2021, they have already apprehended 5.2 metric tons. And so those increases alone are really quite remarkable.

We have donated vessels to the Bahamas that have been used in intelligence-driven interdiction operations. And we are working on financial crime measures across the Caribbean to enable countries to implement asset seizure legislation and then invest the proceeds

of the assets that they seize back into their systems so as to continue the strengthening and sustainability.

Dominican security forces, again, another highlight of the work that they are doing in cooperation with U.S. law enforcement, they dismantled one of the largest drug trafficking organizations in the Caribbean with the capture of OFAC's sanctioned kingpin Cesar Peralta in Colombia in December 2019.

Narcotics seizures are one important component of the, I would say, the fruits of the collaboration that we have had with CBSI. But we have also made investments in citizen security and rule of law. The INL supported 911 system, the 911 system that we have partnered with the Dominican Republic to implement, has been an essential component to reduce violence and increase public support for the police in that country. In Trinidad and Tobago, INL's Resistance and Prevention Program has reduced homicides and enterprise, which is a high crime community in that country.

Mr. GREEN. If I could, what I might do is just have you—if you could just submit, just send me a letter, or submit a letter for us to put into the record. I am out of time.

Ms. FULTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. GREEN. But I want to hear more about what you are saying. Because this is the kind of success stories that we need to hear about. So thank you.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Ms. FULTON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Congressman CASTRO.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you, Chairman. I want to express the concern that I expressed to Gayle Smith and others at USAID and others in the State Department within the last few weeks about the donation, the sale of vaccines to countries around the world, including in Latin America and the Caribbean. And that is I am concerned that, as we are making these donations or sales or in COVAX where—that we are not sufficiently requiring countries to put forward a strategic plan to be successful—and not just in receiving the vaccines; that is one thing. But as we know from our own experience domestically, it is one thing to have the vaccines, it is quite another to have the infrastructure in place to successfully get those vaccines in arms. And my concern is that, in a year or two or three or four or five, there are going to be all these stories about how we donated a million vaccines somewhere and only half of them got used.

There was a case of—I believe the Democratic Republic of Congo that sent back 1.1 million or 1.3 million vaccines that they weren't able to use. So, if you think about it, if it was tough in American urban areas to be able to make sure that all of these vaccines were used in a timely manner, I can only imagine that challenges around the world in other places, both in urban and rural settings, to actually have those vaccines be effectively deployed.

So I say that just for anybody that is having conversations in the Adminstration, internally, about this issue, I have a really—and not to lay blame, but I think that we are—you know, obviously, we are in a very big hurry to make sure that we get vaccines out around the world, which we should be. But I am also concerned

that once they get out, I am wondering what the effectiveness rate is going to be of actually deploying them. So but that is separate. I probably have time for one question because I have gone on long about that.

But, Ms. Feinstein, I have a question for you. Countries in the Caribbean have expressed interest in accessing support from the DFC for critical energy infrastructure investment. But per capita income levels for many countries are above DFC thresholds. And so how has the restriction on the DFC working in upper middle-income countries affected the U.S. Government's ability to undertake development projects in the Caribbean and in Latin America?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much, Congressman, for that question. If I could briefly touch upon vaccines and then also DFC.

Mr. CASTRO. Sure.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Just to say, very much validating all of the comments and concerns that you have articulated, and they very much echo all of the conversations going on within USAID at this point and among practitioners who work on these issues. While, as you mentioned, it is absolutely urgent and vital that we provide these vaccines, we need to do so in a way that is equitable, that gets to especially marginalized and vulnerable populations, that it is done so in an efficient manner and also getting at issues around vaccine hesitancy, which is major concern also in the Caribbean as well as in other countries.

So, to address these issues, I would note that actually a congressional notification went up yesterday for American Rescue Plan funding to provide USAID with the resources to work with individual countries on their strategic planning to try to get at some of these issues. That being said, these are monumentally difficult challenges, so we are going to—I certainly give you our commitment. We will work as hard as we can on it and with the smartest people in this field to try to have that kind of—so that these donations are not for naught and do not go used for wasted.

Mr. CASTRO. And, again, and I know we are all concerned about it. And not to diminish your work or even to lay blame because I know we are trying to move as fast as we can. But you are right, I think we need to focus on working with the countries to really making sure that they can get their vaccines into arms. Again, it was a big problem in American cities for us. So.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Now, with regard to the DFC and the impediment in terms of the high-income thresholds, it is certainly an obstacle. I think the places where we have seen DFC investments, particularly in terms of loan guarantees are those countries like Haiti, like Jamaica, where we do not have the same kind of obstacles or impediments.

On energy, in particular, as I mentioned in my testimony, USAID began 2 years ago now this Caribbean Energy Initiative where we are making the kind of investments to help countries with their transition to renewable energy. For example, in Barbados, we are helping them to carry out their strategy to shift to renewables by 2030. We have helped the country of St. Lucia to revise their grid to allow for the use of renewable energy. So there is a lot of work we are doing in that space. But if we could work

more closely with the DFC in that area, that certainly would be beneficial.

Mr. CASTRO. Wonderful. So thank you for both those responses. And I am just about out of time, so I yield back, Chairman.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you.

Congresswoman Salazar?

Ms. SALAZAR. Thank you. And thank you to all of you for being here. And I would like to ask you a few questions, Ms. Lochman, about Cuba. You know the American consulate has a skeleton crew in Havana due in part to the sonic attacks in 2017. You have 100,000 Cubans waiting for family reunification visa interview. Guyana is a possible destination for that interview, but the plane ticket is $7,000 on the black market.

My district is the heart of Miami is inundated with relatives begging to finalize that process. One of them is Edgar Barrios. He is a 10-year-old child with leukemia, and the Nicklaus Children's Hospital is waiting to give him treatment but needs a visa to come into the United States. Nonetheless, in May 19, the American consulate opened its doors to give visas to 30 baseball Cuban players to come to play in West Palm Beach. That is grotesque. It is embarrassing. So I just would like you to explain to me who makes these decisions? Yes to baseball players, but not to sick kids with cancer?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Thank you, Congresswoman, for your question. I will take this back to my colleagues who focus on Cuba at the State Department, and we will work with your staff to make sure that we get a full answer to you.

Ms. SALAZAR. But didn't you know this reality? 30 baseball players versus sick children? You didn't know this?

Ms. LOCHMAN. No—I do not follow Cuba myself ma'am, but we will definitely——

Ms. SALAZAR. But you are the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, and Cuba is part of the Caribbean. do not you think that this is embarrassing for any Adminstration?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Yes, I will definitely take this back, Congresswoman, and we will be in touch as soon as possible.

Ms. SALAZAR. And I would very much, yes, would like you to explain to me who makes these criteria because it affects the heart of my district. I am not being histrionic. I am just speaking for thousands of people who feel what I am telling you.

Now, when will the State Department designate another country to conduct the final interview so these people can come, as the law says, to the United States with that family reunification visa? Do you know?

Ms. LOCHMAN. I personally do not. And, again, we will work closely with your staff on all of these questions to get you adequate answers.

Ms. SALAZAR. But I really would like the State Department and your office to do—work very closely with us.

Ms. LOCHMAN. Understood.

Ms. SALAZAR. And can we—do you know the answer to Guantanamo? Can we open the Guantanamo Naval Base so those Cubans can come and conduct that final interview on Cuban soil? Is that a possibility?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Again, we will definitely get you answers to all of these questions.

Ms. SALAZAR. But I am a little bit appalled. And, Ms. Lochman, I am sorry you do not know what is really happening in Cuba vis-a-vis the United States and what is happening in the Embassy and the consulate and the sonic attacks and the skeleton crew. Are you aware? What are you aware of?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Yes, in my role, I follow the Caribbean, which is CARICOM and Dominican Republic and Haiti. And there are other individuals who cover Cuba in the Western Hemisphere Bureau.

Ms. SALAZAR. And you are not the person?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Correct.

Ms. SALAZAR. So who would that be person be?

Ms. LOCHMAN. The Acting Assistant Secretary Julie Chung is ultimately responsible for the bureau. And then Emily Mendrala is the Deputy Assistant Secretary following Venezuelan and Cuba.

Ms. SALAZAR. So do you think that maybe my office or myself could have an interview with them as soon as possible? Because maybe there is light at the end of the tunnel, and we could definitely find a visa for this child named Edgar Barrios, who has leukemia and is dying.

Ms. LOCHMAN. We would be happy to work with you on that.

Ms. SALAZAR. That would be—that is very gratifying. And I feel much better that the State Department has the intention of working with us in solving this type of visa. And I thank you. So I yield back.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you. Congressman Levin.

Mr. LEVIN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for holding this important hearing, and thanks to all of our witnesses. I would like to direct my first question to Ms. Lochman regarding elections that are slated to take place in Haiti later this year. Secretary Blinken appeared before our committee earlier this month and made clear the Biden Adminstration opposes the constitutional referendum that had been planned for this month, which, thankfully, has now been postponed. Secretary Blinken also said, and I am quoting, "We still think there is a possibility and opportunity if the appropriate steps are put in place to have an election."

As you know, I have been extremely concerned that free and fair elections in Haiti this year are simply not possible. So I am pleased the Adminstration is looking closely at the conditions on the ground there and what they might mean for elections and their credibility and, frankly, their possibility.

Ms. Lochman, the Provisional Electoral Council, the CEP, was not created through legitimate process under the Haitian constitution. Voter registration is way behind. Kidnappings, rapes, murders, and general impunity are widespread. De facto President Moise failed to organize elections for other levels of government and is seen as having overstayed his mandate by the vast majority of the organizations and constituencies that make up patient civil society.

Would you tell us more specifically what the State Department would consider the appropriate steps that would have to be put in place for Haitian elections organized under Moise this year to be considered free, fair, and credible?

Ms. LOCHMAN. Thank you very much, Congressman, for those questions. And if I can take them maybe in sequential order. You referenced first the referendum. And what you understood from Secretary Blinken is exactly the case, which is we do not support the constitutional referendum. And we believe that the focus of the Haitian Government, the Haitian society, should be squarely on holding free and fair legislative and Presidential elections this year. Obviously, it is up to the Cuban people whether they seek to reform their constitution or not, but we believe that it should be done in a process that is open, participatory, and transparent, and that, so far, it has not been. And, again, the focus should be on elections. And granted there are serious concerns regarding security and preparation for elections in Haiti, we are monitoring those circumstances. We are working with the United Nations, with the Organization of American States, with the core group of countries to, you know, with the Haitian Government to try to move toward, you know, having in place the conditions that would allow for elections this year. We believe it is extremely important, first of all, to end rule by decree, which has been going on since January 2020, and to have a democratic transfer of executive power in February of next year. And then the legislature needs to be reinstated, and you can only do that through elections. So we will continue to work in every way we can to try to enable elections this year. And I am sorry your next, on the——

Mr. LEVIN. Well, let me just say that having elections for elections' sake when they are not credible and won't work just delays the restoration of democracy. We have to accept reality and do what has been done in the past in Haiti where things got into this kind of a situation, and, you know, have some kind of a provisional government that can restore democratic conditions. Because any election held under the de facto President Moise just simply will not be free and fair and credible. And so you are actually—whatever good intentions, we are just going to be delaying the actual restoration of democracy.

Let me move on and ask about vaccines and efforts to control the COVID surge. And I will direct these questions to you, Ms.—is it Feinstein or Feinstein? What is your flavor? I want to get it right.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Whichever you prefer depends——

Mr. LEVIN. Oh, my goodness——

Ms. FEINSTEIN [continuing]. On a member of my family.

Mr. LEVIN [continuing]. OK. I am grateful that the Biden Adminstration has recognized the dire need for vaccines in Haiti and other countries and has made Haiti a priority in its distribution efforts. But I worry that vaccines aren't making it to Haiti quickly and, that once they do, I am concerned about obstacles around distribution efforts in countries, as my colleague, Mr. Castro was referencing.

Can you share with us any updates about when you expect—let me ask you a few questions. You can sort of answer them in however you want. First of all, when do you expect promised vaccines to reach Haiti? And then what is being done now to ensure that, once the vaccines are delivered, distribution plans are in place to make sure they reach those who need them and to make sure they aren't diverted?

And then I am hearing a lot from colleagues in the medical field, in hospitals, especially, in parts of our country that have big Haitian American communities about desiring to get to vaccine doses that may go to waste in our country and get them to Haiti. And I wonder if USAID is working with, you know, our partners like hospital systems. I hear from people who run hospitals in Haiti who say, give us the doses, we can distribute them, and there are just no doses in sight for the Haitian people. So, Mr. Chairman, I do not know if it is OK for them to—for her answer to answer the question. I realize I have——

Mr. SIRES. You just used up the second question. The second 5 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. I think he says you can answer. That is my interpretation. So go for it.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Thank you, Congressman, for those important questions. So, with regard to vaccines, we are as frustrated as everyone is by the delays in the delivery of the AstraZeneca vaccines, we understand, have been caught up due to supply chain issues in India and obviously the needs in India. So I unfortunately do not have a specific date for when those will arrive. I do not know if my colleague has updated information. I wish I did, but regrettably we do have that.

With regard to helping Haiti on COVID more broadly and then with regard to vaccines, we have ongoing programming right now that we, shortly after the pandemic, began to help with risk communications, water and sanitation. And perhaps our biggest effort there has been related to oxygen, which as you know is absolutely critical for providing that kind of support when somebody has a severe case of COVID.

And, in fact, since you know the country so well, I would share that, just a few weeks ago, we had a nightmare situation over the weekend where Father Rick from the St. Luke's Hospital reached to USAID and said that oxygen that was supposed to be headed his way—you may have been tracking the situation in real time—was cut caught up by gang violence at the docks where, in fact, the shipments could not actually proceed to the hospital. It was a terrible situation. We looked to see could DOD do anything. No, they weren't able to. What could USAID do? In the end, thankfully, some kind of agreement was reached, and the oxygen was able to get to St. Luke's. And the people who were needing it that weekend were able to survive as a result.

Thankfully, as a result of that crisis situation, we were able to work with the Ministry of Health in Haiti and provide dedicated oxygen supply onsite to the hospital. And we have additional resources where we are surging more support for the oxygen ecosystem into Haiti.

With regard to the vaccine distribution plan, right now, that is being handled by CDC, the kind of technical assistance that we are providing in the eastern and southern Caribbean and elsewhere. CDC is providing that kind of technical support. However, as I mentioned, in the congressional notification that went up yesterday, we expect to also have additional resources for USAID to be able to work with the government of Haiti. However, as I mentioned to Congressman Castro and as you well know, the chal-

lenges are immense. In addition, regular challenges anywhere are difficult. In Haiti, given the security situation, possibility of diversion, gang violence, et cetera, it only makes it that much more difficult. But as we have more information, I am happy to share that with you.

RPTR WARREN

EDTR SECKMAN

[4 p.m.]

Mr. LEVIN. Thanks very much.

Let me say, in closing, Mr. Chairman, Ms. Feinstein, I want to work with you on the energy transition because I think we have to think a lot bigger about it, and it could be transformative for our relationships with countries throughout the Caribbean and Latin America more broadly. But the best answer to all the anxiety about Belt and Road and the Chinese is not to be reactive or defensive but in a big-hearted and broad-shouldered American way go in and partner with these countries and go way, way beyond what we have done in terms of onshore wind, offshore wind, solar, micro grid storage, and so forth. So let's meet separately about that.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman, for your forbearance. I yield back.

Mr. SIRES. We are going to go down a second round since Mr. Levin started the second round already.

I—we took a trip last year to Curacao. Curacao? Curacao? And one of the things that we saw there was the impact of the Venezuelan migrants. It was almost a crisis. They kept complaining how a country that had low crime, all of a sudden crime was a problem, obviously because they couldn't work, and they couldn't find work. So it didn't help the situation.

I was just wondering what has been the impact of our assistance to the Caribbean to support Venezuelan migrants and refugees and what more can be done because we, you know, as they hop from island to island, obviously, the same situation is going to be developed. So I am just wondering what impact has our assistance to the Venezuelan migrants made. Anyone?

Ms. LOCHMAN. I could start and pass it to my colleague.

Yes, you are absolutely correct. Nearly 5.6 million Venezuelans have fled their country, and it is a U.S. priority to provide humanitarian aid not only to those in the country but to those who have had to flee. So we will continue to work with other partners to get humanitarian assistance to these individuals.

And in that regard perhaps I could turn the microphone over to my colleague from the USAID.

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Thank you. And this is a very critical issue, Mr. Chairman. Glad that you raised it. Our efforts from USAID have primarily been focused in Trinidad and Tobago and in Guyana on the issue of Venezuelan migrants.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we had a program that literally just ended last year where we worked with the receptor communities to try to reduce conflict between the migrants, to try to increase better understanding between those communities, to provide psychosocial support also to the migrants who had come, access to education there. We also funded a hotline for migrants to report cases of abuse because, as you know, they are very much victimized in T&T and in other places that they have migrated to. So and the

good news there is that many of those practices and processes have been taken over by local agencies, by other partners. I know that the State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration also has programming in many of these countries.

In Guyana, our focus has been more on gender-based violence with regard to Venezuelan migrants, since that that has been a terrible problem there. And in that sense, we have been connecting migrants with counseling, financial aid, food support, employment opportunities, cross-cultural exchange, legal support, and classes in English. So our efforts there continue, though, obviously, this is a problem that is not going away anytime soon and warrants increased resources and attention.

Mr. SIRES. Do you know anything about the refinery in Curacao? Curacao? Is it still functioning or—at one time it wasn't. Does anybody know? No? OK. That was a

[inaudible] issue.

Ms. LOCHMAN. Mr. Chairman, we are happy to get back to you with information on that.

Mr. SIRES. Good. Thank you.

Congressman GREEN.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My next question is for Ms. Feinstein. Obviously disaster resilience is better than disaster response. Can you tell how we are helping for resilience against hurricanes, et cetera?

Ms. FEINSTEIN. Thank you very much for that question, Congressman.

So, as you said, this is something that we see as a critical investment. Clearly USAID has and will continue to provide responses in the event of disasters. However, if we can shore up these countries' actual resilience—and that takes a number of forms—then we will be in much better shape, as will they.

So, to give you a few examples, we have worked at the regional level and what that has looked like is providing support for the Caribbean Emergency Management Agency, Disaster Emergency Management Agency, CDEMA, to strengthen their own protocols, to strengthen their own coordination abilities, to strengthen their own abilities to forecast, to provide early warnings to countries within the CARICOM region so that they can plan better responses to that. So we have been shoring up their capacity again so it is not just the United States going in every time.

Similarly, another institution in the region is the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, and we have helped to get them accredited in that field on an international basis. So, again, they have State-of-the-art systems for the kind of weather forecasting that will assist countries in the region.

At a local level, we are also working through the Inter-American Foundation to work with small communities and they do so on a cost-matching basis, whether that is in-kind or actual resources, to work on disaster planning at the local level and also on community resilience projects, for example, mangrove nurseries or other coastal restoration, coral reef restoration, et cetera, so that they can do their part with regard to resilience.

And, obviously, we recognize this isn't just a disaster issue. It is also critical to the tourism industry, as both you and Chairman

Sires have mentioned. And so, in that sense, we also have done work in the energy space in Jamaica and elsewhere to make transitions to renewable energy and other aspects to try to allow, whether it is hotels or other institutions, to spring back more effectively from disasters.

Mr. GREEN. Good. No, that is great to hear.

I will tell you, Mr. Chairman, I thought we had lots of acronyms in the Army. USAID and the State Department have just about as many.

Ms. Lochman, a question for you. It would appear that, over the past 15 or so years, China's economic influence in the Caribbean area has gone from $1 billion to $8 billion. Obviously, that is a concern for us. You and I—I asked you about the CCP earlier. Getting a little more specific, are there any free trade agreements or preferential agreements that we can establish that would help us be the go-to for the Caribbean and keep China from pushing its influence into the region?

Ms. LOCHMAN. OK. Thank you very much for that question, Mr. Representative.

We do have trade programs and that is under the Caribbean Basin Initiative, the CBI, and that involves trade preferences, and they were augmented with the passage of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act, as well as the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, and then, for Haiti, the HOPE and HELP programs.

So those are, you know, powerful tools in that sense to promote the economic development of some of our closest neighbors. And I had mentioned earlier in promoting our positive economic agenda in the region, which allows us to be the partner of choice, there is one initiative that is very new and was announced by the White House just in April and that is the SALPIE, the Small and Less Populous Island Economies Initiative, and that initiative will finance group the activities of approximately 29 U.S. Government agencies and departments. And so it will be a method of coordinating what we do across the U.S. Government vis—vis economic development in the region.

Mr. GREEN. Would it be possible—and you can do so in a letter, I do not need it today—rattle off the names of the islands but if you could perhaps send our office or put into the record via writing what the names of those islands' countries are.

Ms. LOCHMAN. Absolutely.

Mr. GREEN. Thanks.

Ms. LOCHMAN. Yes, we will do.

Mr. GREEN. I think, Mr. Chairman, I am over. So——

Mr. SIRES. Ms. Fulton, we areputting together a codel—that is fine. Thank God it is not an evacuation—we are planning a codel, and we are going down first to SOUTHCOM. I was wondering if you can tell me what we can ask, what we can expect, you know, when we get down there. I have been there once before, and, obviously, security is a big concern and trafficking is a big concern. So——

Mr. GREEN [continuing]. So the 295?

Mr. SIRES [continuing]. Right, yes, right. You got it.

So if you have any suggestions, please.

Ms. FULTON. Yes, Mr. Chairman, I think it would be—I think your visit would be welcome, and I know that the leadership at SOUTHCOM would be happy to provide you with an overview of the activities and their efforts to partner with Caribbean Nations to improve their security and domain awareness. We coordinate closely with SOUTHCOM, and there are a variety of efforts underway that I am sure that they would be happy to brief you on in greater detail in preparation for that trip as you determine where to go.

And as we talked yesterday, we will be happy to provide a list of suggestions. I think that the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica would probably be—I would recommend them being at the top of your list, but I think we will get back to you in a more fulsome way with some suggestions for your consideration.

Mr. SIRES. OK. Thank you.

Ms. FULTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. SIRES. Thank you again for joining us.

As I said at the beginning of this hearing, I believe we need to take immediate steps to distribute vaccines directly to the Caribbean. I look forward to working with Ranking Member Green and our colleagues to deepen U.S. engagement with the Caribbean and elevate the Caribbean as a priority for U.S. foreign policy and national security.

With that, the committee is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:10 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, Migration and International Economic Policy

Albio Sires (D-NJ), Chair

June 23, 2021

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, Migration and International Economic Policy, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. Members who wish to participate remotely may do so via Cisco WebEx. The hearing will be available via live webcast on the Committee website at https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/):

DATE: Wednesday, June 23, 2021

TIME: 3:00 p.m., EDT

SUBJECT: The Biden Administration's Efforts to Deepen U.S. Engagement in the Caribbean

WITNESSES: Ms. Laura Lochman
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Ms. Barbara Feinstein
Acting Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau of Latin America and the Caribbean
U.S. Agency for International Development

Ms. Heide Fulton
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
U.S. Department of State

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202/225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

To fill out this form online: Either use the tab key to travel through each field or mouse click each line or within blue box. Type in information.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Note: Red boxes with red type will NOT print.

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON *Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, Migration and International Economic Policy* HEARING

Day *Wednesday* **Date** *June 23, 2021* **Room** *2172 Rayburn HOB*

Starting Time *3:02 pm* **Ending Time** *4:11 pm*

Recesses *0* (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____) (____to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chair Albio Sires

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☑
Executive (closed) Session ☐
Televised ☑
Electronically Recorded (taped) ☑
Stenographic Record ☑

To select a box, mouse click it, or tab to it and use the enter key to select. Another click on the same box will deselect it.

TITLE OF HEARING:

The Biden Administration's Efforts to Deepen U.S. Engagement in the Caribbean

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See attached hearing attendance form.

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

None

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☑ **No** ☐
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

QFR, Sires to Lochman, Feinstein, and Fulton

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED *4:11 pm*

Subcommittee Staff Associate

Clear Form

Note: If listing additional witnesses not included on hearing notice, be sure to include title, agency, etc.

WHEN COMPLETED: Please print for subcommittee staff director's signature and make at least one copy of the signed form. A signed copy is to be included with the hearing/markup transcript when ready for printing along with a copy of the final meeting notice (both will go into the appendix). The signed original, with a copy of the final meeting notice attached, goes to full committee. An electronic copy of this PDF file may be saved to your hearing folder, if desired.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

WHEM SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING

PRESENT	*MEMBER*
X	Albio Sires, NJ
X	Joaquin Castro, TX
X	Andy Levin, MI
	Vicente González, TX
	Juan Vargas, CA

PRESENT	*MEMBER*
X	Mark Green, TN
	August Pfluger, TX
X	Maria Salazar, FL

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

House Committee on Foreign Affairs **Chairman Albio Sires (D-NJ)**
Western Hemisphere Subcommittee

Opening Statement – "The Biden Administration's Efforts to Deepen U.S. Engagement in the Caribbean,"
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

- **I am glad we are holding this hearing to talk about a region that is too often overlooked.**
- **The countries of the Caribbean are among our closest neighbors, yet we frequently fail to pay enough attention to this region.**
- **As Chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, I am committed to ensuring that we focus more on the Caribbean going forward.**
- **I also want to commend my friend Greg Meeks, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, who has been very clear since the start of this Congress that the Caribbean should be a top priority for the United States.**
- **I know Chairman Meeks agrees with me that the best way for us to show we are ready to elevate the Caribbean in our foreign policy is by sending vaccines to the region as quickly as possible.**
- **I applaud the Biden administration for its announcement that it will donate eighty million vaccines globally by the end of June.**
- **However, today I am urging the administration to quickly step up our efforts in the Caribbean.**
- **Many countries in this region are relying on Chinese vaccines because we aren't providing any alternative.**
- **Other countries, like Haiti, have yet to distribute a single vaccine dose, while the pandemic claims more lives each day.**
- **Given the direct travel routes between Caribbean countries and the U.S. and the close ties between our diaspora communities and countries throughout the Caribbean, it is vital to U.S. national security that we help the Caribbean overcome this pandemic.**
- **We should be proud of the fact that the vaccines produced in the U.S. are the most effective in the world.**

- **While I understand that the Biden administration wants to strengthen Co-Vax, I believe that we should be sending vaccines directly to countries in need.**
- **We should get the credit for the vaccines we donate.**
- **Beyond vaccines, we need to work with our Caribbean friends on the long road to recovery in the wake of the pandemic.**
- **Many of these countries depend heavily on tourism, an industry that has been crushed by the pandemic and which is likely to rebound slowly.**
- **In the Dominican Republic, we have a government that is eager to deepen engagement with the United States, but so far they have had to rely on vaccines from China.**
- **We should step up and send vaccines to our partner in need.**
- **We should also help support their fight against corruption and deepen our security cooperation under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative.**
- **In Guyana, where I traveled last year, we should work to ensure the proceeds of oil revenues benefit the entire population.**
- **As I said during that trip, we want to engage all actors in Guyana, including businesses, civil society, the current government, and the opposition to advance inclusive economic growth.**
- **The severe flooding that Guyana has faced in recent months is a reminder that climate change is having devastating impacts for our friends in the Caribbean.**
- **We need to step up our efforts to support climate resilience and energy security in the region.**
- **In Haiti, I am deeply concerned about the gang violence that has spiraled out of control under a government that is no longer able to carry out its most basic functions.**
- **In just two weeks, over eight thousand women and children have been forced from their homes in Port-au Prince due to this violence, according to the United Nations.**
- **I am glad that Secretary Blinken spoke out against a constitutional referendum there.**
- **We must do more to help the Haitian people overcome the economic, political, and security crises they are facing.**

- **I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how we can deepen our economic and security cooperation with partners in the region and harness the Development Finance Corporation to counter China's influence in the region and help advance a rapid economic recovery.**
- **The COVID-19 pandemic has created tremendous challenges for the Caribbean, but it also provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate our commitment to this region.**
- **I truly hope that we will seize it.**
- **Thank you, and I now turn to Ranking Member Green for his opening statement.**

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#1)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

U.S. Strategy under the U.S.-Caribbean Strategic Enhancement Act: In 2017, the State Department established a multi-year strategy to strengthen U.S.-Caribbean engagement across six (6) priority areas: security, diplomacy, prosperity, energy, education, and health.

Question 1:

How would you evaluate our progress under that strategy thus far?

Answer 1:

The assessment of the State Department is that we have made progress in all six priority areas of the multi-year strategy. We are actively engaged with regional partners diplomatically to discuss our collaboration and advance democracy and human rights. We are proud of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative's work to promote security cooperation and build capacity. We recognize the mutual benefits of a prosperous Caribbean basin and we are heavily engaged in promoting sustainable economic policies and job-creating private sector growth, including through access to finance and utilizing trade preferences under the Caribbean Basin Initiative. We are working closely with USAID to expand renewable energy production. We have thriving educational and cultural programs that are strengthening the people-to-people bonds between the United States and Caribbean. And we are striving to bolster public health by helping to end the current COVID-19 pandemic. While we have made some progress, there is more we hope to do in all six areas as we continue to seek ways to increase and deepen U.S. engagement with Caribbean nations.

We have also added resilience as an additional priority area to our U.S.-Caribbean strategy. In April 2019, we launched the U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership (USCRP) to strengthen Caribbean partner resilience to the impacts of climate change and severe weather-related events. USCRP advances and coordinates complementary U.S. interagency and partner-country resilience efforts around the objectives of Effective Regional Response to Climate Change through enhanced coordination of resilience efforts; Enhancing Regional Disaster Response Planning, Management, and Training; Coordinating Geological Hazards Monitoring and Disaster Mapping; and Developing Resilient Infrastructure. By building the region's resilience against extreme weather events and enhancing adaptation to climate change, USCRP serves to reduce Caribbean reliance on U.S.-provided natural disaster support, advance the security of U.S. citizens living in and visiting Caribbean countries, and mitigate the risks of irregular migration to the United States caused by natural disasters. Increased resilience in the Caribbean will also benefit Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#2)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

U.S. Strategy under the U.S.-Caribbean Strategic Enhancement Act: In 2017, the State Department established a multi-year strategy to strengthen U.S.-Caribbean engagement across 6 priority areas: security, diplomacy, prosperity, energy, education, and health.

Question 2:

In which of the six areas do you think we have made the most progress and in which areas have we fallen short?

Answer 2:

In the area of diplomacy, we are proud that we have been able to continue intensive U.S. diplomatic engagement with the Caribbean, despite the restrictions on in-person interaction during a pandemic. Secretary Blinken's and National Security Advisor Sullivan's meetings with CARICOM Foreign Ministers on April 21, 2021 and May 7, respectively, illustrate our commitment. Secretary Blinken met with Dominican Republic Foreign Minister Alvarez on June 1. These are but the highlights of a regular schedule of diplomatic engagements, both collectively and individually, including productive discussions on multilateral issues.

We have also made significant progress in the area of security, where we have the advantage of funding specifically allocated for the Caribbean under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. We have sustainably built partner country capacity to interdict illicit trafficking, disrupt criminal financial networks, and train law enforcement officers. In 2020, Dominican security forces reported seizing approximately 15 metric tons (MT) of cocaine, and an additional 5.2 MT of cocaine during the first quarter of 2021. Through CBSI mentoring, six countries have adopted civil asset recovery legislation, which has enabled asset seizure orders targeting

transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) leading to the recovery to date of more than $1.8 million in cash and $58,000 in property, with several large asset recovery actions ongoing valued at over $60 million. CBSI funds have also supported the development of a CBSI Connect – an online live video training and learning management platform now functioning across 17 Caribbean law enforcement agencies. In 2020, INL entered into a multi-year partnership with CARICOM IMPACS to transfer ownership and maintenance responsibilities for CBSI Connect, and ensure the system's long-term sustainability.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Caribbean partners have faced significant health challenges, while the Caribbean region's tourism-based economies have experienced severe economic stress. The IMF estimates that GDP for Latin America and the Caribbean contracted by 7 percent in 2020, with the decline in tourism-dependent Caribbean economies alone at 10.1 percent. This has devastated government revenues and caused rising unemployment. As a result, we currently attach high priority to collaboration with our Caribbean neighbors in the areas of health and prosperity, and there is much more we hope to do in collaboration with our Caribbean partners in those areas.

U.S. provision of $26.5 million in COVID-related assistance to the Caribbean to date and our plans to share COVID-19 vaccines in the near future are important examples of our efforts. As a result of the economic impacts of the pandemic, many Caribbean countries struggled with their finances, including debt payments. The United States used its leadership at the IMF to support a total of $1.8 billion in new financing since April 2020 specifically for Caribbean countries to support COVID-19 relief efforts. The United States advanced the G20 and Paris

Club Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) to assist those countries that are eligible for IMF/International Development Association (IDA) assistance. In the Caribbean, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines have received debt relief under the DSSI. Additionally, the National Security Council and National Economic Council launched a Small and Less Populated Island Economies Initiative in March 2021 that will focus existing tools to help build more diversified and resilient economies in the Caribbean region.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#3)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

U.S. Strategy under the U.S.-Caribbean Strategic Enhancement Act: In 2017, the State Department established a multi-year strategy to strengthen U.S.-Caribbean engagement across 6 priority areas: security, diplomacy, prosperity, energy, education, and health.

Question 3:

In a 2019 report to Congress, the State Department asserted that limited budgets and human resources had curtailed cooperation in some areas. Are there countries in the Caribbean where you believe we should have a greater diplomatic presence than we currently have, particularly as we think about China's increased footprint in the region?

Answer 3:

The seven nations of the Eastern Caribbean -- Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines -- have a historical affinity with the United States. The U.S. Ambassador, based in our embassy in Bridgetown, Barbados, is accredited to these seven states. In addition, the United States also maintains a smaller diplomatic mission to Grenada in St. George's.

The State Department, with the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs taking the lead, has been examining options regarding our diplomatic presence in the Eastern Caribbean region.

The Department is still reviewing how best to reinforce strong relations in the region while countering malign influence.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#4)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

U.S. Strategy under the U.S.-Caribbean Strategic Enhancement Act: In 2017, the State Department established a multi-year strategy to strengthen U.S.-Caribbean engagement across 6 priority areas: security, diplomacy, prosperity, energy, education, and health.

Question 4:

How is the State Department ensuring that engagement with the Caribbean is a priority for U.S. foreign policy, particularly in supporting pandemic recovery?

Answer 4:

The Administration announced plans on June 3 for sharing an initial 25 million vaccine doses from the U.S. supply with the world, of which approximately 6 million doses were designated for Latin America and the Caribbean, including the Dominican Republic and CARICOM countries including Haiti.

On June 21, the Administration announced the allocation plan for the remaining 55 million of the 80 million doses President Biden pledged to donate in service of ending the pandemic globally, which includes approximately 14 million doses for Latin America and the Caribbean through COVAX, and approximately 14 million – or 25% of these 55 million vaccines – with regional priorities and other recipients, such as Haiti, other CARICOM countries, and the Dominican Republic.

The United States is providing an additional 500 million doses of Pfizer vaccines to Gavi for distribution by COVAX to 92 low- and lower-middle-income countries and economies and the African Union.

We believe this will be a catalyst for other countries to contribute doses and funding for the rest of the world. The United States will continue to share doses from our domestic supply as they become available.

We also previously provided a contribution of $2 billion to Gavi in support of COVAX. We look forward, with COVAX and other multilateral entities, to facilitate equitable distribution of safe and effective vaccines.

In addition to our efforts in the Caribbean that directly support pandemic relief, the State Department is working in support of the White House's recently launched Small and Less Populous Island Economies (SALPIE) initiative. SALPIE is an economic cooperation framework designed to strengthen U.S. collaboration with island countries and territories in the Caribbean, North Atlantic, and Pacific regions. The SALPIE Initiative signals the U.S. government's prioritization of cooperation with these economies to counter COVID-19 economic challenges, promote economic recovery, respond to the climate crisis, and advance longer-term shared interests.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#5)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Multilateral diplomacy: The State Department's 2017 strategy called for increasing cooperation with Caribbean countries within international institutions like the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations.

Question 5:

Are there examples where the United States has been able to work closely with Caribbean allies to advance shared interests within the UN or OAS?

Answer 5:

We are actively engaging Caribbean nations multilaterally to leverage their votes at the UN and OAS in confronting some of the region's most pressing challenges, including the growing threat to democracy and human rights in Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Haiti.

The June 15 OAS resolution vote on Nicaragua is the most recent example of this collaboration, with 12 of 26 Yes votes coming from the Caribbean.

One Caribbean country, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, is in the second of a two-year term on the UN Security Council, ending in December 2021. It has supported the U.S. position on some resolutions, such as the establishment of a special envoy for Libya and the recent vote for a public conversation on the situation in Tigray.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#6)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Question 6:

Do you believe that as the Petrocaribe alliance has unraveled due to Venezuela's collapsing oil industry, there may be an opening to work with some Caribbean countries that had previously opposed OAS actions aimed at restoring democracy in Venezuela?

Answer 6:

We understand that Venezuela is no longer delivering oil to Caribbean countries, aside from possibly Cuba, under the Petrocaribe program. The United States has been working for years to diversify energy sources for the Caribbean countries. We have also worked within the OAS and though our Embassies to highlight how the Maduro regime has undermined and destroyed democracy in Venezuela, and our strong support for the Venezuelan democratic opposition and restoring democracy in Venezuela. In particular we will focus on OAS Member States that have not previously supported OAS resolutions supporting the restoration of democracy in Venezuela.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#7)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Question 7:

CARICOM played an important leadership role during last year's months-long election dispute in Guyana, with the CARICOM observer mission overseeing a recount of the votes and helping to ensure a peaceful transition of power. How can the U.S. work more closely with CARICOM in promoting democratic governance in the region?

Answer 7:

As President Biden has made clear, the United States supports multilateral approaches to advance our key foreign policy objectives globally and regionally.

Specifically, we work closely with the CARICOM Secretariat and member states to promote democracy, human rights, security, and development.

Through this multilateral collaboration, we leverage Caribbean support to call for free and fair elections in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Haiti; improve conditions throughout the hemisphere in the long-term to stem irregular migration; build support for combatting and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, and more. We are currently working through CARICOM to share COVID-19 vaccines with CARICOM member states.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#8)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Caribbean Energy Security Initiative and Climate Change: According to data from the World Bank, fossil fuels provide over 90% of the Caribbean's primary energy needs. The Caribbean has the highest dependency on imported energy and highest average electricity prices in the Western Hemisphere.

Question 8:

What success has the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative had in increasing accessibility of affordable energy for Caribbean countries?

Answer 8:

The Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI) is a whole of government initiative to promote energy diversification and resilient energy systems through three pillars: (i) improved governance, (ii) increased access to finance, and (iii) donor coordination. The initiative was launched in 2014 by then Vice President Biden and has served as the implementation mechanism for the energy priority area of the multi-year Caribbean strategy the State Department established in 2017.

The CESI governance pillar focuses on putting in place the legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks required to introduce new technologies and approaches to managing electricity systems in small island markets, while also recognizing that electric utilities need to stay financially viable. Under this pillar, we are providing technical assistance to the newly established energy regulatory authority in Saint Lucia, the National Utility Regulatory Corporation (NURC), to develop internal capacity and legal authorities required to effectively regulate the sector.

Under CESI's Finance Pillar, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation has two active loan guarantees to address the barrier of high-cost financing to energy projects: (i) a loan guarantee to leverage $25 million in financing with National Commercial Bank of Jamaica (NCB) to strengthen its ability to provide loans for clean energy projects across the Caribbean, which USAID and the Power Sector Program at the State Department Bureau of Energy Resources helped establish; and ii) a $10 million credit guaranty with Trine AB to catalyze $20 million in loans for clean energy borrowers, focused on off-grid solar projects.

Under the donor coordination pillar, the U.S. government provided technical support to the CARICOM secretariat to implement a virtual platform to facilitate regional energy planning, program development, and project deployment.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#9)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Caribbean Energy Security Initiative and Climate Change: According to data from the World Bank, fossil fuels provide over 90% of the Caribbean's primary energy needs. The Caribbean has the highest dependency on imported energy and highest average electricity prices in the Western Hemisphere.

Question 9:

How can the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative be used to help Caribbean countries transition to green and renewable energy and reduce carbon dioxide emissions?

Answer 9:

The State Department's Bureau of Energy Resources (ENR) has provided technical assistance to Caribbean island states in support of energy diversification efforts. Under the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI), ENR helped Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda develop hurricane recovery plans that emphasized resilient, cost-effective renewable energy generation. ENR also provided technical assistance to Saint Lucia's energy regulator. Currently, ENR is providing technical assistance to The Bahamas to facilitate the introduction of renewable generation in both New Providence as well as the Family Islands. Under CESI's Finance Pillar, the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation has two active loan guarantees to address the barrier of high-cost financing to energy projects: (i) a guarantee to leverage $25 million in energy project finance with National Commercial Bank of Jamaica (NCB) to strengthen its ability to provide loans for clean energy projects across the Caribbean, which the Power Sector Program at the State Department Bureau of Energy Resources helped establish; and (ii) a $10 million credit guaranty with Trine AB to catalyze $20 million in loans for clean energy borrowers, focused on off-grid solar projects.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#10)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Guyana: Guyana is the only economy that grew in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, achieving a rate of 43.5%, due to the growing oil and gas industry.

Question 10:

How can the U.S. use its strong trading relationship with Guyana to help ensure the proceeds from Guyana's oil wealth are shared among the population and to encourage economic diversification?

Answer 10:

The Department will continue advancing its proven commitment to transparent governance and accountable institutions in Guyana to stress the importance of inclusive governance to Guyanese leadership. In regular engagements, senior Department leadership and the Ambassador to Guyana emphasize to Guyana's leaders the importance of broad-based economic growth that benefits all Guyanese irrespective of ethnicity, national background, or political affiliation, and the need for economic diversification to avoid the so-called "resource curse."

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary Lochman by
Chairman Albio B. Sires (#11)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Guyana: Guyana is the only economy that grew in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, achieving a rate of 43.5%, due to the growing oil and gas industry.

Question 11:

Have there been any lingering impacts from the months-long election dispute last year for the political and social cohesion in Guyana? How would you evaluate the current government's efforts to promote unity and reconciliation following that contentious election?

Answer 11:

The opposition A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) + Alliance for Change (AFC) coalition filed an election petition contesting the results of the March 2020 elections in August 2020, shortly after the swearing-in of the Ali Administration of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C). The courts continue to adjudicate the petition. The PPP/C party did the same after it lost in national elections in 2015 to the APNU+AFC coalition, and it also claimed the APNU+AFC government was illegitimate.

President Ali and key ministers have stated that the government is committed to inclusive governance and announced that it would form a "One Guyana Commission," to be led by the Prime Minister, that will foster greater unity and equality of opportunity for all Guyanese. An almost year-long standstill on official meetings between PPP/C and APNU-AFC leadership has persisted over the PPP/C's refusal to meet until the opposition recognizes the new government as legitimate.

Questions for the Record from Chairman Sires to DAA Feinstein
"The Biden Administration's Efforts to Deepen U.S. Engagement in the Caribbean"
Wednesday, June 23, 2021

1. Caribbean Energy Security Initiative and Climate Change: According to data from the World Bank, fossil fuels provide over 90% of the Caribbean's primary energy needs. The Caribbean has the highest dependency on imported energy and highest average electricity prices in the Western Hemisphere.

- What success has the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative had in increasing accessibility of affordable energy for Caribbean countries?

Answer:

USAID's Caribbean Energy Initiative (CEI) focuses on building energy sector resilience in the region through diversifying energy sources and suppliers, as part of USAID's increasing efforts to support broader island resilience. It aligns with the Congressional directive for the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI), which focuses on modernizing and strengthening island grids across the region and enhancing energy security -- including through reducing reliance on imported energy. While CESI pre-dates CEI, in some years the CESI directive also funded CEI programming, given the overlap.

USAID is laying the groundwork to help countries across the region move to clean energy, drive private investment and economic growth, and make energy sectors more resilient to natural disasters. USAID's five-year $25 million CEI is addressing systemic high electricity prices, frequently poor service, and reliance on expensive, imported fossil fuels through an approach grounded in promoting clean energy with new regulations, greater utility capacity to manage intermittent sources and more private investment in the clean energy sector. To date, USAID has provided targeted technical assistance to the Eastern Caribbean to address and respond to their needs to strengthen energy regulation, including to the Barbados Fair Trading Commission (FTC) to support a full transition to renewables by 2030. USAID has also worked with the St. Lucia National Utility Regulation Commission to successfully draft the first power sector grid code that, when adopted, will enable diversification of renewable energy providers. The implementation of the new grid code will increase operational efficiency and transparency of utilities operations which will increase competition among the energy service providers. By increasing renewable energy generation on the grid and increasing competition among energy service providers, electricity services will become more affordable and reduce reliance on expensive oil-based energy generation.

Through CEI, USAID is supporting a $4 million Global Development Alliance (GDA) which will leverage up to $50 million to boost Jamaica's renewable energy landscape, with economic and environmental impacts benefitting Jamaica's tourism sector and other essential industries. USAID is currently working on a potential subgrant to the Jamaica Tourist and Hotel Association (JHTA) to help promote access to financing for renewable energy systems. Thanks to that activity, businesses and hotels will be aware of the financing options available for them to purchase or rent renewable energy systems, therefore increasing access to more reliable and lower cost services.

Under CEI, USAID is also supporting another regional organization that, while not part of CARICOM, is a critical partner in USAID collaboration with Caribbean utilities. The Caribbean Electric Utility Services Corporation (CARILEC) is an association of electric energy solutions providers and other stakeholders operating in the electricity industry in the Caribbean region, Central and South Americas. Through CARILEC and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory partnership, USAID is promoting the introduction of utility cybersecurity concepts through the Distributed Energy Resources Cybersecurity Framework (DERCF). The DERCF is designed to help users pinpoint gaps in their distributed energy systems' cybersecurity—based on unique facilities, personnel, and operational procedures. After providing a score, the tool also develops customized action plans for users to improve their organization's security controls and practices.

By strengthening the capacity of energy authorities and utilities to bring on and to manage low cost renewable energy generation that does not rely on imported fossil fuels, these initiatives are helping to build the foundation for competitive, affordable, and clean modern energy systems across the Caribbean.

- How can the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative be used to help Caribbean countries transition to green and renewable energy and reduce carbon dioxide emissions?

Answer:

USAID's Caribbean Energy Initiative (CEI) focuses on building energy sector resilience in the region through diversifying energy sources and suppliers, as part of USAID's increasing efforts to support broader island resilience. It aligns with the Congressional directive for the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative (CESI), which focuses on modernizing and strengthening island grids across the region and enhancing energy security -- including through reducing reliance on imported energy. While CESI pre-dates CEI, in some years the CESI directive also funded CEI programming, given the overlap.

USAID is laying the groundwork to help countries across the region move to clean energy, drive private investment and economic growth, and make energy sectors more resilient to natural disasters. USAID's five-year, $25 million CEI is addressing systemic high electricity prices, frequently poor service, and reliance on expensive, imported fossil fuels through an approach grounded in promoting clean energy with new regulations, greater utility capacity to manage intermittent sources and more private investment in the clean energy sector. To date, USAID has provided targeted technical assistance to the Eastern Caribbean to address and respond to their needs to strengthen energy regulation, including to the Barbados Fair Trading Commission (FTC) to support a full transition to renewables by 2030. USAID has also worked with the St. Lucia National Utility Regulation Commission (NURC) to successfully adopt a new electric system grid code that targets renewable energy providers.

By helping Caribbean energy authorities and utilities strengthen their capacity to bring on-line and manage local renewable energy sources, USAID is contributing to lowering the region's

dependence on imported fossil fuels and, thereby, to significant carbon emission reductions across the region.

2. Corruption in the Dominican Republic: The construction group Odebrecht admitted to paying $92 million in bribes to the government of the Dominican Republic in exchange for construction contracts between 2001 and 2014.

- How has U.S. assistance helped in combatting corruption in the Dominican Republic, now that the government there seems committed to prosecuting high-level corruption cases?

Answer:

USAID shares your assessment as to the importance of prioritizing anti-corruption efforts in the Dominican Republic. In conjunction with our colleagues at the Department of State, the Agency is working with the Abinader Administrator to improve public procurement systems within the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR). In 2019, USAID trained nearly 200 government officials on accountability mechanisms for procurement malpractice and detecting anti-competitive behavior in the procurement system. USAID is also working with civil society partners and the Director General for Public Contracting (DGCP) to improve the sharing of information on public procurement. In early 2021, the DCGP opened up its first investigation of anticompetitive conduct in the public procurement system. Finally, USAID has a new Memorandum of Understanding with the GODR's Auditing Agency to provide technical assistance on auditing best practices. New deliverables under the agreement will focus on building institutional capacity on policies and procedures for strategic planning, professional development and training, and will also support the introduction of quality assurance and quality control procedures to conduct financial and performance audits.

- Has U.S. cooperation improved under the government of President Luis Abinader, recognizing that he has sought closer relations with the United States?

Answer:

The U.S. Government is making great strides to build a strong working relationship with President Abinader's Administration. USAID has been pleased to see synergies between our work to combat corruption, promote transparency and strengthen the rule of law, and the agenda of President Abinader. The USG and the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR) held a high-level dialogue on April 28, 2021 to assess our coordinated efforts in these and other areas. This dialogue has paved the way for new opportunities for USAID to engage on citizen security and anti-corruption in support of the GODR's reforms in each of these sectors. We have also been pleased to see progress on reforms to the Public Procurement Law with USAID technical assistance, a longstanding priority for USAID in the Dominican Republic. The revised law is now with the President for review and is expected to be submitted to Congress shortly.

3. St. Vincent and the Grenadines: The April 2021 eruption of the La Soufriere volcano covered approximately two-thirds of the island of St. Vincent in a thick layer of ash. The eruptions caused shortages in clean drinking water, food, electricity, shelter, and medical care.

- How far along are recovery efforts and what role has the United States played in supporting the country's recovery?

Answer:

Seismic activity at La Soufriere volcano remains low and on May 6, 2021 the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (GoSVG) reduced the alert level from red to orange, which allowed most people from the orange zone and some from the red zone to return home. The two most vulnerable communities in the orange zone were subsequently allowed to return home as of July 23, 2021. Of the 87 shelters opened to accommodate evacuees from the red and orange zones on April 9, 2021, 45 remain open, with a total population of 2,006 individuals. Once the GoSVG opens up the red zone and parts of the leeward section of the orange zone for returns, it is expected that the needs for shelter will greatly diminish. Utilities on the island are operational except in the red zone and some areas of the leeward side of the orange zone where work continues to clear roads and restore communications, power, and water.

USAID provided technical assistance to monitor La Soufrière starting months before it erupted through the Volcano Disaster Assistance Program (VDAP), which leverages the U.S. scientific and technological expertise of the U.S. Geological Survey. This early support and coordination was instrumental in ensuring local authorities had sufficient early warning to mobilize evacuations ahead of the immediate danger and avoid any loss of life.

After the eruption, USAID provided nearly $4.7 million of humanitarian assistance funding, including in-kind supplies and support through existing partners and programs. This assistance is providing tens of thousands of people with access to emergency food, safe drinking water, hygiene supplies, sanitary latrines, essential household items, and hygiene promotion activities to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases in shelters and communities. It is also providing essential medical supplies and support for health facilities, logistics support to move, track, and distribute emergency items, protection programs for vulnerable populations, and livelihood efforts to encourage recovery.

Due to the damage to many people's homes, USAID's partners have been providing support to the displaced populations in shelters and affected populations in their homes. UNICEF is providing access to safe drinking water to an estimated 20,000 people, including those returning home. UNICEF is also supporting access to basic sanitation, including sanitary latrines, at the community and household levels. In addition, the World Food Program is providing emergency food assistance and relief items to displaced populations and affected people in their homes.

- Is USAID prepared to assist in long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts in St. Vincent and does it have adequate resources to do so?

Answer:

USAID remains committed to assisting the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines affected by the La Soufriere Volcano's eruption. USAID provided $4.7 million in humanitarian assistance for a broad range of services and support, which includes support for livelihood efforts to encourage recovery.

USAID's Eastern and Southern Caribbean Mission is contributing to the sustainable recovery of St. Vincent by increasing the resilience of the Government and community organizations to face future natural disasters. Through partnership with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), USAID's Caribbean Climate Resilience Initiative (CCRI) is providing capacity building support and technical expertise to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' National Emergency Management Organization. Over the long term, this program focuses on improving resilience and strengthening community systems, which can enhance recovery efforts. Through USAID's work with the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), support to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines included a drone for volcanic monitoring purposes and remote sensing and satellite imagery support. In the long term, one objective of CIMH's program is to improve systems to support efficient recovery and response to natural disasters.

USAID also funds the Inter-American Foundation to provide capacity building grants to community organizations undertaking disaster mitigation and resilience related work. Through this joint initiative, a grant was provided to Sustainable Grenadines which will increase the resilience of community members on Union Island, by supporting economic initiatives and strengthening local civil society.

These activities will provide ongoing support to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that can enhance recovery efforts as well as support mitigation efforts for future shocks and disasters. USAID's Eastern and Southern Caribbean Mission is in regular contact with the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and with our civil society partners there. We are continually assessing the needs of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to provide critical humanitarian and development support.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Heide B. Fulton
by Chairman Albio Sires (#1
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade
June 23, 2021

Question 1:

How has U.S. assistance helped in combating corruption in the Dominican Republic now that the government there seems committed to prosecuting high-level corruption cases?

Answer 1:

The U.S. government is committed to helping the Abinader administration implement its ambitious reform agenda, including its fight against corruption. Through the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, the United States is providing technical assistance to the Dominican Republic as it creates a civil asset forfeiture system to help reclaim the proceeds of crime and corruption. The United States is working to help the Dominican Republic improve government oversight through its support to the internal affairs offices in both the Dominican National Police and the Dominican Drug Enforcement Agency. INL is collaborating with the Dominican Supreme Court to digitize its records and implement a court case management system that will improve court efficiencies and transparency.

Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Heide B. Fulton
by Chairman Albio Sires (# 2)
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Civilian Security, and Trade
June 23, 2021

Question 2:

Has U.S. cooperation improved under the government of President Luis Abinader, recognizing that he has sought closer relations with the United States?

Answer 2:

Bilateral relations, including law enforcement cooperation, continue to grow under President Abinader. He has convened a high-level dialogue mechanism with U.S. Embassy senior leadership to identify areas of coordination with the United States, including support for the National Citizen Security Strategy and police and legislative reform. A recent example of operational cooperation includes the investigation and May 18 arrest of Miguel Andres Gutierrez Diaz, an elected member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic, for involvement with a transnational drug trafficking organization. Drug seizures under the Abinader administration have continued to outpace previous year's levels, pointing to enhanced collaboration with U.S. law enforcement agencies.

○