



Updated November 27, 2024

Caribbean Basin Security Initiative

The United States developed the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), a regional U.S. foreign assistance program, in 2009 through a process of dialogue with Caribbean countries. The initiative seeks to reduce illicit trafficking in the region, advance public safety and security, and prevent youth crime and violence. Because of their geographic location, many Caribbean nations are vulnerable to being used as transit countries for illicit drugs from South America destined for the U.S. and European markets. At the time of the CBSI's establishment, strengthened U.S. counternarcotics cooperation with Mexico and Central America led U.S. policymakers to anticipate a potential increase in narcotics trafficking through the Caribbean. Many Caribbean countries also have suffered from high rates of violent crime, including murder, often associated with drug trafficking activities.

President Obama announced the CBSI at the fifth Summit of the Americas in 2009. In 2010, U.S. and Caribbean representatives held an inaugural Caribbean-U.S. Security Cooperation Dialogue, which approved a declaration of principles, a framework for engagement, and a broad action plan. In November 2023, Caribbean and U.S. officials held the 11th Security Cooperation Dialogue to review progress under CBSI and set priorities; discussions focused on combatting firearms trafficking, countering illicit maritime trafficking and transnational organized crime, preventing youth crime and violence, cybersecurity and cybercrime, and efforts to address trafficking in persons.

In 2017, the State Department released a U.S. strategy for engagement in the Caribbean (required by P.L. 114-291, the United States-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act of 2016). Among the priorities for engagement is security, with the objectives of strengthening mutual national security and advancing citizens' safety through programs to dismantle criminal and terrorist organizations, curb the trafficking of illicit goods and people, strengthen the rule of law, and counter vulnerability to terrorist threats—all efforts central to the CBSI.

Congress has appropriated funding for the CBSI. From FY2010 through FY2024, U.S. funding for the initiative exceeded \$942 million. The CBSI has included programs benefiting 13 Caribbean countries—Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago—as well as regional activities (see **Table 1** and **Figure 1**).

The Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-47), provided "not less than" \$88.0 million for the CBSI. That sum is \$23.5 million more than the Biden Administration requested for the initiative for FY2024 and \$6.0 million more than the estimated allocation for the

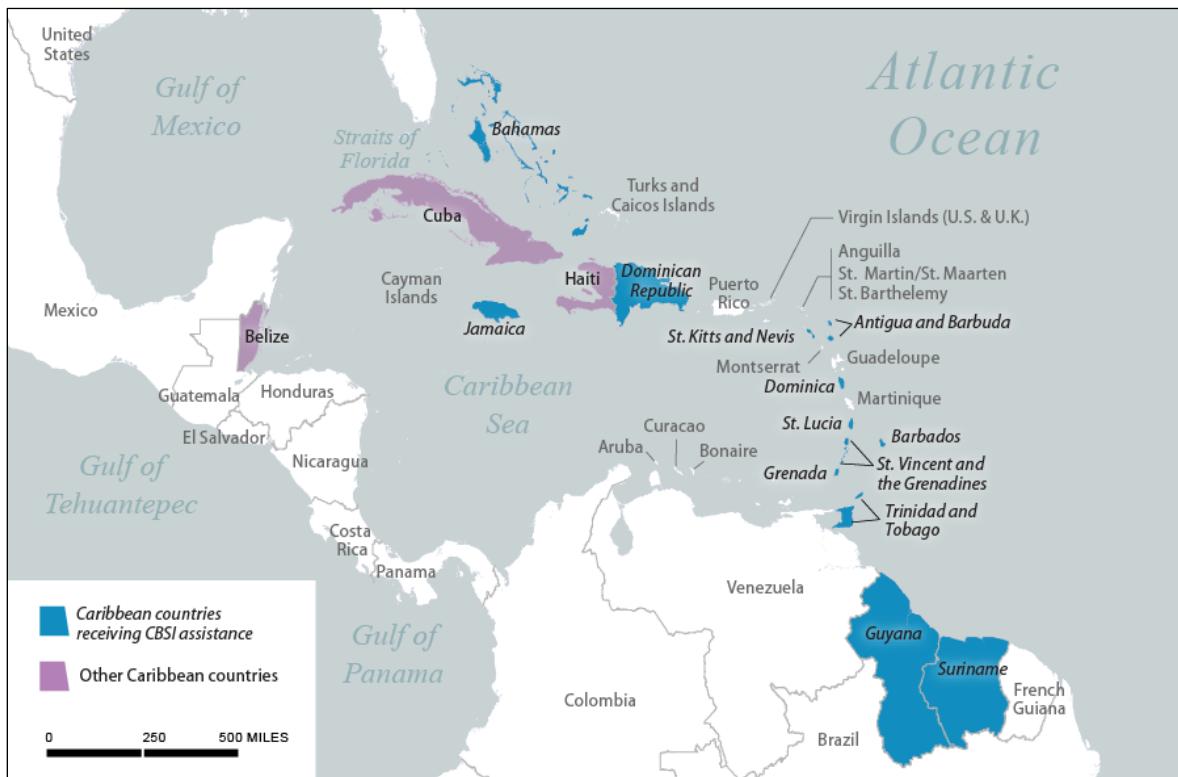
CBSI in FY2023. The explanatory statement accompanying the act directed that funds be prioritized for "countries within the transit zones of illicit drug shipments toward the United States that have increased interdiction of illicit drugs and are most directly impacted by the crisis in Haiti."

For FY2025, the Biden Administration requested \$81.0 million for the CBSI, 8.0% less than Congress appropriated for FY2024. Congress has not concluded action on FY2025 appropriations and may draw from House-passed (H.R. 8771) and Senate-reported (S. 4797) foreign assistance funding bills as it considers final legislation. H.R. 8771 would designate "not less than" \$97.5 million for the CBSI and would direct that funds made available for the initiative above the FY2024 level continue to prioritize countries that are in illicit drug transit zones and that are most impacted by the crisis in Haiti. S. 4797 would designate "not less than" \$88 million for the CBSI. S.Rept. 118-200, accompanying the bill, expresses support for "efforts to transfer, or otherwise acquire, equipment for partner countries [in the Caribbean] that require additional resources to better detect and interdict illicit drugs and investigate and dismantle transnational criminal organizations."

Coordinated by the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere affairs and implemented largely by the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Department of Defense, the CBSI has targeted U.S. assistance in five areas:

- **Maritime and Aerial Security Cooperation**, including assistance to strengthen Caribbean maritime and aerial operations capability, improve radar coverage, and sustain those capabilities;
- **Law Enforcement Capacity Building**, including assistance to improve law enforcement through police professionalization, anti-corruption training, and community-based policing;
- **Border/Port Security and Firearms Interdiction**, including support to improve capacity to intercept smuggled narcotics, weapons, bulk cash, and other contraband at airports and seaports;
- **Justice Sector Reform**, including support to increase the efficacy of prosecutors and criminal courts and reform and strengthen juvenile justice systems; and
- **Crime Prevention and At-Risk Youth**, including assistance to populations vulnerable to being victims of crime or at risk of recruitment into criminal organizations.

According to the State Department, from FY2015 through FY2023, the Dominican Republic received roughly 29.3% of CBSI funding and Jamaica received about 18.8%; 16.6% was for region-wide activities.

Figure 1. Caribbean Countries Receiving CBSI Assistance

Source: Congressional Research Service.

Table 1. CBSI Funding by Foreign Aid Account, FY2010-FY2025 Request (U.S. \$ millions)

Fiscal Year	ESF	DA	INCLE	NADR	FMF	Total
FY2010	14.000	6.000	27.300	—	14.500	61.800
FY2011	17.000	—	37.500	6.400	16.500	77.400
FY2012	17.000	—	30.000	2.000	15.000	64.000
FY2013	18.802	—	30.000	2.000	9.494	60.296
FY2014	29.200	—	25.000	1.800	7.500	63.500
FY2015	27.000	—	30.500	1.500	5.000	64.000
FY2016	23.775	—	25.337	—	7.500	56.612
FY2017	25.000	—	25.200	—	7.500	57.700
FY2018	25.000	—	29.200	—	7.500	61.700
FY2019	25.250	—	27.200	—	7.500	59.950
FY2020	27.300	—	25.200	—	7.500	60.000
FY2021	32.300	—	38.000	—	7.500	77.800
FY2022	35.000	—	35.000	—	10.000	80.000
FY2023 (est.)	37.000	—	35.000	—	10.000	82.000
FY2024 (enacted.)	37.000	—	40.000	—	7.500	88.000
Total (FY10-FY24)	390.627	6.000	460.437	13.700	140.494	942.917
FY2025 (req.)	37.000	—	35.000	—	11.000	81.000

Sources: U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justifications for Foreign Operations, FY2012 to FY2025; State Department data provided to CRS, November 2024; and Explanatory Statement (H2091) to Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-47).

Notes: ESF = Economic Support Fund; DA = Development Assistance; INCLE = International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; NADR = Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, De-mining and Related Programs; and FMF = Foreign Military Financing.

IF10789

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