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**CARIBBEAN SECURITY INITIATIVE
A SHARED REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP TO REDUCE ILLICIT TRAFFICKING, INCREASE
PUBLIC SAFETY AND PROMOTE SOCIAL JUSTICE
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**OAS Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD)
48th Regular Meeting
Washington, DC
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Opening

- Good afternoon. I would like to thank the OAS Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) for the opportunity to discuss the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative – or CBSI – the Obama Administration’s security effort in the Western Hemisphere focused on regional partnership to combat trafficking, build capacity, and address the root causes of the growing crime and violence in the Caribbean. CBSI embodies a firm commitment to greater shared security throughout the Caribbean. More than technical, financial, and program assistance, CBSI reflects a unique mix of institutional and operational partnerships.
- CBSI has its origins in the 2009 Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, where President Obama announced his vision for an enhanced Caribbean-U.S. partnership to bolster regional security. His request to Congress for \$45 million in FY 2010 was, as he described it, an “investment” in a multi-year effort to help the Caribbean fight transnational crime, reduce violence, and provide security for its citizens.
- Before I address the specifics of CBSI, I would like to share with you the Administration’s overall approach to security in the hemisphere.

Citizen Safety in the Hemisphere

- A defining purpose of U.S. policy in the Western Hemisphere is to build effective partnerships that can better develop, mobilize, and apply the capacity of the region toward accomplishing shared objectives.

- In the security sector this is reflected in a commitment to advance citizen safety. This overarching rubric signifies an understanding that while security is a key priority throughout the region, people experience security in localized, personal ways.

- Many of our existing partnerships within this citizen safety framework are centered on key U.S. assistance programs and initiatives:
 - The Colombia Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI),
 - The Merida Initiative in Mexico and Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI),
and
 - The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

CBSI

What is CBSI?

- At the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain in April, President Obama announced his intent to pursue a broader security partnership with the Caribbean. The U.S. and Caribbean government representatives met three times in 2010 to define and develop common objectives and a framework for this new partnership. These efforts culminated with the Inaugural U.S.-Caribbean Security Cooperation Dialogue held in May of this year here in Washington, DC, where CBSI was formally launched with an agreed set of partnership principles, a framework for cooperation, and a joint plan of action.

- All members of CARICOM, and the Dominican Republic, as well as international partner nations (Canada, UK, France, Spain, Netherlands, and Colombia), participated in the Dialogue and have remained active as we have begun to develop and implement programs that will achieve our strategic objectives over the coming years.
- A very important aspect of CBSI is our commitment to increase the regional capacity to allow all Caribbean countries to work together effectively at dealing with transnational threats. To that end, the United States is exploring ways of strengthening existing institutions, such as CARICOM IMPACS and the Regional Security System (or RSS), and facilitating the expansion of regional information-sharing networks. Programs may be implemented bilaterally as well, but with the primary aim of achieving what our partners have already identified as shared security and safety priorities for the entire region.
- As this partnership further develops, we are focusing on three core objectives: 1) substantially reducing illicit trafficking; 2) increasing public safety; and 3) promoting social justice. This will require a whole-of-government approach, including not just traditional law enforcement and counternarcotics programming, but also development programs such as those that will work with youth who are at risk of being recruited into criminal gangs.
- Accomplishing all three goals will require strengthening institutions both inside and out of government to deal with unique challenges facing the region. In addition to the institutional framework identified by Caribbean leaders, we have also begun a comprehensive regional needs assessment to determine how and where we should best utilize our resources to fulfill our common objectives.

- I should also note that this partnership was designed in a manner complementary with other regional efforts (e.g., Merida and CARSI) so that efforts in different regions of the hemisphere contribute to hemisphere-wide security improvements.
- CBSI will also serve as a coordinating venue to attract and incorporate the greatest possible support from extra-regional partners. At the last CBSI Commission meeting November 2-4 in Kingston, the United States along with the Dominican Republic and the CARICOM countries agreed that we would welcome and seek international support from others to avoid duplication and and maximize our efforts, as well as take advantage of existing expertise and lessons learned.

Why Now / What is the Threat?

- The Caribbean has suffered a significant increase in violent crime over the past 10 years. In this region, vulnerable nations are already buffeted by narcotics-driven crime waves. According to a joint UN/World Bank Report released in 2007, “murder rates in the Caribbean are higher than in any other region of the world, and assault rates are significantly above the world average. Narcotics trafficking is at the core of these high rates.” The study confirmed what our Caribbean partners and embassies have long asserted – that “narcotics-trafficking diverts criminal justice resources from other important activities, increases and embeds violence, undermines social cohesion, and contributes to the widespread availability of firearms in the region.”
- Caribbean states’ efforts to work on counternarcotics and counterterrorism issues are hampered by a lack of human, technical, and physical capacity. Porous land, air, and maritime borders and limited domain awareness challenge poorly-resourced law enforcement agencies; many governments cannot keep pace with cash-flush transnational criminal networks.

- These problems will likely worsen as more trafficking routes are pushed into the Caribbean. Thus, through this partnership, we are taking a proactive approach to mitigate against a potential “balloon effect” from efforts in countries like Colombia, Mexico, and Central America.
- Notwithstanding these threats, there is reason for optimism. The unprecedented degree of Caribbean initiative and political will we have seen recently represents a new opportunity and point of departure for effective common cause.

Next Steps

- At the recently completed and very successful CBSI Commission meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, the United States and its Caribbean partners agreed to a series of four technical working groups over the coming months to coordinate local, national, and regional security and crime prevention activities and policies. These working groups will ensure effective and efficient implementation of programs, identify future program and policy needs, and inform policymakers at the 2nd annual Caribbean-U.S. Security Cooperation Dialogue to be held in mid-2011.
- The technical working group meetings will be hosted by our partners in the Caribbean and will focus on four main subject areas: maritime security; information sharing networks; law enforcement capacity building; and crime prevention with a focus on at-risk youth.
- While the cooperative dialogue process is central to our CBSI partnership, this coordination alone will not achieve our goals. In addition to what Caribbean governments, the private sector, and other partners are providing to support our efforts, the United States will provide more than \$45 million to support CBSI in 2010. In addition, the Obama Administration has requested \$79 million to continue support for CBSI in 2011.

- Now that we have established an ongoing coordinating mechanism and have begun implementing programs, we will begin to look to a number of non-governmental partners, such as the private sector, whose support is crucial to economic growth and development throughout the Caribbean. Public-private partnerships such as educational outreach programs and building job skills through internships are just two among many potential projects that the private sector could support.

Closing

- The CBSI partnership represents a bold new approach to the security challenges facing the Caribbean.
- CICAD has always pursued a bold approach to prevent and combat all aspects of the global drug problem and related crimes. International cooperation has been key to its success. The goals of CBSI are similar, and we look forward to continued cooperation.