

Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein
“U.S. – Caribbean Security Cooperation”

February 1, 2012

We are here today to explore ways to deepen our counternarcotics cooperation with our neighbors in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean has come a long way since the 1980s when it was the main transit zone for illegal drugs from South America destined for the United States. Increased interdiction in the Caribbean moved the majority of drug transit routes from the Caribbean to Mexico and Central America. However, we cannot take this success for granted. In November, Ambassador Bill Brownfield – the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement – said that the Caribbean routes that led to South Florida in the 1980s are bound to pick up again as enforcement efforts increase in Mexico and Central America. He is absolutely right.

Last year, the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control held hearings on Mexico, Central America and the Andean region. Today, we are focusing on the Caribbean. We all know by now that successful drug interdiction in one country can mean trouble for the next. That is why U.S. counternarcotics efforts must not overly focus on one country or subregion at the peril of others. As we increase our security assistance to Mexico and Central America, we must not forget the Caribbean.

As you can see on the map behind me, The Bahamas and Turks and Caicos alone cover an area the size of my home state of California. That is a significant area to patrol, and we must continue to provide the Coast Guard and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) with the necessary resources to continue their interdiction efforts through Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos (OPBAT) as they have done since 1982.

I am pleased that even in this difficult fiscal climate, the Obama Administration has provided important support to the Caribbean. In April 2009, President Obama announced the creation of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative or CBSI which provides security assistance to our partners in the Caribbean. CBSI assistance was \$62 million in Fiscal Year 2010, \$77 million in Fiscal Year 2011 and is estimated to be \$73 million in Fiscal Year 2012.

Unfortunately, drug-related violence in the Caribbean continues to rise. Recently, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime found that Jamaica has the **fourth highest** murder rate in the world after only Honduras, El Salvador and the Ivory Coast. In Jamaica, there were 52 homicides per 100,000 people in 2010. In 2010, The Bahamas had its highest murder rate with 28 homicides per 100,000 people. The Dominican Republic had 25 homicides per 100,000 people which is up from a rate of 14 per 100,000 in the year 2000.

The Dominican Republic and Haiti also continue to be victims of drug flights coming from Venezuela. The Dominican Republic has increased interdiction efforts and reduced the number of flights coming in. Haiti's devastating January 2010 earthquake hampered its ability to combat drug trafficking, but I hope we can begin to partner with Haiti again to help bolster its counternarcotics efforts.

I would be remiss not to mention Cuba. Just 90 miles from Florida, Cuba has the potential to be a major transshipment point for illicit drugs. Unfortunately, without formal diplomatic ties between the United States and Cuba, our ability to cooperate on counternarcotics efforts is extremely limited. The limited cooperation we do have between our Coast Guard and Cuban authorities has been very useful, and I hope we can find ways to increase our counternarcotics collaboration with Cuba.

Finally, let me say – because I do not think we can say it enough – that the Caucus is well-aware that drug consumption in the United States fuels drug-related violence in the Caribbean and throughout Latin America. I have tasked my staff with drafting a report with concrete recommendations on how we can better reduce U.S. drug demand.

The Caucus usually hears testimony from U.S. government officials and think tank scholars. Today, we are doing something different by hearing directly from representatives from the Caribbean. It is a real pleasure for me to welcome the Ambassadors from The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Jamaica to today's hearing.

I look forward to hearing from the three of you, and I now turn to my Co-Chairman, Senator Grassley, for his opening statement.

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