

**Statement by
Her Excellency Audrey P Marks, Ambassador of Jamaica to the USA
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control:
Hearing on "US-Caribbean Security Co-operation"
Wednesday, 1st February, 2012**

Chairman Feinstein,
Co-Chairman Grassley,

I thank the Senate Caucus for inviting me to participate in this hearing to examine how we can strengthen existing security co-operation between Caribbean countries and the USA; particularly in the area of counter-narcotics and violent crime.

I trust that the scope of these Senate hearings will provide the opportunity for US/Caribbean security co-operation to be evaluated from a perspective that is broad enough to include the impact of crime on development. This approach is all the more relevant since it is firmly established that high rates of crime and violence directly affect economic growth and social development. With such a perspective these hearings would have an added significance for Jamaica, for the fact that over the past three decades the trafficking in narcotics has emerged as a major contributor to sustained high crime and low economic rates of growth in Jamaica and the Caribbean.

Context: Background to Current Situation

In 2007 the murder rate for the Caribbean Region was 30 per 100,000 people annually, which was higher than that of any other region in the world. South-West Africa was second with 29 and South America third with 26 (UN Crime Trends Survey). It is hardly coincidental that all three regions are involved in a major way in either the production or the trafficking of narcotics, which drives other categories of crime.

The escalation of the trans-shipment of drugs through Jamaica took place after the conflict of ideologies in the Cold War, which exacerbated existing political tensions in our country and laid the foundation for the arming of political gangs, who later turned to drug-smuggling, beginning particularly in the decade of the 1980s. At the same time, Jamaica struggled with other massive external shocks, particularly, the increase in oil prices as well as the fall-out in the commodities market. As with many other small nations at that time, Jamaica turned to the IMF for support, which also created additional pressures, as the Fund's Structural Adjustment policies created more social and economic hardship for our people.

During this period the USA aggressively encouraged the GOJ to pursue the liberalisation of Jamaica's market economy. As part of this agreement with the USA, a tri-partite mission of the IMF, World Bank and USAID, spent an extended period in Jamaica during 1986, with the objective of assisting us to develop this liberalised free market framework; the specific objectives being "to help Jamaica frame and pursue a consistent set of economic policies which will strengthen the prospects for achieving three fundamental objectives":

- To raise the rate of economic growth so that living standards can improve
- Reduce unemployment

- To restore viability to the balance of payments, meaning a position whereby Jamaica can service its external debt in a sustainable way.

In 1990, the Government of Jamaica completed the recommended process for the liberalisation and de-regulation of the Jamaican economy.

This was a bold step for a country in which the State had traditionally played a significant role in the economy. Indeed, the legitimacy of the Jamaican State to a large extent, rested on the capacity of the State, to regulate and protect the local market, foster import-substitution/ manufacturing, and re-distribute revenues in the form of a social wage as well as in health, housing, education and other benefits. As a consequence, the challenges inherent in substituting a more activist State with a liberalised free market were formidable.

Jamaica did become a fully-liberalised economy, but paid a massive price for this, in the form of an 80 per cent inflation rate in 1991, continued de-valuation of the Jamaican dollar, and a collapse of the financial market in 1998, followed by a massive bailout of the sector by the already-burdened Jamaican State, and the subsequent re-assertion of the State in aspects of the regulation of the financial sector.

Throughout this period, the fabric of Jamaican society continued to come under pressure, as in addition to the stagnation of the economy, strategic points of the island's coastline – which the State does not have the resources to police or protect - were increasingly used for drug trafficking. Jamaica was particularly attractive to the drug cartels with the ready supply of gangs – now increasingly organised - and being strategically located between the major cocaine suppliers of South America and the major consumer markets in North America and Western Europe.

Indeed, the US State Department's International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) for 2006 estimated that “two-thirds of all cocaine produced in and exported from South America passes through the Caribbean”. More specifically, it is estimated that some 120 metric tonnes of cocaine - which translates to 20 per cent of U.S. demand and 10 per cent of the Colombian trade - are trans-shipped through Jamaica annually.

Jamaica also produces cannabis /marijuana and derivatives such as hash oil, some of which are also exported to these markets. It should be pointed out that small, controlled amounts of cannabis are also used in the *licit* production of several, very effective pharmaceuticals¹, which are used in the treatment of glaucoma, asthma and motion sickness.

The illicit trade in small arms and light weapons has become a persistent and intractable problem for Jamaica; as in the process of drug-smuggling, illegal arms were also imported into Jamaica and sophisticated arsenals ended up in the hands of competing criminal gangs. Statistics from the Jamaica Constabulary Force reveal that 80 per cent of homicides in Jamaica involve the use of illegal firearms, most of which originate in the USA.

¹ Canasol™ and Asmasol™ were developed by scientists at the University of the West Indies, Mona, from the 1970s and have been distributed for use in Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean.

The Jamaican Government has also had to contend with what is now called the 'Illegal Drugs-for-Guns Trade'. This is a barter trade, involving the exchange of narcotics for small arms and ammunition and vice-versa, which revolves around the southern coasts of Jamaica, Haiti and the USA - particularly the Miami area – and more recently, Honduras. This trade has definitely increased the presence and availability of illegal weapons and ammunition in Jamaica and other affected countries, as well as the corresponding perpetuation of violent crime, exacerbated by social and economic conditions in our countries. In Jamaica, the murder rate increased from 18.7 per 100,000 in 1987 to 41.1 per cent in 2007.

The criminal elite that emerged in Jamaica in the 1990s were an entirely new phenomenon for local law enforcement to contend with. This new elite had financial resources comparable to the national capital budget, but without any of the obligations for debt, employment and services. For the most part they were free to invest their money to entrench themselves by corrupting public institutions and officials and competing with legal businesses.

Where prevention approaches would have been useful, there were not adequate resources for the critical investments required. As a consequence the unemployed youth became vulnerable to the criminal networks involved in drug trafficking. In the turf wars sparked by the drug trade, the 15-29 age cohorts accounted for 75 per cent of both victims and perpetrators.

The fight to combat the illicit drug trade, in which Jamaica is neither a large producer nor a major consumer, has also diverted critical resources from social services – education, health etcetera, to national security. The impact on education and training has been devastating. Surveys have shown that of the unemployed youth in the 15-29 age cohorts, as much as 73.7 per cent have had no educational certification of any kind.

What was required was a modern law-enforcement capacity and “a criminal justice-focused approach...”² I am pleased to report today that the major investments in these systems are now being done.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SECURITY STATUS IN JAMAICA

Jamaica has sought to develop a comprehensive response to counter the strategic threats to regional and national security and to public safety. Current initiatives specifically aimed at reducing crime and drug trafficking, include: dismantling of organised criminal networks, strengthening of the security apparatus, establishment of a tracer system to track the origin of illegal firearms, and the establishment of a national firearms database.

Jamaica has also continued to pursue the eradication, confiscation and destruction of illegal drugs and weapons, and has expanded social intervention programmes, including conflict resolution and diversion programmes for young people. Cumulatively these actions are having a dramatic positive effect; **since 2010, the level of violent crime declined by as much as 44%** in one period, in a clear response to this new and expanded policy thrust and new operational strategies by the Jamaican security forces, in particular, actions geared towards curbing criminal gangs and organised crime. We have been assisted

² US State Department International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)

in these efforts by our bilateral, regional and international partners, including the USA. In fact, the US Embassy/USAID in Kingston developed a successful social intervention programme in Grants Pen, a vulnerable community in the capital. This programme has become a model for other donors and international partners. *Specific actions which have been or are being pursued are outlined in [Appendix I](#) to this statement.*

We have to acknowledge, however, that the removal of powerful gang elements, curtailment of the drug supply and seizure of illegal arms and ammunition also represent the removal of a portion of US\$38 Billion from the Jamaican economy. A socio-economic vacuum is then created as people and communities are deprived of this illicit income and even the 'Robin Hood' provisions of drug lords. This void must be filled with activities from the formal, legitimate economy.

As such, in our regular discussions with the US Government, we have cautioned that Jamaica is at a delicate stage, where gains in security could be easily eroded if we do not receive the appropriate support from all our partners, particularly the USA. This support is not necessarily financial but a policy framework of aligned co-operation. Recent analysis now indicates that, despite the considerable improvement achieved in reducing crime and violence in the Jamaican society; **the level of crime and violence in Jamaica is still extraordinarily high by regional and international standards; and since July 2011, major crimes, particularly violent crimes, have been trending upward, in comparison to the corresponding months in 2010.** The magnitude of the challenge that Jamaica faces is also reflected in our staggering national debt, which now represents some 130 per cent of GDP.

These observations strongly suggest that our collective efforts must be re-doubled to bring about lasting solutions to these complex challenges and must address the social and economic dimension of the life of our country and its people. Moreover, security efforts cannot be undertaken sequentially, as this will create a 'balloon effect', to which Assistant Secretary Brownfield alluded when he warned of the potential for the Caribbean to become, as it was in the 1980s, *the major* trans-shipment point for illegal drugs from South and Central America. We must agree that this is, currently, a very real possibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCED CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE USA AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

While we do not speak for the nations of the Caribbean as a whole, the Government of Jamaica has three main recommendations which we believe, would improve existing security co-operation between the USA and Jamaica, and also, with the Caribbean as a whole.

1. Policy Alignment for Socio-Economic Development

First, it is said that, 'A chain is as strong as its weakest link'. If the Caribbean is truly a valued "Third Border" of the United States, then that border must be treated with the same degree of economic considerations as the other two. Jamaica believes that socio-economic development is the most critical pillar of the counter-narcotics, anti-crime strategy. Yet, for too long, scant attention has been paid to this pillar, with the result that, in spite of our combined efforts – which have run into millions of dollars and hundreds of expended human lives – we have not been able to have the lasting effect that we desire.

Jamaica's record of reliability in living up to its obligations under bi-lateral treaties has been a major contributing factor to the successes made so far. However, it has come with a price. Jamaica's vulnerability based on its geographical location and porous national borders remain a major challenge since the security measures implemented at both our controlled and uncontrolled ports and at our unprotected coastline are currently insufficient to deal with the various ingenious methods employed by traffickers.

Our chief recommendation to you today, is to place social and economic development at the forefront of co-operation with the Caribbean in the area of security. Let us not ignore the umbilical relationship between an under-developed economy, social vacuums and narco-trafficking.

In so doing a most critical component of this recommendation is for the US to improve the alignment of the various aspects of US domestic and foreign policy targeted toward Jamaica and the Caribbean, in order to support our development goals, and ensure that economic and social gains are not erased. Often, actions taken by the US in pursuance of one aspect of domestic or foreign policy, have unintended consequences for our countries and undermines the efforts of other US agencies to achieve the overall goal of a more secure third border with the Caribbean.

One example is Jamaica's current engagement with the International Financial Institutions here in Washington, DC. In recent years, Jamaica has achieved record-breaking strides in some areas of our economic programme, such as the Jamaica Debt Exchange, a critical element of the IMF's strategic measures, which has been defined as the most successful debt swap in history, and which exceeded the expectations of many. The Jamaican macro-economic environment is currently characterised by the lowest interest rates in 30 years, low inflation rates, a stable exchange rate and high net international reserves, all at the same time - an achievement reached for the first time in the last 40 years.

Yet, Jamaica remains unsure of the USA's continued policy support, within the context of the IFIs, and at this critical juncture, when our discussions with the IFIs are focused on safeguarding the valuable gains made in recent years. This, while spending millions from our own resources to support the anti-narcotics programme agreed with the USA.

It is against this background that I would suggest that Jamaica's effectiveness as a partner in the fight against drug trafficking can only be sustained by a clear policy alignment for Jamaica's socio-economic development. I ask that the US take steps to ensure that its positions in the IMF, World Bank and IADB, are consistent and are focused on supporting socio-economic development as an effective weapon in the fight against drug-trafficking.

Another example is the current threat to our nearly 70 year old programme which provides US farmers with thousands of seasonal farm workers from Jamaica. While one Department of the US Government is strongly recommending to the Government of Jamaica the importance of 'even' seasonal employment as an alternative to the narcotics trade for unemployed young men - another US Department has, through unilateral action, caused major harm to the programme. This has resulted in my Government being severely hampered in carrying out our obligations to protect our nationals and to ensure their welfare and that of their families in Jamaica.

A third example is the elimination of the tariff on imports of ethanol into the USA; with the bang of a gavel, the ethanol industry in Jamaica will collapse, and we will lose hundreds of millions of dollars in investment - an investment that was made based on the incentive of the USA 1981 Caribbean Basin Initiative. Given that as much as 80 per cent of all Jamaica's exports to the USA have at one point, been ethanol, it is clear that our economy will suffer another massive economic blow, which will further erode our gains in the area of security.

To fix this problem of non-alignment of economic and security goals will not cost the USA any additional monetary expenditure.

2. Counter-Narcotics Co-operation

The Jamaican Government applauds the US Administration for its timely recognition of the responsibility of the USA as the major source of demand for narcotics trans-shipped through the Caribbean sub-region. We call on the American Government and people to strengthen your commitment to controlling the demand that continues to fuel this trade which has so adversely affected many lives in this Hemisphere of ours.

In terms of specific actions in the area of counter-narcotics:

- i) Jamaica welcomes the CBSI partnership between the USA and Caribbean countries, which has definitely enhanced our counter-narcotics co-operation. This partnership can be further enhanced by maintaining and strengthening existing co-operation strategies and programmes and by focusing on some additional strategies or additional dimensions of existing strategies. *One such action is to expand existing support, especially under current protocols, to include sustainable alternative development programmes as well as demand reduction initiatives in Caribbean territories that cultivate ganja (cannabis). In some cases, this does not necessarily require additional funds, but rather, an expansion in the areas for which existing funding is currently targeted;*
- ii) We also recommend that CBSI programmes be harmonised, where appropriate, with programmes being run by other bilateral and multilateral partners in the Region, in order to create a more structured and productive fight against crime.

Further actions are elaborated upon in Appendix II.

3. Small Arms and Ammunition

I end my presentation today by looking at another significant role the USA can play in enhancing US Caribbean security by actions totally within your control. As trans-shipment countries, Caribbean nations continue to shoulder a significant and disproportionate portion of the cost of the counter-narcotics efforts in the Region. At the same time, our plea to the producers of small arms and ammunition to shoulder a portion of the responsibility for the alarming flow of illegal weapons into the Region continues to be met with resistance. The causes and motivation for conflicts and violence are often complex, deeply-rooted and their effects far-reaching. As such, the massive and uncontrolled presence of arms makes violence more complex, expensive and difficult to manage. The consequence of small arms proliferation and misuse are multi-dimensional and therefore requires a multi-faceted and co-ordinated response. *I pause*

here to emphasise, that in Jamaica, our citizens are allowed to legally own weapons; however, this is controlled and monitored by the Government. For the most part, licensed firearm holders do not pose any threat to society. Our chief concern is with the illegal trade in weapons and ammunition.

Our final recommendation, therefore, is for the USA to work with the Caribbean to fulfil the 2007 pledge made by the USA and CARICOM Member States to enhance co-operation in eradicating the illegal gun trade in the Region. Valiant efforts by the Jamaican law enforcement and customs authorities continue to be undermined by lax vigilance on the part of their US counterparts, which has made it relatively easy for persons to send shipments of illegal weapons from the USA to Jamaica. One solution could be through the Container Security Initiative, the US-developed bilateral system of information exchange, by which, in theory, a host country offers to conduct a security check on cargo containers leaving for a US port. In return, the host country can send its officers to any US port to target ocean-going containerised cargo being exported to their own country.

Our experience with this Initiative is that, while US officials have been able to conduct inspections of US-bound cargo in our countries; the reverse has not been as actively encouraged. We know that most of the illegal weapons seized in Jamaica originate in Florida even if they were imported through other countries; and access by Jamaican authorities to these ports would help reduce weapons on the streets of Kingston. We also recommend that the US focus on helping to build interdiction capability in Caribbean countries, which is critical to our ability to secure the prosecution and conviction of illegal arms traffickers operating out of the USA.

Chairman Feinstein,
Co-Chairman Grassley,

These are just some of our recommendations and suggestions. I thank you for your consideration, and am certain that our nations will improve our co-operation to make our entire Hemisphere a more secure place for our peoples.

*Embassy of Jamaica
January 2012*

**SPECIFIC ACTIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN OR ARE BEING PURSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA IN
THE AREA OF NATIONAL SECURITY**

- i) Strengthening the Capacity of Law Enforcement, through:**
 - a) Reform and Modernization of the Jamaica Constabulary Force
 - b) Anti-Corruption
 - c) Police Oversight
 - d) Strengthening of the Anti-Narcotics Capabilities of the Jamaican Security Forces
 - e) Maritime Security (*improvement in maritime capabilities and the use of technology; and increased collaboration and intelligence-sharing within the sub-region and with North America*)

- ii) Strengthening of Passports and Documentation** (*through the introduction of more modern technology*)

- iii) Strengthening the Resources/Capacity of the Security Forces, in particular:**
 - a) Mobility
 - b) Assets
 - c) ICT capacity
 - d) Scientific Method (*e.g. forensic science*)

- iv) Legislation**

The Government of Jamaica is currently working on enacting, strengthening or otherwise amending the following legislative initiatives, with the intention of strengthening the tools and framework for law enforcement in Jamaica:

- Criminal Justice (Suppression of Criminal Gangs and Organised Criminal Groups) Act, 2011 – *with technical assistance from the USAID*
- Firearms and Explosives Act (a new Act, to replace two older Acts) – *being done simultaneously with the development of a Small Arms Policy with assistance from a top international (UN) expert*
- Proceeds of Crimes Act 2007 (amendments are being made to strengthen the Act)
- Telecommunications Act (amendment)
- DNA Evidence Bill (new)
- Police Authority Bill (new)
- Jamaica Constabulary Force Bill (new)

v) Social Intervention

A central strategic element of the plans of the Government of Jamaica to address national security and public safety has been social intervention in crime-plagued, disadvantaged and depressed communities, targeting particularly vulnerable and at-risk youths. While this has been a feature of the efforts of successive Governments in Jamaica, it has now been elevated to a national strategic level. This is in keeping with our conviction that only a holistic

approach to crime fighting will achieve real, lasting results; and that efforts to create a more peaceful and secure society cannot be primarily focused on law enforcement.

vi) Regional and international co-operation

The Government of Jamaica has long recognised the importance of regional and international co-operation in addressing crime and violence. We have been pursuing sub-regional co-operation with a number of countries including our nearest neighbours: Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the United States, as well as other international partners. This is aimed at improving information-sharing on narcotics trafficking and implementing tighter regulation and gun control mechanisms to stem the flow of illegal drugs and guns into the Region. Other co-operation mechanisms are being pursued within the context of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Enhanced strategies for Counter-Narcotics Co-operation

- 1) Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) –
 - i) continuing joint efforts to ensure adoption of policy and legislative reforms in the Caribbean, in accordance with national laws to facilitate information-sharing on a region-wide basis, including the sharing of –
 - a) radar and sensor data for the purpose of detecting, monitoring, and interdicting illicit activities in the Caribbean; and
 - b) law enforcement information such as fingerprint and ballistics data in order to strengthen the fight against crime.
 - ii) focusing on additional dimensions of existing strategies, e.g. *expanding existing support, especially under current protocols, to include sustainable alternative development programmes as well as demand reduction initiatives in Caribbean territories that cultivate ganja (cannabis). In some cases, this does not necessarily require additional funds, but rather, an expansion in the areas for which existing funding is currently targeted.*
 - iii) harmonising CBSI programmes, where appropriate, with programmes being run by other bilateral and multilateral partners in the Region, in order to create a more structured and productive fight against crime.
- 2) Regional Training - Identify existing national and regional training facilities and explore ways to strengthen or leverage institutions to increase and strengthen region-wide human capacity in the security sector (narcotics, cyber-crimes, in particular).
- 3) Improving Domain Awareness - Address the priority gaps in current regional domain awareness and sensor coverage through the acquisition of various radar platforms tailored to the particular needs of individual countries in the context of a regional response to threats. Explore ways to increase aerial surveillance utilising sensor packages/upgrades for maritime patrol aircraft.
- 4) Increased Funding for regional law enforcement and national defence forces.
- 5) Further Improvement in Intelligence- and Information-Sharing between US and Caribbean law enforcement authorities/agencies.
- 6) Money Laundering – US could assist with the enhancement of the capacity of regional Financial Investigation Units, so that these Units can function more in line with their counterparts in other jurisdictions, such as the USA and UK. Money laundering remains a significant threat to security and stability, particularly for small and micro States, as organized criminal groups seek to “rinse” their ill gotten gains for it to enter the legitimate market. While Jamaica possesses the institutional and legislative infrastructure to combat money laundering, the complex nature of this kind of investigation continues to thwart the level of success against criminal networks motivated by profits. Even a cursory assessment of the effort in the Region to combat money laundering suggests the need for significant improvement.

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