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COUNTERING NARCOTICS THREATS IN
WEST AFRICA

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2012

United States Senate,
Caucus on International Narcotics Control,
Washington, D.C.

The Caucus met, pursuant to notice, at 2:35 p.m., in
room SD-562, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Dianne
Feinstein, Chairman of the Caucus, presiding.

Present: Senators Grassley and Risch.

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DIANNE FEINSTEIN, A U.S.

2 SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

3 Chairman Feinstein. Good afternoon, ladies and
4 gentlemen, and welcome.

5 As some of you know, the Senate Caucus on
6 International Narcotics Control has held hearings on
7 various regions of the world, including Afghanistan,
8 Mexico, Central America, the Andean Region, and the
9 Caribbean.

10 We have also put out bipartisan reports on
11 Afghanistan, Mexico, and Central America, which are all
12 available on our Website, drugcaucus.senate.gov. The
13 Caucus is currently working on reports on the Caribbean
14 and drug demand reduction, which we hope to be able to
15 publish soon.

16 So today we are focusing on a new topic,
17 counternarcotics cooperation with the countries of West
18 Africa.

19 As the European demand for cocaine has increased,
20 West Africa has become a major transit point for illegal
21 drugs coming from South America and destined for Europe.
22 In 2009, wholesale profits for cocaine traffickers in
23 West Africa were estimated at \$800 million. The United
24 Nations Office of Drugs and Crime estimates that the
25 amount of cocaine trafficked through West Africa grew

1 from 3 tons in 2004 to 47 tons in 2007 before dropping to
2 about 21 tons in 2009.

3 So why should the United States care? Cocaine
4 transiting through West Africa is going to Europe, after
5 all, not the United States. I believe that there are
6 three main reasons why fighting the narcotics trade in
7 West Africa is in our national security interest.

8 First, the same Latin American drug trafficking
9 organizations that smuggle cocaine and other illegal
10 drugs into the United States are operating in West
11 Africa, particularly the Colombian FARC.

12 As we support the Colombian government in combating
13 the FARC, it is certainly not in our interest to see them
14 enriched through illicit activities in West Africa.

15 The same is true of Mexican drug trafficking
16 organizations. In 2011, a Lebanese drug kingpin linked
17 to Hezbollah was indicted in United States Federal Court
18 for coordinating the sale of cocaine to Los Zetas by
19 using West Africa to launder huge amounts of drug money,
20 likely up to \$200 million dollars a month.

21 Second, drug trafficking in West Africa provides
22 financing to dangerous terrorist organizations such as Al
23 Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM. As
24 just one example, in 2010, Mauritanian authorities
25 reported that members of AQIM were providing security for

1 a convoy of cocaine and marijuana.

2 So we should do everything we can to achieve that
3 AQIM and other extremists groups are not further
4 strengthened by the drug trade.

5 Third, methamphetamine and other illegal drugs
6 produced in Africa could very well make their way to the
7 United States markets one day. Some meth currently
8 produced in Africa is being shipped all the way to
9 Southeast Asia. So there is no reason to believe that
10 methamphetamine produced in Africa could not make it into
11 the United States.

12 At a time of very limited resources, I am very
13 pleased that the State Department, the DEA, and the
14 Defense Department have made West Africa a priority. As
15 our witnesses know, I am a big proponent of highly vetted
16 units used by DEA called sensitive investigative units,
17 or SIUs.

18 DEA has had an SIU in Ghana since 2010 and intends
19 to establish an SIU in Nigeria by the end of the current
20 fiscal year. This is welcome news.

21 I am also very pleased that the State Department has
22 initiated a 5-year, \$60 million assistance program,
23 called the West Africa Cooperative Security Initiative,
24 which targets transnational organized crime by
25 strengthening West African law enforcement and judicial

1 systems.

2 Of course, in the current fiscal climate, the United
3 States cannot bear this burden alone. So I hope our
4 witnesses today, our distinguished panel, can explain how
5 our European partners and other donors are contributing
6 to the West African counternarcotics efforts.

7 I will introduce the panel shortly after recognizing
8 my distinguished co-chairman, Senator Grassley, for his
9 opening statement.

10 Please proceed.

11 [The prepared statement of Chairman Feinstein
12 follows:]

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1 States has declined significantly, thanks, in part, to
2 successful interdiction efforts, but use in Europe has
3 doubled and even tripled in some areas.

4 To meet this change in demand, South African
5 traffickers have started moving more cocaine across the
6 Atlantic, and West Africa has proven to be a very
7 valuable transshipment point.

8 However these drugs might be transported, more and
9 more cocaine is finding its way to Africa. The current
10 estimate of cocaine flowing through West Africa ranges
11 between 60 and 250 metric tons or between \$3 billion and
12 \$14 billion annually.

13 Many of these West African nations lack functioning
14 central governments. Those that have democratic
15 governments are considered tenuous, at best. So as a
16 result, criminal organizations take advantage of
17 corruption and poor centralized government. The
18 traffickers often act unimpeded by the government.

19 The lucrative trade operating in some of the poorest
20 countries of the world has led to an increase of violence
21 and destabilization.

22 We have got this situation that I want to give you
23 in Guinea Bissau. That country is considered one of the
24 poorest countries in the world. It is a primary
25 transshipment point for drugs moving between South

1 America and Europe.

2 Now, some may question why officials in the United
3 States would be concerned about the impact of drug
4 trafficking in West Africa. But as we have learned since
5 the tragic events of 9/11, failed states can become
6 breeding grounds for more than just crime. The huge
7 profits generated in the West African drug trade are not
8 just lining the pockets of drug traffickers. Known
9 terrorist organizations with hatred towards us use
10 profits from drug sales to support their networks and
11 training camps.

12 An example. Our Treasury Department, working with
13 DEA, listed the Lebanese Canadian Bank, along with
14 subsidiaries, as a financial institution of concern for
15 laundering. This investigation uncovered a complex
16 scheme that moved illegal drugs from South America to
17 Europe and the Middle East via West Africa. In turn, the
18 illicit proceeds were routed through the bank in Lebanon
19 to Canada and facilitated trade-based money laundering
20 schemes, such as purchasing used cars in the United
21 States, transferring those cars to West Africa.

22 But that is not the end. Treasury found complex
23 links between the bank and drug trafficking to the Middle
24 Eastern terrorist organization Hezbollah. Treasury and
25 DEA were able to also link individuals in Iran to this

1 criminal money and the drug smuggling network.

2 So while the roots of the drug trade may seem like a
3 small regional issue, the global impact of the trade via
4 links to organized crime and terrorists cannot be
5 ignored.

6 Another area of concern that links West Africa to
7 our past work is Venezuela. We have previously heard at
8 hearings and briefings about the use of Venezuela as a
9 transshipment point for cocaine destined for Central
10 America and the Caribbean. There are even allegations
11 that the current defense minister of Venezuela is
12 involved in drug trafficking. So I am interested in the
13 links between Venezuela and West Africa.

14 In fact, Venezuela is becoming such a repeat
15 offender that all our hearings should be held considering
16 Venezuela's role in facilitating drug trafficking.

17 More importantly, we cannot ignore the growing links
18 between Hezbollah, Iran and Venezuela. For example,
19 following his 2010 arrest in Venezuela, Venezuelan drug
20 kingpin Walid Makled was asked if Hezbollah is operating
21 in Venezuela. He replied, quote, "They, Hezbollah, work
22 in Venezuela and all that money they send to the Middle
23 East," end of quote.

24 While this hearing is focused on West Africa, we
25 cannot ignore the fact that terrorist organizations are

1 operating all over the continent and that the drug trade
2 is expanding, and it ought to be a major concern of ours.

3 I have skipped so much of my long statement, I would
4 like to have the entire statement put in the record.

5 Chairman Feinstein. Of course.

6 Senator Grassley. Thank you.

7 [The prepared statement of Senator Grassley
8 follows:]

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1 Chairman Feinstein. Thank you very much, Senator
2 Grassley.

3 Now, I would like to introduce the witnesses. I
4 would like to welcome back three of our regulars,
5 Ambassador Brownfield, with a great sense of humor; newly
6 confirmed Deputy DEA Administrator Harrigan; and, Deputy
7 Assistant Secretary William Wechsler.

8 Ambassador Carson, we are very happy to have you
9 joining us today.

10 Let me begin by introducing Ambassador Carson. He
11 serves as Assistant Secretary of State for African
12 Affairs. He has had a 37-year Foreign Service career,
13 including ambassadorships in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Uganda.

14 He previously served as a national intelligence
15 officer for Africa at the National Intelligence Council,
16 and was senior vice president of the National Defense
17 University. He has also served as principal Deputy
18 Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of African Affairs.
19 Before joining the Foreign Service, Ambassador Carson was
20 a Peace Corps volunteer in Tanzania.

21 Next is Ambassador William Brownfield, Assistant
22 Secretary of State for the Bureau of International
23 Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Prior to his
24 appointment, he served as United States Ambassador to
25 Colombia, Venezuela, and Chile. He has also served as

1 Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western
2 Hemisphere Affairs.

3 Thomas Harrigan is Deputy Administrator of the DEA.
4 Before his recent confirmation as Deputy Administrator,
5 he was DEA's chief of operations and led the worldwide
6 drug enforcement operations of the agency's 227 domestic
7 and 87 foreign offices.

8 Mr. Harrigan began his career as a special agent
9 with the DEA in 1987 in the New York Field Division. He
10 has also served in the Bangkok country office and as
11 group supervisor in the Europe Field Division at DEA
12 Headquarters.

13 Last, but not last least, William Wechsler is the
14 Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for
15 Counternarcotics and Global Threats. Mr. Wechsler has
16 served as special advisor to the Secretary of Treasury
17 and on the staff of the National Security Council. He
18 has also served in the Department of Defense as special
19 assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
20 and special assistant to the Assistant Secretary for
21 International Security Affairs.

22 Gentlemen, I want to welcome you.

23 Because we are going to have votes, I would like to
24 keep this hearing, if we can, to about an hour. So I
25 would ask each of you to try to confine your remarks to

1 approximately 5 minutes so that we can have a round of
2 questions.

3 Ambassador Carson, why do we not begin with you?

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1 STATEMENT OF JOHNNIE CARSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
2 FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS, STATE DEPARTMENT
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4 Ambassador Carson. Thank you very much.
5 Chairwoman Feinstein and co-Chairman Grassley and
6 distinguished members of the Caucus, thank you for
7 inviting me to testify at this important hearing.

8 I do have a longer statement. I will submit it for
9 the record, and I will try to keep my remarks within the
10 5 minutes.

11 Chairman Feinstein. Excellent.

12 Ambassador Carson. West Africa is one of the most
13 fragile regions in the world and one of the most fragile
14 in Africa. In recent years, there has been progress and
15 in many countries in the region, they are enjoying the
16 fruits of greater democratization, economic development,
17 and improved security.

18 But those gains are fragile and are increasingly at
19 risk from the threat posed by international drug
20 trafficking. The smuggling of illegal drugs through
21 Africa has become an alarming challenge. Foreign drug
22 dealers usually prefer fragile states.

23 In 2007, an estimated 40 metric tons of cocaine,
24 with a wholesale value in West Africa of \$1.8 billion,
25 transited West Africa, comprising some 27 percent of

1 Europe's annual demand.

2 Many West African states have weak financial
3 systems, weak judicial systems, and a pervasive
4 susceptibility to corruption. The creation of resilient
5 institutions takes time. The flow of drugs through West
6 Africa risks undermining countries by weakening their
7 institutions, their local communities, and the fabric of
8 their societies.

9 Drug trafficking also threatens U.S. policy
10 priorities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Improved governance,
11 which is a principal focus of our policies and programs,
12 is at risk as trafficking depends upon and naturally
13 fuels corruption. Drug money can also undermine
14 elections.

15 Being a transit state is also detrimental to a
16 country's development and economic growth. Most
17 investors are not inclined to do business in unstable
18 environments that are viewed as risky or which entail
19 higher business costs.

20 The risks associated with counterfeit drugs and the
21 development of a local consumer base also compromise our
22 goals of strengthening public health. The local drug
23 consumption appears to be growing rapidly in the region,
24 with the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crimes
25 estimating that there are upwards of 2.5 million drug

1 users in West Africa and Central Africa.

2 Of the 35 tons of cocaine thought to have reached
3 West Africa in 2009, about 21 tons continued on to
4 Europe, with the remainder consumed or stored locally.

5 Finally, our U.S. policy priority to prevent,
6 mitigate and to resolve armed conflict is only
7 complicated by drug trafficking and its effects. In West
8 Africa, drug trafficking negatively impacts the ability
9 of many of the states to provide effective security and
10 to mitigate internal and cross-border conflict.

11 Illegal drug trafficking in West Africa has reached
12 epidemic proportions, and the problem could get much
13 worse before it gets better. There are very few among
14 the Guinea Bissau elite who have not been implicated in
15 narco trafficking.

16 U.S. Government efforts there to improve the justice
17 sector's capacity to combat drug trafficking have
18 resulted in improved performance by the relatively
19 competent and credible judicial police in arresting and
20 detaining narco traffickers and in seizing significant
21 quantities of narcotics.

22 Regrettably, however, repeated interventions by
23 military and civilian leaders have compelled authorities
24 to turn over evidence and release suspects. Furthermore,
25 the April 12 coup executed by the military led to a

1 termination of U.S. bilateral assistance on April 26.

2 Partnerships are important as a part of our strategy
3 to interrupt these drug flows. In Nigeria, for example,
4 heroin and cocaine transit the country on their way to
5 markets in Europe and, to a lesser degree, into the
6 United States. In 2008, we donated modern drug scanning
7 equipment to the Nigerian government for its use at its
8 international airports.

9 Now, Nigerian law enforcement officials arrest a
10 very steady stream of drug couriers at the main airport
11 in Lagos, and the Nigerian Drug and Law Enforcement
12 Agency successfully uses our training and drug detecting
13 kits at other Nigerian points of entry and exit.

14 The Department of State, our interagency colleagues,
15 and our international partners recognize the serious
16 threat posed by drug trafficking in West Africa. With
17 our interagency colleagues who are represented here
18 today, we have collaborated to develop the West African
19 Cooperative Security Initiative.

20 In October 2008, Ministers of Justice and Interior
21 from member states of the Economic Community of West
22 African States, ECOWAS, met in Cape Verde and adopted a
23 regional plan of action to address the growing problem of
24 illicit drug trafficking, organized crime, and drug abuse
25 in West Africa.

1 While ECOWAS and its member states recognize the
2 danger and have started to lay a policy foundation to
3 address the problem, most of the real substantive work
4 remains to be done.

5 ECOWAS, its members, their international partners,
6 and the United States all need to do more collectively to
7 deter this problem. We continue to strive towards
8 African ownership, a comprehensive approach, and
9 sustainable solutions.

10 I look forward to hearing from you and your
11 colleagues the questions that you have, and we will try
12 to provide some information and insights to answer them.

13 Thank you.

14 [The prepared statement of Ambassador Carson
15 follows:]

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1 Chairman Feinstein. Thank you very much,
2 Ambassador Carson.

3 I would like to acknowledge the presence of Senator
4 Risch. We serve together on the Intelligence Committee.
5 I am delighted that you are here. Thank you so much.

6 Ambassador Brownfield?

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1 STATEMENT OF WILLIAM BROWNFIELD, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF
2 STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT
3 AFFAIRS, STATE DEPARTMENT
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5 Ambassador Brownfield. I thank you, Madam
6 Chairman, co-Chairman Grassley, Senator Risch, for the
7 opportunity to appear before you today to address the
8 growing threat of narcotics trafficking in West Africa.
9 And I, too, would like to submit my larger statement for
10 the record, if you would permit me.

11 Chairman Feinstein. So ordered.

12 Ambassador Brownfield. My presentation today is
13 from a simple premise -- drug trafficking organizations
14 are reacting to successes in the Western Hemisphere.
15 Over the past 30 years, working with international
16 partners, we have applied pressure in the Caribbean, the
17 Andean Ridge, Colombia, Mexico, and now Central America.

18 It is more difficult, dangerous, and expensive for
19 drug traffickers to move their product to the United
20 States today than it was 30 years ago. But the
21 traffickers have not, as a consequence, retired to the
22 beach to run concession stands. They have developed new
23 markets in Western Europe and Asia and new routes and
24 networks to move their product to market.

25 Geography and vulnerable institutions put West

1 Africa squarely in their crosshairs. Some parts of West
2 Africa are closer to South America than to Europe, and
3 widespread poverty, official corruption, porous borders,
4 under-resourced law enforcement, poor regulatory systems,
5 and instability provide opportunity to multibillion
6 dollar criminal enterprises.

7 The U.N. estimates that 13 percent of the world's
8 cocaine flows through West Africa, and U.S. law
9 enforcement sees increasing signs of Southwest Asian
10 heroin flowing through West African networks.

11 Some say this is a European problem to solve since
12 most of the flow is to Europe. But history teaches that
13 the same networks will redirect product to the United
14 States when they see it in their economic interest to do
15 so.

16 Now, our response is the West Africa Cooperative
17 Security Initiative, or WACSI, a strategy of five
18 priority areas -- building accountable institutions,
19 establishing legal and policy frameworks, strengthening
20 capacity to conduct security operations, reinforcing
21 justice operations, and combating social and economic
22 vulnerabilities.

23 We do not start at zero, and WACSI is not an overly
24 ambitious program requiring a huge appropriation from
25 Congress. In fact, we are already engaged in West

1 Africa. The State Department, DOD, and USAID currently
2 support roughly \$115 million in assistance programs for
3 the 15 West African nations. European partners
4 collectively have committed a similar amount.

5 The objective of WACSI is to take those programs and
6 operations, organize them effectively, ensure buy-in from
7 the West African governments themselves, structure them
8 to be mutually supportive, and regionalize them, where
9 possible.

10 Two international agreements guide our efforts.
11 Last year, under French leaderships, the G8 approved an
12 action plan to support counternarcotics in West Africa.
13 In 2008, ECOWAS itself approved a regional action plan on
14 drug trafficking and organized crime.

15 Taking those as our guideposts, last year the U.S.
16 Government's operational agencies assessed all U.S. drug,
17 crime and rule of law efforts in West Africa. Early this
18 year, we met with key European, Latin American, and U.N.
19 partners to discuss how best we can work together. I
20 expect to join an international delegation to Abuja,
21 Nigeria next month to open this conversation with ECOWAS,
22 secure their commitment, and expand WACSI coordination.
23 And meanwhile, we have not paused a single program while
24 working this coordination effort.

25 Madam Chairman, Senators, in the past, we thought of

1 drug threats in bilateral terms, the U.S. and Colombia or
2 the U.S. and Mexico.

3 Today, the United States of America faces a growing
4 threat of drugs and crime emanating from West Africa. It
5 is not bilateral. In fact, it requires cooperation
6 across four continents.

7 We have developed a strategy to address that threat.
8 The strategy builds on existing programs and operations,
9 requires only modest amounts of new resources, and
10 leverages support being provided to the region by other
11 partners. We obviously cannot want this strategy more
12 than do our West African partners, but my discussions
13 suggest that they very much recognize the threat these
14 huge criminal organizations represent to their societies
15 and nations and want to cooperate to address them.

16 We live in a global world, but so do the criminals.
17 We need global cooperation to address global threats.
18 WACSI is our plan to address this global threat. It
19 helps West Africa and it helps us.

20 I look forward to your guidance on the way ahead,
21 Madam Chairman, and I thank you for drawing attention to
22 this important topic today.

23 [The prepared statement of Ambassador Brownfield
24 follows:]

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1 Chairman Feinstein. Thanks very much, Ambassador.

2 And now, Administrator, would you please proceed?

3 Administrator Harrigan?

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1 STATEMENT OF THOMAS HARRIGAN, DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR, DRUG
2 ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

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4 Mr. Harrigan. Chairman, just in point of record,
5 you just promoted me. I am deputy administrator, but I
6 appreciate your confidence.

7 Chairman Feinstein. I just left out the deputy.

8 Mr. Harrigan. Thank you very much.

9 Chairman Feinstein. You are very welcome. That
10 was an easy promotion.

11 Mr. Harrigan. That was. Thank you. Thank you.

12 [Laughter.]

13 Mr. Harrigan. Again, Madam Chairman, co-Chairman
14 Grassley, Senator Risch, on behalf of the Drug
15 Enforcement Administration's Administrator, Michele
16 Leonhart, I want to thank you for your continued support
17 of the men and women of the DEA and the opportunity to
18 testify today about the scope and dynamics of drug
19 trafficking in West Africa, as well as related threats.

20 Africa is experiencing an unprecedented rise in drug
21 trafficking, and growth of organized crime in Africa is
22 an increasing national security threat, as evidenced by
23 the assimilation of South American drug trafficking
24 networks with African and European buyers and
25 distributors.

1 The current political and economic environment in
2 Africa presents an unprecedented opportunity for drug
3 traffickers to flourish and expand their operations on
4 the continent. Africa's weak and failing states provide
5 havens for the drug cartels and international criminals
6 alike.

7 An inadequate judicial infrastructure exacerbates
8 the problem and presents a very real threat. South
9 American drug cartels have impacted much of West Africa
10 due to rising demand for cocaine and higher profits that
11 can be made in the European and other worldwide drug
12 markets.

13 As the single point of contact for U.S. drug-related
14 matters overseas, DEA is integral in the realization of a
15 successful counternarcotics plan for Africa. Presently,
16 DEA has 85 offices in 65 countries around the world and
17 works with host governments in assessing drug threats,
18 gathering intelligence, targeting major drug trafficking
19 cartels, and assisting host governments in developing
20 comprehensive counternarcotics strategies.

21 Currently, DEA has five offices established on the
22 continent of Africa, in Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, South
23 Africa, and Kenya, with plans to open a new office in
24 Dakar-Senegal in 2013.

25 As you know, DEA's primary mission in Africa is to

1 disrupt and dismantle the most prolific drug, chemical,
2 money laundering, and narcoterrorism organizations on the
3 continent, all of which have direct impact on the United
4 States.

5 DEA attacks these criminal organizations through an
6 integrated intelligence-driven enforcement process that
7 targets the command and control elements of these
8 cartels.

9 A secondary part of our mission calls for broad
10 interagency support from our U.S. Government partners
11 through programs such as the West Africa Cooperative
12 Security Initiative for assistance in capacity-building
13 and mentoring programs with African law enforcement
14 counterparts, with the intent of extending the rule of
15 law throughout Africa.

16 Current intelligence indicates the principal drug
17 threats in Africa are South American cocaine, Southwest
18 Asian heroin, precursor chemicals primarily used for
19 production of methamphetamine, khat, cannabis, and drug
20 money laundering.

21 Since the opening of new DEA offices throughout the
22 Africa region, there have been a multitude of successes
23 of bilateral and multilateral enforcement operations
24 leading to seizures of multi-ton quantities of cocaine
25 and multi-kilogram quantities of heroin.

1 Additionally, numerous defendants have been
2 extradited and convicted in U.S. courts of law. DEA's
3 extraterritorial authority is a powerful tool that
4 removes the barrier of relative impunity of areas of weak
5 government control around the globe and makes those U.S.
6 prosecutions possible.

7 DEA's long-term strategy in Africa includes a series
8 of programs that will include DEA and U.S. Government
9 partners to address operational and capacity-building
10 requirements in Africa.

11 Enforcement activities in Africa have demonstrated
12 the need for African counterparts to develop specialized
13 investigative teams to conduct investigations into
14 significant local, regional and international drug
15 cartels.

16 DEA is working very closely with the Departments of
17 Defense and State to cooperatively train, equip and
18 support specialized units, Chairman, as you said, the
19 sensitive investigative units within host nation law
20 enforcement authorities. The goal is to improve the
21 ability of law enforcement agencies in Africa to
22 investigate narcotics-related crimes ranging from simple
23 low impact seizures to large-scale, multifaceted
24 conspiracy cases.

25 DEA's global presence has already provided huge

1 dividends in assessing the drug threat developing in
2 Africa. We will continue to develop these investigations
3 and continue coordinating with U.S. Government agencies
4 in intelligence-sharing and capacity-building programs.

5 Chairman Feinstein and Senators, I want to thank you
6 again for the opportunity to appear before you today to
7 discuss this important issue, and welcome any questions
8 that you may have.

9 Thank you.

10 [The prepared statement of Mr. Harrigan follows:]

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1 Chairman Feinstein. Thank you, Deputy Administrator
2 Harrigan.

3 And now we have Deputy Assistant Secretary, Mr.
4 Wechsler.

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1 STATEMENT OF WILLIAM WECHSLER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY
2 OF DEFENSE FOR COUNTERNARCOTICS AND GLOBAL THREATS,
3 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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5 Mr. Wechsler. Feel free to promote me, as well.

6 [Laughter.]

7 Mr. Wechsler. As my colleagues have done, I have a
8 longer statement that, with your permission, will be
9 included in the record.

10 Chairman Feinstein. Please.

11 Mr. Wechsler. And I will be brief so we can get to
12 the rest of the hearing.

13 First, let me start off by thanking you not only for
14 this hearing, but for this committee's steadfast
15 leadership and support over the many years on this
16 important set of subjects; and, in particular, on a
17 personal note, at the end of last year, when we briefly
18 had issues with our legal authorities, the work that was
19 done through this committee to bring that to a speedy and
20 successful resolution.

21 Chairman Feinstein. Thank you. That is very nice
22 of you to say, because it makes me, and I hope my
23 colleagues, believe that we do do things that are
24 worthwhile.

25 Mr. Wechsler. Tremendously so, Senator.

1 Both my colleagues and you have adequately described
2 the threats. So I am going to skip that portion of my
3 statement and just talk about what the Department of
4 Defense's role in all of this is.

5 We believe and what we see is that increasingly
6 transnational organized crime networks are diversifying
7 their illicit activities and, also, building connections
8 with other hostile actors, including terrorist groups,
9 insurgencies, and other elements of rogue or hostile
10 states.

11 That is fundamentally a strong concern for the
12 Department of Defense, in addition to all the other
13 issues that have been discussed today.

14 Our effectiveness across the government in
15 countering these hostile actors depends, in large part,
16 on our ability as a government to also operate as a
17 network and brining to bear all of the elements of our
18 law enforcement and national security apparatus on this
19 problem set.

20 Fortunately, in this case, that is what is being
21 done under the leadership of the State Department and the
22 WACSI initiative, and through other ways on an
23 operational level, that we are able to collaborate.

24 The Department of Defense's counternarcotics efforts
25 in West Africa are largely carried out through U.S.

1 Africa Command and integrated within the broader State
2 Department-led WACSI.

3 The Department of Defense's primary contribution to
4 this initiative is to assist regional counterdrug forces
5 to execute security operations. The department invests
6 in building capacity through training, equipment,
7 information-sharing and infrastructure to enable these
8 partners to take every route of responsibility for their
9 own security.

10 We are strong believers, as are you, Madam Chairman,
11 in small, elite, vetted units as a key part of the
12 solution set, whether they are our own special operators
13 or DEA's SIU. We see these as being what our defense
14 planning guidance tells us to invest in, which is small,
15 light footprint, cost-effective, innovative responses to
16 these emerging national security threats, and this is
17 where a good deal of our focus lies.

18 Counter-illicit trafficking is now one of the
19 primary lines of effort within African Command's theater
20 campaign plan, and its counternarcotics program also
21 supports the command's number one priority -- attacking
22 and defeating violent extremist organizations.

23 We are working towards that end and developing a
24 threat finance cell at Africa Command to target the
25 finances of these organizations through interdictions,

1 sanctions and other law enforcement efforts, and to work
2 in AFRICOM through the presence of all the detailees that
3 we have from the law enforcement agencies across the
4 government.

5 As we look ahead, we can expect that the threat of
6 drug trafficking and its nexus with other threats, such
7 as terrorism, insurgency and other forms of transnational
8 organized crime, will continue. As Director Clapper said
9 in front of the Intelligence Committee in open forum,
10 that a growing concern for the entire U.S. Government is
11 the continuing nexus between terrorist organizations, on
12 the one hand, and organized crime on another. And you
13 have specifically pointed out in open session that
14 Hezbollah and AQIM are clear evidence of this trend, and,
15 of course, both of them exist in the area of the world
16 that we are talking about today.

17 West African countries are especially vulnerable due
18 to, in many cases, weak rule of law, fragile governments,
19 and ingrained corruption. Many West African states have
20 made remarkable progress in the past decade, but,
21 unfortunately, the insidious destabilizing effects of
22 narcotics trafficking, the simple scale of this
23 trafficking compared to the country whose GDP is in
24 question, has the potential to reverse many of these
25 gains in the years ahead.

1 Just as the Department of Defense has long sought to
2 understand how hostile states support the armies that
3 they confront us with, we now have to understand how non-
4 state adversaries use narcotics trafficking and other
5 types of crime to finance their terrorist and insurgence
6 activities.

7 For the foreseeable future, drug trafficking will
8 continue to be the world's most lucrative criminal
9 enterprise, and, therefore, the one with the greatest
10 ability to fund terrorists, insurgents, and other threats
11 to our national security.

12 Thank you again for this opportunity to testify, and
13 I welcome your questions.

14 [The prepared statement of Mr. Wechsler follows:]

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1 Chairman Feinstein. Well, thank you very much.

2 Mr. Wechsler, I think you hit the nail on the head.

3 And I want to go to Mr. Harrigan. I just returned
4 from Afghanistan. I had the privilege of meeting with
5 the minister for counternarcotics and trying to develop
6 in the south food zones.

7 State has been great and I gather there is agreement
8 now to expand from Helmand and do three additional food
9 zones, which is great.

10 DEA has used the law you referenced in your remarks
11 to pick up big traffickers, bring them back to this
12 country, and try them in American courts.

13 How many have been tried from Afghanistan? Here.

14 Mr. Harrigan. Sure. Approximately -- I believe we
15 have used the 960(a) statute, Chairman, which is the
16 PATRIOT Act, about 14 times. Now, that is worldwide. I
17 believe as it relates to Afghanistan, again, this is an
18 educated guess, I would say about a half a dozen times.

19 Chairman Feinstein. Half a dozen.

20 Mr. Harrigan. But I will get the exact number for
21 you.

22 Chairman Feinstein. And has that resulted in
23 successful prosecutions?

24 Mr. Harrigan. Absolutely. Absolutely.

25 Chairman Feinstein. And long sentences?

1 Mr. Harrigan. Yes. As you know, the importance of
2 that particular Act, it gave us, at the time -- and still
3 we are seeing very limited amounts of Southwest Asian
4 heroin here in the United States.

5 Just recently, our latest statistics through the
6 DEA's heroin seizure program put the figure at 14 percent
7 of the heroin seized here in the United States originates
8 in Southwest Asia. That is a huge jump. The last time I
9 testified, it was approximately 3 percent. So we are
10 seeing more and more Southwest Asian heroin here in the
11 United States.

12 But it was difficult for us to prosecute the cases
13 because we did not have that nexus to the U.S. 960(a),
14 as you very well know, gives us the ability to go after
15 the organizations that assist the terrorist organizations
16 by prosecuting them here in the U.S.

17 So it is a very, very strong tool for us.

18 Chairman Feinstein. Well, when I met with the
19 minister of counternarcotics, he pointed out -- the U.N.
20 figure for the poppy supplying money to the Taliban was
21 \$125 million last year. He believes it is more.

22 Having said that, there is no question but that the
23 Taliban is taxing it, is taxing the trucking of it, and
24 is making lots of money from heroin. And I think that is
25 firmly established among people that know in Afghanistan.

1 Now, let us go to AQIM for a minute, because that is
2 of concern to us. What are you doing there? Have you
3 arrested anyone under this law and brought them to this
4 country for prosecution?

5 Mr. Harrigan. Yes, we have. Back in December of
6 2009, there was an investigating conducted by our
7 counterparts in West Africa, along with DEA, where we had
8 three members who were self-admittedly members of AQIM
9 who were providing services, in this particular case,
10 transportation services for movement of tons of cocaine
11 from West Africa up to North Africa and then eventually
12 on to Europe.

13 During the course of the investigation, the members
14 of the AQIM, who were all arrested and pending
15 prosecution in the Southern District of New York, had
16 assumed that they were moving cocaine for the FARC. So
17 you had the FARC, a foreign terrorist organization, and
18 AQIM both negotiating with one another.

19 And we were able, again, to indict and prosecute all
20 three members of the AQIM in the Southern District of New
21 York.

22 Chairman Feinstein. I was just shown I gather, in
23 2009, you announced the extradition from Ghana. Is this
24 the same thing, the three?

25 Mr. Harrigan. Yes. Yes. There were several West

1 African nations involved in that particular
2 investigation, Chairman.

3 Chairman Feinstein. I see that being particularly
4 effective, but it is not well known. Is there a reason
5 for it not being well known?

6 Mr. Harrigan. Well, at the time, it was fairly
7 well known. Again, it was the first time that members of
8 Al Qaida, again, admitted members -- we had them on video
9 and audio recording acknowledging the fact that they were
10 members of AQIM, again, providing services for what they
11 presumed were members of the FARC to transport cocaine.

12 But, yes, there was quite a bit of press at the
13 time, at the time of their arrest.

14 Chairman Feinstein. How much do you think AQIM
15 benefits from the coke market?

16 Mr. Harrigan. That is a great question, and it is
17 one of the intelligence gaps that we certainly have,
18 Chairman, especially in Africa, West Africa. It is
19 something just like how much does the Taliban generate in
20 income from the opium trade.

21 Chairman Feinstein. Well, we know, because there
22 is the United Nations figure and it is low. It is \$125
23 million in 2011.

24 Mr. Harrigan. Right. And that is based -- there
25 are some things that really we could go into maybe not

1 for this particular hearing, but, again, some of the
2 figures, I think, need certainly to be looked at.

3 But as far as AQIM, it is very difficult to
4 ascertain. Again, as my good friend here, Ambassador
5 Brownfield, said in his opening statement, these
6 organizations -- I think drug trafficking organizations
7 are not necessarily in the business to traffic drugs.
8 They are in the business to make money.

9 So whatever way they are going to make money -- and
10 we saw because of the pressure by the Colombians, by the
11 Mexicans, the shift, the market now that is established
12 in Europe, we now have different marketplaces. So now
13 these drug trafficking organizations, primarily the South
14 American drug trafficking organizations, are venturing to
15 places they had never been before, i.e., Africa, and that
16 is where some of these terrorist organizations are.

17 So I think it was only a matter of time before you
18 saw the connection between South American drug cartels
19 and some of these terrorist organizations, especially
20 those that are well entrenched in Africa.

21 Chairman Feinstein. Because if you could get us
22 some of that information on how much AQIM has benefitted,
23 I would appreciate it. I am trying to draw the corollary
24 of these problems across the world, because I think it is
25 going to become a world problem, just as the Taliban is

1 turning into a narcocartel rather than a sort of
2 revolutionary movement.

3 The question comes, do AQIM and others follow that
4 pattern, and I think it is something we have to know.

5 Mr. Harrigan. I think, Chairman, they took the
6 playbook from the FARC, is exactly what they are doing,
7 if you think about how the FARC began.

8 Chairman Feinstein. So more information on that
9 would be useful.

10 Mr. Harrigan. Absolutely.

11 Chairman Feinstein. Ambassador Brownfield, your
12 \$60 million a year West Africa Cooperative Security
13 Initiative, how receptive have the African governments
14 been to this initiative? How much international support
15 has there been to partner in it, and how have European
16 partners specifically engaged?

17 Mr. Brownfield. All very good questions, Madam
18 Chairman. But if I could start with a baseball analogy,
19 we are in the second inning and I have got seven more to
20 play before I can give you a definitive answer.

21 First, there are not one, but 15 different West
22 African governments. Each one, obviously, has its own
23 position. I would say, on average, they have been very
24 positive in their response to the idea, recognizing and
25 acknowledging that they confront a major, major threat

1 from huge multibillion dollar criminal enterprises that
2 are able to penetrate, corrupt, and hollow-out their
3 institutions. So the disposition to work with us is very
4 strong.

5 Chairman Feinstein. Can we get the list of the 15?

6 Mr. Brownfield. Sure thing.

7 Chairman Feinstein. I would like to talk a little
8 bit more.

9 Mr. Brownfield. In fact, I used the 15. Johnnie
10 just -- actually, you are using the same numbers I am.
11 It is the 15 member states of ECOWAS. And it is a line
12 that starts with Nigeria to the east and then works its
13 way along the coast of Africa until you reach the Western
14 Sahara, and, effectively, that is what I am referring to
15 when I talk about the 15.

16 Now, a couple of those, Madam Chairman, as you know,
17 are actually states that have recently adjusted their
18 governments in a non-constitutional manner, and that
19 requires us to adjust the manner in which we work with,
20 cooperate with, and support them.

21 Other partners -- in some ways, this is actually
22 simpler than I thought it was going to be when I started
23 down this road a bit more than a year ago.

24 Madam Chairman, functionally and in real terms, in
25 Europe, there are about five partners that have a

1 longstanding interest in West Africa. They are the
2 United Kingdom and France and Portugal, for longstanding
3 historical reasons. In other words, they have had a
4 presence in West Africa that dates back more than a
5 century; and, Spain and Italy, who, for geographic
6 reasons, which is to say they are the principle entry
7 point for whatever product is moving from West Africa
8 into Europe, have a very direct and immediate operational
9 interest in what is happening there; and, then, the
10 European Union, which is, in essence, the bank for much
11 of what the European nations wish to do in the region.

12 So, basically, I have six European partners that we
13 are working with, and we are working with them, from my
14 perspective, quite well, which is to say I am not finding
15 a lot of pushback in terms of resentment at or resistance
16 to our trying to cooperate with them, our attempt to find
17 out what they are doing so we can coordinate our
18 activities with theirs. And up until this point, the
19 cooperation has been, surprisingly, from my perspective,
20 good.

21 We add to that mix, Madam Chairman, two South
22 American countries, both of which are rather obvious.
23 One is Colombia, because a lot of this stuff originates
24 in Colombia or the trafficking organizations have ties to
25 Colombia or, in some way, shape or form, the product

1 moves through Colombia.

2 And the second is Brazil, a rather large South
3 American country. That has become not only a massive
4 consumer of cocaine in South America, but now a major
5 transit country for product that is moving from southern
6 South America across the Atlantic to West Africa. And in
7 the case of Brazil, there are direct Portuguese-speaking
8 links there, as well.

9 We have, at this point, Madam Chairman, a package
10 that is working fairly well. The proof will be in the
11 pudding. I will seek that proof in about a month's time,
12 when I will join representatives of most of the European
13 governments that I just mentioned to you, plus Colombia,
14 plus a local representative of Brazil, in Abuja to have a
15 direct, specific, operational and programmatic
16 conversation with the ECOWAS leadership.

17 Chairman Feinstein. Thank you very much. Thank
18 you. That is helpful.

19 Senator Grassley?

20 Senator Grassley. Thank you very much. Thank you
21 folks for coming.

22 Hezbollah has expanded its activities to include
23 drug trafficking and has expanded to West Africa and
24 Latin America. Individuals with links to Hezbollah have
25 been prosecuted in drug cases in the United States, and

1 our country has shut down the Lebanese Canadian Bank,
2 which was used to launder drug money.

3 Hezbollah also operates front companies in West
4 Africa, such as in the trade in diamonds, other
5 commodities, to launder drug profits. Furthermore, they
6 have close connections to Latin American drug trafficking
7 organizations, as well as to the Venezuelan government.

8 Hezbollah's multiple roles as a terrorist
9 organization, a drug trafficking organization, and a
10 political party in Lebanon, rolled into one, are
11 extremely worrisome. They are a prime threat to the
12 United States' national security through their activities
13 and through their connections to Iran, on one hand, and
14 Venezuela, on the other. They have global reach.

15 So two people. Deputy Administrator Harrigan and
16 Ambassador Brownfield, you have had numerous successes so
17 far in the effort to crack down on Hezbollah and its drug
18 trafficking activities in West Africa.

19 In regard to the next steps, I assume you have some
20 additional steps, then looking at the connections between
21 Hezbollah, Venezuela, Latin American drug trafficking
22 people, are they all in this together? And is the
23 government of Iran also involved in the same entities?

24 Mr. Harrigan. Thank you for the question, Senator
25 Grassley.

1 It is, obviously, as I had alluded to in my opening
2 statement, a very, very real concern with the
3 convergence, if you will, of Hezbollah and some of the
4 other drug trafficking organizations.

5 We see it, as I mentioned earlier, because of the
6 dynamics, the changing, the fluid nature of the drug
7 trade, where we are seeing these huge cocaine loads
8 leaving places like Venezuela, Brazil, going through West
9 Africa, up through Africa to the Iberian Peninsula and
10 out to Europe.

11 Obviously, as they look for logistical services in
12 Africa, they have partnered up, if you will, with some
13 elements of Hezbollah. We have had several
14 investigations, which we have briefed to, I believe, some
15 of your staff, some of the Chairman's staff, as well,
16 some of the ongoing successes we have had out of special
17 operations division, where we were able to, again, as you
18 mentioned, sir, -- in the Lebanese Canadian Bank
19 investigation, we worked very closely with Treasury to
20 identify the bank as a main conduit of laundering
21 millions and millions of dollars, and of illicit drug
22 proceeds back to the U.S. to purchase vehicles to be
23 shipped to West Africa. And the profits of the sale of
24 those vehicles in West Africa were then moved to -- wire
25 transferred to the Lebanese Canadian Bank.

1 Based upon that, we were able, with assistance from
2 the Department of Treasury, U.S. Department of Treasury,
3 to effectively shut down the Lebanese Canadian Bank.

4 Again, we continue to work very closely with our
5 partner countries, especially in Africa. That is why the
6 importance, as the Chairman had mentioned in her opening
7 statement, of these SIUs, these sensitive investigative
8 units.

9 We continue to work very closely with our
10 counterparts to identify those organizations that are
11 facilitating the movement of South American coke,
12 Southwest Asian heroin. But, again, it is absolutely a
13 concern for us and we continue to work with our African
14 partners and the partners here at the table to further
15 identify the links between Hezbollah and drug
16 trafficking.

17 Mr. Brownfield. Senator, if I could add just three
18 quick points to what Mr. Harrigan just said.

19 First, you referred to him both in your statement
20 and in your question, and, that is, Mr. Walid Makled of
21 Venezuela. Mr. Makled, who offered some information to
22 U.S. law enforcement authorities before he returned to
23 Venezuela, made it absolutely crystalline clear, I think,
24 to anyone with the brain of a 3-year-old that he was very
25 much involved in a criminal enterprise that linked

1 narcotics production in South American, movement through
2 Venezuela, into and through an Arab network based largely
3 in Lebanon. And he did, in fact, tie Iran into this mix,
4 as well.

5 I have my own personal view as to how likely it is
6 that we are going to continue to hear more from Mr.
7 Makled, who is now in the hands of the Venezuelan
8 judicial system, but he made those points clear before he
9 returned to Venezuela.

10 Second, Hezbollah and what it is actually doing in
11 West Africa, I offer you my experience of roughly 10
12 years serving as an ambassador in South America, in
13 Chile, Venezuela, and Colombia. And my experience was
14 Hezbollah was not necessarily working through operational
15 cells in South American countries, but was very much
16 engaged in fundraising and processing money and revenue
17 through commercial enterprises in a number of countries
18 in South America.

19 Do I believe exactly that is going on in West Africa
20 today? I very definitely do, which takes me to my third
21 point. Do I also believe that they are operational or
22 have operational capabilities in West Africa today? I
23 will answer, quite honestly, my own questions, I do not
24 know.

25 But I would give you a very honest historical story,

1 and that is I served in Argentina for 3 years, left in
2 1990. If you had asked me in 1990, what are the chances
3 that a Hezbollah-supported terrorist operation would blow
4 up, first, the Israeli Embassy and then the Argentine
5 National Jewish Center within 2 years of my departure, I
6 would have said absolutely remote possibility, and I
7 would have been absolutely wrong. That is exactly what
8 happened.

9 Chairman Feinstein. I think the world has to begin
10 to understand what is happening in this regard of
11 narcotics fueling terrorism. You mentioned the FARC, you
12 mentioned Hezbollah, you mentioned AQIM, I mentioned the
13 Taliban.

14 It is going to become a pattern, I fear. And so
15 this does take on, Mr. Wechsler, a huge national security
16 implication.

17 Do any of you have any thoughts that you would like
18 to leave us with as to more aggressive action? You
19 mentioned the SIUs, the special investigative units. You
20 mentioned the -- what do you call the acronym for the
21 West --

22 Mr. Brownfield. WACSI, Madam Chairman. WACSI.

23 Chairman Feinstein. Another one to remember.

24 [Laughter.]

25 Chairman Feinstein. WACSI. Are there any other

1 suggestions that you would have? Anybody? Ambassador?

2 Mr. Carson. Let me, Madam Chairman, say that the
3 best response to this kind of a problem is strengthening
4 democratic institutions, strengthening governance, and
5 helping to turn weak states, autocratic states, into
6 responsible, democratic governing states.

7 Chairman Feinstein. Let me just stop you for a
8 second. I met with the commander of SOUTHCOM this
9 morning on Central America and what is happening with
10 respect to drugs. And you are right. But nonetheless,
11 you have massive deterioration in Honduras and Guatemala,
12 deterioration of the very legitimate government entities
13 you are talking about, deterioration in the justice
14 system, and you have, in Africa, in places, as Ambassador
15 Brownfield, this irregular transition really caused by
16 opposing armies.

17 So it creates a kind of no man's land where these
18 institutions can grow. And you could have this money
19 going to people who want to overthrow the government,
20 too. It is a real danger.

21 I agree with you about education, particularly
22 normal education. But if you wait for all of that to
23 happen, I am really concerned about where this goes. You
24 have got the Horn of Africa, too, with terrorist groups,
25 very serious; Kenya's concern, Al-Shabaab.

1 Mr. Wechsler?

2 Mr. Wechsler. Sure. And while we are going around
3 the Horn, Senator Grassley, you mentioned Iran, and, of
4 course, earlier this year, the U.S. Government did, for
5 the very first time, target an Iranian under the Kingpin
6 Act, a general of the Qods Force, who is identified as a
7 trafficker for moving guns in one direction and drugs in
8 another direction, which adds to the concern that we have
9 about this dynamic.

10 And, of course, also, publicly --

11 Chairman Feinstein. Is he still out there?

12 Mr. Wechsler. He is still out there. And, also,
13 as publicly known, we had last year a situation where, as
14 it appears, elements of the Qods Force were trying to use
15 the Zetas organization to commit an assassination here in
16 Washington, DC.

17 Just as Ambassador Brownfield said, before the
18 instance that he is describing about the terrorist
19 attack, the one Hezbollah was involved in, in South
20 America, he would not have predicted it.

21 I think it is fair to say that that episode has
22 caused a recalibration in many people's thinking about
23 what is possible and what we need to look for.

24 As far as the tool sets, one of the processes that
25 the Department of Defense has built over the years to

1 find, fix, finish, exploit and analyze, and disseminate
2 information for counterterrorism purposes can be applied
3 in a supporting role, where the finish is not a military
4 finish, but the finish is a judicial finish in places.

5 There are only so many places where the military can
6 go. And in the rest of the world, the only way that you
7 can take action is through a law enforcement action. And
8 so we are strong supporters of our friends in law
9 enforcement, because they are on the front lines in
10 places that we cannot and should not go.

11 Chairman Feinstein. Mr. Harrigan?

12 Mr. Harrigan. Yes. If I may, Chairman. Without
13 sort of oversimplifying DEA's needs, I think these SIUs
14 -- we get such a bang for our buck.

15 We have one, as you mentioned in your opening
16 statement, in Ghana. We will have a vetted unit later
17 this year hopefully in Nigeria and Nairobi, Kenya, as
18 well.

19 So, again, can we -- and I think as Ambassador
20 Carson had alluded to earlier, extending the rule of law,
21 I think corruption -- I know corruption really fuels what
22 the drug trafficking organizations need. They cannot
23 exist without corrupt whether it is politicians, whether
24 it is police officers, whether it is an officer at some
25 port. They need those corrupt elements in order to

1 survive.

2 The SIUs and the vetted units, do they eliminate
3 corruption? No, but they certainly minimize it. And we
4 have seen how successful they have been in South America,
5 in Central America, in Mexico, and we are seeing the same
6 with the SIU in Ghana, and, as I said, shortly, in Kenya
7 and Nigeria, as well.

8 Chairman Feinstein. What does each one cost? Do
9 you have any idea?

10 Mr. Harrigan. Well, it depends. We get about \$20
11 million a year for all the SIUs worldwide to fund all our
12 operations for the SIUs. So, again, it depends. Those
13 in, say, Bogota, Colombia are obviously -- we have, I
14 believe, probably 50 to 60 officers that are vetted under
15 the SIU umbrella. We have several in Mexico.

16 So then depending on the country, it fluctuates.
17 But it is minimal to stand up, probably approximately,
18 maybe, \$750,000 to stand up once we train them and vet
19 them. And the SIUs are eventually brought to the DEA
20 Academy in Quantico, Virginia, where they undergo 5 weeks
21 of training.

22 But, again, there are background checks done,
23 urinalysis, lie detector tests.

24 Chairman Feinstein. So these are nationals of the
25 country.

1 Mr. Harrigan. Yes, absolutely. And they are
2 handpicked by the host country counterparts and DEA, as
3 well, with input from the embassy, from the U.S. Embassy,
4 as well.

5 So, yes, these are, we feel, the best of the best,
6 if you will, and that is why they work the most
7 significant and sensitive investigations in their
8 respective countries.

9 Chairman Feinstein. Is this true in the arrests
10 made in southern Afghanistan?

11 Mr. Harrigan. Yes. We have an SIU -- yes,
12 Chairman. We stood up an SIU about 2.5 years ago in
13 Afghanistan, and that is who we work on a daily basis
14 with the SIU and, as you know, the NIU that I know you
15 were briefed on, and the TIU. But we work very closely
16 on a daily basis with our SIU in Afghanistan.

17 Chairman Feinstein. Thank you.

18 Anything else?

19 Senator Grassley. Yes. I have got a couple of
20 things, one of them drug-related and the other one drug-
21 related, but a little far removed from what we are doing
22 here.

23 Ambassador Brownfield, I sent a letter to Secretary
24 Clinton in November. I do not have a response. I was
25 asking the State Department, cables that were made public

1 by the press, one article entitled -- and, by the way, I
2 can leave the letter with you to take, the same one I
3 sent.

4 But one article said drug gangs help themselves to
5 Central America and military arsenals, discussing drug
6 gangs like the Zetas are continuing looting military
7 bases in Central America and cited to cables as
8 confirming U.S. Government knowledge of the fact.

9 One article that was entitled, quote, "Drug Gangs
10 Help Themselves to Central American Military Arsenals,"
11 end of quote, was of particular interest to me as it
12 discussed the fact that drug gangs, like the Zetas, are
13 continuing looting military bases.

14 This is a critically important issue to the issue of
15 drug violence in Central America. And as co-Chairman of
16 the Caucus, I requested these cables, and we have the
17 ability of receiving them if the State Department has
18 deemed them as classified.

19 So when could I expect a response to that letter?
20 Would you commit to providing the cables to the Caucus?
21 And if they are classified, we have the means to receive
22 them through Senate security.

23 So I would appreciate you producing them
24 expeditiously.

25 Mr. Brownfield. Senator, I hear what you are

1 asking. It sounds like a reasonable proposal. I,
2 obviously, need to find out where we are on the legal
3 process. You know, as well as I do, as does everyone in
4 this room, that the amount of unregulated arms in the
5 hands of criminals in Central America, as well as in
6 other countries, is very much a part of the problem that
7 we have just spent the past hour describing.

8 Senator Grassley. I guess what kind of disturbs me
9 is that I think a member of Congress ought to be as
10 important as the press.

11 For Mr. Harrigan, on May 14, DEA responded to a
12 letter that I sent 10 days earlier about Daniel Chong,
13 the person left in San Diego locked up. My response was
14 that -- because I did not have a substantive response, I
15 have expressed responsibility to conduct oversight with
16 DEA, as Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee.

17 If the account of his detention are true, is DEA
18 prepared to compensate Mr. Chong? Will anyone be held
19 accountable for this incident, including firing? And
20 when would I get a substantive answer to my letter?

21 Mr. Harrigan. Senator Grassley, as you may know,
22 this particular incident is being investigated by the
23 Office of the Inspector General. What we did immediately
24 following the information that we received at
25 headquarters was we conducted what we call a man-event

1 review. We had senior officials from our Los Angeles
2 field division travel down the very next day to San
3 Diego. They conducted an immediate management review and
4 they made recommendations.

5 In the interim, we have set what we call division
6 policy, divisional orders to San Diego, as well as to
7 DEA's other 21 field divisions. As a matter of fact,
8 just yesterday, the Administrator and I had a VTC with
9 all of our SACs. The issue that was addressed was this
10 particular issue in San Diego and ensuring that it will
11 not happen again.

12 Chairman Feinstein. May I ask something on this?

13 Senator Grassley. Yes, please.

14 Chairman Feinstein. This is my constituent. I do
15 not understand how someone can be left in a cell for 4
16 days and no one pays any attention to it, no food, no
17 water, no nothing. How does that happen?

18 Mr. Harrigan. To be quite honest with you,
19 Chairman --

20 Chairman Feinstein. Somebody should have gone to
21 that place, I would assume, and I would assume they did
22 not do a very good job.

23 Mr. Harrigan. Well, just to give you a sense of
24 all DEA's field divisions, they are not, quote-unquote,
25 "jails." They are simply holding cells. They are

1 processing areas to where we will process a prisoner and
2 then move them to either a state facility or a Federal
3 detention facility.

4 Chairman Feinstein. But no one, Mr. Harrigan, is
5 responsible to check.

6 Mr. Harrigan. No. I am not saying that, Chairman.
7 I absolutely agree. There is someone -- some folks that
8 are responsible.

9 Let me tell you right up, it was a mistake. It was
10 nothing intentional, nothing malicious. They had seized
11 -- they had conducted search warrants at a house in San
12 Diego where they seized over 18,000 MDMA tabs. They
13 seized long guns, they seized several automatic weapons,
14 and thousands of rounds of ammunition.

15 They also arrested nine defendants, one to include
16 Mr. Chong. I cannot tell you how it happened other than
17 the fact it was a mistake. It was a bad mistake. We
18 have taken, I believe, immediate measures to mediate any
19 -- to ensure that it will not happen again.

20 Chairman Feinstein. Was not Chong a student at the
21 University of California-San Diego?

22 Mr. Harrigan. I believe it was San Diego State,
23 but I am not certain of that. But, again, he was self-
24 admittedly high on marijuana. They were celebrating the,
25 quote-unquote, "4/20," April 20, which is the marijuana

1 smokers day, and using some other drugs, as well.

2 Senator Grassley. You did not answer, though,
3 whether you are going to give me a substantive answer to
4 my letter.

5 Chairman Feinstein. The answer has to be yes.

6 Mr. Harrigan. Absolutely, Senator. But, again, as
7 I said, it is under investigation by the Office of the
8 Inspector General. So once they have finalized their
9 investigation, we will certainly address any questions or
10 recommendations that you may have.

11 Senator Grassley. Do you fire people that are
12 responsible for that?

13 Mr. Harrigan. Well, I think it is premature right
14 now to say -- again, it was a mistake.

15 Chairman Feinstein. He does not forget, I can tell
16 you that.

17 Mr. Harrigan. Well, neither do I. And you are
18 absolutely right in --

19 Senator Grassley. Thank you.

20 Mr. Harrigan. -- obviously, elevating your
21 concern. But as far as firing people, it was -- believe
22 me, we have one of the most effective and efficient task
23 force groups in all of southern California who was
24 participating in that particular operation. Again, it
25 was a mistake.

1 Chairman Feinstein. Enough said.

2 Thank you, gentlemen. Our votes begin at 3:50. So
3 we have about 2 minutes to get back to the office.

4 Thank you very much. I think it was a very
5 informative hearing, and it is adjourned.

6 [Whereupon, at 3:45 p.m., the Caucus was adjourned.]

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