

# The Central America Regional Security Initiative: State Presence and Security in At-Risk Communities



***“Every citizen, regardless of where the man or woman comes from, who their parents might be, what kind of village or family they came from, is entitled to his or her rightful share of social, political, economic and civic power.”***

– Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

## **CARSI – An Integrated, Collaborative Regional Security Program**

The Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) responds to regional threats by supplementing the strategies and programs Central American nations implement on their own and in cooperation with other countries. CARSI is coordinated with other nations, international financial institutions, the private sector, civil society, and the Central American Integration System (SICA), and draws upon the expertise and efforts of like-minded donors supporting the citizen safety goals of Central American countries.

## **Communities at Risk**

Gangs, narcotics traffickers, and organized criminal groups are making significant inroads throughout Central America – in many instances exerting control over entire communities and in vast areas of territory. Central American governments need more appropriate training, equipment, and political will to regain this lost territory and provide adequate levels of citizen safety, public services, and economic and social activity for citizens of the region. Although countries may suppress organized crime by stepping up law enforcement actions in areas with high criminal activity, few have developed long-term plans for a balanced prevention-intervention-law enforcement approach that addresses the root causes of criminal activity: a lack of access to basic services such as health care, high youth unemployment, insufficient educational opportunities, overburdened and inefficient justice systems, and increased levels of stress on families.

## **U.S. Assistance – A Balanced Approach: Prevention, Intervention, & Law Enforcement**

The United States is assisting Central American governments in re-establishing effective state presence in communities at risk. CARSI supports and fosters community policing initiatives, enhances citizen-based crime prevention programs, develops economic and social programs to provide alternative livelihoods and activities for at-risk youth, and provides academic and technical training to break the cycle of poverty that yields recruits for gangs, traffickers, and organized crime. By taking back the neighborhoods of the region, citizens will again be capable of participating in the social and economic opportunities that can help them rise out of poverty, provide new opportunities for Central America’s youth, and increase social inclusion for marginalized groups throughout civil society.

## **The Five Goals of CARSI in Central America:**

1. Create safe streets for the citizens of the region;
2. Disrupt the movement of criminals and contraband to, within, and between the nations of Central America;
3. Support the development of strong, capable, and accountable Central American governments;
4. **Re-establish effective state presence, services and security in communities at risk;** and
5. Foster enhanced levels of coordination and cooperation between the nations of the region, other international partners, and donors to combat regional security threats.

For more information related to the Central America Regional Security Initiative, please visit our website at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/carsi/index.htm>