

**COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL GANGS THROUGH
INFORMATION SHARING**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON
COUNTERTERRORISM
AND INTELLIGENCE**

OF THE

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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COMBATING TRANSNATIONAL GANGS THROUGH INFORMATION SHARING

Thursday, January 18, 2018

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM AND INTELLIGENCE,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:17 a.m., in room HVC-210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. Scott Perry [Member of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives King, Perry, Rice, and Keating.

Also present: Representative McCaul.

Mr. PERRY [presiding]. Good morning. The Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence will come to order. The subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony from the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Department of State on Federal coordination and information sharing vital to dismantling transnational criminal organizations.

I would like to welcome the Members of the subcommittee and express my appreciation to the witnesses for being here today.

The Chair now recognizes himself for an opening statement, after which I will deliver Mr. King's opening statement.

Law enforcement officers use many weapons to fight terrorism and crime in our streets. Some of these weapons, such as badges, guns, and squad cars are easy to see. They are the hallmarks of police work.

There are other weapons, however, that are harder to identify but every bit as vital. Among these less visible weapons the access to timely and accurate information is oftentimes the difference between a successful investigation and an unsolved crime.

In today's threat environment, much of the information needed by law enforcement in the United States is generated overseas. This is particularly true when it comes to combating complex transnational criminal organizations that threaten our safety here at home.

These sophisticated criminal enterprises do not stop at borders. Instead, they extend beyond the limits imposed by nation-states and threaten the peace and stability of multiple countries.

The only way to defeat syndicates that operate across international borders is through partnerships with foreign counterparts. It is incumbent on U.S. law enforcement agencies to work with our overseas allies to ensure that coordinated enforcement efforts are brought to bear against the menace that MS-13 and other TCOs pose to our Nation.

In addition to information sharing, another essential step in fighting—in addition to information sharing, another essential step in the fight against TCOs is to develop the capacity of our foreign partners to defeat these networks before they become a threat to the United States.

Today's hearing will feature testimony from representatives of Federal agencies tasked with combating the spread of TCOs. These entities bring various tools and capabilities to the fight, including investigating and prosecuting TCOs, as well as working with our foreign counterparts to strengthen and support their efforts to disrupt and dismantle TCOs.

These witnesses include executives from the Federal Bureau of Investigation from the Department of Justice and Homeland Security Investigations from the Department of Homeland Security and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs from the Department of State. All of these agencies participate in protecting the U.S. homeland by working to defeat TCOs overseas.

Each of these agencies is responsible for collecting, vetting, and disseminating TCO-related information. Sharing this overseas information with State and local domestic law enforcement agencies enhances the ability of our men and women in blue to keep this country safe at home from the threat posed by TCOs.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses. Their understanding and vast experiences will provide the committee with a comprehensive overview of how the cycle of international information-sharing functions.

This overview will, in turn, afford the committee an opportunity to identify enhancements that can be made to better equip U.S. law enforcement at all levels to share information in their efforts to disrupt and dismantle TCOs, both home and abroad.

[The prepared statement of Chairman King follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PETER T. KING

JANUARY 18, 2018

Law enforcement officers use many weapons to fight terrorism and crime on our streets. Some of these weapons, such as badges, guns, and squad cars, are easy to see. They are the hallmarks of police work. There are other weapons, however, that are harder to identify but every bit as vital. Among these less visible weapons, access to timely and accurate information is oftentimes the difference between a successful investigation and an unsolved crime.

In today's threat environment, much of the information needed by law enforcement in the United States is generated overseas. This is particularly true when it comes to combating complex Transnational Criminal Organizations that threaten our safety at home. These sophisticated criminal enterprises do not stop at borders. Instead, they extend beyond the limits imposed by nation-states and threaten the peace and stability of multiple countries. The only way to defeat syndicates that operate across international borders is through partnerships with foreign counterparts.

This issue is of particular concern to the people of Long Island. Specifically, the violent street gang MS-13, which has been designated as a TCO, has inflicted much death and destruction in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The horrendous criminal actions of MS-13 disproportionately affect the youth of immigrant communities on Long Island. In the last 14 months, the murders of 17 people in Suffolk County alone have been linked to MS-13 violence. It is incumbent on U.S. law enforcement agencies to work with our overseas allies to ensure that coordinated enforcement efforts are brought to bear against the menace that MS-13 and other TCOs pose to our Nation. In addition to information sharing, another essential step in the fight

against TCOs is to develop the capacity of our foreign partners to defeat these networks before they become a threat to the United States.

Today's hearing will feature testimony from representatives of Federal agencies tasked with combating the spread of TCOs. These entities bring various tools and capabilities to the fight, including investigating and prosecuting TCOs as well as working with our foreign counterparts to strengthen and support their efforts to disrupt and dismantle TCOs. These witnesses include executives from the Federal Bureau of Investigation from the Department of Justice, Homeland Security Investigations from the Department of Homeland Security, and the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs from the Department of State. All of these agencies participate in protecting the U.S. homeland by working to defeat TCOs overseas.

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Mr. PERRY. I now recognize Ranking Member Rice for her opening statement.

Miss RICE. Thank you, Chairman Perry for holding today's hearing and thank you to the witnesses for your testimony today.

In June 2017 we held a similar hearing on how we can both combat transnational gang violence on Long Island while empowering young people with the knowledge, support, and resources that they need to reject gangs in our communities.

As we find ourselves here to discuss a similar topic again, I hope that today's discussion will include a broad look at transnational criminal organizations around the world. As we all know, MS-13 and the 18th Street gang and rival gangs are criminal organizations who commit brutal acts of violence and have taken too many lives.

They, like other transnational gangs, are organizations that revel in violence, create fear, and terrorize the communities in which they live and operate and recruit their members.

As the formal Nassau County district attorney, I have seen firsthand how vicious and unrepentant these gangs are. I have seen MS-13 and 18th Street gang members laugh at the judge as they were sentenced to life in prison or they were deported.

So I want the record to be clear. I believe all violent criminals should be punished to the full extent of the law. I believe that violent criminals who are in this country illegally should be deported and prevented from ever coming back. I believe that dismantling violent criminal organizations like MS-13 must be a priority for law enforcement officials and lawmakers at all levels.

However, I also know for a fact that the vast majority of immigrants in this country are not criminals. They are usually the victims of crime rather than the perpetrators.

I know and understand that you cannot destroy a gang like MS-13 without the help of immigrant communities. You need members of the community to talk to you, provide information, report crimes, and for that they need to trust you. They need to know that stepping forward to help will not lead to them being detained and deported and ripped away from their families.

I will remind the committee and my Republican colleagues that many of the members of MS-13 are, in fact, immigrants and children and descendants of immigrants that have become victims of gang threats, violence, and recruitment.

More, it is clear to me that President Trump, Attorney General Sessions, and Republicans in Congress have sought and continue to use the threat of MS-13 to justify their push to build a wall on the Southern Border and round up and deport millions of immigrants, including those whose only crime is being in this country without paperwork.

Last week, President Trump and DHS Secretary Nielsen made another shameful anti-immigrant decision by ending temporary protected status for 31,000 Salvadoran TPS holders in New York, which will send families back to a country that is overrun with gang violence and drug trafficking.

This decision came on the heels of the Trump administration's decision to end DACA and temporary protected status for Haitians and Nicaraguans. Republicans have made it clear that they are not concerned about the destabilizing effects that such U.S. policies will have on communities like the one that Peter King and I serve on Long Island.

On average, TPS recipients in our State have lived in the United States for an average of 21 years. They are our neighbors, our friends, and our co-workers. Now, I recognize that this hearing is not about TPS, but I also recognize the Republican-controlled Congress does not want to negotiate so I have to use every platform to address this issue.

I yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Rice follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER KATHLEEN RICE

JANUARY 18, 2018

In June of 2017, we held a similar hearing on how we can both combat transnational gang violence on Long Island, while empowering young people with the knowledge, support, and resources they need to reject gangs in our communities.

As we find ourselves here to discuss a similar topic again, I hope that today's discussion will include a broad look at transnational criminal organizations around the world.

As we all know, MS-13, the 18th Street Gang, and rival gangs are criminal organizations who commit brutal acts of violence and have taken too many lives. They, like other transnational gangs are organizations that revel in violence, crave fear, and terrorize the communities in which they live and operate and recruit their members.

As the former Nassau County District Attorney, I've seen first-hand how vicious and unrepentant these gangs are. I've seen MS-13 and 18th Street Gang members laugh at the judge as they were sentenced to life in prison or deported.

So I want the record to be clear, I believe all violent criminals should be punished to the full extent of the law. I believe that violent criminals who are in this country illegally should be deported and prevented from ever coming back. I believe that dismantling violent criminal organizations like MS-13 must be a priority for law enforcement officials and lawmakers at all levels.

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I recognize this hearing isn't about TPS, but I also recognize a Republican-controlled Congress doesn't want to negotiate, so I have to use every platform I have to address this issue.

Mr. PERRY. The Chair thanks the gentlelady.

The Chair now thanks the Chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. McCaul.

Mr. MCCAUL. Thank you, Chairman Perry.

Transnational Criminal Organizations are a serious and growing threat to the American people. They disregard the rule of law of all nations and use their networks to smuggle drugs and traffic human beings for sexual exploitation and slave labor.

They resort to brutal violence and intimidation tactics to carry out their illegal deeds. These networks of vile individuals and gangs like MS-13 have been known to kidnap, torture, and behead their victims. Top officials at DHS are very alarmed by their actions.

Before becoming White House Chief of Staff, Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly explained to a National security forum last July, to me personally, that one of his top concerns is a partnership between TCOs and international terror groups.

If such alliances were formed, terrorists would have an easier time sneaking a dirty bomb or other catastrophic weapon and resources into the United States.

Further, in written testimony before our full committee back in November, Acting Secretary Duke stated that TCOs are, "bringing drugs, violence, and dangerous goods across our borders and pose a persistent National security threat to the United States".

Unfortunately, some of these partnerships are starting to take hold. Recent reports have shown that Hezbollah has been very active in recent years with international drug cartels in Latin America. We cannot allow such dangerous actors to gather in our hemisphere unchallenged.

The ability of TCOs secreting terrorists and WMD into our country is a grave threat. This committee is going to undertake a thorough review of these possibilities so that we can prevent them from happening. Sadly, these TCOs have an easy time infiltrating our communities because the security of our Southern Border is just not strong enough to stop them. Hopefully, we will soon be able to fix that.

Legislation I introduced to strengthen border security with new infrastructure including a wall, more boots on the ground and new technology, was passed out of our full committee in October.

Last week, that important legislation was incorporated into a larger bill to fix our broken immigration system. I am hopeful that we can pass it through the Congress and get it to the President's desk very soon.

All three branches of Government working together is essential in this fight, but we must also create and foster partnerships with governments in Latin America to help eliminate these threats from TCOs.

One of the most important lessons we learned from the 9/11 attacks is that we must effectively communicate vital information among Federal departments and law enforcement agencies. Doing so will save many innocent lives.

Today's witnesses represent the hardworking men and women from FBI, ICE, and State Department, who work very hard for the protection of their fellow Americans, and I would like to thank each of you individuals for being here today.

Before I yield back I just want to say on a personal note before becoming a Member of Congress I was the chief of Counterterrorism and National Security in the Western District of Texas in the U.S. Attorney's Office. I had the Texas and Mexico border in my jurisdiction.

I have been dealing with this issue for quite some time, seven terms in Congress and many years as a Federal prosecutor. This problem has not stopped. It has gotten worse. It has not gotten better.

It is now more of a threat. I think it cries out for action from Congress and from the administration to finally, once and for all, get this job done.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

[The statement of Chairman McCaul follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

JANUARY 18, 2018

Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) are a serious and growing threat to the American people. They disregard the rule of law of all nations and use their networks to smuggle drugs, and traffic human beings for sexual exploitation and slave labor.

They resort to brutal violence and intimidation tactics to carry out their illegal deeds. These networks of vile individuals, and gangs like MS-13, have been known to kidnap, torture, and behead their victims. The top officials at DHS are very alarmed by their actions.

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We cannot allow such dangers to gather in our hemisphere unchallenged.

The ability of TCO's secreting terrorists and WMD into our country is a grave threat. And this committee is going to undertake a thorough review of these possibilities so that we can prevent them from happening. Sadly, these TCO's have an easy time infiltrating our communities because the security of our Southern Border is just not strong enough to stop them. Hopefully, we will soon be able to fix that.

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One of the most important lessons we learned from the 9/11 attacks is that we must effectively communicate vital information among Federal departments and law enforcement agencies. Doing so will save many innocent lives.

Today's witnesses represent hardworking men and women from the FBI, ICE, and the State Department, who work very hard for the protection of their fellow Americans. I'd like to thank each of you for being here.

Mr. PERRY. The Chair thanks the gentleman. Other Members of the committee are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record.

[The statement of Ranking Member Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

JANUARY 18, 2018

This hearing is focused on Federal information sharing related to combating transnational gangs and criminal organizations, but given the recent antics from the White House I cannot address this topic in a vacuum.

President Trump began his campaign with an attack on immigrants and continues to use his administration to advance an agenda that is based on racial and ethnic bias.

One of his first actions as President was a travel ban from majority Muslim countries.

Last fall, Trump ended the Deferred Action Childhood Arrival program, upending the lives of many young immigrants, who have only known the United States as their home.

On January 8, the Trump administration made a decision to cancel the Temporary Protected Status for people from El Salvador, mere months after the same decision was made regarding those that have sought shelter and compassion in the U.S. from Haiti and Nicaragua.

This week, the Trump administration released a misleading report, which purports that foreign-born individuals commit terror at very high rates.

The data in the report perpetuates a myth that all immigrants are a threat and a danger to our communities and country.

The report is yet another propaganda tool by the Trump administration consisting of falsehoods and half-truths to support its narrow-minded policies.

President Trump is becoming more and more comfortable openly stoking xenophobia to garner support for his misguided immigration and border security plans.

Republicans in Congress seemingly agree with President Trump, as they are silent when his administration spews misinformation, turn a blind eye to his despicable decisions TPS and Dreamers, and refuse to denounce the vile remarks he has made about immigrants from Latin American, African, and Middle Eastern countries.

Republican Members of Congress, some of whom serve on this committee, recently scrambled to justify a string of heartless actions by the Trump administration all of which are in support of his border wall.

Those who allege rampant exploitation of our borders and immigration system by transnational gangs like MS-13 often fail to acknowledge the hundreds of millions of immigrants that reside legally and peacefully in our country.

After 1 year, it has become crystal clear that President Trump does not understand how important immigrant communities are to the history, makeup, and future of our country.

We are left to wonder whether many Republican Members of Congress actually agree with Trump or are simply afraid to hold him accountable.

The committee has examined transnational gangs in the past, including a subcommittee field hearing on MS-13 in Long Island, New York, last summer.

However, this administration and Republicans have focused solely on the threat from MS-13, while Democrats acknowledge that there are a wide range of threats posed by transnational gangs and TCOs, not just MS-13.

I want to be clear, I remain committed to protecting our homeland from transnational criminal threats and activities such as murder, assault, human trafficking, money laundering, and cyber crime, as well as drug trafficking.

However, I am not willing to give President Trump a blank check to carry out his dangerous, un-American policy goals.

Mr. PERRY. We are pleased to have a distinguished panel of witnesses before us today on this important topic. All the witnesses are reminded that their written testimony will be submitted for the record.

Our first witness is Mr. Stephen E. Richardson, the assistant director for the Criminal Investigative Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Mr. Richardson joined the FBI as a special agent in 1996. He has worked with the bureau in Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia, and several stints at headquarters.

Throughout his career, he has specialized in the investigation of white-collar crime, public corruption, hate crime, violent crime, gang matters, and counterterrorism. Since April 2016 Mr. Richardson has served as assistant director of the Criminal Investigation Division with oversight of all FBI criminal matters.

Thank you for being here today and—does he recognize individually or all? OK. Well, thank you for being here today and we are going to recognize you individually.

So you can begin with your testimony, Mr. Richardson.

STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. RICHARDSON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Mr. RICHARDSON. Representative Perry, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Rice, and Members of the committee, I would like to thank each of you for inviting me here today to discuss this very important issue. My name is Steve Richardson and I am the assistant director for the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division.

The issues that we are going to talk about today fall under my leadership at the FBI. The FBI is dedicated to defeating those transnational organized crime groups referred to as TOC groups, which pose the greatest threat to our National and economic security.

To combat the on-going threat posed by these groups, the FBI has a long-established TOC program. The FBI uses the Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organizations Act to expand criminal accountability for a number of predicate offenses and to expand a single offense across multiple members of a criminal enterprise.

Utilizing a multi-pronged approach to target a variety of criminal activities and impact the group's financial stability, the FBI is able to disrupt or dismantle the entire enterprise, not just a few key people.

The FBI leverages trusted relationships both domestically and internationally to combat and influence the reach of these transnational criminal enterprises. The FBI has long been a pro-

ponent of the task force model, and in 1992 we stood up the first Safe Streets Violent Gang Task Force, specifically to address transnational gangs.

The mission of these task forces is to fully integrate our State and local partners to address threats posed by violent criminal gangs in communities across our great country. This involves working with State and local task force officers, commonly referred to as TFOs, who have direct knowledge of the criminal activities occurring within their specific jurisdictions.

The collaboration of FBI special agents and local law enforcement creates a comprehensive approach utilizing both State and Federal statutes to address these violent gangs from top to bottom.

The FBI currently operates and provides oversight to 169 of these particular task forces comprised of nearly 800 special agents, 1,400 TFOs, and 58 other Federal law enforcement partners in all of the FBI's 56 field offices.

Collectively these task forces average approximately 5,100 arrests of violent criminal gang members annually and have averaged over 2,000 seizures of firearms in each of the past 2 years. Our ultimate goal and the goal of each task force is to have a positive effect on the communities by disrupting and dismantling violent criminal organizations.

On the international front, the FBI's Transnational Anti-gang Task Forces, we refer to those at TAGs, work with international partners to target transnational gangs, both domestically and internationally.

The TAG program was created through cooperation between the FBI and the U.S. Department of State in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and is responsible for the investigation of the MS-13 gang and other violent transnational gangs such as the 18th Street gang.

The mission of the TAG is to conduct gang enforcement operations and gather actionable strategic intelligence for domestic use by our Safe Streets Violent Gang Task Forces and to further disseminate this information to U.S. law enforcement partners.

Recently, the TAG has conducted a coordinated arrest operation in all three countries in the Northern Triangle, targeting both MS-13 and 18th Street, resulting in the arrest of 754 violent gang members. The arrest also led to the seizure of multiple items of evidence which are currently being exploited for their intelligence value.

Apart from our task forces, the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division actively participates in multi-agency intelligence entities, such as the National Gang Intelligence Center, Special Operations Division, and Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force or OCDETF Fusion Center.

Although vetting and possible arrest of individuals at the border is primarily a function of the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI makes every effort to gather and share intelligence on a timely basis related to the movement and recruitment of gang members prior to and upon entry into the United States.

Information sharing is critical to fulfilling this responsibility and the FBI is dedicated to improving communication with our partners. Please know we will continue to direct tremendous resources

and effort to targeting, investigating, prosecuting, and dismantling these transnational criminal gangs.

Chairman McCaul, Chairman King, Representative Perry, Ranking Member Rice, and other Members of the committee, I thank you again for having me here today. I am honored to represent the FBI and the fine men and women of our organization, and I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Richardson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF STEPHEN E. RICHARDSON

JANUARY 18, 2018

Good morning Chairman McCaul, Chairman King, Ranking Member Rice, and Members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) efforts to combat the transnational gang threat and the FBI's use of task forces.

The FBI is dedicated to eliminating transnational organized crime (TOC) groups that pose the greatest threat to the National and economic security of the United States. Some TOC groups can be hierarchies, clans, networks, or cells, and may evolve into other structures. The depth and financial stability of these organizations often allow them to continue long after key members are removed. Therefore, the FBI targets entire organizations responsible for a variety of criminal activities. TOC groups are independent associations that operate by illegal means across borders, and many of these associations encompass both the Eastern and Western hemispheres. With the increase of technology available around the world, TOC groups are more commonly incorporating cyber techniques into their illicit activities.

To combat the on-going threat posed by these groups, the FBI has a long-established transnational organized crime program dedicated to eliminating the criminal enterprises that pose the greatest threat to America. The FBI uses the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act to target entire criminal organizations and to address the full extent of the criminal conduct by the leaders, members, and associates of those organizations. Unlike typical investigations, which target a single criminal act, this multi-pronged approach allows the FBI to disrupt or dismantle the entire enterprise.

The FBI leverages political and law enforcement relationships domestically and abroad to combat the influence and reach of these organized crime groups due to the transnational nature of these criminal enterprises.

The FBI also participates in selecting TOC groups to appear on the Department of Justice's Top International Criminal Organizations Target (TICOT) List, and contributes to the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) efforts to pursue criminal enterprises. Further, to pool resources and leverage technical and investigative expertise, the FBI participates in many Organized Crime Task Forces consisting of State and local law enforcement partners in the United States.

Specific to transnational gangs, the FBI established the first Safe Streets Violent Gang Task Force (SSVGTF) in 1992. The mission of our SSVGTFs is to fully integrate our State and local partners to address threats posed by violent criminal gangs that have a destructive effect in our communities across the country. A key component of this success involves the utilization of Task Force Officers (TFOs) who have direct knowledge of the criminal activity occurring in their jurisdictions. This collaboration of FBI Special Agents and local law enforcement creates a comprehensive approach to addressing these violent gangs from top to bottom utilizing the Enterprise Theory of Investigation (ETI). ETIs are intelligence-driven investigations which seek to identify the hierarchy of a criminal enterprise and the scope of their criminal activity. The SSVGTF can then utilize State and Federal statutes to address all elements of the violent criminal organization. The success of the SSVGTFs is directly related to the ability to cross-programmatically leverage all resources and expertise of the FBI.

The FBI currently operates and provides oversight to 169 SSVGTFs comprised of nearly 800 Special Agents, 1,400 TFOs, and 58 other Federal law enforcement partners in all of the FBI's 56 field offices. Collectively, these SSVGTFs average approximately 5,100 arrests of violent criminal gang members annually. Additionally, SSVGTFs have averaged over 2,000 seizures of firearms in each of the past 2 years. Although the numbers are impressive, the ultimate goal of all SSVGTFs is to have

a positive effect on communities by disrupting and dismantling the violent criminal organizations that exist within them.

In addition to our domestic task forces, the FBI's Transnational Anti-Gang Task Forces (TAGs) continue to work with international partners to eradicate transnational gangs domestically and internationally. The TAG program was first created in 2007 in El Salvador through the cooperation between the FBI and the U.S. Department of State. The TAG expanded to Guatemala and Honduras in 2009 and 2011, respectively. The TAG is currently comprised of six FBI Special Agents and 120 vetted police officers. Each TAG is a fully operational unit responsible for the investigation of MS-13 and other violent transnational gangs, such as 18th Street. The focus of the TAG is to conduct gang enforcement operations and gather actionable, strategic intelligence for domestic use by the SSVGTFs and dissemination to U.S. law enforcement partners.

Additional valuable intelligence provided by the TAG include: Affiliations with other violent criminal gangs; associations with drug cartels; and illicit activity, such as human trafficking and firearms trafficking. Recently, the TAG conducted a coordinated transnational gang arrest operation in all three countries. The operation targeted members of both MS-13 and 18th Street, resulting in the arrests of 754 MS-13 and 18th Street gang members. The arrests also led to the seizure of multiple items of evidence, which are being exploited for their intelligence value.

The FBI utilizes a comprehensive approach combining intelligence with operations to more effectively combat gang violence. Apart from our task forces, the FBI has numerous analysts and agents dedicated to studying the threats posed by MS-13 and other transnational criminal gangs via the National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC). NGIC is a multi-agency intelligence entity that supports law enforcement agencies through timely and accurate information sharing and strategic/tactical analysis of Federal, State, and local law enforcement intelligence. NGIC is co-located at FBIHQ with the Safe Streets Gang Unit to further enhance integration of intelligence and operations. Additionally, the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division (CID) participates in the Special Operations Division (SOD) which is a multi-agency intelligence center wherein the FBI is one of over 30 partners. The primary focus of SOD is to identify and target command-and-control communications of those criminal organizations that operate across regional, National, and international boundaries and to facilitate de-confliction and coordination of law enforcement investigations.

In addition to SOD, the FBI participates in the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force's (OCDETF) Fusion Center (OFC); this collaborative integrated center is a multi-agency operational intelligence center that provides law enforcement with analytical resources, case de-confliction, and information sharing to develop the most complete intelligence picture of targeted drug trafficking organizations and other complex criminal organizations. The OFC brings together 112 datasets from 21 separate Federal and international agencies, along with open-source information, to generate intelligence products for FBI investigations. Furthermore, the FBI continues to be a vital participant in scores of OCDETF investigations that are countering TCOs and Transnational Gangs, like MS-13. In October 2017, the Attorney General explicitly directed that MS-13 be a priority of the multi-agency OCDETF Program, authorizing and encouraging investigative agencies and prosecutors to leverage OCDETF's funding, infrastructure, and other resources to target MS-13.

Although the vetting and possible arrest of individuals at the border is primarily a function of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the FBI makes every effort to gather intelligence related to the movement and recruitment of these gang members prior to and upon entry into the United States. Information sharing with our partners is critical to fulfilling this responsibility, and the FBI is continually working to improve the way in which we and our partners communicate. Please know we will continue to dedicate tremendous resources and efforts to targeting, investigating, prosecuting, and dismantling these transnational criminal gangs.

Chairman McCaul, Chairman King, Ranking Member Rice, and Members of the committee, thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the FBI's efforts to eradicate the threat posed by transnational gangs. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Mr. KING [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. Richardson.

First of all, let me express my regret for not being here on time. We had a meeting of the Intelligence Committee, which went over

time. But I want to thank all the witnesses for their testimony up to now.

I want to thank Mr. Perry for filling in for me. I am sure he did a far better job than I would have. Of course thank the Ranking Member for her support in putting this hearing together.

So thank you, Mr. Richardson.

Our second witness now is Mr. Raymond Villanueva, the assistant director for International Operations with Homeland Security Investigations at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. He began his law enforcement career in 1994 with the Puerto Rico Police Department.

Since joining Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Mr. Villanueva has served in numerous key positions, including group supervisor for the Financial Crimes Asset Forfeiture and Removal Group from Buffalo, New York, section chief of the Illicit Finance and Proceeds Crime Unit in Washington, DC, assistant special agent in charge for the HSI San Juan office and most recently as a deputy assistant director for HSI international operations.

Mr. Villanueva has more than 22 years of law enforcement experience.

Let me just say that with the situation we have in Long Island with MS-13, HSI has been invaluable. Through you thank all of them for the great job they are doing in conjunction with the FBI. It has just been, again, phenomenal cooperation and also working with the local police in Suffolk County and Nassau County. It has been extraordinary. So I thank you.

Mr. Villanueva, you are now recognized for your testimony.

STATEMENT OF RAYMOND VILLANUEVA, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR IN CHARGE, INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS, U.S. IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Mr. VILLANUEVA. Thank you, Chairman King. Mr. Perry, thank you for starting the hearing and Ranking Member Rice, and distinguished Members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations with efforts to investigate, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations or TCOs, to include violent gangs in the United States and abroad.

HSI utilizes its broad legal authorities to investigate immigration and customs violations across several programmatic areas, including investigating and dismantling TCOs and gangs.

During the last two decades, transnational organized crime has expanded dramatically, which poses a significant threat to National security.

We take this threat very seriously and target TCOs at every critical location in the cycle by utilizing a layered approach that is internationally by pushing our borders out in cooperation with foreign counterparts where transnational criminal and terrorist organizations operate at our Nation's border, in coordination with U.S. Customs and Border Protection, CBP, where the transportation cells attempt to exploit America's legitimate trade, travel, and transportation systems and in cities throughout the United States where criminal organizations earn substantial profits off their illicit activities.

As of December 28, 2017 we maintain over 100 open investigations targeting MS-13 members and their criminal organization throughout all the United States and abroad by working with our law enforcement partners, including those in countries such as Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Without our information sharing and partnering with our Federal, State, local and foreign law enforcement partners, HSI would not be nearly as successful at battling MS-13 and other gangs.

In response to the gang epidemic in 2005, ICE initiated Operation Community Shield, which combines HSI and Enforcement and Removal Operations, ERO, expansive criminal and civil enforcement authorities, as well as our partnerships with law enforcement stakeholders, domestically and abroad.

Through this platform, HSI executes on the gang initiative, including specialized urban response gang enforcement, known as search operations. Since inception, HSI and its partner agencies have made over 60,000 criminal and administrative arrests of gang leaders, members, and associates, including more than 7,900 MS-13s.

HSI's most recent search operation, Project New Dawn, the largest gang search to date, resulted in 1,378 arrests. At the same time, we pursue domestic criminal investigations. We continue to push the borders out by capitalizing on our international partnerships with foreign law enforcement officials.

This is accomplished by our attaché network located in 67 offices around the world. Our attachés leverage several key international partnerships, to include the Transnational Criminal Investigative Units, the TCIUs, and Operation CITADEL to identify potential bad actors along the illicit pathways while exploiting available information with the goal of identifying a known gang posing a threat to the United States.

HSI also leverages information-sharing capabilities through the use of several key initiatives, some of which I would like to highlight briefly. The Visa Security Program, through this program we partner with CBP and Department of State by deploying trained special agents to high-risk visa-issuing posts to identify and investigate potential terrorist and criminal threats before they reach the United States.

The Trade Transparency Units, the TTUs are designed to aggressively target organizations and individuals involved in trade-based money laundering and also those involved in contraband smuggling and customs fraud. All TTU foreign partners, 16 today, recognize the value of information sharing.

Last but not least, the Biometric Identification Migrant Alert Program, what we call BITMAP. This program helps provide infrastructure and capability for host governments to collect biometric data on individuals they encounter.

We and CBP's National targeting center then share information back with our foreign partners. Through this process we are able to track movement toward the United States, take joint action with partner nations along the route and deter human smuggling through South and Central America. BITMAP is deployed to 14 countries.

These operational endeavors would not have been possible without the cooperation of our Federal, State, local, and foreign law enforcement partners, including the support provided by the Department of State through its country team and their Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your continued support of ICE and our law enforcement mission. I am looking forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Villaneuva follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RAYMOND VILLANUEVA

JANUARY 18, 2018

Chairman King, Ranking Member Rice, and distinguished Members: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the mission of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), its efforts to identify, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), to include transnational gangs, drug cartels, and smugglers, and its information-sharing initiatives dedicated to combatting the aforementioned threats. ICE enforces approximately 400 Federal laws governing border control, customs, trade, and immigration to promote homeland security and public safety. With more than 20,000 employees and more than 400 offices across the United States and in 50 countries, the men and women of ICE execute our mission humanely, professionally, and always in accordance with the law. ICE has three operational directorates: Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO), and the Office of the Principal Legal Advisor. As a senior executive of ICE/HSI, I serve as the assistant director of ICE/HSI International Operations.

As the largest investigative component in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), ICE/HSI protects U.S. borders by conducting multi-faceted, international law enforcement operations, and by partnering with foreign and domestic counterparts to combat criminal organizations and prevent terrorist activities.

ICE/HSI International Operations has a network of over 400 personnel, including over 180 special agents deployed to 67 attaché offices in 50 countries, who conduct investigations against TCOs, terrorist, and other criminal organizations that threaten our National security. ICE/HSI leverages its international footprint and partnerships to disrupt and dismantle TCOs that seek to exploit America's legitimate trade, travel, and financial systems, and enforces U.S. customs and immigration laws at and beyond our Nation's borders to prevent threats from entering the United States.

ICE/HSI manages several strategic/information sharing initiatives, which include:

- Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit (TCIU)
- Biometric Identification Transnational Migration Alert Program (BITMAP)
- Visa Security Program (VSP)
- Trade Transparency Units (TTUs)

HSI, domestically and abroad, focuses on critical investigative areas, which include:

- National security
- Counter-proliferation of arms and controlled technology
- Human smuggling and trafficking
- Financial crimes
- Child exploitation
- Commercial fraud and intellectual property
- Anti-Gang Enforcement
- Narcotics
- Identity and Benefit Fraud
- Worksite Enforcement
- Cyber
- Human Rights Violators and War Crimes.

ICE/ERO identifies, arrests, and removes aliens who present a danger to National security or are a risk to public safety, as well as those who enter the United States illegally, or otherwise undermine the integrity of U.S. immigration laws and border control efforts. ERO upholds America's immigration laws at, within, and beyond its borders through efficient enforcement and removal operations. ERO also develops investigative leads and provides support in locating and arresting foreign nationals wanted for crimes committed abroad who are now at-large in the United States.

ERO removal operations require complex coordination, management, and facilitation efforts to successfully remove or return aliens from the United States to their country of origin. ERO has enforcement officers strategically deployed to 19 locations around the world and leverages resources available through foreign law enforcement partners, including INTERPOL, EUROPOL, and the HSI Attaché corps.

COMBATTING TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

ICE utilizes its broad legal authorities to investigate immigration and customs violations, including those related to export control, human rights abuses, narcotics, weapons and contraband smuggling, financial crime, cyber crime, human trafficking and smuggling, child exploitation, intellectual property theft, transnational gangs, immigration document and benefit fraud, and worksite enforcement. ICE is grateful for continued Congressional support that allows ICE to maintain critical operations at home and abroad and increase our efforts to target and combat dangerous transnational gangs and other criminal organizations.

During fiscal year 2017, ICE investigations led to the disruption or dismantlement of TCOs with more than 32,958 criminal arrests, including arrests of more than 4,818 transnational gang members. ICE also seized 981,586 pounds of narcotics, made 1,205 seizures for violations of U.S. export laws and regulations, and seized nearly \$307 million in currency and monetary instruments. Additionally, ICE identified and assisted 518 human trafficking victims and more than 904 child exploitation victims.

During the last two decades, transnational organized crime has expanded dramatically in size, scope, and impact, which poses a significant threat to National security. ICE takes very seriously this threat, and targets TCOs at every critical location in the cycle: Internationally, in cooperation with foreign counterparts, where transnational criminal and terrorist organizations operate; at our Nation's physical border and ports of entry, in coordination with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), where the transportation cells attempt to exploit America's legitimate trade, travel, and transportation systems; and in cities throughout the United States, where criminal organizations earn substantial profits off their illicit activities.

As directed by the President's Executive Order 13773, *Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking*, ICE will continue to give a high priority and devote sufficient resources to dismantling TCOs and subsidiary organizations. ICE will continue to focus on cooperative work with other Federal agencies, as well as with foreign counterparts, by sharing intelligence and law enforcement information when appropriate and permitted by law.

JOINT TASK FORCES

In 2014, the Department announced its new Unity of Effort Initiative and directed our Department-wide Southern Border and Approaches Campaign (SBAC) Plan. The SBAC is part of a comprehensive security strategy designed to unify efforts across DHS components to address threats specifically associated with terrorism, illicit market-driven flows, and illegal migration across our Southern Border and Approaches. In furtherance of the SBAC, the Department commissioned three Joint Task Forces (JTFs) in November 2014. The three Joint Task Forces, JTF-East (JTF-E), JTF-West (JTF-W), and JTF-Investigations (JTF-I), are responsible for establishing operational priorities and synchronizing capabilities in order to achieve SBAC objectives.

Two of the JTFs, JTF-E and JTF-W, are geographically focused task forces that concentrate on the southern land and maritime borders and approaches to the United States all the way to Central and South America. JTF-I is a "functional", multi-component task force that employs National Case Management to identify and prioritize top TCOs affecting homeland security, manage investigations and operations to dismantle them, and identify weaknesses or gaps in our practices, technology, etc.

To address these gaps, JTF-I created and implemented HOMECORT (Homeland Criminal Organization Target), the DHS-wide process for identifying and prioritizing the top criminal networks affecting homeland security.

In order to manage and unify U.S. Government efforts against these HOMECORT criminal networks, JTF-I developed three complementary processes:

1. *National Case Management* to manage, integrate and support all the investigations and operations related to the targeted criminal network;
2. *Comprehensive Criminal Network Analysis* to provide knowledge of the criminal network; and

3. *Integrated Action Planning* to establish the business rules for conducting National Case Management and producing Comprehensive Criminal Network Analysis.

Through the sharing and fusing of each other's information, these JTF-I processes allow DHS components to:

- Identify and prioritize the top criminal networks impacting homeland security;
- Tie together and manage all the investigations, operations, arrests, and seizures (covering multiple countries, jurisdictions, areas of responsibility and programs) related to all the activities (smuggling, money laundering, corruption, etc.) of a criminal network (see complementary processes below);
- Move toward a complex common goal through a formal integrated action planning process.

Since its inception, JTF-I's interagency delegates managed and supported the targeting of 21 HOMECORT criminal networks, comprised of more than a thousand criminal investigations. To date, 13 of those networks were dismantled to the point they no longer threaten homeland security. The networks include money launderers, human smugglers, sex traffickers, drug smugglers, bulk cash smugglers, and weapons smugglers. The remaining HOMECORT-designated criminal networks continue to be the targets of active criminal investigations.

Another example of a successful joint task force model is the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST) initiative. BEST teams are ICE-led, multiagency task forces that target illicit movement of people and contraband through border areas. Other DHS entities, particularly CBP and the United States Coast Guard, participate. There are 38 BEST teams on the U.S.-Canada border and U.S.-Mexico border. Canadian and Mexican (multiagency) law enforcement partners work directly with DHS and other U.S. counterparts on investigative and interdiction missions. Canadian officials are often cross-designated as U.S. law enforcement (U.S. Code: Title 19) to promote full sharing of law enforcement information. These units are housed on the U.S. side of the border. In fiscal year 2017, the BEST teams initiated 4,034 investigations and effected 4,967 criminal arrests.

NATIONAL GANG UNIT

The National Gang Unit (NGU) is a critical part of ICE's mission to bring the fight to transnational criminal gangs. The NGU identifies and develops intelligence on gang membership, associations, activities, and international movements. It also deters and disrupts gang operations by tracing and seizing cash, weapons, and other assets derived from illicit activities.

In 2005, ICE initiated Operation Community Shield, an international law enforcement initiative that combines ICE's expansive statutory and civil enforcement authorities to combat the growth and proliferation of transnational criminal street gangs, prison gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs throughout the United States. With assistance from State, local, Tribal, and foreign law enforcement partners, the initiative helps ICE locate, investigate, prosecute, and where applicable, immediately remove gang members from our neighborhoods and ultimately from the United States.

Operation Community Shield has resulted in the criminal and administrative arrests of nearly 60,000 gang leaders, members, and associates since its inception. Among those arrests, Community Shield operations have resulted in the criminal and administrative arrests of over 7,800 leaders, members, and associates of Mara Salvatrucha-13 (MS-13), the international criminal street gang.

In 2012, ICE worked with the Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to designate MS-13 as a TCO, the first criminal street gang so designated. As a result of the designation, any property or property interests in the United States, or in the possession or control of U.S. persons in which MS-13 has an interest, are blocked. In addition, U.S. persons are prohibited from engaging in transactions with MS-13 and are subject to civil monetary penalties up to \$250,000 and imprisonment up to 20 years.

In 2016, ICE utilized the 2012 OFAC designation to develop and implement a new strategy targeting MS-13. ICE recognizes that TCOs need funding to maintain and expand their criminal organization and has been successfully identifying, exploiting, and disrupting MS-13's global financial networks. Part of ICE's new strategy is to address the threats posed by MS-13 in the United States and at their command-and-control structure in El Salvador simultaneously. Since January 2016, ICE has been deploying special agents to El Salvador to work with our host country law enforcement partners to build their financial investigative capacity to combat MS-13 and identify MS-13's financial networks within El Salvador. In addition, the deploy-

ment allows the free flow of actionable intelligence between ICE and our host country law enforcement partners.

In 2017, ICE worked with our DHS partners to form a departmental MS-13 Working Group, to include ICE, CBP, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), and the Department of Justice's Bureau of Prisons (BOP). The DHS MS-13 Working Group was formed to share intelligence, bridge intelligence gaps, eliminate redundancies, enhance collaboration, and provide visibility to all DHS entities involved in the fight against MS-13. The ultimate goal of the DHS MS-13 Working Group is to develop and implement a DHS enterprise enforcement strategy to disrupt and dismantle MS-13's global criminal networks.

As of December 28, 2017, ICE maintains 107 open investigations targeting MS-13 members and their criminal organizations globally, including Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, the District of Columbia, North Carolina, Texas, Tennessee, Ohio, California, Washington, and the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador through Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO), Violent Crimes in Aid of Racketeering (VICAR), and criminal conspiracy prosecutions. Without information sharing and partnering with our Federal, State, local, and foreign law enforcement partners, ICE would not be nearly as successful at battling MS-13 and other gangs.

LAW ENFORCEMENT INFORMATION-SHARING EFFORTS

In addition to leveraging domestic assets, ICE uses its strategically deployed personnel around the globe to use established relationships with host country law enforcement officials and mechanisms such as Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements (CMAAs) to share information and further its investigations. Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) are also invaluable instruments in obtaining and receiving international legal assistance, including evidence, for criminal investigations and prosecutions.

ICE International Operations also partners with TCIUs and international task forces in 12 countries around the world. TCIUs are comprised of foreign law enforcement officials, customs officers, immigration officers, and prosecutors who receive ICE training and undergo a strict vetting process to ensure that shared information and operational activities are not compromised. Partnering with these TCIUs enables ICE to promote direct action via information sharing and investigative leads while respecting the sovereignty of the host country and cultivating international partnerships.

Aligned with the President's Strategy in Combatting Transnational Organized Crime, TCIUs identify targets, collect evidence, share intelligence, and facilitate the prosecution of TCOs both in-country and in the United States. These efforts, which often occur thousands of miles from the U.S. borders, essentially act as an outer layer of security for the United States.

Another ICE program, BITMAP, helps provide infrastructure and capability for host governments to collect biometric data on individuals they encounter. This information is shared with U.S. law enforcement and the intelligence community; DHS in turn provides information back to these countries about these individuals. Through this process, ICE is able to track movement toward the United States, take joint action with partner nations along the route, and deter human smuggling through South and Central America. Comparisons of biometric data through BITMAP serve to identify criminal persons, wanted subjects (including international fugitives), and known or suspected terrorists. BITMAP is currently deployed to 14 countries, with near-term plans to expand to two additional countries.

ICE also leverages its information-sharing capabilities through the use of the Visa Security Program (VSP) and Trade Transparency Units (TTU). VSP deploys trained ICE special agents abroad to high-risk visa activity posts to identify and investigate potential terrorist and criminal threats before they reach the United States. VSP contributes to both counter-flow and counter-network capabilities, as well as providing support for intelligence, interdiction, and engagement. VSP special agents work alongside Department of State Consular Officers to provide real-time feedback on visa applicants prior to visa adjudication. VSP agents receive referrals based on automated screening of U.S. visa applicants conducted by ICE, in cooperation with CBP.

The core mission of the TTU is to aggressively target criminal organizations and individuals involved in trade-based money laundering (TBML) but also those perpetrating contraband smuggling and customs fraud. In order to achieve this mission, HSI reached out to key foreign trading partners and successfully established (16) TTUs abroad. TTU currently has partnerships with Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, France, Guatemala, Pan-

ama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, United Kingdom, and Uruguay. These countries are highly dependent upon value-added taxes (VAT) on commodities, which served as a motivating factor in the establishment of TTUs. These foreign partners recognize the value of information sharing, which permits the comparison of international trade and cross-border movement of merchandise.

The United States and its foreign TTU partners currently provide trade data which that allows HSI investigators and analysts to detect anomalies which may be indicative of criminal activity such as TBML, contraband smuggling, and trade/customs fraud. This information sharing allows for the cross-referencing of trade data with other pertinent information such as Bank Secrecy Act (BSA) reports. The ultimate goal of most criminal organizations is financial gain either to promote on-going illicit activity or as the finality of this activity, hence trade-based money laundering is often the primary means by which they launder proceeds for their criminal enterprises.

ICE's Law Enforcement Information-Sharing Initiative (LEISI) serves as an active advocate in support of law enforcement information sharing both internal and external to DHS. This includes information sharing between Federal, State, local, Tribal, territorial, and foreign partners. LEISI coordinates throughout the law enforcement community to improve the understanding of information needs, provide leadership in resolving policy issues that may inhibit law enforcement information sharing, and develop approaches to overcome traditional barriers to information sharing.

The LEISI program provides program management support and oversight to include administration of the Law Enforcement Information Sharing Strategy. For fiscal year 2018, additional focus is on international information for initiatives such as: Preventing and Combatting Serious Crimes (PCSC), the Five Country Ministerial (FCM), the Five Country Conference (FCC), and ERO's Criminal History Information Sharing (CHIS) program.

CHIS is a DHS-led initiative between the United States and its international partners whose purpose is to provide participating nations with criminal history information in advance of an alien's removal. In turn, foreign countries share their information with the United States. The information shared helps protect law enforcement personnel, regional security, and public safety officers all over the globe. The initiative supports efforts in immigration management, law enforcement and National security. Countries currently participating in the CHIS initiative are: Mexico, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, the Bahamas, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, with planned expansion to additional countries in fiscal year 2018.

CHIS enables ICE to identify wanted felons, including gang members, who fled to the United States to avoid prosecution in their home countries. Without this initiative, dangerous criminals might be able to circumvent prosecution. In fiscal year 2017, CHIS sent 84,067 outbound notices of removal and ICE's foreign partners returned 21,434 positive responses, including 2,810 foreign criminal history records, 93 foreign criminal warrants and information related to 199 transnational gang members.

During fiscal year 2017, ICE achieved significant successes in Latin America and the Caribbean through the development of programs that bolstered the law enforcement, customs, and immigration enforcement capabilities of international partners. These successes included the joint interagency execution of Operation CITADEL, which focused efforts on building partner nation capacity in identifying, disrupting and dismantling TCOs, including those designated as drug trafficking organizations and terrorist support networks. Interagency information sharing and collaboration from agencies within DHS, the Department of State, the Department of Justice (including the Federal Bureau of Investigation), and the Department of Defense, as well as participating partner nations, has been an essential piece of Operation CITADEL's efforts to build capacity and to address identified threats. Operation CITADEL provided resources to enhance foreign partners' investigative capabilities to counter transnational threats and organized crime that, in turn, provided ICE the ability to expand domestic and international investigations well beyond the U.S. borders and to more effectively target the illicit pathways exploited by TCOs.

In fiscal year 2017, the Operation CITADEL effected the training of 809 partner national personnel, 231 criminal arrests, 54 indictments, 9 convictions, 2,005 BITMAP enrollments, seizure of \$252,235 in currency, 18,224 pounds of narcotics, seizure of 27 firearms, and encountered 3,669 aliens of possible National security concern.

CONCLUSION

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your continued support of DHS and ICE and their missions. ICE is committed to continuing

its successful practice of sharing information with domestic and foreign partners and leveraging its resources around the world to stem cross-border criminal organizations. I appreciate your interest in these important issues and the efforts I have discussed today.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. KING. Thank you very much, Mr. Villanueva for your testimony and for your service.

Our final witness is Mr. Richard H. Glenn, the acting deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs in the State Department.

Mr. Glenn oversees his department's air wing and is responsible for foreign assistance programs in the Western Hemisphere that combat illicit drugs and organized crime and support law enforcement and the rule of law. Mr. Glenn began working with International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs in 2011 in Mexico City, implementing the Mérida Initiative.

Since joining the State Department as a foreign service officer in 1999, Mr. Glenn has served in Ecuador, South Africa, Czech Republic, Argentina, and Mexico.

Mr. Glenn, you are recognized for your testimony. Thank you very much for being here today.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD H. GLENN, ACTING DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTIC, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. GLENN. Good morning, Chairman King, Ranking Member Rice, Members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning to share with you the Department of State's work to combat transnational gangs, primarily through information sharing.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, INL as we know it, leads the Department's efforts to combat crime overseas. We strengthen the capacity of foreign partners to mitigate crime before it reaches our borders.

Our neighbors, particularly Central America's Northern Triangle, suffer extortion, violence, and instability carried out by gangs like MS-13. Gang activity in the region undermines institutions. It drives migration and it threatens citizen security. This has a direct bearing on our own National security.

Like other forms of transnational crime, combatting gangs requires well-coordinated and comprehensive solutions. INL approaches this threat abroad on three fronts: First through regional coordination and information sharing through vetted and specialized units; No. 2, community anti-gang efforts; and third through institutional reform and capacity building of our foreign partners.

INL support to vetted and specialized units provides U.S. and partner National law enforcement with the tools they need to investigate complex and high-threat gang cases. Through our support, foreign law enforcement gains the skills necessary to become reliable, trusted partners of U.S. law enforcement, routinely sharing information to disrupt the work of transnational gangs.

We support 56 specialized units throughout Central America, including FBI's TAG units and ICE's TCIUs. In 2016 alone the Northern Triangle and the vetted units that we support made

3,116 arrests and denied more than \$200 million in revenue to criminal organizations.

Because gangs are transnational I cannot overstate the importance of strong regional coordination. We must be nimble and INL continually evolves its approach. INL and FBI develop the regional criminal gang intelligence platform to enable real-time information flow between TAG units.

Last May, INL, with the Department of Homeland Security, created the Border Immigration and Coordination Center, which we call GCIF, a Salvadoran multi-agency task force to help U.S., State, and local authorities identify, arrest, or deny entry to gang members.

To date, GCIF has identified 240 MS-13 members not previously known to U.S. law enforcement, 46 not previously known to Salvadoran authorities and 37 Salvadoran human smugglers and facilitators.

Just in the last 2 weeks GCIF identified 16 Salvadoran gang members, four of which had active arrest warrants in El Salvador for crimes, including aggravated homicide. They will be processed for deportation and returned to Salvadoran law enforcement authorities.

INL is working to expand GCIF offices in El Salvador to include Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexican authorities.

We also work closely with our partners in Mexico through the Mérida Initiative to strengthen our shared border security and to combat transnational crime through enhanced information sharing. Through INL support, in partnership with DHS, biometric information Mexico collects at their borders and ports is now being shared with the United States.

This capability enhances our countries' joint efforts to respond to migration trends and to conduct cross-border investigations of gang members and special interest aliens.

We recognize, however, improving operational coordination and information sharing is not enough. Citizens need to have the trust and confidence in police to report crimes and police need that information to successfully crack down on gang activity.

In Central America, INL is strengthening local law enforcement's capacity to connect with communities and address gang violence by implementing violence prevention programs in high-crime areas, many of which have seen homicide rates plunge between 40 percent and 73 percent in 2015.

INL's third line of effort supports building strong institutions. Arresting gang members is only effective if justice institutions can prosecute, convict, and incarcerate criminals. INL and our inter-agency partners enhance the capacity of justice institutions, including attorney generals to introduce legal reforms, mitigate gang violence, and combat corruption.

Combatting transnational gangs requires comprehensive and well-coordinated efforts. Achieving lasting change is not quick or easy, but the comprehensive approach we have put in place is showing promising results. And a sustained commitment to our partners in the region is critical to protecting our homeland.

Chairman King, Ranking Member Rice, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Glenn follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD H. GLENN

JANUARY 18, 2018

Chairman King, Ranking Member Rice, distinguished Members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the work of the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) to combat transnational gangs, including through information sharing. Transnational gangs are key drivers of instability throughout the Western Hemisphere, posing significant threats to security and prosperity here in the United States and to our partners abroad, particularly in Central America. Transnational gangs extort individuals and small businesses and perpetuate high levels of violence and crime, causing large numbers of Central Americans, particularly in the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, to migrate to the United States.

Gangs, predominantly Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and the 18th Street Gang, which originated in Los Angeles in the 1980's, continue to forcibly recruit vulnerable Central American immigrants and expand their influence in the United States. With a presence in more than 40 U.S. States, communities across the country are forced to grapple with increased levels of homicide, extortion, local drug dealing, prostitution, and other violent crimes carried out by gangs. MS-13 is particularly prevalent in El Salvador, contributing to its notoriety as one of the most violent countries in the world in 2015 and 2016. While El Salvador's homicide rate for 2017 decreased by 25 percent from 2016 levels, gang activity still contributes to sustained levels of extortion, violence, and insecurity. U.S. law enforcement reports more frequent communication between MS-13 members in El Salvador and the United States, further reinforcing the growing transnational nature of MS-13. Both MS-13 and Barrio 18 have a significant presence in Honduras, though not on the same scale as in El Salvador. In Guatemala, gang activity consists mainly of street gangs focused on extortion. However, transnational gang members, especially Barrio 18, are increasingly extending operations in Guatemala as El Salvador and Honduras intensify efforts to combat gangs in their respective countries.

As the reach of transnational gangs span borders and communities, successfully dismantling them require comprehensive and well-coordinated solutions at the local, State, Federal, and international levels. INL leads the Department of State's efforts to combat transnational crime overseas by strengthening the capacity of foreign partners to combat and prevent crime at the source before it reaches U.S. borders. Our programs complement those of, and are closely coordinated with, the efforts of our U.S. interagency colleagues, including the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

In Central America, INL leads the Department's implementation of regional efforts to combat transnational crime under the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) and in support of the U.S. Strategy for Central America, a multi-year interagency initiative to secure U.S. borders and protect U.S. citizens by addressing the security, governance, and economic drivers of migration and illicit trafficking, and to promote private-sector investment in Central America. Established in 2008, CARSI brings years of lessons learned and best practices to the current fight against transnational gangs, including the knowledge that combatting MS-13 and other transnational gangs requires a multi-faceted approach that couples law enforcement efforts to deny transnational gangs the ability to operate with building stronger, more accountable institutions that bring criminals to justice. To this end, INL support under CARSI focuses on strengthening the capacity of foreign governments' law enforcement and criminal justice systems through a three-part approach: Regional coordination and information sharing through vetted and specialized units, bottom-up community anti-gang efforts, and top-down institutional reform and capacity building. Through this approach, we prevent gang activity and recruitment in Central American communities, ensure institutions are capable of bringing gang members to justice, and strengthen the ability of partner-nation law enforcement to disrupt and dismantle transnational gangs.

Our Northern Triangle partners are also working to enhance their efforts to disrupt and dismantle transnational crime. In August 2016, the Northern Triangle governments signed the "Regional Plan Against Transnational Organized Crime". The

agreement includes measures for information sharing on organized crime investigations and increased joint patrolling of border zones by police and military personnel to curb arms and drug smuggling, as well as the movement of gang members. As part of this plan, high-level officials, including the Attorney Generals, meet to increase collaboration and coordination between the countries.

REGIONAL COORDINATION AND INFORMATION SHARING

Working closely with our interagency colleagues, including DoJ and DHS, INL combats transnational gangs through building the capacity of vetted units and specialized task forces to investigate cases and to serve as reliable, trusted partners of U.S. law enforcement. Due to the transnational nature of MS-13 and Barrio 18, our efforts increasingly focus on enhancing cross-border intelligence sharing and operations. We currently support 56 partner nation vetted units, task forces, and specialized tactical units throughout Central America. These units, typically comprised of elite members of partner nation law enforcement institutions, are capable of investigating complex and high-threat gang cases and other key security issues. In Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, INL provides training, equipment, technology, and logistical support to FBI-vetted and advised Transnational Anti-Gang Units (TAGs), which lead international efforts to target criminal gangs. Through the TAGs, U.S. and Central American law enforcement partners work together to investigate, disrupt, and dismantle transnational gangs, including through the collection and dissemination of intelligence to support investigations. The results of these units have been remarkable and, importantly, have led to arrests in both the United States and Central America, and to lives saved. In 2015 the TAG unit in El Salvador started monitoring Salvadorans with active links to gang members throughout the East Coast of the United States, which contributed to the identification of the entire leadership structure for local MS-13 and 18th Street gangs and the arrest of 98 MS-13 gang members in Charlotte, Boston, and Newark, saving four lives in the United States and 28 in El Salvador.

To enhance TAG units' ability to attack criminal gang activity in the region, INL supported the development of the Regional Criminal Gang Intelligence Platform (SICAT), which was operationalized in October 2017. INL continues to support SICAT, which enables real-time information sharing for TAG units to track gang-related activities, migration, human smuggling, and the trafficking of drugs, weapons, and illicit goods across the Northern Triangle. The platform facilitates secure and immediate exchange of information, directly supporting the Northern Triangle Presidents agreement in the 2016 "Regional Plan Against Transnational Organized Crime" to exchange information on transnational gang activity. SICAT is a critical component for increased cross-border coordination and operations.

In the Northern Triangle and Panama, INL supports U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)-vetted Transnational Criminal Investigative Units (TCIUs) through the provision of equipment and technology, training, and logistical support. TCIUs disrupt and dismantle transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and investigate a litany of crimes, including human trafficking, smuggling, and money laundering, which often have a nexus with transnational gangs. Our support for TCIUs includes DHS Operation CITADEL, a multi-year interagency effort to bolster partner nation capabilities to identify, disrupt, and dismantle TCOs by targeting the networks used to move migrants, illicit funds, and contraband throughout Central America. In 2017, CITADEL's intelligence and information sharing, mentoring, and capacity building through cross-border TCIU operations resulted in 231 arrests, including nine MS-13 members in Honduras. CITADEL also led authorities to identify or disrupt a number of human trafficking and financial networks of gangs and TCOs in the region.

Extortion is the main source of revenue for Salvadoran gangs. Wide-spread extortion perpetuated by gangs is often cited as a primary security concern by citizens of the Northern Triangle and one of the drivers of migration from the region. As a result, INL established several specialized task forces beginning in 2012 comprised of police and prosecutors to address extortion and dismantle transnational gangs' extensive financial networks. Through technical assistance and mentoring by INL and DOJ Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development Assistance and Training (OPDAT) advisors, investigations by these task forces have produced impressive results. In 2017, asset forfeiture and financial crimes task forces executed numerous large-scale operations with hundreds of arrests and multi-million-dollar asset seizures of gang members and associates, eliminating access to their financial resources. For example, the Salvadoran Business Crimes Task Force (BCTF) successfully dismantled four MS-13 and 18th Street extortion networks, maintaining a 96 percent conviction rate. In 2016, these units contributed to Operation Jaque, El Sal-

vador's first effort to dismantle MS-13 financial structures. The Salvadoran Attorney General's Office expanded the BCTF concept to anti-extortion units located in each of El Salvador's 19 departments. In September 2017, the units executed a second MS-13 financial takedown, Operation Tecana, which involved cross-border coordination with Guatemala and DHS, resulting in 137 arrests, including six police officers, for collaborating with MS-13 and other criminal organizations and the seizure of properties and businesses used to launder money from illicit acts.

In September 2017, INL and interagency efforts to more effectively coordinate the network of Northern Triangle task forces and vetted units contributed to the success of Operation Regional Shield. INL-supported prosecutors and police in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, working with OPDAT and the FBI, conducted a coordinated regional operation against gang members in their respective countries. The operation led to the arrest of 3,800 gang members in the United States and Central America. Law enforcement officials seized six firearms and charged 284 gang members in Guatemala; seized 14 businesses and 11 luxury vehicles and arrested 12 MS-13 money launderers in Honduras; and filed 3,477 criminal charges, resulting in more than 1,400 arrests and the dismantling of eight MS-13 and Barrio 18 cliques in El Salvador.

In May 2017, INL facilitated the creation of the Border Integration and Coordination Center (GCIF), a Salvadoran multi-agency task force supporting DHS and U.S. State and local law enforcement to identify, arrest, or deny entry to gang members. GCIF officials, originally deployed to McAllen, Texas, conduct research and report information to DHS and relevant law enforcement for further action. The information provided through GCIF was not available to U.S. authorities prior to the implementation of the program. Since its inception, GCIF information has led to the arrest of eight gang members and one human smuggler in the United States, as well as the arrest of a gang member in Italy who was on Salvadoran authorities' top-wanted criminal list. GCIF has identified 240 MS-13 members not previously known to U.S. law enforcement, 46 not previously known to Salvadoran authorities, and 37 Salvadoran human smugglers and facilitators. GCIF queries also identified 88 Salvadoran nationals with active arrest warrants in El Salvador; information U.S. officials utilized when reviewing immigration applications made by these individuals. In December 2017, the last Salvadoran officials deployed to McAllen returned to El Salvador, joining a permanent staff of 10 police officers, five migration officials, and two corrections officers—alongside representatives from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security—at a dedicated Salvadoran headquarters where they will continue to review these records.

Due to the initial successes and strengthened coordination between United States and Salvadoran authorities, INL is working to expand GCIF to include Guatemalan and Honduran officials. In July 2017, the INL-funded United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime human trafficking project facilitated the first Interparliamentary Forum among legislators, Attorneys General, and Security Ministers of the Northern Triangle countries. The country delegates concluded the meeting with signed commitments, including support for GCIF, the first tangible regional commitment to the GCIF by the Northern Triangle governments. At the same time, we are working to expand GCIF beyond its current location and are promoting it as a resource for U.S. States and local jurisdictions with significant MS-13 presence. In October 2017, INL and DHS reached out to the Suffolk County, Long Island Police Department (SCPD), which submitted to GCIF a list of 454 individuals suspected of gang affiliation. GCIF identified and provided potential residential locations of known gang members and individuals wanted in El Salvador.

Through INL's International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEAs), we provide specialized training to criminal justice sector officials and facilitate collaboration between partner nations' and U.S. Federal, State, and local law enforcement to address common problems. From 2015 through 2017, 211 law enforcement officials from 12 countries, including more than 100 from the Northern Triangle, attended anti-gang training courses at ILEAs San Salvador and Roswell. The courses were taught either by the FBI or Salvadoran National Police to provide participants with tools to investigate gang-related crimes.

INFORMATION SHARING WITH MEXICO

Through our strong security partnership with Mexico, INL's efforts under the Mérida Initiative includes enhancing information sharing with Mexico to disrupt transnational crime and TCOs. In 2015, the United States agreed to help Mexico develop a nation-wide, interagency biometrics system capable of interfacing with U.S. biometrics systems. INL, in coordination with DHS, commenced a pilot project in 2017 to enable Mexico's National Migration Institute to routinely collect and ex-

change biometric information on migrants with the United States. As of 2017, all biometric information collected in migration centers and ports of entry along Mexico's southern border with Guatemala and Belize is shared with United States law enforcement. This capability enhances our countries' joint efforts to identify, track, and dismantle TCOs and other violent criminal groups; to identify Known or Suspected Terrorists before they reach U.S. borders; to track migration patterns; to anticipate, plan for, and respond to migration surges; to analyze human trafficking networks; and to support cross-border investigations of gang members and other criminals. INL partners with ICE and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to train and mentor Mexican migration officials. We will explore expanding this biometric exchange with Mexico to prisons, airports, and other Mexican security agencies.

The depth of our cooperation with Mexico to strengthen border security, control migration, and dismantle transnational criminal networks is unprecedented. Since 2014, Mexico has significantly increased its presence along its southern border with Guatemala and Belize. In 2016, Mexico's Migration Agency detained 188,595 migrants headed to the United States. Ninety percent of those migrants were Central Americans, and 17,889 were unaccompanied children. Mexico's cooperation to control migration strengthens our own border security and saves the United States billions of dollars in potential deportation costs.

Mexico continues to increase engagement with the United States and Central American partners to combat shared threats from organized crime, and we welcome this very positive step in regional collaboration.

BOTTOM-UP ANTI-GANG EFFORTS

In addition to our bilateral and regional coordination efforts to enhance information sharing, INL also implements proven successful community-level anti-gang interventions in Central America, given a significant amount of gang activity in the region is localized. These interventions strengthen the capacity of police, make communities more resilient to gang infiltration, and establish trust and relationships between communities and the police. Through Model Police Precincts (MPP) and Place-Based Strategy (PBS) sites, we strengthen local law enforcement's ability to prevent and respond to gang violence by identifying key high-crime areas and communities at risk, and partnering with implementers to develop strategically balanced and integrated criminal justice-sector projects. As a result of these strong partnerships, MPP and PBS sites have seen reductions in homicide rates ranging from 40 to 73 percent since 2015. We also tackle gang recruitment, a pervasive issue for youth in the Northern Triangle countries, through the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) and Police Athletic League (PAL) programs. These police-led programs provide anti-gang and life skills training, sports, and other activities to at-risk children. As a result, children develop tools to resist recruitment tactics and citizen trust in law enforcement is strengthened. To date, more than 300,000 students have graduated from INL-sponsored GREAT programs in Central America, and 1,624 police officers achieved certification to teach the GREAT curriculum.

TOP-DOWN INSTITUTIONAL EFFORTS

Arresting gang members is only effective if justice institutions are capable of prosecuting, convicting, and incarcerating these criminals. Through training, technical assistance, and mentoring, INL and our interagency partners enhance the capacity of the Northern Triangle justice institutions and ensure the security of prosecutors and judges working on high-profile cases. These efforts are essential as corruption and impunity remain significant challenges in the region. We work closely with the Attorney Generals of the Northern Triangle countries to introduce legal reforms, mitigate gang violence, and combat corruption. Many key successes, including Operation Regional Shield executed in September 2017, are coordinated by Northern Triangle Attorney Generals, with U.S. support. Furthermore, by helping Salvadoran and Guatemalan prisons improve security and infrastructure, we work to ensure that gang leaders are unable to direct criminal activities while incarcerated.

CONCLUSION

Dismantling transnational gangs and ending the violence and crime they carry out requires sustained and well-coordinated efforts between law enforcement while also strengthening the institutions that administer justice and investing in local communities to increase trust and confidence in the police and provide citizens with the tools necessary to resist gang influence. These are smart and necessary investments, whether it is combating transnational gangs here at home or abroad. Secu-

rity in Central America is vital to the security of the United States. INL's work to strengthen foreign partner capacity in the region provides critical linkages between U.S. and foreign law enforcement to make possible greater information sharing. Like other forms of transnational crime, however, dismantling gangs does not lend itself to simple, short-term solutions. This is a long-term endeavor, but the comprehensive approach we have put in place to tackle the considerable challenges before us is demonstrating measurable results. INL will continue to support programming that enhances information sharing and regional coordination to improve citizen security in Central America and combat the influence of transnational gangs and criminal organizations in the United States.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Glenn.

I will direct my first question initially to the FBI but then to be answered by anyone who wants to respond. What has changed or will change in your ability to target MS-13 since the October 2017 attorney general direction to make the TCO a priority? OK, that will be the first part of the question.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Thank you, sir. Certainly we at the FBI have redirected resources appropriately. We are actively engaged with our TAG teams or our TAG task forces down in the Northern Triangle with regard to MS-13 and the 18th Street gang.

Ultimately our goal is to get ahead of the threat through intelligence sharing and be more proactive as opposed to reactive. We rely heavily upon the information that is coming out of the Northern Triangle.

We have SSAs that are assigned to these vetted teams that are trusted advisors providing subject-matter expertise regarding investigative techniques that we utilize. Then the goal is to gain actionable intelligence and share that with our domestic partners, with our trusted Safe Streets partners across the United States in order to get ahead of the threat.

Mr. KING. Thank you. Let me, before I go to Mr. Villanueva, I would be remiss if I didn't also commend the FBI for the terrific work they are doing in the—and again, this is HSI, FBI and the local police are doing a phenomenal job, and so I want to—if you can, again, pass on to them my thanks for the terrific job they are doing.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Yes, sir. I will. Thank you.

Mr. KING. Now to Mr. Villanueva and Mr. Glenn, as a follow-on to that question, did this attorney general's direction add any capabilities to HSI or to the State Department?

Mr. VILLANUEVA. Sir, what I will say is that the direction will actually help us to focus on the problem and to double down our efforts into targeting MS-13 and other violent gangs by bringing all ICE tools to bear, whether it is the criminal enforcement side they have through HSI or the administrative through ERO.

But also to bring our traditional financial investigations to target their finances, their assets, and to go with a holistic approach against this violent gang, also by working with CBP, with the interagency and working with INL to bring capacity-building efforts to the region very much like the FBI is doing to continue to raise that level of awareness and the expertise to tackle those violent gangs.

So a really important direction. It really helps the interagency and the law enforcement community to hone down into a terrific problem that is affecting our National security.

Mr. KING. Mr. Glenn.

Mr. GLENN. I would just echo what Mr. Villanueva mentioned, as well as the success of our programs relies largely on the political will of the countries that we work in. Without that political will we can do a tremendous amount of work and have very few results.

When we get high-level engagement, for example, the attorney general's engagement with the countries that we work in, it sends a very clear signal as to the priorities of the United States and helps them internally develop the political will that is needed to make these programs successful.

Mr. KING. If I could follow up with you, Mr. Glenn, how is the McAllen coordination facilitated by INL? How is that enhancing the coordination between, say, the police in El Salvador and in U.S. communities such as Nassau and Suffolk Counties where Miss Rice and I represent?

Mr. GLENN. Sure. So it has been a tremendous development and a very effective tool, but what it does is it places or has placed in El Salvador a law enforcement official who has access to their criminal information databases and puts them in physical connection with law enforcement authorities in the United States and provides us between the two countries an avenue with which to share the information.

That is why we have been able to get the results that we have gotten. As people have come across the border and been apprehended, we can run fingerprints against databases in El Salvador.

So people who have misrepresented who they are, your fingerprint doesn't lie, and that is how we have been able to actually identify people wanted for murder back in El Salvador and been able to deport them and see that they experience justice.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Glenn.

Now I will recognize the Ranking Member. But let me just say before I formally recognize her, is that Miss Rice has been a great partner in all this. We had a joint hearing back in Central Islip on MS-13 back in, I guess, May or June, and I want to thank her for her cooperation and bipartisan spirit in this.

With that, I recognize the Ranking Member.

Miss RICE. Thank you, Chairman King.

Mr. Glenn, what are the largest Russian gangs that you have come across, and what are the kind of criminal activities that they are involved in? How are you trying to combat Russian cyber crime?

Mr. GLENN. So our focus in the Western Hemisphere has been on Latin American gangs, MS-13, 18th Street. Russian gangs in the Western Hemisphere has not been a focus.

What I can do is take that question back to those who focus on Russian law enforcement matters.

Miss RICE. But if you are talking about transnational criminal organizations, I mean, the Russians, given what they did during the elections last year have to be front and center on—I mean, just out of curiosity is there any focus on that at all?

Mr. GLENN. Right.

Miss RICE. I am not saying take away from MS-13, but if you are looking at transnational criminal organizations I would think that the Russians are right up there.

Mr. GLENN. The focus in the Western Hemisphere has been on MS-13 and 18th Street.

Miss RICE. Are you aware of any effort to address Russian—
Mr. GLENN. Not in the Western Hemisphere.

Miss RICE [continuing]. Criminal organizations? No.

Mr. GLENN. Not in the Western Hemisphere.

Miss RICE. Well—

Mr. GLENN. Not INL programming.

Miss RICE. OK.

Mr. Villanueva, there are many undocumented immigrants who I am sure you are aware are victims of transnational criminal organizations, including MS-13, certainly where Chairman King and I are from. They witness crimes committed by gang members, but as you know, many of them don't want to come forward because they are afraid that they are then going to be taken into custody, deported depending on what their status is.

So my question is: You know, it seems that the administration's rhetoric and policies toward undocumented immigrants have really caused that fear to escalate. So how are you as law enforcement agencies, needing information from people who are maybe here illegally but are being victimized and have information to help you address the criminal activities of MS-13 and other gangs, how do you deal with that issue?

Mr. VILLANUEVA. Ma'am, thank you very much for the question. Your point is extremely valid and it is a concern that we law enforcement deal with every day. As a matter of fact, there are protections for witnesses when they come forward to law enforcement, whether they are in the country legally or not.

Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, the INA, we can provide those individuals with continued presence. That authority is delegated to the Secretary of Homeland Security, which she then delegates that to ICE, which is one of the programs that I have overseen of. It is what we call the Parole Branch.

We can work with that community and we can offer protections, continued presence, significant public benefit paroles and there are some other tools out there to protect those individuals from being deported, to protect those individuals from violence from those gangs.

So there are protections for them when they come forward to law enforcement. When I am saying law enforcement, not only ICE, HSI. When they come forward to the FBI we will work with our FBI partners to grant those protections to any witness that come forward regardless of that person's immigration status.

Miss RICE. Has that made it easier for you to get information? I mean how do you get the word out that it is OK for people to come forward?

Mr. VILLANUEVA. So we do have actually outreach campaigns through the victim assistance program and certainly efforts like this and where we have the ability to talk to the American people about all the programs are paramount to get the word out, so really appreciate your question on this topic.

Miss RICE. Great, thank you.

I think that is it.

Mr. KING. Mr. Perry, let me thank you for—articulately and more intelligently than I would ever do.

Mr. PERRY. My privilege, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KING. The gentleman is recognized.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you.

Mr. Richardson, a couple questions here kind-of in different directions and maybe a little off the topic of collaboration, but somewhat in it. Not only transnational crimes but if a terrorist activity or event occurs in the United States that would be something you would collaborate with other agencies on as the FBI. Is that correct? I just want to make sure I am not out of bounds here.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Yes. Yes.

Mr. PERRY. That is correct, right? So if I could, what compels your organization or local law enforcement for that matter to work with the National Counterterrorism Center in some type of a criminal or alleged terrorist event? What compels that? What is the precedent? What has to happen?

Mr. RICHARDSON. So counterterrorism is not my expertise.

Mr. PERRY. I understand.

Mr. RICHARDSON. However, I can tell you that NCTC is a great partner of ours. We work with them each and every day on the counterterrorism front and share information on a regular basis, both on a Classified level and an Unclassified level.

Mr. PERRY. If you were working on a case, so to speak though, and you determined that you need to bring the NCTC in, what makes that determination? Do they offer? Do you see things? How does that happen?

I am trying to figure out what that nexus is, and I have got a specific example in mind and I won't keep you in suspense.

The mass shooting in Las Vegas, ISIS in June and August, per my recollection, warned the United States or warned us, warned the public that they were going to attack Las Vegas. Then I think up to four times post the incident claimed responsibility.

Yet at this point I don't think there is any NCTC involvement, but there is FBI involvement. So I am trying to figure out what is happening there? Do you know?

Mr. RICHARDSON. So I couldn't speak to the Las Vegas shooting incident in this particular environment because of classification issues.

Mr. PERRY. Well, what is the normal protocol though? What would invoke? What would precipitate involving the NCTC?

Mr. RICHARDSON. Specifically I would have to get back to you. I am happy to do that.

Mr. PERRY. There is no normal protocol that somebody has to request it? You hear some traffic. You see some traffic. None of that? There is not a specific protocol that you know of at this time?

Mr. RICHARDSON. So my information is dated but I will tell you based upon my personal experience working counterterrorism matters the dialog with NCTC happens every day in group meetings and then individually with folks that work from each agency. So I can tell you that that dialog is on-going. It is seamless.

Mr. PERRY. OK.

Mr. RICHARDSON. But specifically if you are asking me for protocols I will have to get back to you on that.

Mr. PERRY. Yes, if you could, please.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Sure.

Mr. PERRY. I would like to be able to understand that a little bit better. Moving on with the remaining time I want to explore an area where this, again, is maybe out of the particular realm of this conversation, but Congress is meant to provide oversight in our role, and we provide a check on the Executive branch to ensure the balance of power between the two branches.

I have oftentimes, and you might not have and probably have nothing to do with this, but been frustrated by asking for briefings on particular issues from the FBI only to be told there is no briefing available. We are not going to brief you.

I understand the sensitivity of the case and that we don't want to jeopardize any on-going investigation. I will tell you one in particular that I have requested and recently requested again, and I am trying to work through whatever the protocols are.

Imran Awan is a case that I am interested in. We don't seem to have much information. I am just trying to verify and validate some things. This is an incident where literally the Congress is involved.

As I understand it the FBI's involved, yet we can get no information—zero. We can't get a briefing. We don't see any reports from the FBI so we don't know where the investigation stands.

Is it solely bank fraud? Is there something more to do with the links to Pakistan and the shadow, if you want to call it that, or whatever you want to call the car sales exercise and money laundering and so on and so forth? These seem to be reasonable questions for Members of Congress.

Certainly I have got a bona-fide Top Secret clearance and plus whatever you characterize the one here in Congress. What must Members of Congress do to get a reasonable briefing on events that are appropriate? Is there something I am missing?

Mr. RICHARDSON. No, sir. We make every effort to provide those briefings at the request of Congress and others. I would encourage you to continue to make that request. We will send it up through our channels.

I will tell you that we are hesitant to comment both publicly or privately on on-going investigations. As a matter of fact, we are prohibited to do that. However, in certain instances we are able to provide those briefings when the request comes in.

So I am very familiar with—

Mr. PERRY. If you would please make a note that I have made the request but maybe it will have a little more weight if you send it forward. But we will continue to, and I look forward to a continuing conversation on this and other issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Perry.

The gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KING. Former prosecutor himself.

Mr. KEATING. That is right. That is correct. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank all of you for your service to the country. It is really appreciated, and it is great to see the interagency cooperation on display here this morning.

I had a question, I guess Mr. Glenn first. You were describing some of the conditions in El Salvador and you were talking about how many homicides, gang activity, the violence that is there. It is a pretty violent place, isn't it?

Mr. GLENN. Yes.

Mr. KEATING. Young people that are there, is there coercive activities with these gangs and other groups to coerce them into criminal activities?

Mr. GLENN. Yes.

Mr. KEATING. What would you say, and is it important to have cooperation, as you mentioned, with the local people in the country, not just the leaders themselves? That is part of what we are trying to instill. That is part of the three things you mentioned, correct?

Mr. GLENN. Correct.

Mr. KEATING. So what are we to make of sending 200,000 people back to El Salvador in huge numbers? What is that going to—what message does that send to the people we are trying to create this cooperation with in El Salvador when they see family members who have fled because of danger, fear, being sent back?

Is that something that instills or will enhance cooperation locally in our activities? What kind of message could that send?

Mr. GLENN. Sure. Well, I think it is important at least in terms of why we do what we do in Central America, specifically in El Salvador. The reason that we offer the assistance that we do is because of the conditions in these countries.

Mr. KEATING. Right.

Mr. GLENN. So we have—

Mr. KEATING. So I mean is it fair to say that sending these people that fled from those type of coercive activities and dangers we could be sending them right back into those dangerous situations—

Mr. GLENN. Well, from an INL perspective, our responsibility is to—

Mr. KEATING. No, no, I am sorry. I am just asking you with your knowledge not as an official answer, but—

Mr. GLENN. Yes.

Mr. KEATING [continuing]. You know, with the knowledge which obviously you have for that part of the world and what is happening, is that kind-of a possibility?

Mr. GLENN. Yes, but there are tough conditions and that is why we are there trying to help resolve, to help them get the security infrastructure that they need.

Mr. KEATING. So nothing has changed suddenly from the point where those people fled from that coercive activity and it is still a problem. I am wouldn't say there's not improvement, but it's still a problem.

Mr. GLENN. Oh, yes. I think we have seen some real improvement, especially in some of the most dangerous neighborhoods, the neighborhood of Chamelecon in Honduras, for example, outside of San Pedro Sula. You know, in partnership with USAID and DOD, INL's place-based strategy has made significant improvements in a neighborhood like that that was a primary—

Mr. KEATING. So but it is still dangerous?

Mr. GLENN. Dangerous and getting better.

Mr. KEATING. The country is—yes, great.

Mr. GLENN. Yes.

Mr. KEATING. All right. Thank you. I know those are difficult questions to put you on the line for, but it is important to say as part of your earlier testimony indicated.

You know, there are about 100 people, almost 100 people a day in the United States dying, and when you look at the gang activity and the other activities.

But when we are looking at transnational criminal organizations, the one that is killing the most people in our country, as I said, almost 100 a day, are those activities that surround opioids and Fentanyl coming into our country, being counterfeited to look like Percocet or other commercial drugs, coming in with great potency.

It has spiked the deaths in my area and most of the country enormously. A lot of that is coming from China. Can you comment on what we are trying to do where right under the nose of the Chinese government the manufacturing of these that are occurring and being shipped through?

Because clearly that is costing the most American lives every day. Anything we are doing to focus on that specifically? Any of you, sorry; FBI, too.

Mr. GLENN. I can just mention briefly some of the things that INL has been doing. One of the important things on Fentanyl and the analogs of Fentanyl, so there are multiple types of synthetic opioids that are being produced in China and brought into the United States, is to get those substances on the list of prohibited substances.

That has been successful. We will be going into the meetings in April in Vienna to get additional substances put on those lists.

Engagement with China has been effective, and I think we have begun to see China taking a proactive—

Mr. KEATING. Quickly because my time is running out, it is important to note that my discussions in private meetings with the Customs and Border Patrol, Homeland people, the greatest trend now is getting the shipments through UPS, FedEx, the United States Postal Service.

These things are coming and you also have that in coordination with use of the internet and maybe some of the dark parts of the internet, too.

I mean, is that creates a great challenge, a lot of those things. How are you doing on that? That is a pretty tough challenge to do, but are we getting more cooperation from the postal service or from these other countries at the point that they are being sent from?

FBI, you know, Mr. Richardson.

Mr. RICHARDSON. Yes, sir, thank you for the question and certainly realize that opioid addiction and trafficking of opioids in this country is a great problem. It will probably be worse tomorrow than it is today unfortunately, but we do have resources that are targeting the distributors of those illegal opioids to the communities.

One thing that we are doing that is a little bit unique maybe from some of the other agencies is we have stood up a unit that looks at the dark net specifically in order to try to identify those individuals, those organizations that are on the dark net, the net

beyond the net, hiding with autonomy that are sending the drugs through whether it is FedEx or whether it is the postal service or how the narcotics are coming in.

So we have had some success with that initiative thus far. We are going to add additional resources to that going forward, and we have been relatively successful, so——

Mr. KEATING. Well, thank you. My time is up. I would just comment. I would rather give you and your collective activities on that arena more resources, more money, because it is killing more people than having an extended wall would result in saving people's lives.

I yield back.

Mr. KING. The gentleman yields.

We are going to closed session soon, but I have two questions I would like to ask if you can answer them on the record. If not, we can wait 'til downstairs. I will ask them together and then you can respond.

My staff recently visited El Salvador and they heard from agencies on the ground that the MS-13 leaders are actually frustrated that the MS-13 members in this country are not violent enough. They are going to be sending more violent members to the United States.

Now, can you confirm that? If so can you say what, you know, the implications of that are? Would you be able to adapt to that?

Mr. RICHARDSON. So I will take a crack at it first. I can tell you from the FBI perspective our intelligence streams tell us that what you have mentioned is accurate. Because of enforcement actions across the country, some of the leadership here at the mid-level within the United States of America they have been arrested. They are incarcerated.

That is frustrating to the leadership of the MS-13 gang in El Salvador, and they are very much interested in sending younger, more violent offenders, gang members up through their channels into this country in order to be enforcers for the gang. So that is absolutely correct.

Mr. KING. Mr. Villanueva.

Mr. VILLANUEVA. Yes, sir. We can actually discuss some of our on-going efforts later on today downstairs, but yes. We are looking at that problem. We are looking at the information we are getting and, once again, I mean, we are doubling down our efforts against MS-13.

As a matter of fact, this year Operation Citadel, which we have been doing for a few years, it is just going to have an MS-13 component working with our international partners. We do have some other efforts that are going to be paramount to stop the flow of those individuals from coming in to the United States that we can discuss later today.

Mr. KING. Mr. Glenn, do you have any——

Mr. GLENN. Again, I would just reiterate that our efforts are going to be in support of the units that they work with in the Northern Triangle region to help mitigate any kind of change in behaviors by the gangs.

Mr. KING. Yes. I would just say it is hard to imagine them being much more violent, so truly a horrifying thought. I know within 1

mile of my house I am sure close to where Miss Rice lives they are actually digging up bodies of young kids who have been butchered by MS-13.

So one other question on that. Are there any signs of MS-13 member partnering with traditional drug cartels?

Mr. GLENN. I can—internationally?

Mr. KING. Internationally, yes.

Mr. GLENN. Yes. You know, they control neighborhoods just like here in the United States. MS-13 and 18th Street gang members distribute drugs in their countries so they are an essential part of the distribution network of drugs in their countries for local consumption there.

There are indications, although not in large ways, but there are indications that they do cooperate with the drug trafficking organizations that are sending drugs into the United States.

Mr. RICHARDSON. So I would say our intelligence tells us or informs us that most of the relationships are opportunistic in nature. The MS-13 would be subordinate to the larger drug cartels that we are familiar with and we have worked for years.

MS-13 is used as enforcers for particular shipments and/or distribution rings in some of the communities here within the United States. So that is the intelligence that we have currently regarding the partnership, but MS-13 is subordinate to the drug cartels.

Mr. VILLANUEVA. Sir, along the same lines our information is similar to the FBI. There is connectivity. It is just defining what connectivity looks like. So the same connectivity to be at par. Maybe not but maybe as a subordinate, the enforcers, distributors. There is certainly a connection to that effect.

Mr. KING. OK. I have no more questions in open session.

Miss Rice, do you?

Miss RICE. No.

Mr. KING. Scott? No? OK. Well, with that, do we actually adjourn or go on recess? How do we get downstairs? What do we do? So what do we do next, recess?

OK. Recess and we will move to a secure environment. Thank you. Thank you for testifying and we will see you downstairs.

[Whereupon, at 11:13 a.m., the subcommittee proceeded in closed session and subsequently adjourned at 12:28 p.m.]

APPENDIX

QUESTIONS FROM RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON FOR STEPHEN E. RICHARDSON

Question 1. What are the largest Russian transnational gangs and what are their main activities and crimes?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 2. How is your agency trying to combat Russian cyber crimes, including those perpetrated by Russian and Eurasian transnational gangs, and/or Russia-linked actors working with these gangs?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 3. How does your agency prioritize which transnational gangs, and which of their illicit activities, to combat? What common metrics are used by your agency to communicate across the interagency to measure the threat posed by various gangs? What metrics are most commonly used in information sharing with foreign partners?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 4. What percentage or proportion of the illicit activities of transnational gangs and TCOs involve drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, and cyber crime? Separately, how much of transnational gangs' and TCOs' illicit activities involve human trafficking, money laundering, and cyber crime? Which transnational gangs and TCOs committed the most serious crimes in fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2017, for instance, in terms of numbers of homicides, amount and value of drugs trafficked, amount of human trafficking conducted, amount of weapons trafficked, amount of money laundered, and dollar value of fraud committed? Please list the top ten transnational gangs and TCOs involved by each type of illicit activity.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 5. Threat reports state that there are more than 300 active Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs) who engage in violent crime, weapons trafficking, and drug trafficking in the United States, including along and across both the Northern and Southern Borders, as well as in locations throughout the United States. Please provide statistics on the numbers of crimes, cases, and investigations related to OMGs.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

QUESTIONS FROM RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON FOR RAYMOND VILLANUEVA

Question 1. What are the largest Russian transnational gangs and what are their main activities and crimes?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 2. How is your department trying to combat Russian cyber crimes, including those perpetrated by Russian and Eurasian transnational gangs, and/or Russia-linked actors working with these gangs?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 3. How does your department prioritize which transnational gangs, and which of their illicit activities, to combat? What common metrics are used by your department to communicate across the interagency to measure the threat posed by various gangs? What metrics are most commonly used in information sharing with foreign partners?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 4. What percentage or proportion of the illicit activities of transnational gangs and TCOs involve drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, and cyber crime? Separately, how much of transnational gangs' and TCOs' illicit activities involve human trafficking, money laundering, and cyber crime? Which transnational gangs and TCOs committed the most serious crimes in fiscal year

2016 and fiscal year 2017, for instance, in terms of numbers of homicides, amount and value of drugs trafficked, amount of human trafficking conducted, amount of weapons trafficked, amount of money laundered, and dollar value of fraud committed? Please list the top ten transnational gangs and TCOs involved by each type of illicit activity.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 5. Threat reports state that there are more than 300 active Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs) who engage in violent crime, weapons trafficking, and drug trafficking in the United States, including along and across both the Northern and Southern Borders, as well as in locations throughout the United States. Please provide statistics on the number and type of indictments, arrests, and investigations related to OMGs. Please also provide statistics on the numbers of crimes, cases, and investigations related to OMGs, including as relates to information sharing with Canadian and Mexican officials on the illicit activities of OMGs across both our Northern and Southern Borders.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 6. Your testimony described 32,000 criminal arrests, of which more than 4,800 were gang members. Were there particular TCOs of concern among the other arrests, and if so, which groups constituted the greatest number of arrests? Of the 4,800 gang members, how many were from MS-13, and how many were from other groups?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 7. Your testimony mentioned that ICE seized more than 900,000 pounds of narcotics. Which five forms of narcotics were most prominent (by dollar value of narcotics seized)? What percentage of the seizures occurred along the Southern Border versus along the Northern Border?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 8. What percentage of the human trafficking and child exploitation activity, per your testimony, that ICE identified occurred within the United States, and what percentage occurred along our Northern and Southern Borders, respectively? Which transnational gangs and TCOs were most heavily involved in human trafficking? Please list the top ten transnational gangs and TCOs involved.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 9. You stated in your testimony that a successful joint task force model is the Border Enforcement Security Task Force (BEST), and that in fiscal year 2017, BEST teams initiated more than 4,000 investigations and made nearly 5,000 criminal arrests. Which transnational gangs and TCOs accounted for the largest number of arrests, and what proportion of the activity you mentioned occurred along our Northern and Southern Borders?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 10. Your testimony noted that Operation Community Shield resulted in the arrests of nearly 60,000 gang members and associates since 2005. In your testimony, you identified there were 7,800 gang members arrested who were affiliated with MS-13. Which other transnational gangs and TCOs accounted for the most arrests? Please list the top ten transnational gangs and TCOs by number of arrests.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 11. Your testimony stated that without information sharing with Federal, State, local, and foreign law enforcement partners, ICE would not be nearly as successful at battling MS-13 and other gangs. Other than working with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, which countries have you been working most closely with, and what transnational gangs have you been targeting? Please provide a list of the top 20 countries with whom you are working globally, and the nature of the information sharing, to include which transnational gangs or TCOs are a particular focus.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 12. You praised the role of Operation CITADEL in disrupting and dismantling TCOs in fiscal year 2017. Of the 54 indictments and nine convictions as a result of this program, which transnational gangs and TCOs were the main culprits whose members were indicted and convicted?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

QUESTIONS FROM RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON FOR RICHARD GLENN

Question 1. What are the largest Russian transnational gangs whose operations are affecting the United States globally and what are their main activities and crimes?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 2. How is your department trying to combat Russian cyber crimes, including those perpetrated by Russian and Eurasian transnational gangs, and/or Russia-linked actors working with those transnational gangs?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 3. How does your department prioritize which transnational gangs, and which of their illicit activities, to combat? What common metrics are used by your department to communicate across the interagency to measure the threat posed by various gangs? What metrics are most commonly used in information sharing with foreign partners?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 4. Of your information-sharing programs globally, what percentage are focused on transnational gangs' and TCOs' involvement in drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, and cyber crime? Which transnational gangs and TCOs committed the most serious crimes in fiscal year 2016 and fiscal year 2017, for instance, in terms of numbers of homicides, amount and value of drugs trafficked, amount of human trafficking conducted, amount of weapons trafficked, amount of money laundered, and dollar value of fraud committed? Please list the top ten transnational gangs and TCOs active in the United States and along both our Northern and Southern Borders. Please note and explain if there are countries (for instance, China and Russia) from which we have faced particular difficulty obtaining actionable information as part of our efforts to counter transnational gangs and TCOs.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 5. How many FTEs in your department are working on combating transnational gangs and TCOs, and how does your department prioritize and track its caseload in terms of the most serious threats? Does your department have the resources it needs to devote to this threat? If not, what resources are needed, including in terms of budget, personnel, and technological resources?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 6. The National Gang Report stated that gangs continue to expand their partnerships with other criminal organizations in order to widen their networks. Please describe the degree of overlap that exists between transnational gangs and transnational organized crime. Please include Russian, Eurasian, Asian, Middle Eastern, and African organized crime activities along both our Northern and Southern Borders, as well as entities such as Hizbollah that may be active in partnership with transnational gangs.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 7. In your testimony, you described the importance of the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). Has State Department funding for this initiative declined, remained constant, or increased? What were the amounts of funding requested for CARSI in fiscal year 2015, 2016, and 2017?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 8. You stated that our strong security partnership with Mexico, including efforts under the Mérida Initiative, have included enhancing information sharing to disrupt transnational crime and TCOs. Has State Department funding for this initiative declined, remained constant, or increased? What were the amounts of funding requested for the Mérida Initiative in fiscal year 2015, 2016, and 2017?

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.

Question 9. Your testimony mentioned the success of asset forfeiture and financial task forces in 2017. Which gangs and transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) were you able to disrupt with this focus on assets and finances? Please be sure to include assets of transnational gangs and TCOs disrupted globally, to include not only groups primarily active along the Southern Border, but also TCOs, Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs) and Russian, Eurasian, Asian, Middle Eastern, and African criminal networks active elsewhere in the United States and across or along one or both of our Northern and Southern Borders.

Answer. Response was not received at the time of publication.