



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
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Written Statement of:

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Chairman Feinstein, Co-Chairman Grassley, and Members of the Caucus, thank you for the opportunity to address the growing presence of narcotics and narcotics-related criminal networks in West Africa, which is a significant emerging threat to regional and global security interests.

Transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, is a major threat to security and governance throughout West Africa. Traffickers are moving drugs, people, small arms, oil, cigarettes, counterfeit medicine, and toxic waste through the region, generating large profits for transnational criminal networks. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has estimated that, together, these illicit activities generate approximately \$3.34 billion a year. Cocaine trafficking is one of the most lucrative of these illicit activities. In fact, the U.S. government and the UNODC have estimated that about 13 percent of the global cocaine flow moves through West Africa.

Drug trafficking in West Africa directly harms Americans. We have invested greatly in attacking the South American drug cartels that move cocaine to our streets. Because of our successes impeding the flow of cocaine north, and growing demand for cocaine in Europe, these cartels have found new ways to stay in business. Although most of the cocaine moving through West Africa goes to Europe, the proceeds from cocaine trafficked through West Africa flow back to organizations that move cocaine to America, reinforcing their financial strength and their motivation to continue exploiting emerging routes for drug sales. We are also starting to see drug trafficking in the West African region expand from cocaine to include heroin, which does come to American streets. In July 2011, for example, U.S. federal agents took down an international heroin trafficking ring that moved heroin from Ghana to Dulles International Airport.

As you've rightly identified, another reason drug trafficking in West Africa deserves particular attention today is because of its destabilizing impact across the region. Competition between government factions for control of drug trafficking profits has greatly increased instability in the region. The potential for drugs to contribute to destabilization in the region is clearly seen, for example, in the case of Guinea-Bissau, where most of the country's leadership has been implicated in drug trafficking. This example serves as a dire warning of the destabilizing effects of drug trafficking. Recognizing this link, when West African Heads of State laid out the region's response to the April 12th coup in Guinea-Bissau at an April 26th Extraordinary Summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), they specifically highlighted the need for expedited action to address drug trafficking.

Drug trafficking not only destabilizes our African partners but undercuts our U.S. policy priorities in West Africa, including security, democracy, and good governance. The proceeds of drug trafficking are fueling a dramatic increase in narco-corruption, including in the form of contributions to election campaigns in West Africa. Criminal networks are co-opting government officials and security forces – the very actors responsible for fighting crime. They seriously compromise the effectiveness of anticorruption and institution-building efforts as they permeate political and state administration institutions and build corrupt networks with state officials to facilitate or reduce the risks and costs of their operations.

Drug trafficking through West Africa is a problem for Americans and for our foreign policy. But addressing drug trafficking through the region is also an important opportunity. By developing relationships with our West African partners, we have been able to force significant traffickers, who had previously eluded arrest, to face justice. For example, in July 2010, a Federal Court in Manhattan sentenced Jesus Eduardo Valencia-Arbelaez to over 17 years for his role leading a sophisticated international cocaine trafficking organization. His organization was based in Colombia and Venezuela but operated in Europe, West Africa, and the United States. Valencia-Arbelaez's arrest was possible only through the close cooperation of law enforcement officials in the United States, Romania, and Liberia. As we combine building working relationships and building the capacity of our West African partners, the opportunities to combat drug trafficking and other transnational threats cooperatively will increase exponentially.

Developing a U.S. Government Response

In May 2011, I led a delegation of senior U.S. officials, including Assistant Attorney General Breuer and DEA Administrator Leonhart, to Ghana and Liberia, to begin formulating a strategic approach to undermine transnational criminal networks in West Africa and to reduce their ability to operate illicit criminal enterprises. Through consultations with partners in the region, our U.S. government team developed a plan called the West Africa Cooperative Security Initiative or W-A-C-S-I.

WACSI is built from the ground up – around five objectives designed to respond to the underlying factors that allow transnational crime to flourish in West Africa. INL led a U.S. interagency effort, consisting of experts from the Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Department of Defense (U.S. Africa Command and the Office of the Secretary of Defense), Department of Homeland Security

(United States Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement), Department of Justice (Criminal Division, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation), and U.S. Agency for International Development to analyze the challenges in the region and develop a strategy to guide the U.S. government's response. Drawing on lessons learned from the law enforcement, development, and military perspectives, as well as the conditions on the ground unique to West Africa, WACSI offers the first comprehensive U.S. government approach to drug trafficking in West Africa.

WACSI's Guiding Principles

1. Drug traffickers have established relationships with senior government officials in many West African countries. In too many cases, traffickers in West Africa have been able to buy high-level protection for their illicit activities. *WACSI's first objective, building accountable institutions, will address corruption within the justice and security sectors, high-level corruption of government elites, and the culture of impunity. The U.S. will work to address this at two levels: First, through technical assistance, integrity controls within criminal justice institutions can be established and strengthened so the very organizations meant to fight crime are not so vulnerable to becoming agents of crime; and second, through collaborative efforts to bring corrupt officials to justice. We will work with both government and civil society actors to strengthen the will and capacity to pursue impartial, apolitical investigations and prosecutions of significant corruption.*
2. Absent common legal frameworks regarding narcotics and narcotics-related crimes, rule of law is nearly impossible to introduce across national borders. ECOWAS has called for the harmonization of its Member States' drug laws. *WACSI will establish legal frameworks, tackling the need for the development of comprehensive laws that combat transnational crime, particularly drug trafficking in each program country.*
3. Credible governments must be able to extend the rule of law, secure communities, and enforce common and transparent laws for all citizens. *West Africa is a diverse region. WACSI will strengthen the capacity of host governments for security operations and will empower our partners to execute lawful operations. In some countries, such as Ghana and Nigeria, U.S. assistance will focus on building capacity to detect, disrupt, and dismantle drug trafficking networks. In other cases, especially in post-*

conflict countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone, the next step is enhancing basic law enforcement.

4. Achieving peace and security requires justice systems, not simply the administration of justice. Arresting drug traffickers and their government facilitators will not cure the problem, particularly if there is not a transparent system of justice in place to incarcerate or rehabilitate offenders. *WACSI will reinforce justice operations to ensure that suspects are arrested based on transparent charges, prosecuted, convicted, and incarcerated or rehabilitated fairly and according to the law. While it is far easier to build a legal case against a low-level drug courier, successfully prosecuting mid- and senior members of drug trafficking networks requires sophisticated legal skills, which U.S. assistance will work to develop.*
5. Drugs and drug-related crime may flourish in ungoverned areas, where the government's presence is weak or corrupt, but it is also the case that socio-economic factors are largely responsible for facilitating crime. *WACSI programs will engage African citizens and private enterprises to address the underlying socio-economic factors that facilitate crime and work to undermine them. Helping the region prevent and contain domestic drug use is important to our West African partners and will be part of this approach.*

WACSI in Action

WACSI today is in its infancy, but our framework and engagement has already demonstrated an impact. For example, in Ghana, we have provided intensive training and support to a DEA Sensitive Investigative United (SIU) composed of a select group of vetted Ghanaian law enforcement officials. As a result of assistance through WACSI and the in-country engagement of the DEA, these Ghanaian officials have already deployed new skills to conduct sophisticated criminal investigations, leading to multiple arrests, including government officials and international traffickers. Four of these suspects were expelled into U.S. custody and the leader of the Ghana based organization was sentenced to fourteen years in prison. To support the comprehensive approach called for by WACSI, INL has also worked with the Department of Justice to deploy an Assistant U.S. Attorney to Ghana to strengthen Ghana's capacity to successfully prosecute drug traffickers.

The goal of WACSI and of all our assistance is ultimately to help our partners develop their own capacity to fight crime and administer justice. We

often impart training, mentoring, and technical assistance to further that goal. We also recognize, however, that capacity is not developed overnight. Training and partnerships take time to develop. We also recognize that WACSI's goals must be measured in the context of local environments. Where we can build basic law enforcement and judicial capacity into something more advanced, we will. Where our partners' capacity is more basic, our initial support can take other forms as well. One such example is in Sierra Leone, where the Anti-Corruption Commission of Sierra Leone, the Departments of State and Justice, the Government of Brazil, and INTERPOL developed a West Africa Anti-Corruption Workshop in December 2011. The workshop brought together forty law enforcement officials from Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Togo to examine techniques for investigating and prosecuting public corruption. The Government of Sierra Leone has since requested U.S. assistance investigating a case involving senior officials who are suspected of soliciting bribes in exchange for permission to conduct illegal logging operations.

Starting this summer, an experienced U.S. prosecutor will serve as a legal advisor in Sierra Leone to follow-up on the aforementioned training program and assist Sierra Leone in its efforts to more effectively combat public corruption, including by supporting anti-corruption investigations and prosecutions. Whether the illicit activity is illegal logging or drug trafficking, the impunity that allows for such corruption must be checked.

In addition to building the capacity of individual states, addressing drug trafficking, a trans-national issue, requires transnational cooperation. In May 2011, the State Department, together with the European Union (EU), hosted the Trans-Atlantic Symposium on Dismantling Transnational Illicit Networks (TAS). The TAS brought together over 300 senior law enforcement and justice sector officials from 65 countries, including representation from 11 West African nations as well as from ECOWAS. TAS charted ways to cooperate and coordinate our activities against trans-Atlantic crime flows, including narcotics trafficking. Following the Symposium, INL and the EU agreed that we would work jointly in a number of key areas in order to build the law enforcement and judicial capacity of West African states to disrupt and dismantle the illicit transnational networks that are attacking them. We are moving forward with a number of targeted, high impact initiatives.

WACSI will continue to focus on these cooperative partnerships and use them to expand effective programming. One of the most important of these partnerships is that between the international community and ECOWAS. There is

broad consensus among those most active in West Africa, including Brazil, Colombia, the European Union, France, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States, that ECOWAS plays a vital role in providing the regional answers needed. In 2008, ECOWAS developed the continent's leading regional action plan on drug trafficking and organized crime. I believe that ECOWAS's continued leadership is necessary for implementation and will continue to work with our European partners on how best to support that goal.

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Chairman Feinstein and Co-Chairman Grassley, the nature of transnational crime in West Africa and the unique circumstances in the region have prompted us to create a new, holistic approach in WACSI. The needs in West Africa are overwhelming and our government's efforts must be well focused and coordinated. We face a difficult task ahead of us, and we recognize the need to partner with all players involved to fight this growing danger. The key to combating drug trafficking and other transnational crime is to undermine the factors that permit it – namely the weak rule of law and entrenched corruption – and the socio-economic factors that continue to drive it. Through WACSI, the entirety of the U.S. government has come together to focus our efforts and expertise on these very issues.

Thank you for this opportunity today. I welcome your questions.