

S. HRG. 111-121

# CONFRONTING DRUG TRAFFICKING IN WEST AFRICA

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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## CONFRONTING DRUG TRAFFICKING IN WEST AFRICA

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2009

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:32 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Russ Feingold (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Senators Feingold, Kaufman, and Isakson.

### OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RUSSELL D. FEINGOLD, U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN

Senator FEINGOLD. I want to call the hearing to order. On behalf of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on African Affairs, I welcome all of you to this hearing, entitled “Confronting Drug Trafficking in West Africa.”

I’m honored to be joined by the ranking member of the subcommittee, Senator Isakson, and I’ll invite him to deliver some opening remarks in a moment.

I’m very pleased to be holding this hearing today, particularly because this is an issue that urgently requires more attention. I am hopeful that by holding this hearing we can highlight the critical need for greater engagement, attention, and, quite likely, more resources to fully address this problem.

Over the last few years, there’s been a sharp rise in the quantity of cocaine transiting through West Africa from Latin America en route to Europe. The U.N. Office of Drugs and Crime now estimates that there are roughly 50 tons of cocaine being smuggled a year, worth almost \$2 billion. The region’s vast and porous borders and coastline and weak governance infrastructure, including poorly regulated airfields and limited law enforcement capacity, have, unfortunately, made it a perfect hub for traffickers trying to reach Europe’s growing cocaine markets.

According to the U.N., there are increasing signs that Latin American cocaine trafficking syndicates have been expanding into the region, possibly linking up with Nigerian-dominated criminal groups that have been actively smuggling heroin for years. While the quantities of smuggled heroin pale in comparison to the current amounts of smuggled cocaine, it is worth noting that West Africa has long been one of several transit points for heroin from South Asia to the United States. This new trend is deeply alarming, not

only in terms of our global counternarcotics goals, but because of the impact on the many weak states in West Africa.

The recent unrest in Guinea-Bissau and coups in Guinea and Mauritania are only the most recent illustrations of the volatile political environments easily susceptible to illicit drug trafficking. In some states, such as Guinea-Bissau, the influx of drugs has already started to corrupt and hollow out governance institutions. If we don't act soon, this dynamic could become entrenched and could undermine governance throughout the region.

At the same time, the massive profits gained from the drug trade can potentially be used to fund criminal and violent enterprises in the region, if they aren't already, which further exacerbates instability. We saw in the 1990s how an influx of illicit money fueled violent conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Even more worrying, synergies could form between drug trafficking and terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

In holding today's subcommittee hearing, I hope to sound the alarm on this growing problem and these potential threats. I've discussed this problem recently with both the Foreign Ministers of Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and I know it is a top priority for leaders across West Africa and our Ambassadors there. As President Obama prepares to travel to Ghana next month, I hope this issue will be part of his agenda, as Ghana is a major hub through which cocaine enters the region.

Today's hearing also is an attempt to explore what efforts are currently being made by the United States and our partners in response to this problem, and how we can best expand and strengthen those efforts. It's clear that the ultimate solution to this problem, of course, is to address state weakness, to help regional governments to strengthen their institutions, with a particular focus on law enforcement agencies, judiciary, and coast guards. But, we also have to consider how to build effective short-term solutions, including effective interdiction capacity, to ensure these countries are not flooded with illicit narcotics in the interim. Indeed, we need a short-term plan to help identify and prosecute individuals and disrupt organizations that are behind this trafficking. We won't be able to stop everyone, but we can and must raise the cost of trafficking drugs through West Africa before this problem becomes entrenched throughout the region. The challenge, of course, is to do so in a way that works with, and not against, our long-term goals of governance and stability.

So, I look forward to hearing from all of our witnesses today about the current efforts underway and how we can best navigate these serious challenges.

Speaking of our witnesses, let me quickly introduce them. We'll first hear from representatives from three U.S. Government agencies that are working on this issue, and working together, we hope. We will hear from Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Johnnie Carson; Thomas Harrigan, Chief of Operations for the Drug Enforcement Administration; and William Wechsler, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats.

Thank you all for being here. And I know that this issue cuts across several offices and bureaus within your respective agencies,

so I want to also thank those who contributed to your written testimonies. We'll include those in the record, and I do ask, please, that you keep your remarks here to 5 minutes or less so we have plenty of time for questions and discussion.

On our second panel, we'll hear from Michael Braun, the managing partner of Spectre Group International. Mr. Braun worked for DEA for over two decades, and was Chief of Operations from 2005 until 2008, and he obviously has a wealth of experience on these issues.

We'll also hear from Doug Farah, senior fellow at the International Assessment Strategy Center. Mr. Farah worked for over two decades as a correspondent for the Washington Post in West Africa and Latin America, and has recently focused on terror financing. He's the author of two books, "Blood from Stone: The Secret Financial Network of Terror" and "Merchant of Death: Money, Guns, Planes, and the Man Who Makes War Possible," a book on Russians arm dealer Victor Bout, whose arrest I was very happy to see last year.

Finally, we'll hear from Mike McGovern, assistant professor of anthropology at Yale University. Dr. McGovern previously worked as the West African project director of the International Crisis Group.

So, I thank everybody for being here, and I look forward to a fruitful discussion.

And now I'm pleased to turn to our distinguished ranking member, Senator Isakson, for his opening remarks.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHNNY ISAKSON,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM GEORGIA**

Senator ISAKSON. Well, thank you, Chairman Feingold, and I am delighted to be here. And let me apologize in advance. I am a member of the HELP Committee, and we are marking up the health care bill. I am not going to be able to stay for the entire hearing, but I will stay for the testimony of our first panel.

And it was great to see Secretary Carson again. He was working hard late into the night last night at a dinner on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for the Sudanese Government. I appreciate very much his commitment and dedication to the Department, and in particular to Africa.

I want to thank the chairman for calling this hearing. When I saw the paperwork come through and the hearing he called, it reminded me of an evening I spent in Equatorial Guinea a year ago, which was 2 nights after pirates—not "pirates," but robbers—had beached a boat in Equatorial Guinea, run up into town, robbed a bank, gotten back in their boat and left again. This is right in the middle of one of the largest cities in Equatorial Guinea. So immediately upon reading the committee memo, I recognized exactly what had been said there, that the western coast of Africa is extremely vulnerable. In fact, one of the requests made of us by the Government of Equatorial Guinea to the Defense Department, Secretary Wechsler, was to get more naval stops along the coast, just to have that presence, because of the tremendous amount of illegal activity that was going on along the western coast of Africa.

And Africa is particularly vulnerable because of the money associated with drugs. There are a number of countries whose GDP is very low, and the opportunity for the type of money that can come in from illicit drug trade and trafficking can be very tempting. And, worst of all, on the Horn of Africa, where we're in a constant battle to stop the encroachment of terrorist organizations, drug trafficking is one of the main things they like to use to finance their opportunities and their exploits, as we have seen in Afghanistan.

So, I think it is a perfectly appropriate hearing to have today. I think it is something we should be focusing on. I am delighted to be a part of it. And I apologize again in advance that I will have to leave after the testimony of the first panel.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Senator. And the Senator, of course, is very dedicated to this subcommittee, and the proceeding that he has to attend if very important, so of course we understand.

Let's start with Mr. Carson.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JOHNNIE CARSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ambassador CARSON. Chairman Feingold, Ranking Member Isakson, thank you very much for inviting me to testify at this important hearing on drug trafficking in West Africa. Thank you also for asking my colleagues from the Department of Defense, DOD, and the Drug Enforcement Administration, DEA, to join me at the witness table this morning.

We are united in our understanding about the threat drug trafficking poses to Africa and to United States interests, and why we must collectively boost our coordination and efforts now to prevent a tidal wave of addictions, drug-related enterprises, corruption, instability, and conflict from overwhelming Africa's shores.

If the committee agrees, I will submit my full testimony for the record and summarize here.

Senator FEINGOLD. Without objection.

Ambassador CARSON. Illegal drug trafficking in West Africa has reached epidemic proportions, and the problem could get much worse before it gets better, especially in countries like Guinea-Bissau. The transshipment of cocaine has increased dramatically throughout West Africa in recent years.

Before 2005, seizures from all of Africa generally totaled less than 1 ton a year. Between 2005 and 2008, at least 46 tons of cocaine were seized in West Africa alone. This volume carries a wholesale value of approximately \$2 billion, and a retail value 10 times that much. This is an amount that easily exceeds the incomes of some of the poorest countries in the region.

West Africa is appealing to traffickers because of its relatively close proximity to cocaine-producing areas in Latin America. Traveling straight along the 10th parallel from South Africa to the Gulf of Guinea is only a 2-day journey by boat, or a 5- or 6-hour plane ride. Several other reasons also make West Africa an appealing transshipment destination. West Africa's borders are mostly unguarded and porous. Many governments have weak legal and



judicial structures and customs authorities that simply do not work.

Many countries in West Africa are also extremely poor. Salaries and wages are low, and corruption is high. In many parts of West Africa, 50 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day, and the unemployment rate is well over 30 percent.

The trafficking of illegal drugs is a lucrative occupation in a society where money is scarce and jobs are hard to come by. Foreign drug traffickers usually prefer permissive environments, and many West African nations fall into that category. They choose to operate in countries with weak law enforcement and judicial systems, and thrive in areas where they can operate with impunity, either corrupting government officials or evading inept customs authorities. In these kinds of environments, drug traffickers are able to cultivate complex and symbiotic criminal and financial networks with the local political officials and law enforcement authorities.

Our counternarcotics assessments throughout West Africa have provided valuable information about the nature of the drug threat and the willingness and capacity of West African governments to respond. We are working closely with our international partners, including the European Commission and with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes. The majority of the drugs transiting West Africa go into Western Europe, and the Europeans are eager to work with us to reduce the flow of drugs into their countries.

Congress appropriated almost \$14 million in fiscal 2009 to the State Department and the Department of Defense for counternarcotics assistance in Africa. The State Department is collaborating closely with the Department of Defense, DEA, and the rest of the interagency community to ensure U.S. Government assistance is used effectively in Africa, especially in West Africa. The Department of State also chairs an African Narcotics Working Group with broad USG participation. Senior-level coordination is also taking place, particularly among the three agencies represented at this panel.

Mr. Chairman, the focus of this hearing is drug trafficking in West Africa, but it would be a mistake if I did not share with the committee my serious concern about the spread of drug trafficking elsewhere around Africa. Kenya and Ethiopia, largely because of their excellent airline and transportation connections, are becoming major transshipment routes for heroin coming from Afghanistan and Pakistan. And South Africa has become a source for the manufacture and distribution of synthetic drugs that are being used in South Africa and shipped to Europe and South Asia.

The first powerful wave of illegal drug trafficking has already hit Guinea-Bissau and the shores of West Africa. If African countries and the international community do not increase their vigilance and respond in an effective comprehensive manner, narcotics trafficking will undermine and destabilize a growing number of African states, not only in West Africa, but around the continent.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Carson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JOHNNIE CARSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR  
BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Feingold, Ranking Member Isakson, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to testify at this important hearing on drug trafficking in West Africa. Thank you also for asking my colleagues from the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to join me at the witness table. We are united in our understanding of the serious threat that drugs and drug trading are to Africa and to United States interests. Our partnership and coordination are essential to any success in deterring this threat.

A RAPIDLY GROWING PROBLEM

Drug trafficking, especially of cocaine, has increased dramatically through West Africa in recent years. Before 2005, seizures from all of Africa rarely totaled more than 1 ton a year. Between 2005 and 2008, at least 46 tons of cocaine were seized in West Africa alone. By 2007, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) described West Africa as “under attack.” Access to shifting global cocaine markets drove traffickers to look for new routes.

Global cocaine markets have shifted because of demand, supply, and the value of the dollar. Cocaine use in the United States has declined, while use in Europe has increased. Law enforcement efforts in the United States and Latin America have made it harder for traffickers to move cocaine to United States markets. The declining value of the U.S. dollar, relative to the euro, may also have influenced the shift toward European markets. As European law enforcement made it more difficult to move cocaine along direct routes from South America to Europe, traffickers began to look for alternate ways to access the European markets.

West Africa is appealing to traffickers for several reasons. It has endured a staggering level of poverty, which promotes a susceptibility to corruption: On average, 50 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. West Africa lies in close proximity to Latin America. Dakar, Senegal, is 700 miles closer to Recife, Brazil, than it is to Paris, France. West Africa’s borders also are mostly unguarded and porous. The region boasts more than 2,600 miles of coastline. In perspective, our Pacific coast (minus Alaska) and Atlantic coast each are less than 2,100 miles long. West Africa’s area and population are slightly less than that of our contiguous 48 States. Many governments do not have the legal systems, judicial structures, plans, funding, resources, and political will to combat drugs. Half the region’s population is under the age of 18 and the unemployment rate of the work-age population average is 30–50 percent. Thus, the trafficking of illegal narcotics is a lucrative alternative in a culture disposed to view narcotics like any other commodity to buy and sell.

Moreover, foreign traffickers usually prefer unstable but not chaotic operating environments. They choose to operate in countries with weak law enforcement and judicial systems and thrive in areas where they can operate with impunity—either by corrupting officials or by inept systems. West African nations like Guinea-Bissau and Guinea fall into these categories.

In some countries, we can rely on local cooperation to prosecute and expel foreign traffickers, especially if such action displaces outsiders from the trade. However, such cooperation is compromised when the foreign traffickers are able to cultivate complex, symbiotic networks with the local elite.

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN WEST AFRICA HARMS UNITED STATES INTERESTS

Though the majority of the drugs transiting West Africa do not come to the United States, the proceeds flow to the same South American drug trafficking organizations that traffic drugs to the United States. This illicit activity reinforces and bolsters their financial strength. Guinea-Bissau’s GDP is \$340 million; that is the wholesale value of 6 tons of cocaine, which can easily be transshipped over 1 to 2 months. This creates a threat to good governance, local and regional stability, and development in West Africa. UNODC has noted that, “The relationship between diamond smuggling and the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia has been well documented, but, at their peak, profits accruing from this activity amounted to some tens of millions of dollars per year. The potential destabilizing influence of the cocaine traffic, where the value of a single consignment can exceed that sum, is very real.”

Drug trafficking poses at least two threats to good governance, a principal focus of United States diplomacy and foreign assistance in West Africa. First, trafficking normally is facilitated by corrupting public officials from law enforcement and judi-

cial actors to the highest levels of government. Second, politicians could look to drug money to finance their elections.

Being a transit state is detrimental to a country's development. The government has less to invest in health or education, because those resources have been diverted to address the insecurity resulting from possible trafficking-related violence. Investors are less inclined to do business in transit countries; unstable environments are risky and operating in high-crime areas entails higher business costs.

Being a transit state is also harmful to public health. Though initially most transit states in Africa do not have markets for illegal drug consumption, eventually they develop. In West Africa, local facilitators of trafficking networks are believed to be paid in cocaine. Much of this is smuggled to Europe but anecdotal evidence suggests small domestic markets for cocaine are already developing.

#### USG EFFORTS TO STOP THE DRUG FLOW AND OBSTACLES

The Department of State recognizes the serious threats posed by drug trafficking in West Africa. With our interagency colleagues, we have engaged in a careful planning process. The Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has been leading interagency counternarcotics assessments throughout West Africa. These assessments have provided valuable information about the nature of the drug threat and the willingness and capacity of West African governments to respond to the threat. A comprehensive counternarcotics strategy requires both the interdiction of the drugs and the dismantling of the drug trafficking organizations (DTOs). Our European partners are focused largely on interdiction, which is logical as the majority of the cocaine flows to Europe. We are primarily working to build the law enforcement and judicial capacity of West African governments to effectively counter the DTOs. This complements the European focus and fits well with United States security, governance, and development objectives in West Africa.

Rule of law and judicial capacity strengthen the ability of emerging democracies of the region to prevent or respond to transnational issues such as rising drug trafficking. One of the areas our Interagency Task Force has looked at through the assessments is countries' counternarcotics legal frameworks. While most West African states have many of the elements in place to support more robust national counternarcotics efforts, there are some ways in which the laws could be improved. In some countries, there is significant judicial discretion allowed in sentencing for even the most serious drug offenses. In Togo and The Gambia, judges can decide to sentence traffickers to prison or simply to fine them. This invites corruption. Many countries lack the legal concepts of conspiracy and plea bargaining. Both are powerful legal tools in combating organized crime. Asset forfeiture is another helpful legal and financial tool. West African countries that have some sort of asset forfeiture laws often require a conviction before they can seize assets. By contrast, many other countries around the world have alternative legal mechanisms that provide a broader basis and more efficient means for seizing and forfeiting assets related to criminal activity.

The national agencies charged with counternarcotics missions across West Africa vary from actively facilitating trafficking to risking their lives to stop it. Even in agencies that have the will to counter drug trafficking, there are common challenges to their ability to do so effectively. Many do not know how to gather and analyze counterdrug intelligence. Most of the big seizures in West Africa have occurred by chance or through a foreign tip off. Further, the agencies do not know how to conduct investigations. Basic policing is a challenge and most agencies will require significant assistance before being able to conduct complex investigations. Counternarcotics programs and strategies are inherently interagency. Border officials and traffic cops need to coordinate with lead counternarcotics police agencies that, in turn, must work closely with prosecutors or investigative judges to develop a case. This is a significant challenge.

Like law enforcement, the judicial sectors across West Africa vary widely. Senegal, for example, is a society with a capable judiciary and a respect of the courts and the rule of law. Sierra Leone recently convicted traffickers in a historic case connected to a July 2008 cocaine bust. Guinea-Bissau, on the other hand, has not tried a drug case since 2005. Even with such mixed results, there are common challenges. The courts have sizeable backlogs. In many countries, prisons hold accused persons who have been awaiting trial longer than the maximum sentence they would receive if found guilty. In the rare cases where West African countries have arrested and tried foreign traffickers, the traffickers often hire talented private defense attorneys. Further, due to capacity problems, defendants are often held too long before being charged, which has resulted in some dismissals. Even when this

does not happen, police and prosecutors often prepare cases and witnesses poorly, with the alleged drug seized neither proven to be cocaine nor tied to the defendant. Finally, countering judicial corruption is a challenge around the world, and West Africa is no exception. This is an area of serious concern and will require careful attention.

As with the rest of the criminal justice system, prisons vary greatly from country to country. Guinea-Bissau has no civilian prison whatsoever, though one is nearing completion. Togo, on the other hand, has a prison system that is functioning remarkably well given the extreme lack of resources. The main challenge corrections systems face is maintaining custody over accused and convicted traffickers. Security at many prisons is not good and traffickers have access to significant financial resources with which to bribe prison officials.

Despite the significant challenges facing West Africa, there is reason for hope. Oil-wealthy Nigeria is entirely unique: Numerous and very experienced Nigerian traffickers have been deployed worldwide over decades. But despite its many problems the Government of Nigeria has demonstrated increased political will in fighting narcotics. U.S.-donated body scanners at Nigeria's four international airports are having a deterrent effect, causing traffickers to shift their operations to seaports and land borders, where adequate protection is lacking, or to airports in neighboring countries. Nigeria's National Drug and Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) flexed its muscles in arresting a drug kingpin, processing an extradition, and convicting 1,231 of 1,239 traffickers in 2008. The Attorney General recently approved the embedding of a USG sponsored drug investigations specialist within the NDLEA. The Government of Cape Verde has vast potential as a trans-Atlantic partner for regional interdiction activities, as an intelligence platform, and as a facilitator of dialogue with Guinea-Bissau. It benefits from: A strong and stable democracy; its strategic location; its three U.S. Federal Aviation Administration-certified airports; its excellent track record on cooperation with DOD's United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), NATO, the European Union and United States and European law enforcement agencies; and, its success at curbing drugs from Latin America.

Furthermore, we hope that our projected reestablishment of a formal diplomatic presence in Bissau will help improve what we know about the problem there and encourage the host government to raise its profile on this important matter.

Department of State assistance is targeted and carefully monitored. For instance, in Ghana we will support a judicial advisor this year to develop further capacity to prosecute complex drug cases. In countries where there is not yet a strong understanding of the domestic implications of being a transit state, we will use public diplomacy to build this awareness. Our embassies have been instrumental in facilitating the expulsion of traffickers into U.S. custody, which has a powerful deterrent effect.

The Department of State's counternarcotics assistance programs are shaped according to the following principles. Above all, we do not want our assistance inadvertently harming innocents. We don't want equipment we provide misused. Since donated boats or radios could be used to facilitate trafficking, for example, such assistance must be provided responsibly. Second, counternarcotics operations are dangerous and should not expose our West African partners to unnecessary risks that they have not been prepared to address.

Counternarcotics assistance should include both operational support and institutional reform. Providing training and equipment are important components of assistance strategies, but we must also address institutional incentives and structures. For example, prosecutors might not know how to oversee a complex investigation or turn it into a winning case. Training in these areas should be part of the assistance provided. Institutionally, the prosecutorial service may not be structured to encourage complex investigations. Promotions of these prosecutors might factor the number of convictions without regard for the complexity of cases. These structures must be reformed if prosecutors are to learn and implement complex prosecutions.

The U.S. Interagency Task Force has collaborated closely to confront these challenges. At the working level, State, DEA, and DOD jointly have conducted all assessments and now include the FBI, Treasury, and USAID on a case-by-case basis. The Department of State also hosts an African counternarcotics working group with even broader interagency participation. Senior-level coordination is also taking place, particularly between the three agencies represented on this panel. Similarly, international coordination is also taking place at both the working and policy levels. One of my INL colleagues will be leading the U.S. delegation to meetings with the EU Drug troika in the coming weeks. We look forward to working more closely with AFRICOM to help build capacity, provide data analysis and management, facilitate interoperability, and promote limited interdiction, where feasible.

Finally, there is much that the United States can learn and do in concert with the Europeans, Latin Americans, and international organizations in order to fight increasing narco-trafficking in the region. Increasing our own knowledge of, and ability to track, trans-Atlantic contraband and developing regional African capacity through a reliable, willing partner (such as Cape Verde) and its government could be one of our more productive and cost-effective efforts as part of an integrated approach.

For fiscal year 2010, the Department has requested \$7.96 million in narcotics and law enforcement assistance for West Africa. Our primary targets are to develop capacity in the law enforcement and judicial sectors in Guinea-Bissau (\$3 million), Cape Verde (\$2 million), Nigeria (\$2 million), Ghana (\$500,000), Sierra Leone (\$250,000), Guinea (\$110,000) and Burkina Faso (\$100,000). To complement these efforts, we propose applying \$42.4 million in other Department resources to bolster democracy, governance, and rule-of-law programs in these countries. As Secretary Clinton has indicated, the Department requires sufficient personnel and financial resources to carry out its missions, and we welcome your support in helping us do so.

I look forward to hearing from my colleagues, listening to your insights, and consulting you further as we address this serious issue. Thank you for your invitation, and for your consideration and support.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you so much, Assistant Secretary Carson.

Mr. Harrigan.

**STATEMENT OF THOMAS M. HARRIGAN, CHIEF OF OPERATIONS, DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. HARRIGAN. Good morning. Chairman Feingold, Ranking Member Isakson, Senator Kaufman, on behalf of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Acting Administrator, Michelle Leonhart, I want to thank you for your continued support of the men and women and the opportunity to testify about the scope and dynamics of drug trafficking in West Africa, as well as related threats.

Africa is experiencing an unprecedented rise in drug trafficking and the growth of organized crime in Africa is an increasing national security threat, as evidenced by the assimilation of South American drug-trafficking networks with African and European buyers and distributors. The current political and economic environment in Africa presents an unprecedented opportunity for drug traffickers and terrorists to flourish and expand their operations on the continent. Africa's weak and failing states provide havens for the drug cartels and international criminals alike. An inadequate judicial infrastructure exacerbates the problem and presents a very real threat. South American drug cartels have impacted much of West Africa, due to the rising demand for cocaine and the higher profits that can be made in the European drug market.

As the lead U.S. Federal drug law enforcement agency, DEA is integral in the realization of a successful counternarcotics plan in Africa. Presently, DEA has 83 offices in 62 countries around the world, and works with host-government counterparts in assessing drug threats, gathering intelligence, targeting major drug cartels, and assisting host governments in developing comprehensive counternarcotics strategies. Currently, DEA has four offices on the continent of Africa—in Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa—and a new office expected to open by the end of the year in Kenya.

DEA's primary mission in Africa is to disrupt and dismantle the most prolific drug, chemical, money laundering, and narcoterrorism organizations on the continent, all of which have a direct impact

on the United States. DEA attacks these criminal organizations through an integrated intelligence-driven enforcement process that targets the command-and-control elements of these cartels.

A secondary part of our mission calls for broad interagency support from our U.S. Government partners for assistance in capacity-building and mentoring programs with African law enforcement counterparts, with the intent of extending the rule of law throughout Africa.

Current intelligence indicates the principal drug threats in Africa are South American cocaine, Southwest Asian heroin, precursor chemicals primarily used for production of methamphetamine, drug money laundering, narcoterrorism, and other drugs, such as marijuana, hashish, and khat.

In the past 24 months, DEA has initiated bilateral and multilateral criminal investigations with our law enforcement counterparts in Africa, Europe, and Asia to attack these threats. Successes include seizures of multiton quantities of cocaine and bringing those responsible to U.S. courts to face prosecution.

Earlier this year, a significant Colombian cell head was expelled from Ghana and transported to the Southern District of New York to face drug charges. This cell head was identified by DEA as a former member of the now-defunct Cali cartel and was wanted for charges stemming from a 1992 seizure of 12 tons of cocaine in Miami, then the United States largest cocaine seizure.

DEA's extraterritorial authority is a powerful tool that removes the barrier of relative impunity of areas of weak government control around the globe, and makes those U.S. prosecutions possible.

DEA's long-term strategy in Africa includes a series of programs that will include DEA and U.S. Government partners to address operational and capacity-building requirements in Africa. Enforcement activities in Africa have demonstrated the need for African counterparts to develop specialized investigative teams to conduct investigations into significant local, regional, and international drug cartels.

DEA is working very closely with Departments of Defense and State to cooperatively train, equip, and support specialized units within host-nation law enforcement authorities. The goal is to improve the ability of law enforcement agencies in Africa to investigate narcotics-related crimes ranging from simple low-impact seizures to large-scale multifaceted conspiracy cases.

DEA's global presence has already provided huge dividends in assessing the drug threat developing in Africa. DEA will continue to develop these investigations and continue coordinating with U.S. Government agencies in intelligence-sharing and capacity-building programs.

Chairman Feingold, Ranking Member Isakson, Senator Kaufman, and distinguished members, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss this important issue, and welcome any questions that you may have.

Thank you, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harrigan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THOMAS HARRIGAN, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR AND CHIEF OF OPERATIONS, DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON, DC

Good morning, Chairman Feingold, Ranking Member Isakson, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. On behalf of the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) Acting Administrator, Michele M. Leonhart, I want to thank you for your continued support of the men and women of DEA and the opportunity to testify about the scope and dynamics of drug trafficking in West Africa as well as related threats.

#### OVERVIEW

Over the past decade, international drug law enforcement efforts have focused principally on the major source countries, and limited resources have been dedicated to other areas impacted by the global drug trade, such as the African Continent. DEA investigative efforts and those of other Western law enforcement agencies have chronicled the significant increase in Africa's utilization as a transshipment point, storage, cultivation, and manufacturing point for narcotics destined for Europe, and, to a lesser extent, other consumer markets, including the United States. The versatility of transnational criminal organizations is well-known, as is their penchant for finding and exploiting vulnerable regions of the world to further their illicit activities. Unfortunately, Africa is such a place, with its strategic geographic location, and, in many instances, weak governments, endemic corruption, and ill-equipped law enforcement agencies.

As a single mission agency, DEA's focus in Africa is to disrupt or dismantle the most significant drug, chemical, money laundering, and narcoterrorism organizations on the continent. A secondary—but no less important—part of this mission will be the long-term effort to address law enforcement capacity-building endeavors and mentoring programs with our African counterparts. The cocaine, heroin, chemical, money laundering, and narcoterrorism threats in Africa have an impact on the United States, particularly since some of the drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) that smuggle illicit drugs in the United States are the same as those using Africa as a base of operations for smuggling operations into Europe and the Middle East. By expanding DEA's operational capabilities into Africa, DTOs will increasingly find it difficult to operate in Africa with continued relative impunity. While DEA is increasing its presence in Africa, a critical part of DEA's overall Africa strategy calls for broad interagency support from U.S. Government partners for assistance in capacity-building and mentoring programs with African law enforcement counterparts.

DEA's presence in Africa consists of four offices established on the continent of Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa), and is anticipating opening an office in Kenya. DEA is striving to enhance its intelligence collection and operational capacity to address the African drug threat. At the same time, DEA is working closely with its U.S. law enforcement, military, intelligence, and diplomatic counterparts to counteract the wave of drug-related crime impacting many African nations. DEA also is engaging foreign law enforcement agencies and governments in an effort to coordinate counternarcotics strategies in Africa. While DEA remains a single-mission agency with a law enforcement focus, decades of experience in drug source and transit countries has evidenced the need for close coordination with U.S. Government agencies focused on intelligence and capacity-building programs. DEA alone does not have the resources or authorities to implement parts of our Strategic Concept for Africa, and therefore will continue to work cooperatively to leverage the resources and expertise of our interagency partners.

#### DRUG THREATS IN AFRICA

For DEA, the principal drug threats in Africa are: Cocaine, Southwest Asian heroin, methamphetamine precursor chemicals, drug money laundering, narcoterrorism, and other drugs such as marijuana, hashish, and khat.

##### *Cocaine*

West Africa is a transshipment location for metric-ton quantities of cocaine being transported to Europe by South American DTOs. A 2007 U.S. Government assessment estimated that between 180 and 240 metric tons of cocaine transited established transshipment points in West Africa most ultimately destined for Europe. Colombian, and Venezuelan traffickers are entrenched in West Africa and have cultivated longstanding relationships with African criminal networks to facilitate their activities in the region. Criminal groups take advantage of Africa's porous borders, poorly equipped and undertrained law enforcement agencies, and corrupt govern-

ment officials to facilitate their trafficking operations. The significant rise in cocaine trafficking from South America to Europe, via established routes in Africa, presents a threat not only to Europe, but also to the United States. The same South American DTOs responsible for transporting major cocaine shipments to the United States are using the African Continent as a transit base/storage location for cocaine destined for European markets. The drug proceeds from cocaine trafficking return to these South American DTOs to further their illegal activities in the United States, Africa, and Europe.

#### *Southwest Asian Heroin*

DEA investigations, intelligence and seizure information identify Africa as a staging ground and transit location for Southwest Asian (SWA) heroin entering global markets. The heroin is principally smuggled by West African criminal groups from Pakistan through Middle Eastern countries and East Africa to West Africa. Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana are the principal transit zones in East and West Africa. The heroin is concealed in air cargo, luggage, and body-carried by couriers for eventual transshipment to the United States and Europe.

#### *Methamphetamine Precursor Chemicals*

Current drug and laboratory seizure statistics suggest that the vast majority of the methamphetamine consumed in the United States is produced by Mexico-based DTOs. Since methamphetamine is a synthetic, clandestinely produced drug, its production and distribution relies exclusively on the ability of Mexican organizations to obtain key precursor chemicals, particularly pseudoephedrine and ephedrine. Since 2006, DEA investigations and intelligence collection initiatives indicate sub-Saharan Africa has become a major transshipment location for precursor chemicals destined for the Americas.

#### *Drug Money Laundering*

The laundering of drug proceeds in Africa is a major concern. DEA investigations and intelligence collection initiatives have revealed evidence of money laundering on the continent is rapidly expanding. Africa does not constitute a global money laundering hub, but its permissive and corrupt environments offer opportunities for traffickers and their money brokers to operate with relative impunity. DEA has observed the following money laundering methods in Africa: Bulk currency smuggling and storage, illicit wire transfers, Informal Value Transfer Systems (IVTS) or "hawalas," corrupt foreign exchange houses, casinos, laundering through precious gems (particularly diamonds), real estate investment and trade-based money laundering (including the used-car market). Often several laundering methods are used in the same operation to repatriate proceeds to the criminal beneficiaries. As evident from the scope of methods available to traffickers, deficiencies in some African economies (such as sparse banking outlets, cash-dependent markets and inadequate regulation) do not discourage money laundering.

#### *Narcoterrorism Activity*

The threat of narcoterrorism in Africa is a real concern, including the presence of international terrorist organizations operating or based in Africa, such as the regional threat presented by al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Maghreb (AQIM). In addition, DEA investigations have identified elements of Colombia's Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) as being involved in cocaine trafficking in West Africa. In a large number of African states, there are also insurgent/antigovernment groups undermining stability, the rule of law, and the weak central governments, all of which are conditions exploited by international drug and precursor chemical organizations. The weak economies throughout Africa make drug trafficking one of the more profitable ways for criminal organizations to generate money, certainly a point not overlooked by terrorist and insurgent organizations. The transportation, money laundering, and logistical infrastructures utilized by DTOs in Africa are vulnerable, wittingly or unwittingly, for use by terrorist organizations.

#### *Marijuana, Hashish, and Khat*

Marijuana, hashish, and khat are additional drug threats currently posed by DTOs operating in Africa and are serious issues of concern to our African counterparts due to their growing rates of abuse on the African Continent. Marijuana is the primary drug of abuse in Africa. Marijuana production takes place in almost every African country for internal sale, and also is smuggled to Europe. The primary drug trafficked in northern Africa is hashish. Each year Spanish drug law enforcement authorities seize massive amounts of hashish, smuggled into the Iberian Peninsula from Morocco. Hashish traffickers and cocaine traffickers now utilize the



same routes to transport those drugs into Spain. Finally, khat is smuggled into the United States from East Africa via European countries, where the plant is legal. As a result, millions of dollars a year are being sent to Somalia and other countries in the Horn of Africa that may end up in the coffers of terrorist networks.

#### DEA'S STRATEGIC CONCEPT FOR AFRICA

DEA's principal mission in Africa is to identify, target, and dismantle significant international DTOs. In the last 24 months, DEA's near term strategy for Africa has focused investigative efforts to uncover those DTOs which represent a threat to the United States, or our law enforcement counterparts in Africa, Europe, and Asia. Once identified, DEA has initiated bilateral and multilateral criminal investigations into these groups to great effect. DEA has developed a long-term strategic concept for our efforts in Africa. The strategic concept includes a series of programs that will enable DEA and U.S. Government partners to address operational and capacity-building requirements in Africa.

#### *African Investigative Units*

Enforcement activities in Africa have demonstrated the need for African counterparts to develop specialized investigative teams to conduct investigations into significant local, regional, and international DTOs. DEA is currently working to cooperatively train, equip, and support specialized units within host-nation law enforcement authorities. DEA will continue to work with the Department of State (Bureau of International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Affairs—INL) in this effort.

#### *DEA Training in Africa*

The DEA International Training Section (TRI) will dedicate the necessary training and mentoring to Africa's law enforcement community, which is necessary to combat drug trafficking in Africa and support DEA's strategic concept for Africa. TRI will seek to provide the African law enforcement officers with knowledge of investigative and tactical techniques. The goal is to improve the ability of law enforcement agencies in Africa to investigate narcotics-related crimes ranging from simple seizure cases to large-scale conspiracy cases.

During 2006–07, DEA conducted nine training seminars in Africa with students from 26 African nations. The seminars ranged from instruction in Basic Drug Enforcement Operations to the Drug Unit Commanders Course. In fiscal year 2009, DEA is participating in seven training courses for African counterparts in Botswana, South Africa, and Morocco. The courses will include Asset Forfeiture, Drug Unit Commanders, Basic and Advanced Agent Course, Airport Interdiction, and Clandestine Laboratory Operations.

#### *International Law Enforcement Academies/Training Centers*

DEA will continue to participate in the Department of State's International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Botswana and continue to sponsor African law enforcement counterparts to attend its courses. The mission of the ILEA is to support emerging democracies, help protect U.S. interests through international cooperation, and to promote social, political, and economic stability by combating crime. The ILEA concept and philosophy creates a united effort by all of the participants to include government agencies and ministries, trainers, managers and students to achieve the common foreign policy goal of international law enforcement.

In July 2000, the governments of the United States and Botswana entered into an agreement for establishing an ILEA that would provide training for member countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), East Africa and other eligible countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

#### ONGOING DEA EFFORT TO COUNTER THE AFRICAN DRUG THREAT

DEA recognizes that in order to effectively attack the international drug trade it has to forward deploy its personnel into the foreign arena. DEA has the largest Federal law enforcement presence overseas. DEA has 83 offices in 62 countries and works with host governments in assessing drug threats, gathering intelligence, targeting major DTOs, and assisting host governments in developing comprehensive counternarcotics strategies. DEA agents understand the importance of working to establish relationships of trust with host-nation governments in order to accomplish DEA's mission.

DEA's global presence has already proved to be essential in assessing the drug threat developing in Africa. Much of the intelligence obtained to date on the activities of DTOs operating in Africa has come from ongoing DEA investigations on the continent and in other DEA domestic and foreign offices. DEA will continue to

develop these investigations and enhance our understanding of how DTOs in Africa function, so we are best positioned to attack their command and control.

As noted, DEA currently has four offices established on the continent of Africa (Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, and South Africa), and plans to open a new office in Kenya. These offices are strategically located across the continent to utilize limited manpower and financial resources. DEA's offices serve as regional hubs in which DEA coordinates investigative activities and implements its regional strategy.

#### *Organizational Attack*

In order to prioritize and maximize the use of DEA's manpower and financial resources, DEA works with DOJ partners to identify those organizations having the most significant impact on international drug availability. The result of this collaboration has been the identification and targeting of the full scope of an organization's criminal activities. Since 2007, DEA has identified at least nine top-tier South American and Mexican DTOs that have established operations in Africa. By attacking these groups in the source and transit zones, as well as their operations in other areas of the world, a unified targeting strategy is being implemented. As the same South American DTOs transporting cocaine into West Africa are also responsible for multiton cocaine shipments into Mexico and the United States, DEA's organizational attack strategy calls for investigative efforts against these organizations on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

#### *International Drug Flow Attack Strategy*

A key element in combating international drug trafficking is the concerted and coordinated efforts of the interagency community to jointly identify chokepoints vulnerable to enforcement efforts and simultaneously direct assets to vigorously target the identified chokepoints on a coordinated and sustained basis. To this end, DEA developed an International Drug Flow Attack Strategy, which has the primary objective to cause major disruption to the flow of drugs, money, and chemicals between the source zones and the United States. The strategy includes an integrated intelligence-enforcement process that rests on four pillars: Intelligence-driven enforcement, sequential operations, predictive intelligence, and law enforcement deception campaigns. To stem the flow of drugs into the United States, DEA will continue to implement this successful Drug Flow Attack Strategy by expanding enforcement initiatives with our global law enforcement partners and the military. Where applicable, DEA will begin to engage African counterparts in these initiatives and develop Africa specific enforcement initiatives.

#### *Financial Attack*

The U.N. World Drug Report 2007 affirms that the global illicit drug trade is as lucrative as it is poisonous. This global illicit drug trade generates an estimated \$322 billion a year in revenue, far more than the estimated profits from international human trafficking, arms trafficking, and diamond smuggling combined. To make a significant impact on the drug trade in the United States and internationally, DEA is tracking and targeting illicit drug money back to the sources of supply before it can be used to finance the next production cycle of illegal drugs. DEA's financial investigations are driven by strategies designed to inflict permanent damage against DTOs. By denying DTOs the revenue from the distribution of illegal drugs, the drug traffickers' capability to acquire or produce additional drugs and support their organizations is hampered. DEA's perspective on the money laundering threat is twofold: First, DEA is focused on proceeds generated by the illegal drug industry; second, DEA is addressing the threat that drug proceeds represent as a means of financing international terrorist organizations.

#### *Extraterritorial Authority*

DEA has the legal authority to investigate and charge drug traffickers with extraterritorial offenses under U.S. Code Title 21 §959. Section 959 gives DEA extraterritorial jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute drug offenses with a nexus to the United States even though the drugs in question have not actually entered the United States. The 959 statute has proven to be an invaluable investigative tool in pursuing drug trafficking organizations overseas where we can satisfy the requirement for a nexus to the United States.

Additionally, Title 21 U.S.C. §960a gives DEA an enforcement tool for narcoterrorism. Like section 959, section 960a gives DEA jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute extraterritorial offenses if a link between the drug offense and a specified act of terrorism or a terrorist organization can be established. Under this statute, the prescribed punishment is twice the punishment provided for the underlying drug offense. Significantly, there is no requirement for a nexus to the United States for the underlying drug offense, a concept that is particularly important in cases

involving heroin from Afghanistan, and could also be applied to international terrorists involved in the African drug trade.

Sections 959 and 960a and traditional conspiracy charges under 21 U.S.C. §§ 846 and 848, provide the legal authority to prosecute transnational DTOs, and the robust sentencing provisions in these statutes provide incentive for defendants to cooperate with investigators, promoting success in investigations.

#### DEA INVESTIGATIVE SUCCESSES

A number of recent successes detailed below demonstrate how the cooperative efforts of the United States and foreign law enforcement counterparts are addressing the African drug threat.

- In September 2008, a Colombian national was arrested by Togolese officials based on a narcotics investigation targeting a South American DTO operating in West Africa, which resulted in the seizure of approximately 300 kilograms of cocaine. DEA was able to identify the Colombian as the subject of an outstanding arrest warrant issued by the Southern District of Florida (SDFL) pursuant to a 1992 Federal investigation in Miami, FL. The arrest warrant was based on an indictment for cocaine trafficking related to the seizure of 12,500 kilograms of cocaine secreted in cement fence posts—the largest single seizure of cocaine in U.S. history at the time. The Colombian was identified as the head of a cell operating in Miami working directly for former Cali Cartel leader Miguel Rodriguez-Orejuela. In January 2009, DEA coordinated the expulsion of this individual from Togo based on the SDFL arrest warrant, and he is awaiting trial in Miami. This operation demonstrated that South American DTO personnel based in West Africa are in fact, experienced, high-level operatives.
- In July 2008, Sierra Leone authorities seized approximately 600 kilograms of cocaine from a twin-engine airplane that landed at Lungi International Airport in Freetown. The aircraft was marked with a Red Cross emblem and had originated in Venezuela. The flight crew fled the area upon landing; however, Sierra Leone officials quickly apprehended the flight crew and subsequently arrested other South American nationals in Sierra Leone involved in the smuggling operation. The investigation revealed the defendants and cocaine were linked to a major South American DTO. DEA worked with international partners and Sierra Leone officials to develop a criminal prosecution against those involved. In April 2009, 15 individuals involved with this DTO in Sierra Leone were convicted on narcotics charges, several of which were subsequently expelled to the United States to face charges under Title 21, U.S.C. § 846.
- In 2007, DEA, French, and Congolese law enforcement counterparts conducted a successful operation which resulted in the seizure of approximately 9 tons of pseudoephedrine in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The investigation revealed a Mexican-based organization was responsible for the pseudoephedrine shipment, as well as several prior precursor chemical shipments that transited the DRC, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and South Africa en route to Mexico. Since the March 2007 operation, DEA has assisted with the seizure of several other multiton pseudoephedrine and ephedrine shipments in Africa that have been linked to Mexican DTOs.
- In 2006, DEA initiated an investigation targeting the head of a Kabul-based DTO operating a major heroin processing laboratory in Afghanistan and as the source of supply for heroin groups in West Africa and Europe. During UC operations in Ghana and Afghanistan, DEA agents negotiated a 100 kilogram heroin deal, which was intended for distribution in the United States. In late 2007, the principal target and an associate were arrested by Ghanaian authorities and an expulsion order (to the U.S.) was issued by the Ghanaian courts. Both individuals were quickly transferred to U.S. custody and transported to Virginia to face charges issued under a title 21, section 959 indictment from the Eastern District of Virginia. Based on their conviction, in June 2008, the subjects of the investigation received prison sentences of 24 and 17 years, respectively. This investigation disrupted the West African trafficking operations of a major Afghan heroin DTO, included successful DEA UC operations in Ghana and Afghanistan, and was the first time title 21, subsection 959 authority was used by DEA in Africa.

DEA is continuing to target the most significant DTOs operating in Africa, and I fully expect continued success. The achievements described also must be attributed to the brave and determined African police counterparts and their willing governments. Without their cooperation, coordination, and support, the successes realized in Africa would not be possible.

CAPACITY OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND IMPEDIMENTS TO SUCCESSFUL DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT INITIATIVES

Africa is experiencing an unprecedented rise in drug trafficking, and the growth of organized crime in Africa is an increasing national security threat, as evidenced by the integration of South American drug trafficking networks with African and European buyers and distributors. Organized criminal groups are exploiting governmental weakness and corruption prevalent in many African nations. There are obvious signs that Africa's vulnerability is being exploited by some of the world's most dangerous drug trafficking organizations. The global expansion of West African drug trafficking syndicates, such as Nigerian DTOs, has been documented from Bangkok to Kabul; from Nairobi to Cape Town; and from Lima to Detroit. This expansion would not be possible without safe bases of operation on the African Continent.

South American cocaine DTOs have impacted much of West Africa due to the rising demand for cocaine and the higher profits that can be made in the European drug market. The wholesale price for a kilogram of cocaine in Europe can exceed the cost of the same kilogram in the United States by two or three times. The current political and economic environment in Africa presents an unprecedented opportunity for drug traffickers and terrorists to flourish and expand their operations on the continent. There is a risk that the rule of law in some West African states might collapse under the sustained pressure from foreign and local DTOs. In addition, many African governments do not have the economic capacity or political will to address the drug threat in the face of other issues such as famine, disease and poverty.

CONCLUSION

As the lead U.S. Federal drug law enforcement agency, DEA is integral to the realization of a successful counternarcotics plan in Africa. With decades of overseas experience and an unparalleled global law enforcement presence, DEA is well-positioned to forge the partnerships necessary to achieve lasting success in Africa. Implementing an effective counternarcotics strategy in Africa represents a significant challenge to DEA and its partners throughout the U.S. Government.

DEA is enhancing its bilateral intelligence collection and operational capacity to address the African drug threat. DEA is also working closely with its U.S. Government and foreign law enforcement counterparts to counteract the wave of drug-related crime impacting many African nations. With the implementation of the proposed programs—such as increased training opportunities—DEA and its partner agencies can achieve meaningful and sustainable counternarcotics success in Africa.

Mr. Chairman, the DEA is committed to working both harder and smarter in dealing with the threat of transnational drug trafficking that affects the entire global community. We recognize that interagency and multinational cooperation are essential elements of the President's National Drug Control Strategy, and these cooperative efforts are the best way for us to dismantle and disrupt international DTOs. DEA will continue to work tirelessly to enhance the effectiveness of our enforcement operations in order to curtail the flow of drugs to the United States and around the world. Again, thank you for your recognition of this important issue and the opportunity to testify here today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you very much, Mr. Harrigan.  
Mr. Wechsler.

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM WECHSLER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR COUNTERNARCOTICS AND GLOBAL THREATS, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. WECHSLER. Thank you, Chairman Feingold, Senator Isakson, Senator Kaufman. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to testify on this important and emerging subject.

With your permission, I will submit my full testimony for the record.

Senator FEINGOLD. Without objection.  
Mr. WECHSLER. Great.

My office, as you know, has responsibility for overall management of Department of Defense counternarcotics programs, and provides direct oversight for AFRICOM's counternarcotics office.

Narcotics trafficking in West Africa is not a new phenomenon, but the unprecedented growth in trafficking in the last few years demonstrates that West Africa is now firmly tied into international trafficking patterns and is being systematically targeted by international drug trafficking organizations, principally from Latin America. This endangers peace, stability, democracy, our efforts to promote security-sector reform in West Africa, and poses an increasing threat to both our African and our European partners.

We need, and are working on, an integrated approach, both interagency and international, to equip, train, and maintain counternarcotics organizations of regional partners. DOD is working with its combatant commands, counternarcotics offices, and our interagency partners to jointly attack this problem.

Cocaine trafficking to West Africa is a recent development, as you described and as my colleagues have described. Four years ago, only 10 percent of the cocaine destined for the European market first transited West Africa; but, by 2007, we saw this estimate climb to nearly 60 percent, representing 180 to 240 metric tons, and 18 percent of the total world cocaine production. Despite a decline in trafficking in late 2008, for a variety of reasons, we would expect that West Africa will continue to be a major transshipment point, going forward.

The same drug traffickers who ship their drugs to the United States have intensified their use of Africa as the transshipment point, in reaction to increased interdiction efforts against direct shipment to Europe, and to take advantage of Africa's porous borders, instability, corruption, and lack of dedicated counterdrug forces. Once on the continent, the drugs are broken down into smaller quantities for further shipment, using a variety of means and routes.

Regional government capacity to address the problem is varied, but, in general, ranges from limited to, unfortunately, nonexistent. Certain countries, like Cape Verde, Senegal, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, have relatively good capacity and have demonstrated political will through participation in maritime law enforcement operations with the United States. To build more regional capacity, aid for the navies and coast guards must be tailored for each country while planning for broader desired regional capabilities.

Ultimately, we want the regional navies and coast guards to be able to conduct intelligence-driven interdiction operations in collaboration with other partner nations. For this to occur, our African partners need assets, such as patrol boats, integrated training, and support facilities, along with necessary support from the United States and other international partners.

AFRICOM analysts are actively collaborating with their counterparts as JIATF-South, DIA, Naval Forces Africa, and others, to monitor the drug flow and help guide which projects will have the greatest impact. Projects already underway in West Africa include construction of boat and refueling facilities for the regional navies and coast guards, student sponsorship for classroom training, con-

struction of an airline passenger screening facility in Ghana, and establishment of an Information Fusion Center in Cape Verde.

All these programs are—it must be stressed—are a result of a real interagency development process. And that’s critical for the success of any of these programs. The Joint Assessment Teams, led by State INL and AFRICOM, include individuals from DOD, DOJ, and others. They visit individual countries to determine the capabilities and weaknesses. The resulting assessments generates lists of programs which are designed to integrate with and support one another as one whole-of-government approach from the United States, and also integrate with other international efforts that are underway. The members of the interagency team are then able to identify which proposals fall within the scope of their expertise, and collaborate for execution.

In addition, AFRICOM routinely consults with the interagency community via the interagency personnel that are embedded with AFRICOM in Stuttgart and ongoing interaction with State INL. Through active consultation with the interagency community, we seek to only engage in meaningful projects that directly support foreign policy and effectively use our tax dollars.

In conclusion, although we are still defining the scope, we know that drug trafficking in West Africa is a major problem, it’s growing rapidly, and we expect it to grow in the coming years. The time to correct it is now, before it undermines our strategic interests on the African Continent. So, I thank you very much for this wake-up call.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Wechsler follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM WECHSLER, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, OFFICE OF COUNTERNARCOTICS AND GLOBAL THREATS, DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Feingold, Senator Isakson, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the threat of drug trafficking in West Africa.

Narcotics trafficking in West Africa is not a new phenomenon, but the unprecedented growth in trafficking since 2005 demonstrates that West Africa is now firmly tied into international trafficking patterns and is being systematically targeted by international drug trafficking organizations, principally from South America. While the direct threat to the United States is limited, this trafficking problem endangers peace, development, stability and democracy in West Africa and poses an increasing threat to both our African and European partners.

In accordance with NSPD 50, the national security goals for Africa include building capacity, consolidating democratic transition, bolstering fragile states, strengthening regional security and providing humanitarian and developmental assistance. The Department of Defense strategy for achieving these goals include reducing threats that flow from ungoverned areas of weak and fragile states, countering humanitarian tragedies that often arise from conflict, ethnic tensions and extreme poverty, working with our partners to build capacity and reduce threats by promoting reform and professionalism in African militaries, and by fostering stability and assisting in reconstruction.

Together with regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States and partner countries such as Senegal and Ghana we have worked to raise regional peacekeeping capabilities.

The recent explosive growth in narcotics trafficking in West Africa seriously impacts our strategy and goals. We have seen how drug traffickers on other continents work to corrupt politicians, militaries, and the judicial process. They are using the same tactics in Africa. West Africa has made great progress since the horrendous civil wars at the turn of this century. The corruption and violence associated with the drug trade can rapidly undermine the progress made in the region. What we see as vulnerabilities in Africa the traffickers see as opportunities. Drug-related cor-

ruption and violence will undermine overall United States regional strategy and weaken African militaries unless the traffickers can be convinced now, while they are still establishing their networks, that West Africa and the rest of the continent is not open for their business.

Four years ago, only 10 percent of the cocaine destined for the European market first transited West Africa, but by 2007 we saw this estimate climb to nearly 60 percent, representing 180 to 240 metric tons and 18 percent of the total world cocaine production. In 2008, this fell to approximately 40 percent of the cocaine destined for Europe, likely due to the instability in Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, two of the region's primary entry points. In 2009 this figure is expected to climb again, as the drug trafficking organizations adjust their operations around the political realities of the region.

Drug traffickers have intensified their use of Africa as a transshipment point as a reaction to increased interdiction efforts against direct shipment to Europe and to take advantage of Africa's porous borders, instability, corruption, and lack of law enforcement. Once on the continent, the drugs are broken down into smaller quantities for further shipment using various means and routes. Often, traffickers will put as many as 30 couriers on a single commercial flight from places like Accra, Ghana, to the European Union, and will then give the name of one courier to the authorities on the receiving end to focus law enforcement on that individual, allowing the remainder to proceed unchecked.

West African organized crime groups receive large amounts of cash or up to one-third of the drug shipment as payment for services. This in turn leads to the serious corruption issues with certain West African governments and is contributing to a growing drug-use problem. The amount of money officials are paid in bribes far exceed what these impoverished governments can pay in salaries, and can lead to what is called a narcostate, defined as an area that has been taken over and is controlled and corrupted by drug cartels and where law enforcement is effectively nonexistent. Recent events in Guinea-Bissau leave their current status unknown. For example, a U.N. report states that in 2006, 674 kilograms of cocaine was taken off a plane that landed at a military airstrip. Military officers took control of the drugs, which subsequently disappeared. The two Colombian suspects that were arrested were later released by a judge, with no legal reason given. As government capabilities decline due to rampant corruption, licit activity becomes more difficult and discourages foreign investment. Also, there is a large population of young people in this region. Without any real avenues for licit employment or opportunity, they can become a humanitarian burden through illegal immigration to Europe or America or become vulnerable to extremist ideology and become part of a terrorist organization. Finally, left unchecked regional instability can deteriorate into armed conflict necessitating expensive Noncombat Evacuations of American Citizens or the deployment of peacekeepers to the region to stave off widespread humanitarian crisis.

Regional government capacity to address the problem is varied, but in general is weak to nonexistent. Certain countries like Cape Verde, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Ghana have either a limited basic capability to conduct independent counternarcotics operations or have demonstrated their political will through participation in maritime law enforcement operations with the United States.

DOD's Counternarcotics Strategy, which guides counternarcotics operations and assistance at all Combatant Commands, calls for building host-nation capacity to conduct counternarcotics operations through "enhancement of interdiction forces." To build a regional capability, aid in terms of training and equipment for the navies and coast guards must be tailored to the individual countries while keeping in mind the broader regional capacities we seek to build or enhance. For successful maritime operations to occur, our international partners need assets to patrol against and interdict drug trafficking organizations, including land vehicles, patrol boats, and aircraft, along with the requisite training and funding stream for maintenance and operations. However, it must be noted that basic government, law enforcement, and military institutions must be in place before substantial investment in hardware will be beneficial, and that the funds available to these governments both internally and in terms of foreign assistance are very limited. AFRICOM CN efforts recognize this reality and focus on the basic capabilities these governments need. The interagency is currently working to develop a strategy that balances interdiction and other counternarcotics efforts. DOD is collaborating closely with our interagency colleagues to ensure the resulting strategy appropriately addresses narcotrafficking in the African context, including taking into consideration the assistance our European partners are providing.

AFRICOM CNT analysts are actively collaborating with their counterparts at Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S), our European partners' Maritime Analysis and Operations Center (MAOC) based in Lisbon, the U.S. Office of Naval

Intelligence, Defense Intelligence Agency, and others to monitor the drug flow, support the broader efforts, build capacity, and help guide which projects will have the greatest impact against drug trafficking organizations. AFRICOM CNT provides assistance to both military and law enforcement units with counternarcotics missions. The maritime projects already underway in West Africa include:

- AFRICOM CNT sponsorship of students from multiple West African nations on Africa Partnership Station to attend courses taught by U.S. Coast Guard Trainers.
- Construction of a pier and refueling facility to extend the range of the Senegalese Navy.
- Supported the establishment of Cape Verde Maritime Security Interagency Operations Center, which is an interagency fusion center that will help to develop the regional intelligence picture and communications with U.S. organizations like JIATF-S and the MAOC in Lisbon.
- Construction of a climate-controlled facility at the international airport at Accra, Ghana, to screen passengers suspected of swallowing drugs.
- Collaborating with Sixth Fleet to construct a boat facility in Ghana to support Defender Class boats that were provided by the United States.
- Supporting the training of the future Liberia Coast Guard Commander and Deputy Commander at the International Maritime Officer's Course at the USCG training facility in Yorktown, VA

Some of the aforementioned programs are the result of direct AFRICOM interaction with country teams, but others are the result of an interagency development process that will serve as the model for future joint efforts. To achieve this, a joint assessment led by INL and including individuals from DOD, DOJ, and others is conducted in the individual countries to identify current capabilities and weaknesses. The resulting assessment generates a list of programs and proposals which are designed to integrate with and support each other. The members of the interagency team are then able to identify which proposals fall within the scope of their expertise and authorities and allow them to collaborate with the interagency for execution. In addition to the assessment process, AFRICOM routinely consults with the interagency community via the interagency personnel embedded with AFRICOM in Stuttgart, daily phone calls to State INL, and participation in various working groups. Through active consultation with the interagency community we seek to only engage in meaningful projects that directly support foreign policy.

In conclusion, we are still discovering the scope of the problem in West Africa, and are in the process of building a complete picture and comprehensive plan to assist West African countries in becoming capable partners against drug trafficking organizations. We look forward to continued successful collaboration with the interagency and thank the committee for the opportunity to be here today.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, sir.

Thank all of you.

Normally, I would start the questioning, but Senator Isakson has to leave for this very important session of another committee, so I'm going to ask him to start off. These will be 7-minute rounds.

Senator ISAKSON. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Wechsler, on the Somalian coast, given the trafficking and the piracy, there has been some international cooperation between navies. And that situation appears to at least be somewhat better, although certainly not solved. Has there been any coordination with European navies regarding some presence of patrol on the West African coast?

Mr. WECHSLER. Yes, we are actively cooperating with the Europeans in trying to identify how to make use of the resources that are available and that might be available. Again, this isn't a problem that we can solve on our own; this is a problem that, of course, the governments of Africa need to play a leading role in solving, and, of course, the governments of Europe need to play an important role in solving, because, after all, the cocaine that is being shipped is intended for European shores. So, indeed, we are, and we will be, working with our European partners. It's helpful that



AFRICOM, of course, is in Stuttgart, which facilitates the coordination that's necessary.

Senator ISAKSON. Well, I know when I was on the western coast, they talked about wanting the U.S. Navy to make ports of call on that coast simply because the presence there sends a strong message. And if that were true—my thinking being that were true—if there was some coordination between the navies of the European countries, it might be further evidence of that naval presence might be a suppressant.

You mentioned that once they were at the West Coast of Africa, drug traffickers had multiple routes into Europe. Can you describe what some of those routes are?

Mr. WECHSLER. Sure. The routes extend from everything from individual mules with very small amounts of cocaine that can go in great numbers, and so, when individuals are caught, it really doesn't hurt the organizations, and they continue to traffic through the major air hubs in the region, to overland routes. Really, these organizations, of course, as you know, Senator, are continuously adapting; they have long experience in finding every single route and every partner that might be available to do this. The concern is not only, of course, how they are doing it now, but how they might do it in the future, as demand for cocaine in Europe is expected to grow.

Senator ISAKSON. Has there been any evidence or presence of al-Qaeda or other organized terrorist groups on the West Coast of Africa?

Mr. WECHSLER. Well, there is certainly evidence of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. There's evidence of Hezbollah in the area. We do not have—I think it's fair to say—strong evidence, at this stage, of either of those organizations playing a significantly powerful role in the drug trade, either the ones that we're talking about now or other drug trades that do exist in the wider region.

But, I also think it's important to look ahead and to recognize the roles that such organizations—the roles that drug trafficking have played with such organizations in the globe, more widely, and even in the region, more specifically, and to imagine ourselves, 5 to 10 years hence, and with a much bigger problem on our hands if we don't work together to help ameliorate the issue today.

Senator ISAKSON. Well, my concern—

Mr. HARRIGAN. Sir, if I may—

Senator ISAKSON. Yes.

Mr. HARRIGAN [continuing]. Follow up—

Senator ISAKSON. Certainly.

Mr. HARRIGAN [continuing]. As well. The Deputy Secretary is absolutely right. Also relative to terrorist organizations, let's not forget the FARC. The FARC plays a prominent role in West Africa. DEA has several ongoing operations and investigations with our counterparts in West Africa and Europe, and we'd be happy to brief you, sir, or any of your staff members, in a classified setting.

Senator ISAKSON. I appreciate that, and I would like to do that, because, having been on that coast and in some of those countries, corruption is still a major problem in government in Africa, (a), and (b) that is the operative opportunity for al-Qaeda, the FARC, and others to actually infiltrate the governments, for their own protec-

tion, to traffic in and out. So, that is why I asked the question. I would really enjoy very much having that briefing, so let's make that happen.

Mr. HARRIGAN. Absolutely.

Senator ISAKSON. Secretary Carson, on another note—it has nothing to do with drug trafficking in West Africa—but I want to thank you for your commitment to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. And I know you will probably be going back today to the Park Hyatt on those negotiations, and I wish you well and thank you for that time you're spending on it.

Ambassador CARSON. Thank you very much, Senator. I was there this morning from 8 o'clock, rushed here to participate in this hearing, and will go back to those meetings and proceedings after this hearing. We appreciate your strong support in this effort, as well as Chairman Feingold's efforts.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you, sir.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Senator Isakson.

Assistant Secretary Carson, let me start with you. It seems to me that one of the greatest challenges that we face in this issue of countering drug trafficking in West Africa is the lack of an adequate diplomatic presence and inadequate information on the problem. Do you agree with the assessment? And are there specific countries or areas in West Africa where you think we urgently need to expand our diplomatic presence to address this problem?

Ambassador CARSON. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the question. The answer is, absolutely yes, we need expanded diplomatic presence throughout West Africa, but in particular in Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau has been identified as Africa's first narcotics trafficking state. It is a country that has experienced enormous instability. Some of that instability has been caused by the influence of drug traffickers operating there. Both the President and the chief of the army were recently killed, in large measure, we believe, because of relations they had with financing and drug dealing. We have no embassy there. We have not had an embassy there in nearly a decade. We need one there. We need a strong diplomatic presence there, not only to represent our interests, but also to help counter and monitor developments in the area of drug trafficking.

We also need expanded presence in some of the Sahel countries, where we only have one or two political and economic officers. We could reasonably see expansions in places like Senegal, like Mali, like Burkina Faso, and Benin and Togo. All of those places could stand additional resources.

Senator FEINGOLD. And as a former national intelligence officer, how would you assess the adequacy of the information we have on this threat?

Ambassador CARSON. We could use additional information to help to track down individuals who are associated with international narcotics trafficking. The absence of political officers who can dedicate more time to this, as well as the absence of intelligence officials who can dedicate more time to this, hampers our ability to zero in on individuals who are engaged in these networks. The more intelligence, more information, would be enormously helpful.

Senator FEINGOLD. And in coordination with the Africa Bureau, what specific activity, Mr. Carson, is the State Department's INL Bureau currently undertaking to help West African countries both build their law enforcement and judicial capacity to respond to this problem? And do they have sufficient resources for it?

Ambassador CARSON. We could use additional resources. The State Department's INL program focuses largely on building capacity. We think that there is a need for governments in Africa to have stronger judiciaries, stronger prosecutorial authorities, better judges, better investigators, and better police officers capable of investigating crimes, lawyers capable of prosecuting, judges willing to convict, and jails able to keep convicted individuals involved in drug trafficking.

We're working in a number of states in Africa to strengthen that African capacity, for example, in Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. We have programs that are designed to strengthen capacity, and programs that are designed to work effectively with those of DEA and DOD.

The State Department could always use additional resources. This fiscal year, State Department received approximately \$2.17 million for counternarcotics efforts. The Defense Department, my colleagues over there, received \$11 million in funding for counternarcotics efforts. I think that is a slight imbalance, given what we have to do on the ground. I'm not asking to rob from DOD, but I do think that we could use additional resources, given our responsibilities in this area and the need to have programs that strengthen local capacity, political will to investigate, prosecute, and indict.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you.

Special Agent Harrigan, on DEA's efforts to partner with its law enforcement counterparts in West Africa, what do you find to be the greatest challenges? And, in this regard, how do you coordinate with State's INL Bureau? And how much is corruption of law enforcement agencies, particularly drug-related corruption, an active and present threat?

Mr. HARRIGAN. Well, it's—thank you for the question, Chairman, it is a huge issue for DEA and our counterparts—drug-related corruption and other related crimes involved with that—sort of that corruption infrastructure, if you will. We work very closely with our law enforcement counterparts in West Africa, in the countries where DEA has offices. We are looking to stand up a vetted unit in Ghana, which would be the first on a continent of Africa. And basically what that does, sir, those officers in a vetted unit would be handpicked by DEA personnel, in consultation with authorities from Ghana, and they will be trained, they will be vetted, they will be polygraphed, they will be drug tested and undergo extensive training down at the DEA Academy here in Virginia, actually in Quantico, VA. Does it eliminate corruption? No. But, it certainly minimizes it when we could with these vetted units. Again, we look to stand up the first vetted unit within the next 6 to 9 months in Ghana and hopefully in the other countries that we are located and eventually will expand to; we'll have similar vetted units, as we do all around the world.

Senator FEINGOLD. Mr. Wechsler, as you mentioned, AFRICOM is actively involved in efforts to strengthen maritime security off West Africa's coast. How much of these efforts are specifically targeting drug trafficking? And is AFRICOM currently involved in any interdiction activities?

Mr. WECHSLER. Well, a couple of answers to that, Senator, first and foremost, this work is being done, to a great degree, through the counternarcotics office in AFRICOM, and that's where a great deal of the immediate threat and the potential for a growing threat is coming. And so, that's where a lot of the focus is.

Now, of course, wider issues, to understand and get a full grasp of maritime domain awareness, have wider advantages, as well, for other threats that might affect the region and for the region's continuing development. So, we see this as having mutual beneficial impacts on the region and on the work of AFRICOM.

AFRICOM is working with JIATF-South. One of the things that is not as—I don't think, as well understood out there is JIATF-South, which has built up a tremendous expertise at working through interdiction issues on an interagency basis with SOUTHCOM, also has agreements with EUCOM and with AFRICOM to bring that expertise to bear.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you very much.

Senator Kaufman.

Senator KAUFMAN. Secretary Carson, I'm looking for some optimism in this picture. Having traveled in this area of the—Africa, corruption is already an incredibly difficult problem. It just sounds to me like—first, I—by the way, first I want to thank the chairman for holding this hearing. I mean, I want to tell you, this is, as you said, a wake-up call—for this Senator, it's a wake-up call, in terms of what could really be a very—a bad situation getting very—a lot worse.

And so, I mean you look at these countries, where there's, kind of, corruption in a number of the countries, they aren't strong central governments. You talked about the kinds of things that we have to do, in terms of the rule of law and getting folks involved and the amount of poverty in these areas. I mean, aren't we kind of faced with a rush to the bottom, where we kind of help—work with some countries—Guinea-Bissau—the present problem, but then the drug lords just move to another country and use their money to corrupt whatever government that they're working on? Can you just give me some hope that there is an answer to this?

Ambassador CARSON. Senator, thank you for the question.

It's a difficult issue, but I think it is not hopeless, and we are certainly not helpless in the process. I think that by a strategic-coordinated approach, using all the elements of the U.S. Government, we can, in fact, begin to make a difference.

I think the work that we do collaboratively here as a U.S. Government can make a difference. As I say, the State Department's focus is on coordination, but by building local capacity and dealing with the issues of inadequacies in the judicial system and in the police forces, and working with governments to recognize the nature of the problem can work. I think that the efforts that DEA brings to the investigative and prosecutorial aspect of this are important, and I think AFRICOM's efforts, in terms of helping in

interdiction, all constitute a part of a whole which is a part of a strategic-level engagement.

We do have success when we are engaged and we focus on it. I would point to Nigeria as a place where there were enormous, enormous problems with drug trafficking, a decade ago. They have not entirely disappeared, but we have, in effect, been able, by working effectively with the Nigerian Government and sensitizing them to the political dangers that are inherent in allowing drug trafficking to pass through their country—how it undermines their political system; how it undermines their police and customs authorities. Through a lot of collaborative effort, they have worked with us to identify individuals engaged in international trafficking, have prosecuted an increasing number of individuals involved in drug trafficking, and have systematically worked to try to improve their ability to catch people who are mules and smugglers going to the United States and Europe.

It is not as much of an improvement as we would like, and it's not perfect, but it is substantially better than it was a decade ago, and it does demonstrate that, if we, in fact, focus on this and apply our collective abilities, we can make a difference.

There's no question that both corruption and poverty play a role in allowing narcotics traffickers to insinuate themselves into a country. Guinea-Bissau is a classic case. It has virtually no economy. It depends on a single-item export, and that's cashew nuts. And there is absolutely no doubt that cocaine and two or three large shipments of cocaine through Guinea-Bissau have an enormous ability to corrupt a society and its political elite and its customs officials, as well.

Senator KAUFMAN. And I don't mean—I think what you've laid out here this morning is a coordinated plan using the resources available to you from the Federal Government, and it seems to make a lot of sense to me. I'm just trying to deal with the idea that, you know, Nigeria's one kind of—Nigeria has a lot of interests, it's a big country, they have international responsibilities, they have oil, they have all these things. I'm just looking at some of the other players in that area—smaller countries with not much natural resources, that these drug traffickers are just going to move from country to country if we—and I'm not—I hope this isn't the case; I'm just—with the best-laid plans, if you don't have the government involved, all the things that you talked about are just not going to—it doesn't seem to me, are going to work. So, as they move from country to country, is there some bigger thing we have to do, or is there—give me some hope, like you did on Nigeria, that—

Ambassador CARSON. Well, I think there is hope. I think, less than 3 months ago, the Sierra Leonean Government took the courageous step of identifying and arresting several known Latin American drug dealers, and they were turned over to United States authorities in Freetown, and moved from there back to the United States, where they are currently in jail and awaiting prosecution. We are working with various governments, informing them how dangerous this can be for the long-term stability of their country.

And we do get cooperation. We received cooperation in Sierra Leone, in Liberia, and in Ghana, where, as our colleague has just

said, that the Ghanaians have clearly agreed to the vetting of a special police unit. The Attorney General for Ghana was here in the United States less than 2 weeks ago. He made two visits. One was to the Department of Justice to deal with a contentious commercial legal issue. The other was to DEA, to talk with her counterparts about strengthening the collaboration between Ghana and the United States on drug trafficking.

One of the things that we have tried to do on the diplomatic side is to sensitize African leadership, at the political level, at the police level and the judiciary, about how insidious and cancerous drug trafficking can be. I think that the rapid increase in trafficking in Africa surprised some of Africa's governments; they had not regarded this as a priority.

One of the things that we've tried to do is to encourage them to prioritize this issue.

Senator KAUFMAN. Can I ask the—Mr. Chairman—any other comments?

Mr. WECHSLER. Yes, I think it's an excellent question, Senator, and I think we have to avoid both the dual temptations of cynically understating the important work that's being done by certain parties in Africa who are dedicated to fighting the scourge of narcotics, and, at the same time, avoiding, also naively understating the threat and the challenge that is presented to them and to other parts of Africa that aren't as dedicated to the fight against narcotics. This problem is that it's a long-term problem, it requires a long-term solution, where there's one thing that you can guarantee, is that there's going to be failures along the way. But, with that kind of long-term solution, we can try to address this problem with the recognition that it's likely to get worse before it gets better. Demand in Europe is going to go up. The narcotics traffickers look at Europe and they look at the United States, and they see, in Europe, that profits are higher, they see that the downside risk is far less, and they see that the future growth is much, much higher, that means that's where you should be focusing, and those are the countries in Africa which find themselves along the way.

Mr. HARRIGAN. If I may, Senator, also, maybe a sliver of sunshine.

Senator KAUFMAN. Good.

Mr. HARRIGAN. But, let me be very clear and candid. We have an outstanding working relationship, DEA does, with our law enforcement counterparts. Without question, as we've seen in South America and Mexico, our law enforcement counterparts put their lives on the line each and every day to battle these cartels, whether it's the FARC, whether it's potentially Hezbollah or some other narcoterrorist group.

But, as Secretary Carson said, I met, personally, 2 weeks ago, with the Attorney General from Ghana. She is extremely dedicated, intelligent, committed, and, in my opinion, honest, the most important thing. And she is willing. She has just recently, as I mentioned in my opening statement, sir, where she approved the expulsion of a very significant trafficker. There have been several. We've had excellent working relationships in Togo and Ghana and in Sierra Leone. And I think what is very important for the African nations, the countries, to understand, much as we've seen in Mex-

ico and Central America, years ago, where they say, “Well, it’s just transiting Mexico or Central America; it’s going to the United States.” You know what? Transit countries become user countries overnight. There’s no question about it. And they must be prepared. And that’s what—DEA’s standing tall with our partners there to try to deliver that message.

Senator KAUFMAN. And I think that’s great, and I really want to encourage what you’re doing.

And again, I want to thank the chairman for doing that.

I’d just say one thing. If you were picking the countries that I thought we’d get cooperation from, Ghana and Nigeria would be at the top of the list. There are some other countries that are—I think could well go—exactly what you said, become transit points—looks like a good idea, deals with their own personal needs of the leaders there. So, I’m just supporting what it is you’re doing. I’m just concerned about—just trying to raise the level of how difficult this problem is, again, and thanking the chairman for holding this hearing.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Senator Kaufman, for your participation and your strong interest in this.

And I want to thank the panel for your testimony and for your efforts in this area. And I want to urge you on with coordination. That is obviously critical to this.

So, thank you very much.

And we’ll ask the next panel to come forward now.

[Pause.]

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you very much, and we’ll begin the panel.

Again, please limit your remarks to 5 minutes. We’ll put your full statement in the record.

Mr. Farah.

**STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS FARAH, SENIOR FELLOW, INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY CENTER, TAKOMA PARK, MD**

Mr. FARAH. Thank you, Senator Feingold, for the opportunity to be here.

Some of what I was going to say was covered by the earlier panelists, so I will skip some of that.

I want to thank you, particularly, for the Victor Bout case and your help in bringing him to justice, we hope, at least to get him as far as the Thai prison for the last 14 months, where he’s lost about 40 pounds, so it’s not all bad. [Laughter.]

The movement of drugs, particularly cocaine, through West Africa is a product of several developments in the overall drug trade. And the consequences are already devastating, as we’ve talked about here. You’ve talked about the U.N. estimates of the amount of drugs flowing through, the \$1.8 billion. If you look at what drug—what “blood diamonds” provided Charles Taylor at the height of the blood diamond trade, it was \$200 million. So, the order of magnitude between what drug trafficking will bring in to the criminal/terrorist pipelines in West Africa and what we’ve already seen in the devastation that even \$200 million can bring,

you can understand the level of concern for what's going to be happening there in the near future.

The ability of terrorists and criminal organizations to exploit weak and criminal states, and their existence in West Africa, as well as several other macrotrends in drug trafficking, explain why West Africa has become so important, in my mind.

One of the primary developments is—as mentioned—is the consumption in Europe. But, a second development, which we haven't focused on as much, is the ability to move cocaine from Colombia production sites, particularly those controlled by the FARC, through Venezuela with impunity. The government of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela has allowed the FARC to establish roots through his country that greatly lessen the threat and the cost of their moving cocaine, and Venezuela's geographic proximity to West Africa also make it an ideal launching pad.

A third factor is the success in the Colombia governments in dismantling the large cartels, leaving the field open to smaller groups that seek alternative routes to their markets. General Oscar Naranjo, the commander of the Colombian National Police, recently stated that Colombia, due to the weakness and absence of the traditional drug trafficking groups, no longer produces 90 percent of the world's cocaine, but rather, about 54 percent of the cocaine hydrochloride, with the rest coming from Peru and Bolivia. He noted that, for the first time in two decades or more, there's no single drug trafficking organization that dominates, like the Medellin Cartel, the Cali Cartel, the Northern Valley, the FARC, and the AUC.

At the same time, as was mentioned earlier, the Mexican cartels are under increasing pressure inside Mexico, and United States interdiction efforts have raised the cost of doing business for them in the United States. This pressure has made diversification to the European market via West Africa increasingly attractive.

All of this has direct consequences for West Africa. What I have observed repeatedly in two decades of following drug trafficking, transnational criminal organizations, and nonstate armed groups is that they are able to meet—when they are able to meet in neutral territory, they often form alliances that would not be possible in—under other circumstances. This is holding true in West Africa.

Already, in Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and elsewhere, we're seeing members of Mexican, Colombian, Venezuelan, Surinamese, and European organizations operating in the same territory and plugging into the same criminal pipelines. Identified members of the FARC, as well as Colombian—other Colombian organizations are on the ground in West Africa, protecting shipments and making deals.

There is a broader potential danger that must be kept in mind as we assess the emerging trends to West Africa. Some—and I'm—I think Mr. Braun will talk about this in more detail—we talk about the hybrid criminal-terrorist organizations, of which I think the FARC is a primary and leading example. In West Africa, it is Hezbollah, the Lebanese-based Shia Islamist organization that has long maintained an operational presence on the ground, and it has played a significant role in "blood diamonds" and other trafficking activities there.



In addition, many of the Lebanese diaspora community in West Africa, numbering several hundred thousand, pay a portion of their earnings to support Hezbollah in Lebanon, with the knowledge and acquiescence of their host governments.

I think it's inevitable that these groups, operating in the same permissive environments, will eventually come to know each other and come to work together, because each has what the other one needs. The Lebanese and Hezbollah groups control the pipelines and movement to Europe, and the cocaine traffickers provide a high-value commodity to put into that: Cocaine.

I think it's worth keeping in mind that Hezbollah has long been active in Latin America. The most egregious case is the—that we've documented, of course—is the Hezbollah and Iran's direct involvement in the 1994 AMIA bombings in Buenos Aires.

What's more worrisome is the recent evidence of Hugo Chavez's direct support for Hezbollah in Venezuela, including the June 18, 2008, OFAC designations of two Venezuelan diplomats—very senior diplomats—in his organization, in his party.

Given Iran's ties to Hezbollah in Venezuela, Venezuela's ties to Iran in the FARC, and the FARC's history of building alliances with other armed groups in the presence of Hezbollah and other armed Islamic groups on the ground, both in Latin America and West Africa, I think it would be dangerous and imprudent to dismiss the possibility of an alliance of these actors.

The histories of these groups indicates they will take advantage of ungoverned spaces in corrupt and weak states in West Africa to get to know each other, work together, learn from each other, and exploit areas of mutual interest. Unfortunately, the primary area of mutual interest is a hatred of the United States.

Given that most of the cocaine passing through West Africa is destined to Europe, why should we care? I think the first answer is that the West Africa cocaine trail directly strengthens the drug cartels in our hemisphere. We see the problems that Mexico's having—Colombia, Bolivia, Peru—the illicit organizations in all those states will be greatly strengthened.

It will also—it also strengthens the groups that are seeking to strangle the liberal democracies of Latin America, as we see in Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and elsewhere. The enemies of these liberal democracies, I would say, are Hugo Chavez, Iran, the FARC, and Hezbollah.

A second reason, of course, is that we depend on the region for about 18 percent of our oil, 14 percent of our liquid natural gas. And we are going to see increased instability in the region, I think, inevitably, as this goes forward.

The third reason—and I—then I witness the destruction on the ground—is the human suffering that this will inevitably bring. The order of magnitude, as I said, of the drug trafficking will far outstrip the other commodities that have already caused great human damage, from the systematic mass amputations and rape of the RUF to the brutality of the Taylor regime to the millions of displaced refugees.

As the previous panel said, the United States is taking effective—some steps to deal with this, but I think more needs to be done, primarily on the information-sharing. We still see stovepiping

within our own—within our own government. The Europeans, particularly the French, British, and Belgians, must be brought into the process in a much more robust way. This is true, not only because the cocaine ends up in Europe, but because these countries have long histories and knowledge of the drug trafficking organizations, the other criminal organizations that already exist in Latin America—or, in West Africa.

I'm not optimistic about the possibility of avoiding a wholesale disaster in West Africa that will have direct spillover effects in Latin America and the United States. Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, and other terrorist organizations have an operational presence across sub-Saharan Africa. They are increasingly using the same pipelines and facilitators as transnational criminal groups. And these pipelines will grow and spread with the infusion of cocaine drug money, accelerating the corrosion of already weak states.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Farah follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS FARAH, SENIOR FELLOW, INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY CENTER, TAKOMA PARK, MD

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on an issue that I believe is one of the most pressing we face in terms of the security and stability of the African subcontinent, Latin America and, ultimately, the United States.

The movement of drugs, particularly cocaine, through West Africa is the product of several developments in the overall drug trade, and the consequences are already devastating, as shown by the new wave of political instability and the creation of the continent's first true "narcostates." As the trafficking grows, so will the havoc wreaked on weak states in West Africa—many of which are only now emerging from decades of chaos and unspeakable violence and are ill prepared to face the new challenges.

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) conservatively estimates that 40 to 50 tons of cocaine, with an estimated value of \$1.8 billion, passed through West Africa in 2007, and the amount is growing.<sup>1</sup> The Pentagon's Africa Command and other intelligence services estimate the amount of cocaine transiting West Africa is at least five times the UNOCO estimate.<sup>2</sup> But even using the most conservative estimate, the magnitude of the problem for the region is easy to see. Using UNODC figures, the only legal export from the region that would surpass the value of cocaine is cocoa exports from Côte d'Ivoire. If the higher numbers are used, cocaine would dwarf the legal exports of the region combined, and be worth more than the GDP of several of the region's nations.<sup>3</sup>

As Antonio Maria Costa, the head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime wrote recently in a recent op-ed in the *Washington Post*, this epidemic of drugs and drug money flooding Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Sierra Leone and elsewhere has become a security issue. "Drug money is perverting the weak economies of the region . . . The influence that this buys is rotting fragile states; traffickers are buying favors and protection from candidates in elections."<sup>4</sup>

This staggering influx of illicit new revenue into the region is taking place in a broader and unhealthy context.

The changes across the globe have been swift and dramatic in recent years, as demonstrated in a snapshot drawn from three World Bank studies<sup>5</sup> and a recent

<sup>1</sup>Presentation of Antonio L. Mazzitelli, regional representative, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, Regional Office for West and Central Africa, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 28, 2009.

<sup>2</sup>Presentation of Peter D. Burgess, Counter Narcotics Project Officer, U.S. Africom, at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 28, 2009.

<sup>3</sup>Extrapolated by the author from UNODC and Africom data.

<sup>4</sup>Antonio Maria Costa, "Cocaine Finds Africa," *The Washington Post*, July 29, 2008, p. A17, viewed at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/28/AR2008072802466.html>.

<sup>5</sup>"Engaging with Fragile States: An IEG Review of World Bank Support to Low-Income Countries Under Stress," *The World Bank*, September 2006, Washington, DC, accessed at <http://www.worldbank.org/ieg>.

survey by Foreign Policy Magazine and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.<sup>6</sup> Both sets of studies use metrics of economic development, state legitimacy, human rights, demographic pressures, public services and citizen security to determine where countries rank on a global scale.

Those nations at the bottom have become known as “failed states” or “fragile states,” terms that have come into vogue to describe the growing areas of the world that lie beyond the control of central governments. In 1996 only 11 states were judged to be failing across the world. By 2003, a scant 7 years later, the number had grown to 17 and by 2006 the number was 26. More than half of those, 18, are in sub-Saharan Africa.

This trend is important because these growing areas that are either stateless or governed by states that are in practice are functioning criminal enterprises give rise to new hybrid organizations which make the traditional distinction between terrorism and organized crime, particularly drug trafficking, meaningless. I believe we will see the emergence of these hybrid organizations in West Africa in the very near future and indeed they may already exist.

What draws terrorist and criminal organizations together, as overt state sponsorship for terrorism has been curtailed, are the shadow facilitators who understand how to exploit the seams in the international legal and economic structure, and who work with both terrorist and criminal organizations. Both groups use the same pipelines, the same illicit structures, and exploit the same state weaknesses, and are increasingly overlapping. Of the 43 Foreign Terrorist Organizations listed by the State Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration says 19 have clearly established ties to drug trafficking and many more are suspected of having such ties.<sup>7</sup>

One of the reasons for this is the dismal state of governance in West Africa is that since the early 1990s the region has suffered a series of conflicts centered on natural resources, particularly diamonds, timber, oil, and gold. Profits from these “honey pot” wars fueled the rise of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone with its child soldiers and unspeakable atrocities; fed the wars sustained by Liberia’s Charles Taylor; and contributed to the rampant corruption and weak or failed institutions in almost every country. These natural resources, while valuable, pale in comparison to the money the cocaine trade generates. For example, at the height of the “blood diamond” trade in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the total value of the diamonds being smuggled out was less than \$200 million. The potential to fuel conflicts over the cocaine pipeline, the most lucrative commodity so far and one whose profits are several orders of magnitude larger than diamonds, is truly frightening.

Terrorist and criminal organizations are masters at exploiting weak or criminal states,<sup>8</sup> and the existence of these regions in West Africa, as well as other macro-trends in cocaine trafficking, explain the emergence of West Africa as an important transit area in recent years.

One of the primary developments is the growth of cocaine consumption in Europe, the former Soviet Union and other new and emerging markets.<sup>9</sup> Drug traffickers, like all good entrepreneurs, are constantly looking to diversify their markets and move to markets that provide greater profitability. While U.S. demand for cocaine has remained steady or declined in recent years, consumption in other parts of the world is growing rapidly. According to the State Department, Brazil is now the second largest consuming market for cocaine, after the United States.<sup>10</sup> Moving drugs through Africa to Europe, while a circuitous route, is lucrative enough to draw many illicit organizations’ involvement.

A second development is the growing ability to move cocaine from the Colombian production sites, largely controlled by the self-declared Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–FARC) or other nonstate armed groups, through Venezuela with impunity. The government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela has allowed the FARC, with whom Chávez has a deep

<sup>6</sup>“The Failed State Index 2007,” Foreign Policy Magazine, July-August 2007, pp. 54–63.

<sup>7</sup>DEA Chief of Operations Michael Braun at a July 18, 2008, speech to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, accessible at: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=411>.

<sup>8</sup>For a more detailed look at the criminal/terrorist pipelines and the different functions of failed and criminal states in their exploitation, see: Douglas Farah, “The Criminal-Terrorist Nexus and Its Pipelines,” The NEFA Foundation, January 14, 2008.

<sup>9</sup>According to recent data provided by U.S. agencies, the wholesale value of a kilo of cocaine in the United States is about \$30,000, while the value in Europe is \$47,000.

<sup>10</sup>2009 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), Country Report: Brazil, United States Department of State, February 27, 2009.

and personal relationship,<sup>11</sup> to establish routes through his country that greatly lessen the threat and the cost of moving cocaine.

The closeness of the Venezuelan Government to the FARC was demonstrated in September 2008, when the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctioned three of Chávez's closest associates, including two intelligence chiefs, for aiding the FARC in the purchase of weapons and drug trafficking.<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that the FARC has a well-established network, including financial handlers, already established in Europe, particularly in Spain, where a good portion of the cocaine enters the European Union.<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting to note that several of the largest cocaine busts in West Africa have come aboard aircraft that departed from Venezuela.<sup>14</sup> Since Chávez expelled the Drug Enforcement Administration from Venezuela in 2006 and has halted all counternarcotics cooperation, U.S. officials describe Venezuela as a "black hole." Not only does the Venezuelan Government's attitude encourage drug trafficking, but Venezuela's geographic proximity to West Africa make it an ideal launching pad. This is true for both maritime operations and the use of aircraft.

A third factor is the success of the Colombian Government in dismantling the large cartels, leaving the field open to smaller groups that seek alternative routes and markets. This is particularly true of resurgent drug trafficking organizations in Bolivia and Peru. While the Colombian organizations were for years able to keep the Bolivian and Peruvian structures from participating in any significant manner in the production of cocaine hydrochloride (HCL), or refined cocaine, those restrictions have eased as the Colombian organizations have weakened.

General Oscar Naranjo, commander of the Colombian national police, recently stated that Colombia, due to the weakness of the traditional groups, no longer produces 90 percent of the world's cocaine, as has been the case for most of the past two decades. Rather, he said, Colombia produces about 54 percent of the HCL on the world market "with the rest coming from Peru and Bolivia."<sup>15</sup> He noted that for the first time in two decades or more, there was no single drug trafficking organization that dominates, as the Medellín, Cali, Northern Valley, FARC, and the right wing United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia-AUC) structures were able to. Rather, the landscape is now divided among many smaller groups, called "Grupos Emergentes" or Emerging Groups, such as the Águilas Negras. These groups, in turn, are often made up of remnants of the former cartels, even ones that were mortal enemies at one time, such as the FARC and the AUC.

At the same time Mexican cartels are under increasing pressure inside Mexico, and United States interdiction efforts have raised the cost of doing business in the United States. This pressure has made a diversification to the European market, via West Africa, increasingly attractive.

This has direct consequences for West Africa. There is a consensus among United States, United Nations, and European monitors that the volume of cocaine flowing through West Africa is accelerating, and that the dramatic rise will not end any time soon, for a variety of reasons. Among those reasons are the rapid shifts and increasing fluidity within the overall world drug trade.

<sup>11</sup>The relationship is meticulously documented by the FARC leadership. The documents were captured from the computer of Raul Reyes, the FARC's second in command, on March 1, 2008, when Colombian troops raided Reyes' headquarters established on Ecuadorian soil. For more details, see: Douglas Farah, "What the FARC Papers Show Us About Latin American Terrorism," The NEFA Foundation, April 1, 2008, accessible at: <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefarc0408.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup>The three are Hugo Armando Cavajal, director of military intelligence, described as providing weapons to the FARC; Henry de Jesus Rangél, director of the civilian Directorate of Intelligence and Prevention Services, described as protecting FARC drug shipments; and Ramón Emilio Rodríguez Chacín, who, until a few days before the designation was Venezuela's Minister of Interior and Justice. He is described as the "Venezuelan Government's main weapons contact for the FARC." The role of the three in closely collaborating with the FARC is described in some detail in the documents captured in the Reyes documents. See: "Treasury Targets Venezuelan Government Officials Supporting the FARC," Press Room, Department of Treasury, September 12, 2008, viewed at: <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1132.htm>.

<sup>13</sup>For details of the FARC European network, see: Douglas Farah, "The FARC's International Relations: A Network of Deception," The NEFA Foundation, September 22, 2008, accessed at: <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefarcinetworkdeception0908.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup>Among the largest was the May 1, 2007, seizure of 630 kilograms of cocaine aboard a Cessna aircraft in Nouhabidou, Mauritania. The airplane's GPS showed it had taken off from Venezuelan territory. See: "Cocaine Trafficking in Western Africa: Situation Report," UNODC, October 2007, pg. 9. In July 2008 another aircraft with 600 kilograms of cocaine and using a false Red Cross emblem on its tail, was seized in Sierra Leone.

<sup>15</sup>"Colombia: Amid Signs of Progress, Warning of a Cartel War," Latin American Security & Strategic Review, January 2009.

A significant portion of the Bolivian (and to a lesser degree Peruvian) cocaine shipments move by air to Venezuela, in part because of the alliance and friendship between Bolivian President Evo Morales and Chávez that makes the transportation relatively easy and safe. The cocaine is then often shipped onward to Europe, via Africa. But the majority of the Bolivian and Peruvian product is moved through Brazil, a nation with growing consumption, and then onward to Africa. There are linguistic as well as geographic reasons for this. Angola and Guinea-Bissau, two of the most active transshipment hubs, are former Portuguese colonies, and the official languages there is Portuguese, making communication easier for Brazilian traffickers.

This trend is creating the conditions for the convergence of these groups in new and dangerous ways, affording them not only the opportunity to reap enormous profits, but the chance to share “lessons learned,” best practices and the latest technology in areas that are largely beyond state control.

What I have observed repeatedly in two decades of following drug trafficking, transnational criminal organizations and nonstate armed groups is that when they are able to meet in neutral territory they often form alliances that would not be possible under other circumstances. This is holding true in West Africa.

Already in Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and elsewhere we are seeing members of Mexican, Colombian, Venezuelan, Surinamese, and European organizations operating in the same territory and plugging into the same pipeline. Identified members of the FARC, as well as other Colombian organizations are on the ground in West Africa, protecting shipments and making deals.

Not only do these actors bring a huge influx of cash, which can be used to buy or corrupt virtually any state institution. The Latin American cartel operatives also bring a whole new level of violence and sophistication to the illicit pipeline structures. Just as the “blood diamond” trade and illicit timber deals allowed groups like the RUF to purchase advanced weapons on the international market and become a much more lethal force, the influx of cocaine cash will allow the criminal and militia groups in the region to acquire ever more sophisticated armaments, training, and communications. At the same time, the weak host states have severely limited police, judicial or military capacity to confront these groups in any commensurate manner.

There is a broader potential danger that must be kept in mind as we see assess emerging trends in West Africa. I spoke earlier about the “hybrid” criminal-terrorist organization, of which the FARC is a leading example. In West Africa, it is Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based Shiite Islamist organization that has long maintained an operational presence and has had a significant role in the blood diamond trade and many other illicit activities. In addition, many in the Lebanese diaspora community in West Africa, numbering several hundred thousand, pay a portion of their earnings to support Hezbollah in Lebanon, with the knowledge and acquiescence of the host government.<sup>16</sup> The importance of this revenue stream was revealed when a charter flight bound for Beirut from Cotonou, Benin, crashed on takeoff on December 25, 2003. On board was a Hezbollah “foreign relations” official carrying \$2 million in contributions raised in the region. The money was said to represent “the regular contributions the party [Hezbollah] receives from wealthy Lebanese nationals in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin, and other African states.”<sup>17</sup>

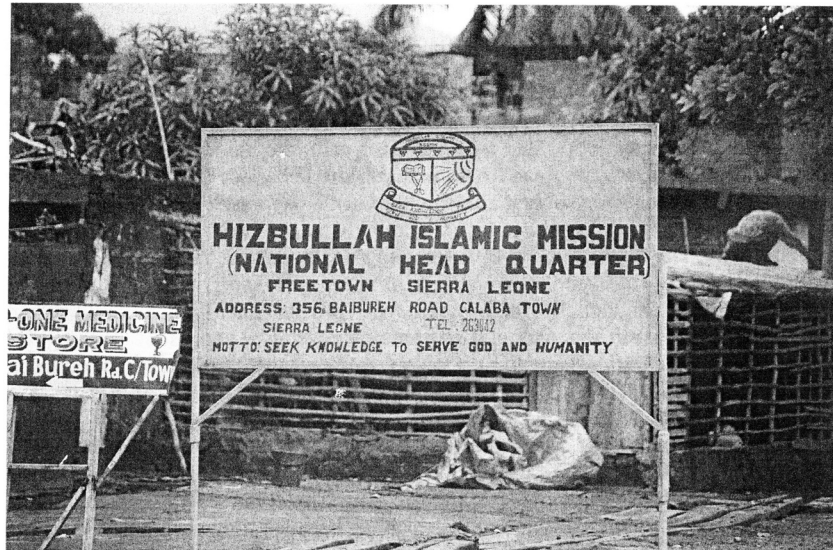
Given the prominence of the Lebanese diaspora community and its members’ control of most of the existing pipeline to import and export illegal commodities, it is inevitable that those organizations and the drug trafficking groups will encounter each other and mutually benefit from each other because they each has something the other wants and needs. The Lebanese networks control the decades-old contraband networks and routes to Europe, while the drug traffickers offer a new and lucrative product for the existing pipeline. Violent clashes may take place, but the history of both groups indicates they will cooperate where useful.

Given Hezbollah’s long-established presence on the ground in the region and the closeness of its operatives to that community, it is also reasonable to assume that Hezbollah and the drug traffickers, operating in the same permissive environment, will cross paths. It is precisely this type of environment that allows for the otherwise unthinkable alliances to emerge. Most are short-lived, centering on specific

<sup>16</sup> See: Edward Harris, “Hezbollah Extorting Funds From West Africa’s Diamond Merchants,” Associated Press, 29 June 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Hamid Ghiryah, “Hezbollah Officials Carrying Donations Reportedly Killed in Lebanese Plane Crash,” *al-Siyasah* (Kuwait), December 29, 2003. For a broader look at the role of the Lebanese diaspora in West African illicit trade activities, see: Lansana Gberie, “War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection,” *The Diamond and Human Security Project*, Occasional Paper 6, January 2003.

opportunities and operations that can benefit both groups, but others are longer lasting and more dangerous.



Hezbollah Office in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

There is a long history of outside terrorist actors, particularly Hezbollah, being active in Latin America. The most egregious documented cases of Hezbollah and Iran's direct involvement in terrorist activities are the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and the 1994 bombing of the AMIA Jewish center in the same city.

But there are other instances that merit mentioning. The FARC has a long history of reaching out to other terrorist groups, notably the Provisional Irish Republican Army (P-IRA) and the ETA Basque separatists, for training and exchanges. There are documented visits in the late 1990s to the Tri-Border Area by Hezbollah's chief of logistics, Immad Mugnyiah (now deceased), and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the architect of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, currently held in Guantanamo.<sup>18</sup> There is the possible presence of Osama bin Laden in the region in 1995, as reported by the Brazilian, French, and United States media.<sup>19</sup> Given the security with which these senior operatives would have to move, it is unlikely they would visit the region unless there were adequate security arrangements and infrastructure to allow them to operate. It is also unlikely they would travel there if there were no compelling reason to do so.

More worrisome is the recent evidence of Chávez's direct support for Hezbollah, including the June 18, 2008, OFAC designations of two Venezuelan citizens, including a senior diplomat, as terrorist supporters for working with the armed group. Several businesses also were sanctioned. Among the things the two are alleged to have been conducting on behalf of Hezbollah were coordinating possible terrorist attacks and building Hezbollah-sponsored community centers in Venezuela.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> For a comprehensive look at possible radical Islamist activities in the region, see: Rex Hudson, "Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border (TBA) of South America," Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, July 2003. For more recent Hezbollah ties, as related by Colombia authorities, see: "Colombia Ties Drug Ring to Hezbollah," Reuters News Agency, as appeared in the New York Times, October 22, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> "El Esteve no Brazil," *Veja* on-line, No. 1,794, March 19, 2003; "Bin Laden Reportedly Spent Time in Brazil in '95," *Washington Post*, March 18, 2003, p. A24.

<sup>20</sup> One of those designated, Ghazi Nasr al Din, who served as the charge d'affaires of Venezuelan Embassy in Damascus, and then served in the Venezuelan Embassy in London. The OFAC statement said that in late January 2006, al Din facilitated the travel of two Hezbollah representatives of the Lebanese Parliament to solicit donation and announce the opening of a Hezbollah-sponsored community center and office in Venezuela. The second individual, Fawzi Kan'an is described as a Venezuela-based Hezbollah supporter and a "significant provider of financial support to Hezbollah." He met with senior Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss

Given Iran's ties to Hezbollah and Venezuela, Venezuela's ties to Iran and the FARC, the FARC's history of building alliances with other armed groups, and the presence of Hezbollah and other armed Islamist groups in Latin America and on the ground in West Africa, it would be dangerous and imprudent to dismiss the possibility of an alliance of these actors. The history of these groups indicates that they will take advantage of the ungoverned spaces and corrupt and weak states of West Africa to get to know each other, work together, learn from each other and exploit areas of mutual interest. Unfortunately, the primary area of mutual interest is a hatred of the United States.

Given that most of the cocaine passing through West Africa is destined for Europe, and given the limited resources of the United States for protecting its strategic interests around the world, one can ask why any of this is of pressing concern for us on a strategic level.

There are multiple reasons. The first is that the West Africa cocaine trail directly strengthens drug cartels that exercise great power and pose a direct threat to the United States and its allies in the Western Hemisphere. The money generated by the cocaine trade largely flows back to the drug trafficking organizations in Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, Brazil and Peru, greatly increasing the power of nonstate criminal organizations to challenge the state.

We see daily the threats posed by the transnational Mexican drug organization on and across our borders. We have spent significant resources to aid Colombia in its costly wars against the drug cartels and the FARC in recognition that these groups posed a direct challenge to our national security and the stability of areas of vital strategic interest in our hemisphere. The movement of drugs through West Africa to Europe produces enormous revenues for these groups, allowing them to survive, morph, reconfigure and continue to wreak havoc.

Just as importantly, the drug trafficking in West Africa also directly strengthens those who seek not only to harm the United States but also to strangle the struggling liberal democracies in Latin America. These include Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, his allies in Iran, the FARC and Hezbollah. As noted above, the circumstances in West Africa are ideal for allowing many of these nonstate criminal and terrorist organizations to greatly expand their cooperation. The money raised from the cocaine on the West Africa route brings all these threats closer to the United States.

A second reason to engage in this threat is that the infusion of drugs and drug revenue into West Africa—one of the poorest and most corrupt regions of the world with a history of violent conflict centered on commodities and resources—will inevitably bring a new wave of violence and instability to the region. Apart from the very legitimate humanitarian concerns, about 18 percent of the oil<sup>21</sup> and 14 percent of the natural gas (LNG) imported by the United States each year comes from the region<sup>22</sup> and these amounts are estimated to rise significantly in coming years. By 2015 sub-Saharan Africa is projected to supply about 25 percent of United States oil and LNG imports, the vast majority of that from West Africa.<sup>23</sup> Africa remains one of the most promising regions of the world for future oil production. Proven reserves increased by 56 percent between 1996 and 2006, compared to 12 percent for the rest of the world.

A third reason is that we have already witnessed—and I have spent considerable time in the war zones of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea documenting—the horrendous human tragedy of resource wars in West Africa. These range from the campaigns of mass amputation and systematic rape by the RUF and the brutality of the Taylor regime to the millions of displaced refugees and the destruction of civil society across the region. The revenue stream derived from cocaine will make past wars pale in comparison to what will come. In addition, if history is any guide, the

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operational issues, including possible kidnapping and terrorist attacks. The OFAC statement can be accessed at: <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1036.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Statement of John R. Brodman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Energy Policy, Office of Policy and International Affairs, U.S. Department of Energy, before the Subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, July 15, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Statistics from the U.S. Department of Energy: [http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/pet\\_move\\_impcus\\_a2\\_nus\\_ep00\\_im0\\_mdbl\\_a.htm](http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/pet_move_impcus_a2_nus_ep00_im0_mdbl_a.htm). Nigeria is the fifth-largest source of oil for the United States, produces some 2.5 million barrels a day, and supplied the United States with a total of 413 million barrels of oil in 2007. Angola was next, with a total of 185 million barrels of oil sold to the United States, followed by Chad (28.4 million barrels), and Cameroon (10.8 million barrels).

<sup>23</sup> National Intelligence Council, "Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future with Non-government Experts," December 2000, accessed at: [http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC\\_globaltrend2015.html#link13e](http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2015.html#link13e).

traffickers will work to create internal consumption markets in the countries where they operate. Having seen first hand the damage done by child soldiers in drug-induced hazes already, it is clear that easier access to cocaine will give rise to a whole new level of violence.

The United States has already taken important steps to engage in this theater. Africom, the DEA and State Department each are devoting considerably more resources to drug issues in West Africa than they were a year or two ago. But by any measure it is not enough, and certainly has not slowed the flow of cocaine through the region. Compartmentalization, stove-piping of information, and the continued focus on delimited geographic territories continue to hamper the effectiveness of counterdrug programs. It is no longer a useful model to look at the old, static model of Latin American drug trafficking organizations because the new organizations operate on multiple continents rather than a single country or region. Hence, information-sharing across regions and across U.S. Government agencies is vital to beginning to significantly improve the situation.

As the DEA knows well, the key to identifying, mapping and dismantling drug trafficking organizations is human intelligence. The DEA is working to identify and target "shadow facilitator," or those individuals who service a variety of organizations, both criminal and terrorist. A prime example of this type of individual was Viktor Bout, the Russian weapons merchant who Senator Feingold worked hard to bring to justice and who is currently in prison in Thailand, awaiting a ruling on whether he can be extradited to the United States to stand trial.<sup>24</sup>

However, U.S. agencies cannot work effectively in the region without local allies. One of the keys to success in Colombia and elsewhere has been the establishment of effective vetted units within a local police or military force, where information can be exchanged with less fear of leaks or compromise. Given the linguistic and cultural complications across West Africa, and the fact that they vary from country to country, the ability to work in some fashion with at least a segment of the national law enforcement community is vital.

Finally, our European allies, particularly the French, British, and Belgians, must be brought into the process in a much more robust way. This is true not only because most of the cocaine ends up in Europe. These countries have deep colonial histories in different countries in the region, and have a much deeper historic knowledge of the traditional criminal and smuggling networks that operate. For example, the Belgians have followed the blood diamond trade for decades and understand and have mapped the Lebanese family and clan networks involved in the trade. This type of information and understanding would take years for U.S. agencies to develop, but can be put to good use in combating drug trafficking in the region. These nations also have many more levers of "soft power," through trade and aid, than the United States does, and hence have more tools with which to engage the region on this issue.

I am not optimistic about the possibility of avoiding a wholesale disaster in West Africa that will have direct spillover effects in Latin America and the United States. The cancer of cocaine trafficking is far advanced in a host body that is weak and unable to fight back without a great deal of help and significant structural changes. Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, and other terrorist organizations have an operational presence across sub-Saharan Africa. They are increasingly using the same pipelines and facilitators as transnational criminal groups. These pipelines will grow and spread with the infusion of cocaine and drug money, accelerating the corrosion of already weak states. But the consequences of allowing the cancer to spread unabated, and the direct threat that will pose to the United States, means we have no choice but to work to stem the tide.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, sir.  
Mr. Braun.

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL BRAUN, MANAGING PARTNER,  
SPECTRE GROUP INTERNATIONAL, ALEXANDRIA, VA**

Mr. BRAUN. Chairman Feingold, thank you very much for the opportunity to meet with you today and comment on this very important topic.

<sup>24</sup>For a more complete look at Bout and his transnational operations see: Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun, "Merchant of Death: Money, Guns, Planes and the Man Who Makes War Possible," John Wiley and Sons, New York, 2007.



If I had one overarching theme that summed up, basically, my comments today, it would be “out of Africa.” And what do I mean by that? It means—by that, I mean we can’t modify that wildly famous Las Vegas slogan, “What stays—or, what goes on in Vegas, stays in Vegas.” What happens on the African Continent with respect to security threats does not stay on the African Continent. I don’t care if we’re talking about drugs, terrorism, other transnational crime; it moves onward to distant shores and has a very negative impact.

One of the things that I would like to stress, probably more than any of my other comments or answers to your questions that follow, is this. There has been a lot discussed today, a lot talk about, now—and this has been a topic of discussion around this town for quite some time. Drug trafficking in Africa—West Africa—and what’s the real strategic threat involving all this? And part of that discussion has been this coming together of terrorist organizations and global drug trafficking organizations. And that is nasty business, but I’m going to—let me drill in just a little bit deeper, something that folks aren’t, I think, thinking about this as much as they should be, analyzing it, and determining what the long-term impacts are.

Whether you’re the leader of a terrorist organization or you are a major South American or Latin American drug trafficking kingpin, you do not dispatch to places like West Africa your most timid troops; you naturally send your toughest, most cunning, most brutal sergeants and lieutenants to places like that. Those folks are meeting, as we speak, in the same seedy bars, the same seamy brothels, and the same dingy hotels almost every evening. What are they doing? They’re talking business. They’re sharing lessons learned. They’re sharing very important strategic contacts. And what they’re really doing that scares me, that causes me to lose sleep at night, is, they are forming personal relationships today that will undoubtedly develop into organizational—strategic organizational relationships in the future. Why? Because these tough young Turks, these tough young sergeants and lieutenants, will naturally claw and fight their way to the tops of their respective organizations over the next decade, and assume leadership positions.

And it’s one thing today to say that someone from Hezbollah can pick up the phone and call someone from Hamas. That’s going on. That’s been going on for quite some time. What’s even more frightening, though, is when someone from Hezbollah can pick up the phone and call someone for the FARC or the Norte Valle Cartel or some major Mexican drug trafficking cartel that is also beginning to show up on the African Continent. So, again, it’s just something that I think we need to pay closer attention to around this town.

Some things that I think that we can do that I would simply suggest you consider as we talk about building capacity on the African Continent. We’ve made a lot of mistakes over the past several years, in Afghanistan and in Iraq, in attempting to build law enforcement and judicial capacity. One of the problems that I’ve seen, as the former Chief of Operations for 4 years, former Chief of Intelligence with DEA for a year, 34 years in law enforcement in some tough places, what I’ve seen, time and time again, is we become

obsessed with building corruption-free law enforcement institutions. We can never forget that if the cops—no matter how corruption-free they are, if they have to deal with corrupt prosecutors and/or corrupt judges and/or corrupt border officials and/or corrupt prison officials, then the entire judicial process falls apart like a house of cards. And I would simply say that, you know, we need to maintain a focus on those efforts.

Quite frankly, I—you know, I've been in this business for 34 years, and the United States of America has been paying the ticket, the vast majority of the world's counternarcotics ticket, for quite some time. This is a problem—what's going on in Africa is a problem for us, as well. As Doug said, as I'm sure Mike will say and others have already testified to, those narcodollars that are being generated by the trafficking in Europe, Russia, and elsewhere now, eventually make their way back into the same organizations that are impacting our country. But, I'm telling you what, I'm convinced, too, that the Europeans need to step up to the plate and do—I don't want to sound too crude here—but, a helluva lot more.

Thank you, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Braun follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL A. BRAUN, MANAGING PARTNER, SPECTRE GROUP INTERNATIONAL, LLC., ALEXANDRIA, VA

Chairman Feingold, Ranking Member Isakson, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the threat posed by drug trafficking and related security issues in West Africa. The security challenges facing West Africa today, above and beyond drug trafficking and abuse are enormous. However, I believe it will be abundantly clear by the end of this hearing that most of the security threats facing this region are in large part driven by, or certainly related to, powerful drug trafficking cartels from Latin America and Mexico that have taken root on the African Continent. What is even more ominous are the broader strategic threats, the by-product if you will, this activity has, and will continue to produce.

Mr. Chairman, let me say up front that each of you on this subcommittee, and your colleagues throughout Congress, should be praised for all that you have done to support the multifaceted counternarcotics efforts of our Nation, and many other countries around the globe. I appreciate the fact that it is in that spirit you called us here today, to determine what we can do to help Africa with this dangerous and highly volatile situation.

Before entering the private sector on November 1 of last year, I served for almost 4 years as the Assistant Administrator and Chief of Operations with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and for 1 year as the Agency's Acting Chief of Intelligence. I also served in a number of DEA offices throughout the United States, including service on both our southern and northern borders, on both our east and west coasts, in the Midwest, as well as approximately 3 years in various countries in Latin America and Iraq. It is through my 34 years in law enforcement that I sit before you today, deeply concerned about drug trafficking and related security threats playing out in West Africa. You will receive a career, Federal narcotics agent's perspective on what is happening in West Africa, and how that region has become an important link in the global cocaine trade.

#### WEST AFRICA ASSUMES AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE GLOBAL COCAINE TRADE

The reasons for the increased drug flows into West Africa, involving principally cocaine from Latin America and Mexico, are many and varied. Demand for cocaine has increased dramatically in many parts of Europe, and the best estimates are that approximately 400 to 500 metric tons of cocaine is destined for Europe this year from Latin American and Mexican drug cartels. Consequently, West Africa now plays a critical role in connecting cocaine transiting the Atlantic Ocean from Latin America and Mexico to destinations throughout Europe and elsewhere. Think of it this way: West Africa has become to Europe what Central America, the Caribbean

and Mexico are to the United States with respect to cocaine trafficking. It has always been about the money for global drug trafficking cartels; greed being their single most important motivator. Colombian and Mexican drug cartels, which operate with Fortune 100 corporate efficiencies, also recognize the current value of the euro over the dollar, and are successfully capitalizing on this lucrative upshot in the present global economic state of affairs.

I believe there are other important reasons for this shift in global cocaine trafficking trends. U.S. law enforcement and our military, working shoulder to shoulder with our Mexican, Caribbean, and Latin American partners, have hit the Latin American and Mexican drug cartels hard over the past few years with record-breaking seizures of drugs, cash, and precursor chemicals. For over 2 years now, we have witnessed ever-increasing prices for cocaine throughout the United States, and ever-decreasing levels of the drug's purity. This phenomenon is unprecedented and I do not believe we have experienced anything quite like it for a very long time—if ever.

The Latin American and Mexican drug cartels are also experiencing enormous pressures in their own neck of the woods—in their own respective countries, and throughout the Western Hemisphere. Consequently, they are looking to develop and expand new markets, and Europe has naturally emerged as the perfect, latest playground for these ruthless cartels. I have been told many times by my European law enforcement colleagues, that they do not possess the tough drug laws and sentencing guidelines that you, our Congress, have bestowed upon the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and other Federal law enforcement agencies in our country. That, coupled with very liberal attitudes toward drug trafficking and consumption found in many European countries, is the underpinning for disaster in Europe in the years to come.

I see Europe today teetering on the brink of a drug trafficking and abuse catastrophe similar to the one our Nation faced about 30 years ago. If you need a visual on what I predict Europe is facing in the years to come, just picture Miami, FL, in the late 1970s, followed by the “crack” cocaine epidemic that exploded all across our Nation in the 1980s. The bottom line—Latin American and Mexican drug lords currently face far less of a threat distributing their poison in Europe than they do in the United States, and there is far more to gain in the way of profits.

Africa is the center of gravity for the drug cartel's movement of cocaine out of Latin America and Mexico to European and other markets. West Africa's geographical location, positioned between Latin America and Europe, and its weak security status, make it the ideal setting for exploitation by powerful drug cartels and terrorist organizations. These powerful cartels, just like terrorist organizations, thrive in “permissive environments”; something our military refers to as “ungoverned space.” In fact, the cartels invest hundreds of millions of dollars each year to destabilize regions around the world to advance their operational efficiencies. They rely heavily on the hallmarks of organized crime—corruption, intimidation, and brutal violence—to destabilize governments in places like West Africa. Many countries in West Africa qualify as quintessential examples of ungoverned space, and allow powerful criminals and terrorists to work unimpeded.

Most countries in West Africa simply do not possess the judicial, border, military and intelligence institutions and infrastructure necessary to deal with the threat posed by the Latin American and Mexican drug cartels, not to mention terrorist organizations and indigenous criminal groups that operate freely throughout this region. What is the security situation really like in some West African countries? Cops without ink pens and paper, much less radios, automobiles, guns and ammunition; border guards without uniforms, not to mention basic checkpoint facilities and contraband detection equipment; militaries often led by the toughest thugs money can buy; and intelligence service operatives who blend seamlessly in with the bad guys, because they are working directly for, or in conjunction with, the bad guys.

The security “fabric” of most West African countries has the same tensile strength as the worn out, filthy and flimsy Western T-shirts that cover far too many of their neglected citizens. The retail value of a few, multihundred kilogram loads of cocaine passing through many of these countries is equal to or exceeds their GNP. The narcodollars being spent in support of the cartel's efforts in West Africa threaten to destabilize their already anemic economies even more. Porous borders, and the significant challenges they present, exacerbate the overall security threat even further.

## STRATEGIC SECURITY THREATS THAT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED

Many have written about the strategic security threats caused by drug trafficking and consumption in Africa, but I would like to address some that you most likely have not heard of or considered.

Local indigenous organized crime groups in Africa are as brutal, if not more so, than any in the world, but they have historically lacked the sophistication of global drug trafficking cartels and other transnational organized crime groups. However, they are now learning from the most advanced organized crime organizations in the world—the Latin American and Mexican drug trafficking cartels, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which by the way has been designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by our country, the European Union, and other countries. Why? Because, the cartels rely heavily on these indigenous organized crime groups for their smuggling and trafficking expertise on the African Continent; just as the Colombian cartels did with the Mexican syndicates when we successfully closed off the old Caribbean drug transportation corridor, and forced the Colombian kingpins to start moving their drug loads across our Southwest border.

Another dimension to this dangerous scenario is that indigenous organized crime groups have most likely learned from Mexican traffickers to demand payment in “kind” (cocaine) for their services, rather than in cash. They can make far greater profits with cocaine in their hands than they can with currency in their coffers. This type of arrangement allows the indigenous organized crime groups to create demand—markets—in their own back yard. There is an important lesson to be learned here: No “transit country” remains purely a transit country forever. Just ask our colleagues in Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico. This growing, mutually supporting and beneficial relationship is advancing the sophistication and complexity of African indigenous organized crime groups at light speed.

The state of affairs I described in the two previous paragraphs is troubling. However, 7 months after I hung up my DEA badge, gun, and credentials for the last time, I am still losing sleep over something that haunts me like nothing else. Terrorist organizations and global drug trafficking organizations naturally migrate to, and ultimately congregate in, the same ungoverned space. A recent CNN exclusive reported that al-Qaeda was believed to be moving some of its command and control network back to Somalia where they had a significant presence through the mid-1990s. The fact of the matter is, al-Qaeda never left the African Continent and they have routinely had their operatives working throughout North, East and West Africa. Hezbollah and Hamas are even more active in West Africa and other places on the continent.

Mark my word, as we speak here today, operatives from al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and Hamas—perhaps others—are rubbing shoulders with the Latin American and Mexican drug cartels, including the FARC, in West African countries and other places on the continent. They are frequenting the same seedy bars and sleazy brothels, and they are lodging in the same seamy hotels. And they are “talking business.” They are sharing lessons learned, sharing critically important contacts and operational means and methods.

What is most troubling about this situation is that terrorist and cartel leaders send their toughest, most cunning young sergeants and lieutenants to places like West Africa; the kind of guys who they can count on to advance their (the leader’s) agendas no matter what it takes. These are the guys who will fight and claw their way into executive leadership positions within their respective organizations within the next decade—in both terrorist groups and global drug cartels. And these are the guys who are forming personal relationships today that will most assuredly evolve into strategic, organizational relationships tomorrow, as they work their way up the ladder within their respective organizations. This scenario is the witches brew. We as a nation should be doing everything in our power to drive a wedge between these powerful threats, but I fear that we are not. And I am afraid we could pay dearly for our mistake in the years to come.

Finally, permissive environments like those found in some countries of West Africa are unintentionally promoting the continued evolution of what I call the “hybrid terrorist organization,” which is a designated foreign terrorist organization that has involved itself in one or more aspects of the global drug trade to help fund operations and keep their respective movements alive. The Hezbollah, FARC, Hamas, Sendero Luminoso, Abu Sayef, and at least 15 others of the 45 current designated foreign terrorist organizations have made this transition. It is the face of 21st century organized crime, and places like West Africa are its preferred breeding ground and base for operations.

## A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO HELP TURN THIS AROUND

It is difficult for global drug trafficking cartels to establish wholesale bases of operations in areas of the world where the rule of law is strong and security institutions are respected. In many West African countries, as well as other challenged environments around the globe, it is important that we work closely with host-nation officials to develop and implement fully vetted judicial paradigms. Our government has been obsessed with building corruption-free police institutions in some extremely challenged environments over the past few years, yet we continue to miss a critical link that is essential to the success of these projects. If trusting police officers have to deal with corrupt prosecutors, and/or corrupt judges, and/or corrupt prison officials, then the entire judicial process falls apart like a house of cards. Focus on creating a corruption free judicial process—and not just corruption-free cops. Anything short of that is doomed to failure.

Equipping militaries, law enforcement and intelligence services with aircraft, swift-boats, and other costly interdiction and enforcement hardware is important, but we had better have a long-term training and mentoring piece attached to these projects. If not, we could find our counterparts in West Africa using those assets against us in support of the cartels—or terrorist organizations. I no longer speak for the DEA, but I believe the Agency would be willing to assume greater responsibility for enhancing our Nation's counternarcotics strategy in Africa if it received the additional personnel and resources that it desperately needs to address the threats I have discussed today. Included should be funding for the DEA to standup additional offices in Africa, as well as fully vetted host-nation Sensitive Investigative Units in several African countries, much like the Agency has in Colombia, Mexico, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. The DEA could then share the most sensitive intelligence with their African counterparts for effective action.

Many Department of Defense detection and monitoring (D&M) resources, as well as maritime interdiction resources, were moved out of Southern Command's area of responsibility after the 9/11 attacks on our Nation, and these resources have never been fully recouped. These assets are responsible for identifying and interdicting drug loads moving by sea and air. Although Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) interdiction seizures have been nothing short of spectacular over the past few years, it is in large part due to our military working closer with Federal law enforcement in the post 9/11 era. Needless to say, if Southern Command recovered those missing D&M and interdiction resources, the seizure numbers would be even greater, including the interdiction of drug loads destined for Europe via Africa.

Finally, it would be easy to say that Africa is Europe's problem, but the truth of the matter is that the money which flows back into the coffers of the Latin American and Mexican drug cartels, the same ones that are directly impacting our country, makes the cartels even stronger. We, as a nation, should be doing a great deal more to support Africa, but I also strongly believe we should press many European countries to do more in support of counternarcotics efforts designed to dismantle or significantly disrupt the Latin American and Mexican drug cartels. The United States has funded the global, counternarcotics ticket for far too long, and it is time other responsible nations assumed more responsibility of this burden.

## "OUT OF AFRICA"

If I had one overarching theme to sum up my comments today it would be, "Out of Africa." We cannot modify that wildly famous Las Vegas slogan, "What goes on in Vegas stays in Vegas" and apply it to Africa. Because what goes on in Africa does not stay in Africa; whether it is drugs, terrorism, the black diamond trade, human trafficking, or some other transnational organized criminal activity, the end result impacts distant shores.

I mentioned that I lose sleep at night thinking about the escalating involvement of Hezbollah, Hamas, and other terrorist groups in the global drug trade. They are operating freely in many parts of Latin America and that is troubling indeed. However, in my mind the threat is far more dangerous than most choose to admit, because these same terrorist groups and others are now clearly positioned on our Eastern "flank"—West Africa—and the drug trade emanating in Latin America is clearly funding, and now facilitating much of their operational capacity.

What goes on in Africa does not stay in Africa.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you very much, Mr. Braun, for your testimony.

Professor McGovern.

**STATEMENT OF DR. MICHAEL MCGOVERN, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY, YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN, CT**

Dr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and your colleagues for the invitation to join you in today's hearing.

I'll limit my remarks to two brief points and one suggestion for a partial solution, and I'm happy to enlarge on any of these during the questions period.

I want to begin with a tale of two countries, Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry. Both countries, as we've heard, have recently seen a radical upsurge in the presence of transshipped drugs, and the money and violence that come with them. Both are experiencing considerable political instability, falling standards of living, and recently saw their Presidents die; in Guinea-Bissau, probably as a result of narcotraffickers' doing.

However, the reactions to the presence of traffickers in the two countries is quite different. In Guinea-Bissau, the attitude toward the fact that drug transshipment has come to dominate the national economy has been largely agnostic. By contrast, the reaction in Guinea has been, frankly, moralistic and utterly negative. Ill-gotten drug wealth is seen as corrupted, as are any persons involved in the drug trade. Most Guineans that I know have a sophisticated understanding of the gangrenous potential of such criminal economic networks to insulate the powerful against any claims made by ordinary citizens, to cultivate secrecy and other kinds of abuse, and to destabilize countries by creating competing factions amongst the powerful.

The military junta that took power immediately after President Conte's death last December in Conakry made prosecuting drug traffickers one of its No. 1 priorities, and the deceased President's brother-in-law and son are presently in prison for drugs trafficking, along with the former army chief of staff, navy chief of staff, and the head of the gendarmerie.

And I'll just say parenthetically, I think it's important—we've been hearing about weak states and porous borders—there are states that might have the political will to fight drugs trafficking, and not all the capacity they'd like to have. But, where this has really taken off, it has been with, not just the complicity, but the very close cooperation of the highest level of state who can provide the military, the logistical, and all of the other sorts of support that the cartels need to operate in their countries.

These differences between Guinea and Guinea-Bissau point to at least two important findings for policymakers. First, there are significant differences in national culture and attitudes. And this suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach is not going to be one that yields good results. Second, even where there are significant differences in national attitudes, we may still find elites acting in similar ways. As we've heard already, the amounts of money at stake are enormous, and the cartels are not stupid. They choose those countries where the political elite has already shown itself more or less indifferent to the welfare of its population.

The second point, I'll make briefly, because it's been made by others, but, in West Africa, as elsewhere, criminal networks centered on drugs often cooperate with and cross-fertilize other extra-

legal networks. In West Africa, these may include human trafficking, arms trading, and insurgent networks. And, as Michael Braun already said, groups are increasingly diversifying their tactics and mixing and matching the activities of organized crime syndicates, insurgent groups, and quasi-state actors.

I'd like to finish with a suggestion regarding one productive approach to this problem, which echos both Michael Braun's and Ambassador Carson's remarks. I believe that much more attention has to be given to the support of the justice sector in many West African countries. We've heard about the importance of interdiction, but I'd like to suggest that a narrow approach may not yield the desired outcomes, even if it appears, initially, to be admirably focused and, consequently, less expensive. What's necessary is a thorough-going reform of all the institutions implicated in the justice sector, from the police to low-level magistrates, from systems of case management to civic education regarding the role and the prerogatives of the supreme court.

I won't have to convince you of the importance of a strong and independent legislature for any healthy democracy, something that's sorely lacking in many West African countries; however, in the case of drug trafficking, it's an independent and neutral judiciary that will make the greatest difference.

I urge the subcommittee to consider the present problem within the larger framework of the need for holistic and long-term support for the justice sectors of West African countries. The fact that the last place many West African peasants go when faced with a case of rape or a land dispute is the courts, the fact that a chief justice of a supreme court does not have the courage to declare a President in a coma incompetent to fill his functions, which was the case in Guinea, and the fact that international drug syndicates can operate in these same countries in total impunity may not, at first glance, seem to be interrelated facts; but, indeed, they are.

Thanks.

[The prepared statement of Dr. McGovern follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL MCGOVERN, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY, YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN, CT

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and your colleagues for the invitation to join you in today's hearing on "Confronting Drug Trafficking in West Africa." My name is Mike McGovern, and I am a professor of anthropology at Yale University. I was previously the West Africa Director of the International Crisis Group, where I conducted research on the region from the Sahara-Sahel region down to the Niger Delta.

I would like to limit my remarks to two brief points and one suggestion for a partial solution. I am happy to enlarge on any of these during the questions period.

1. I begin with a "Tale of Two Countries." We know that international drugs traffickers have chosen to use West Africa as a preferred transshipment point for Latin American cocaine headed to Europe. Where these relationships have flourished, it has typically been in contexts where the traffickers have worked in complicity with high-level political military officials.<sup>1</sup> This has been the case notably in both Guinea-Bissau and Guinea-Conakry. Yet what do we know about local reactions to this state of affairs? Quite a lot, actually, if we talk with people, read the local newspapers, and listen to call-in radio shows like those in Conakry where these are topics of burning interest.

<sup>1</sup>I recommend Stephen Ellis's 2009 article, "West Africa's International Drug Trade," In African Affairs 108/431:171-196 to anyone interested in this subject.

Both countries have recently seen a radical upsurge in the presence of transshipped drugs and the money and violence that come with them. Both are experiencing considerable political instability, falling standards of living, and recently saw their Presidents die. In Guinea-Bissau it appears that the President's death may well have been orchestrated by the traffickers. However, the reactions to the presence of traffickers is quite different in the two countries. In Guinea-Bissau,<sup>2</sup> the attitude toward the fact that drugs transshipment have come to dominate the national economy seems to be agnostic. Cocaine is one good amongst many,<sup>3</sup> and to the extent that cocaine represents a scourge for those who use it, many Bissau Guineans seem to consider this the concern of those European countries where the drug is consumed, and perhaps of those Latin American countries where it is produced. The biggest concern of many Bissau Guineans has been over the perceived fairness or not of the redistribution of wealth gained by such means. In other words, it is alright to enrich oneself by participating in the drugs trade, so long as one shares the wealth with kin, with allies, and with political clients.

By contrast, the reaction in Guinea has been frankly moralistic and utterly negative. The ill-gotten wealth is seen as corrupted, as are any persons involved in it. Most Guineans I know have a sophisticated understanding of the gangrenous potential of such criminal economic networks to insulate the powerful against any claims made by ordinary citizens, to cultivate secrecy and other kinds of abuse, and to destabilize countries by creating competing factions amongst the powerful. The widespread rumor that members of former President Lansana Conté's family were key actors in the drugs trade was seen by most Guineans as proof of the moral degradation of the regime, and robbed it of whatever remaining legitimacy it might have had. The military junta that took power immediately after Conté's death last December made prosecuting drug traffickers one of its No. 1 priorities, and the deceased President's brother-in-law and son are presently in prison, along with the former Army chief of staff, Navy chief of staff, and head of the Gendarmerie. There are also a number of Nigerians and an Israeli awaiting trial on drugs charges. Although the junta has gradually lost much of its legitimacy by signaling the possibility that the head of the junta might break his promise to return power to civilians, the drugs trials have been a continuing source of popularity and legitimacy for them, and there is considerable public pressure for the trials to move forward.

The distinction I have suggested between Guinea and Guinea-Bissau is to some extent exaggerated. There are certainly some Bissau Guineans who are morally outraged by the presence of drugs traffickers in their country just as there are some apathetic Guineans in Conakry.<sup>4</sup> Yet I think the differences are real, and they point to at least two important findings for policymakers. First, there are significant differences in national culture and this suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach to this problem is likely to yield poor results. In Guinea-Bissau, there may be a lot of work to be done simply in convincing ordinary Bissau Guineans that the drugs trade is, on balance, against their own self-interest. In Guinea, where people are already convinced of this, the problems have more to do with the strategies, institutions and processes used to act on an existing social consensus. The other "take-away" point I would underline is that even where there are significant differences in national attitudes, we may find elites acting in similar ways. The amount of money at stake is enormous, often outstripping small nations' GDPs, and international traffickers are not stupid: They choose those countries where the political elite has already show itself more or less indifferent to the welfare of the population, treating the national patrimony as their personal property and capable of coordinating activities within the military and civilian channels necessary to provide cover to such major international networks.

2. The second point is that in West Africa as elsewhere, criminal networks centered on drugs often cooperate with and cross-fertilize other extra-legal networks. In West Africa, these may include human trafficking, arms trading, and insurgent networks. A few quick examples will help me make this point:

<sup>2</sup>I base my Guinea-Bissau comments on conversations with Guinea-Bissau specialists, including one colleague who has worked there for some 20 years and was in the country in March when the Army chief of staff and the President were assassinated.

<sup>3</sup>In this way drugs are like cashews, which have lured many Bissau Guineans away from the backbreaking work of subsistence rice cultivation but exposed them to the whims of the international cashew market.

<sup>4</sup>Anthropologist Daniel Smith has nicely captured the ways that disapprobation and acceptance of criminal behavior can coexist in the same society or even the same person. See "A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria." Princeton: Princeton University Press 2006.



- As Algeria and Libya have clamped down on the formerly robust stream of African migrants crossing the Sahara desert in order to reach North Africa and ultimately Europe, those same migrants have moved toward the West African coast, taking fishing pirogues<sup>5</sup> in order to reach the Canary Islands. Meanwhile, drugs shipments that had previously headed by boat or air from the West African coast northward to Europe have increasingly traded places with the former human trafficking routes, now crossing the desert. A 2008 seizure of 750 kilograms of cocaine along the Mali-Algeria border is one example of the growth of the drug trade along this route.<sup>6</sup>
- In the Niger Delta drugs are one of multiple interchangeable currencies along with stolen oil, weapons, and cash. This links a variety of criminal activities to the drugs trade, ranging from kidnapping expatriate oil company employees for ransom, to oil bunkering,<sup>7</sup> to the arming and use of young men as political muscle to determine the outcome of elections in the region. It also helps to interlink disparate criminalized networks, ranging from the militants fighting in the creeks of the Delta to the political “godfathers” controlling politics at the local level, to the oil companies themselves, who often pay, and allegedly even arm, some actors in order to act outside the law against others.<sup>8</sup>

Increasingly groups are diversifying their tactics and mixing and matching the activities of organized crime syndicates, insurgent groups, and quasi-state actors. Different groups share expertise and contacts. The relations between state and nonstate actors are often ambiguous, sometimes fluctuating between complicity and enmity, or at other times varying between different groups within government that are competing for preeminence.

Finally, I would like to close with a suggestion regarding one productive approach to this problem. I believe that much more attention needs to be paid to support of the justice sector in many West African countries. Certainly the officials from the Drug Enforcement Agency and other arms of the government who testify today will have already requested that the subcommittee grant more money for the kinds of training and cooperation that will assist in interdiction and investigation activities in countries like Guinea-Bissau and Guinea. I would like to suggest that a narrow approach may not yield the desired outcomes, even if it appears initially to be admirably focused and consequently less expensive.

It is not by coincidence that in going after the traffickers in Guinea, the junta bypassed the judicial system and conducted a kind of popular “kangaroo court” televised live to the entire country, in which the head of the junta personally interrogated those accused (including the son of the recently deceased President) and extracted confessions from them. The lower ranking officers who took power in Guinea felt, like most Guinean civilians, that the judicial branch of government was not a branch at all, but merely an appendage of the executive. In light of this, the soldiers have set up a parallel justice system to deal not only with drugs cases but also with land disputes and all manner of other complaints. I believe they are acting in good faith in doing this, but the approach is clearly not sustainable in the long term. What is necessary is a thoroughgoing reform of all the institutions implicated in the justice sector, from the police to low-level magistrates, from systems of case management to civic education regarding the role and the prerogatives of the Supreme Court. Guinea is not alone in needing this kind of support. Liberia also has been in desperate need of justice sector reform, and efforts over the last 3 years are just beginning to show results. But systemic change will require concerted long-term support organized by a holistic view of the changes sought.

Many West African intellectuals have grown weary and even skeptical of foreign lectures about the virtues of democracy. Many decry the focus on elections to the

<sup>5</sup>A kind of long canoe.

<sup>6</sup>For more on the complex interlinkages amongst Islamist insurgency, Tuareg rebellions against the Malian and Nigerien states, cigarette smuggling, and human trafficking, see “Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?” Africa Report No. 92. Brussels: International Crisis Group 2005.

<sup>7</sup>Bunkering is theft of oil by filling tankers illegally and selling it for personal gain, estimated to account for some 30 percent of overall Nigerian oil production. It exists alongside smaller scale theft of oil by illegally tapping into pipelines.

<sup>8</sup>This is the case with “surveillance” contracts, in which militants who make a credible enough threat to the security of oil installations are often paid off under the guise of a kind of private security contract. More serious accusations, for instance that Royal Dutch Shell armed Nigerian military and hired government troops who shot at protestors in the 1990s were recently settled with an out-of-court payment to the families of nine activists (including Ken Saro-Wiwa) hanged by the Nigerian Abacha government. Shell still denies any wrongdoing, and described the payments as a “humanitarian gesture.” See 9 June 2009 “Joy at Nigeria Oil Deaths Pay-Out.” BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8091104.stm>.

exclusion of all else. I would agree, but would add this: The focus is not just too much on elections; it is also too focused on the executive branch of government. Granted, in Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and a number of other countries, the executive has all but swallowed up the legislative and judicial branches, even if they have constitutional prerogatives of their own. It can be hard to see how one might gain any access to the legislative or the judicial without passing by the executive first. Yet why would we expect the executive to willingly cede the power it has worked long and hard to monopolize, especially when what is at stake may be investigation of its own illegal activities?

I will not have to convince this audience of the importance of a strong and independent legislature for any healthy democracy. However, in the case of drug trafficking, it is an independent and neutral judiciary that will make the greatest difference. I urge the subcommittee to consider the present problem within the larger framework of the need for holistic long-term support for the justice sectors of West African countries. The fact that the last place many West African peasants go when faced with a case of rape or a land dispute is the courts; the fact that the chief justice of a supreme court does not have the courage to declare a President in a coma incompetent to fulfill his functions; and the fact that international drug syndicates can operate in these same countries in total impunity may not at first glance seem to be interrelated facts, but indeed they are.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you all for your interesting testimony and useful suggestions.

I will start off a round with Mr. Farah. As a reporter and researcher you've covered drug trafficking in Latin America for decades. And obviously it's not easy to draw parallels between Latin America and West Africa, because the latter is not a major producing region. Nonetheless, from your observations of counter-narcotics efforts in Latin America, what lessons do you believe can be learned for West Africa, and what has been most effective at stopping drug flows?

Mr. FARAH. Well, I'd say, as I said in my prepared full remarks, I think one of the key issues is vetted units, which was talked about to some extent here. I think one of the huge successes in Colombia was the creation of reliable, vetted units that you could rely on to both—to prosecute and chase the drug traffickers and bring down their organizations.

The second—and this is something that the DEA has done well over time—is the creation of human intelligence. As you're well aware of, Senator, we lost a lot of our human intelligence capacity and a lot of the intelligence community in the 1990s, and, prior to 9/11, were scrambling to build that up. I think that that is crucial to understanding how these operations work, because a lot of it is not going to be—some of it's very high-tech, and some of it's incredibly low-tech. You—they do use sat phones and things, but they also, as Mike Braun was saying, hang around together and—if you look at the diamond smuggling and how other stuff operates, it was very low-tech. You can move stuff across deserts in small packages.

So, I think human intelligence is much more crucial than having high-tech, very expensive toys out there. People on the ground are much more important.

The other thing I've learned in my years of dealing with drug trafficking is that, especially in the smaller countries, everyone knows who they are. It's not that—that's—goes back to the human intelligence side. I mean, I—as a reporter, I could wander around Cali, and you could—they would say, "OK, well, so-and-so lives here, and this is so-and-so's house, and this—he's married to so-and-so, they own this"—you know, nothing necessarily would initially stand up in court, but they are known quantities. Very

quickly. At Guinea-Bissau, I guarantee you everybody knows who the major traffickers are, because it's not a very big place. Sierra Leone is the same way. Liberia is the same way. Just as I could figure out who the al-Qaeda diamond dealers were in those countries because people would talk to me, you can bet you'll find out who the drug traffickers are.

So, I think you have to—as we were asking the earlier panel about funding, you have to have people on the ground there who can actually listen to what's going on and help, then, the law enforcement agencies, intelligence community, and develop that into something much more actionable.

And the third thing I think that you really have to focus on is the money trail. Mike McGovern has talked about the civil society side, which I think is also incredibly important. But, if you find—if you can—you know what the narcos want, you know what they'll buy, and you can bet that they're doing it there. You know, there are certain things that they always buy across Latin America, and they'll be buying in Africa. You can track their money much more efficiently doing that than setting up these wide regulatory networks that no one can enforce.

And so, I would say that that's another key point.

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, in this regard, you said that identified members of the FARC and other Colombian organizations are on the ground in West Africa and protecting shipments and making deals. And from your sources, is there credible evidence that these groups are trying to establish footholds and expand their presence in West Africa? And I think you've already alluded to this can these people really blend in? You seem to be suggesting they can't.

Mr. FARAH. I think what you'll see in that situation, Senator, is that you'll have the FARC keeping their enforcers on the ground there and making sure that their products are—or the other Colombian or Mexican or Surinamese groups, making sure their product is delivered, but they need—and this is what I think is so dangerous—they need the Lebanese diaspora, which ties very closely to Hezbollah, networks to move their product if they're going to do that over time. From Guinea-Bissau, if you're going to fly an aircraft, you don't need that. If you're going to begin using overland lines and folks—and routes that these groups have huggled into and run for the last 60 years, then you're going to need to hook up with those organizations to move your product. That's why I think you're not going to see a bloodbath of organized criminal groups going after each other, because the narcos bring something very valuable to the pipeline that the other groups already control, and the cocaine people need the pipeline, the pipeline will benefit from the cocaine, and you'll see, I believe, very quickly, a cooperative effort there, using traditionally established—the same way they did—as you're familiar with it, with the diamonds—the same groups that bring the expired chicken and dump it in West Africa, the expired medicines and dump it in West Africa, take the timber and gold out of West Africa—they'll plug cocaine into that pipeline without thinking twice about it. And that's why they don't need to blend in. They need enough presence on the ground to be able to say, “We can blow your brains out if you don't do what we

like,” but they don’t need to take over the country; they need to have people who cooperate with them.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Braun, clearly one of the major challenges we face is identifying, tracking, investigating, and, of course, ultimately, disrupting these drug trafficking organizations, rather than just picking off individuals. From your long experience at DEA, what do you see as the key to going after organizations? And are there best practices that should be considered as the United States and our partners scale up counternarcotics efforts in West Africa?

Mr. BRAUN. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Chairman, listen, I’ve given a lot of thought to what’s going on in Africa. I’ve—you know, one of my last foreign trips, you know, abroad, as the Chief of Operations with DEA, was in Africa. I can tell you what we need to do in Africa. And Doug has alluded to this, and others have alluded to it and said it directly. DEA needs a much larger presence on the African Continent. Right now, they’ve got four offices, soon to open a fifth in Kenya, but there are some major gaps. And when you actually tally up the numbers of personnel that are assigned to those soon-to-be five offices, you’re probably talking about less—somewhere between 15 and 20 criminal investigators or special agents. So, you need—we need a much larger DEA presence on the ground, and I believe—and I’m not speaking for the agency any longer, Senator; I’ve been gone for 7 months—but, we also need—or, the DEA needs the resources, including the funding, to stand up a number of vetted teams, as many have talked about, in that country. They are the DEA’s force multiplier abroad. You know, when you’ve got vetted teams of seasoned host-nation counterparts that are well trained, fully vetted, working shoulder to shoulder with DEA personnel, you can take that one DEA agent and quickly multiply him or her by tenfold, if not more. And they bring—that program brings a very powerful punch to the fight very quickly.

So, if you’re—there are no quick fixes, no easy solutions, but that is one way that we can very quickly get a much better handle on what to do. And with that increased capacity, the DEA can focus on their organizational attack that is working extremely well in places like Afghanistan now, that has worked very well in places like Thailand, Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, and elsewhere over many years.

Thank you.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Braun

Dr. McGovern, you’ve studied this region closely for some time. In your view, how can we ensure that increased counternarcotics assistance and activities contribute to larger efforts to promote regional stability and the rule of law? And what are the risks if we focus too narrowly on interdictions and investigations without building sufficient institutional capacity?

Dr. MCGOVERN. Yes. Thanks for the question.

This goes back to my final comments about a holistic approach to the justice sector and the need for people to see the justice sector as something that operates independently of the executive, and where they might have recourse for any of their needs that we take for granted in a country like this one. And I think, in that context,

it's important to keep in mind that, in a country like Guinea, where, right now, there's a kind of a ferocious battle being waged by the military junta against the drug traffickers, it's being waged in ways that are likely to end up undercutting the broader aim of strengthening the institutions that we need to see strengthened. The actual process, so far, has been a kind of a kangaroo court, where the head of the junta has personally interrogated people like the former President's son on live television, extracted a confession from him, and then, you know, it looked, for a while, as if they would be released, because, for many Guineans, justice had been done. There isn't even a conception of what the legal process ought to be and who are the competent people within the justice institutions who ought to follow it through.

And I would just say as a footnote to that, it's the one area where this junta, in Guinea-Conakry, has some legitimacy both with the people—it looks as if they're increasingly looking to hold on to power and not hold elections—and it's one of the areas that they're throwing a kind of—a few crumbs to the U.S. Embassy in Conakry in order to try to maintain a bit of support while really abandoning everything else, in terms of human rights, due process, and turning power back over to civilians.

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, I have found this panel to be very interesting, and this hearing, I think, is an important way, as Senator Kaufman said and as we've tried to illustrate, to make this something that people are aware of, not only with regard to the African countries and people that are involved, but with regard to our own national security, as well. So, I look forward to following up with all of you.

And that concludes the hearing.

[Whereupon, at 11:52 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

