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**Testimony
Of
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**Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Oversight and Government Reform Committee**

***“Transnational Drug Enterprises (Part II): U.S.
Government Perspectives on the Threat to Global Stability
and U.S. National Security”***

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10:00 a.m.**

Thank you very much, Chairman Tierney, Ranking Member Flake, and other Members of the Subcommittee, for the opportunity to testify today on this important subject. I very much look forward not only to today's discussion, but also to working on drug issues with all the Subcommittee Members in the months and years ahead.

Before I provide a more detailed response on the issue of this hearing, I want to share with you the focus of my first year as Director of National Drug Control Policy. I have, with my Deputy Director, Tom McLellan, committed to continuing our strong domestic law enforcement efforts, especially along the Southwest border, and to evaluating the attention and funding provided to prevention and treatment in our national anti-drug efforts. The connection between the transnational drug threat and the domestic demand for drugs should not be overlooked.

Vital Role of Drug Prevention and Treatment

The Obama administration is emphasizing a comprehensive, balanced approach to drug policy. We are rebalancing our efforts, building on the hard-won knowledge we already have, but also incorporating new information, and new tools, that research and science have provided us. We recognize that drug addiction is a disease with a biological basis, although personal responsibility does play a role in recovery. Drug use – whether or not the user is addicted – raises the risk of traumatic accidents, infectious disease, psychiatric disorders, family violence, and a host of other health problems. One of my top priorities is to intensify efforts to reduce the demand for drugs, which fuels crime and violence around the world.

As a long-time police chief, I have seen up-close the terrible impact drugs have on individuals, families, and communities. The earlier we can intervene to get people help, the better – that's why community-based prevention will be a focus. Drug use and its consequences affect different places in very different ways. In fact, there is no single "drug problem," in this country, but a wide variety of drug problems, each closely tied to the makeup, the economy, the geography and the culture of particular communities. We will be expanding and enhancing existing prevention efforts and working to ensure drug abuse treatment services are made more widely available. These efforts will include expanded work to address the abuse of pharmaceutical drugs, a problem of increasing concern within the U.S.

This renewed focus on a balanced approach does not, in any way, diminish the critical role of law enforcement in addressing our drug control challenges. We continue to integrate border enforcement and interdiction, domestic law enforcement and international efforts so they are coordinated and mutually reinforcing. Federal, State, local and Tribal law enforcement efforts are focused on disrupting the drug trafficking organizations' domestic profits, assets, and money laundering operations.

The Administration is committed to using the criminal justice system effectively – violent criminals and drug traffickers must be incarcerated to protect public safety, but there are better alternatives for those caught up in the criminal justice system due to their drug involvement. We do not want to simply incarcerate drug addicts, while leaving their drug problems unaddressed. We must seize the opportunity to provide evidence-based treatment – either out of jail through diversionary programs like drug courts, or while in jail – to set them on a path to recovery. We

also want to make sure that those in the community correctional system can be held to account through swift and certain sanctions, which often can stop the cycle of drug use and crime. The Obama Administration is focused on providing treatment for Americans in need, so they can contribute to safe and healthy communities. Addressing these issues quickly saves both money and lives.

Fiscal Year 2010 appropriations increased funding for adult, juvenile, and family drug courts by one-third, tripled Federal support for treatment in state prisons, more than doubled prisoner re-entry funding, and provided \$30 million to fund the recently passed Second Chance Act.

Employing ONDCP's authority to review and certify national drug control program budgets under Public Law 109-469, Departments and agencies worked with ONDCP through the summer and fall of 2009 in the development of the President's Fiscal Year 2011 National Drug Control Budget. The budget requests \$15.5 billion to reduce drug use and its consequences in the U.S. This represents an increase of \$521.1 million (3.5 percent) over the FY 2010 enacted level of \$15.0 billion. The Budget seeks to increase drug prevention funding by 13.4 percent and to increase drug treatment funding by 3.7 percent over the FY 2010 enacted level.

More specific to the jurisdiction of this Subcommittee, the interdiction portion of the President's budget proposal seeks an increase of \$86.9 million (2.4%) over the FY 2010 level, with \$3.7 billion to support Federal interdiction efforts.

The Budget also requests over \$2.3 billion to provide support to our international partners and counternarcotics programs, an increase of \$20.1 million (0.9%) over the FY 2010 level. The Departments of Defense, Justice, and State perform a wide range of drug control activities primarily conducted in areas outside of the U.S., focusing on the disruption or dismantlement of the most significant international drug organizations, and increasing the drug enforcement capability of partner nations, and supporting programs to reduce drug demand and treat addiction.

Transnational Drug Enterprises and Their Threat to the U.S.

Now let me turn to the main purpose of the today's hearing, the serious national security threat posed by illicit drug production, trafficking, and consumption. Certainly this is an issue of great concern not only to me, but to all of my colleagues in the Obama Administration.

The production, trafficking, and use of illicit drugs have become a significant threat to our Nation, our hemisphere, and our planet. Transnational criminal organizations operate best in an environment of weak governmental institutions, insecurity, corruption, and limited legitimate economic opportunity. Their purposes are served by a culture of violence, intimidation, and impunity to create the perception they are the governing power in areas where they operate freely. They perpetuate their control and income-generating power with complete disregard for the negative impact their criminal enterprises have on the lives of individuals, on governmental and social structures, and even on the environment. The asymmetric threat posed by illicit trafficking has become global in scope. The revenue derived from these illicit activities has created a destabilizing effect on the fragile democracies and the rule of law in our own

hemisphere and throughout the world. A clear nexus has been established linking the revenue produced by drug trafficking organizations and their violent and destabilizing activities.

Governmental efforts against international drug production and trafficking organizations typically include interdiction, direct organizational attack, and disruption of inputs to the trafficker's chain of production.

Domestically, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program provides resources to Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) by targeting drug cultivation, distribution, drug-related violent crime, and demand reduction. The collaboration and cooperation among these agencies leads to an expanded jurisdiction and enhanced expertise for task force members in disrupting and dismantling both domestic and transnational DTOs. Without building probable cause and intelligence through the street-level case work and thorough criminal investigations by Federal and local law enforcement working together, major transnational DTOs would continue expanding their illicit enterprises. Identifying the source and denying the revenue originates with Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers building investigations, discovering links, and ultimately developing cases against these illicit organizations.

Interdiction efforts in the transit zone between South America and the U.S. have been successful over the past several years, to the extent they have impacted the drug trafficking business model. In response to increasing interagency successes in interdicting "go-fast boats" and multi-ton loads on the high seas, traffickers have shifted to moving their product in ever-more sophisticated self-propelled semi-submersibles (SPSS) capable of carrying five tons of cocaine per shipment. The Drug Trafficking Vessel Interdiction Act that Congress passed in 2008 outlawed the operation of these vessels and has enabled prosecution of their crews, even after they have scuttled the vessel and its contraband, facilitating significant progress in trying to stop this threat. To further minimize risk, traffickers have dispersed smaller loads among an increased number of go-fasts, and they are running them through littoral waters off the coasts of Central America to Mexico to take advantage of reduced partner nation interdiction capability in territorial seas.

Efforts to disrupt the trafficking organizations have been most successful in Colombia, where we have witnessed an evolution from what many described as a nearly failed state during the nineties, to today's situation in which the drug-funded terrorist organizations are reduced in size and power, security has returned, and the government is increasingly taking responsibility for implementation of programs formerly funded by the U.S.

In Afghanistan, we are focusing on disrupting the nexus between drug traffickers, insurgents, and government corruption, and denying them the revenue they generate from the illicit drug trade. In Mexico, President Calderon's government is engaged in a struggle to dismantle major criminal organizations, and at the same time, reform and strengthen the democratic institutions of government. United States information sharing, training, and the provision of equipment through the Merida Initiative and other regional programs have been invaluable in our strategic partnership with Mexico and the Caribbean and Central American countries. Beyond law enforcement, the U.S. cooperates with regional governments to strengthen democratic

institutions and provide citizens with economic and social alternatives to involvement with the drug economy (whether as producers, traffickers, or consumers). With our national interests as much at stake in the outcome as those of our partners, it is essential that we continue to amply support disruption of transnational criminal organizations in the hemisphere and elsewhere when they affect our national security.

President Calderon's efforts, combined with increasing security along our Southwest border, may have motivated drug cartels to expand outside of Mexico, and to move into less challenging markets in Europe, the Middle East, and possibly Central America (Guatemala). By moving into new markets, the DTOs have sparked a significant reaction. We are currently in the midst of an unprecedented period of international cooperation, which has been spurred by the realization that illicit drug trafficking is not just a domestic problem. Our South and Central American and Caribbean neighbors realize the rapidly growing threat to their own civil and social systems, and are calling for regional cooperative efforts against the DTOs. The DTO-related violence in Mexico and a clear understanding of our mutual interest in addressing this serious drug trafficking threat has facilitated unprecedented cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico.

The current situation has created a window of opportunity for a coordinated international effort to address this common threat. The U.S. must continue our law enforcement efforts to make best use of the current wave of international commitment by providing leadership and assisting our hemispheric partner nations and our international allies to develop the capability and capacity they need to play an enhanced role in the current struggle. We must also do the same with our non-law enforcement efforts, such as capacity building of democratic institutions, improving justice systems, strengthening community capacity to resist and prevent substance abuse, and providing opportunities to at-risk youth so they do not become involved in either drug abuse or the drug trade.

The Administration has a goal of increasing the cost of doing business for the DTOs, to the point where routine losses are no longer sustainable. Getting there will not be easy. Interagency forces, with the help of our international partners, have done heroic work in seizing increasing amounts of cocaine in the transit zone year after year. But we must do better. ONDCP, in its role as U.S. Interdiction Coordinator (USIC) and working through The Interdiction Committee (TIC), is currently engaged in a comprehensive interagency study, entitled the Western Hemisphere Transit Zone Performance Gap Analysis (PGA). The study will determine the resources required to improve seizures, and will provide a better basis for interagency budget requests to attain this objective.

The PGA will establish a comprehensive baseline for the capability and capacity required by U.S. agencies as well as our international partners. It can also serve as one component of the requirements document for several related initiatives, including the ongoing Merida Initiative, and the related Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI – formerly known as Merida Central America), the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), and the Maritime Interdiction Investment Plan (MIIP). Led by the Coast Guard with DOS support and incorporating input from DOD, DHS and DOJ, the MIIP will provide non-binding guidance to TIC regarding maritime interdiction investment priorities within the Western hemisphere. These initiatives have all been developed to foster an interagency approach designed to maximize the

return on investment of current and proposed counternarcotics funding mechanisms. This coordinated effort is essential. We will also endeavor to include partner nations in this process to ensure they can leverage these initiatives to maximize the return on their investments as well.

The U.S. already collaborates extensively with our partners in the region and around the globe to interdict shipments of illicit narcotics as close to the source as possible. Seizing large loads before they reach our borders, measured in metric tons is far more efficient and cost effective than seizing quantities measured in grams when they arrive in our neighborhoods. For years, our international partners have recognized the wisdom of this approach, and have provided ships, aircraft, and investigative personnel under the tactical control of the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South (JIATF South). In response to the increasing eastward flow of illicit narcotics across the Atlantic, seven European countries have joined to establish the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre – Narcotics (MAOC-N) in Lisbon, Portugal. JIATF South has established a permanent liaison at the MAOC-N to ensure a seamless exchange of tactical and investigative information.

Finally, disruption of the illegal drug supply chain needs to continue. The U.S. assists efforts in drug source countries to eliminate poppy and coca, to empower government control and the rule of law in drug-producing areas, and to defeat terrorist organizations that depend on drug trafficking as a significant source of income. When the security situation permits it, U.S. efforts to disrupt drug production at its source include assistance for development of sustainable income sources and institutional strengthening, with respect for human rights and democracy. One of the best examples of this occurred in Peru's San Martin area, where the Peruvian government, through a geographically-targeted, whole-of-government effort that included State Department-funded coca eradication and USAID alternative development assistance, reduced the number of hectares of coca in San Martin from over 18,000 to less than 325 today. Critical to this success was community participation in selecting the types of assistance provided and alternative development assistance in place before eradication began. Investments such as these need to be sustained to make it possible for allied governments in the heroin and cocaine source countries to stop drug production and increase stability. Continuing to increase and expand these kinds of international and regional partnerships is essential, if we are to achieve the level of supply reduction necessary to begin to impact trafficker success in a meaningful way.

Colombia

The U.S. has long-focused on the threats posed by drugs within our hemisphere. Colombia has made tremendous progress in reducing violence and disrupting the major drug trafficking organizations. During my visit to Colombia, I was impressed by the commitment of the Uribe administration to partner with the U.S. to reduce the flow of illicit drugs to the U.S. and to reduce the effect that drug trafficking has on Colombia. I also noted recognition by the Colombian government that drug trafficking is a regional problem. Colombia is using its years of experience fighting drug trafficking to partner with and assist the Mexican government.

Inside Colombia, President Uribe's government has shown remarkable progress in taking back control of the country from armed drug-trafficking groups, resulting in dramatic drops in violence, kidnappings, and impunity. Colombia's plan simply seeks to establish state control over portions of Colombia that have never had a government presence. This expansion of

governance into once-forgotten parts of rural Colombia will decrease the ability of insurgent and criminal groups to threaten the Colombian state; cultivate illicit crops; traffic narcotics, weapons, and ammunition; and perpetrate violence against Colombian citizens. It will also provide the secure environment for alternative development programs to succeed in permanently replacing illicit crops.

Of course, there is more work to be done, and the U.S. will continue to partner with Colombia in attacking all aspects of the drug trade. To avoid a reversal of our successes, it is important that we enable Colombia to sustain their gains and replace illicit enterprises with productive commerce. Greater U.S. private sector engagement with their Colombian counterparts will go far to create the investor confidence and market openings Colombia needs to push out the drug business, while also providing opportunities for U.S. companies.

Mexico

In October 2007, Mexico and the U.S. announced a strategic partnership against transnational crime. Through the Merida Initiative, the U.S. committed to provide \$1.4 billion in equipment, technical assistance, and training to Mexico, as well as improve our communications and information sharing with Mexico, Central American, and Caribbean countries in support of anti-drug and anti-crime programs. Mexico has taken the lead in directly confronting transnational criminal organizations that threaten its national security.

On August 9, 2009, at the North American Leaders' Summit in Guadalajara, President Obama commended Mexican President Felipe Calderón and his government for their determination and courage in taking on these cartels. He spoke of the violence and death the cartels cause, and our shared commitment "to continue confronting the urgent threat to our common security" they pose. President Obama said the U.S. would, "remain a full partner in this effort," working "to make sure Mexico has the support it needs to dismantle and defeat the cartels."

I have nothing but the greatest respect for the courageous efforts made by President Calderon in taking on the cartels. He and his administration deserve our sustained support. Mexico faces a tremendous challenge, and they have shown the will and commitment to meet it. The U.S., through the Merida Initiative, is providing information about the whereabouts of transnational criminal leadership. Over the longer term, the U.S. is also providing rotary wing mobility to facilitate take-downs of criminal cells and criminal leadership, with the support of Congress. The U.S. is also sharing information on the trafficking of drugs north into U.S. territory and is developing programs to impede bulk currency and weapons trafficked south from the U.S. into Mexico.

In implementing its cartel-focused strategy, Mexico has relied heavily upon the military and federal police to control territory where there is a strong criminal presence. Those institutions have disrupted criminal infrastructure through arrests and seizures of transportation assets. According to the Government of Mexico, arrests increased from 40,630 in the previous administration to 79,301 for a comparable period in the Calderon administration. Of the nearly 80,000 arrests, about 55,000 - or 70 percent - had ties to organized crime.

Cartel leaders have also been put at greater risk. Even in advance of full integration of United States technical assistance into Mexico's national security structure, 9 of 37 kingpins and lieutenants identified by Mexico as their "most wanted" had been arrested as of January 12, 2010. In December, Mexican forces killed or captured two of the Beltran Leyva brothers, heads of the eponymous cartel.

It is true that the threat of violence, on both sides of the Southwest border, is serious and troubling. However, there is some good news in the scale of Mexico's commitment to reform their Federal, State, and local agencies and the degree to which our two nations have been able to closely collaborate. This cooperation does not just consist of high-level meetings, but also regular exchanges of case-specific information through the Mexican liaison officers now based in a number of United States centers, such as the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). This regular collaboration, buttressed by the Merida Initiative, is building a strong foundation for an enduring full-scale effort to push back against the international drug cartels based in Mexico. Both the U.S. and Mexico recognize that extensive use of the military for counternarcotics is not a permanent solution to the challenge of the drug cartels, but a response to a crisis. We are collaborating on efforts to train their law enforcement agencies so they can take over leadership of this effort and are concurrently working to support the Mexican Government's efforts to more fully protect the human and civil rights of its citizens who are too often caught in the violent crossfire of this difficult struggle.

In addition, it is important to note that U.S. cooperation with Mexico also includes expanding collaboration on prevention, treatment, and innovative criminal justice policies. The most recent example is the US-Mexico Demand Reduction Bi-National Policy Conference, which ONDCP hosted last week in Washington, DC. I was encouraged that First Lady Margarita Zavala of Mexico participated. The conference resulted in a joint declaration, in which both countries agreed to pursue bi-national collaboration in seven key areas: developing strong, resilient communities that resist criminal organizations and develop a culture that sustains lawful authorities; supporting community-based prevention efforts and anti-drug coalitions; integration of substance abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment into medical education and healthcare systems; Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment; drug treatment research leading to better and more accessible programs; credentialing / licensing of healthcare and treatment professionals; and innovations in criminal justice to reduce recidivism and interrupt the cycle of drug use and crime.

The Southwest Border

Of course, there is much we can do to address the threat drug trafficking poses to the U.S. and Mexico. In June 2009, Secretary Napolitano, Attorney General Holder, and I publicly released the *National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy* in New Mexico. The Strategy is a key component of our comprehensive national response to the threat along the border. This response includes: cooperation with Mexico through the Merida Initiative and enhancement to border-related personnel, technology, and equipment.

Under my leadership, and in close collaboration with DHS, DOJ and other agencies, the Administration is moving forward to aggressively implement this Border Strategy. Just two weeks ago, I convened relevant Department and Agency representatives and a participant from

our Southwest Border HIDTA, to review the status of the Strategy. Significant progress has been made in many areas, including information sharing with State and local partners, as well as employing Treasury Department authority to disrupt trafficking operations. It further includes an increased focus on interdiction of southbound currency and weapons, and sharing information on gun shipments among law enforcement agencies. Some challenges remain. ONDCP will be preparing a public report on the implementation of the Border Strategy which will be provided to Committee Members this spring. DHS and DOJ will begin the process of updating the National Southwest Border Counternarcotics Strategy for 2011, as required by statute.

I have heard from many of my former colleagues in State and local law enforcement about the importance of working together as one U.S. team to stem the flow of drugs into our country, as well as the outbound flow of bulk currency and weapons. This is a large, complex, and important undertaking. Strengthening this national partnership will be essential to our efforts to stop the flow of bulk currency and weapons from the U.S. across the border to Mexico. I applaud Secretary Napolitano and Attorney General Holder for their emphasis on stopping the flow of outbound money and guns that empowers the violent Mexican drug cartels. Clearly, the money and weapons are just as important to the cartels, if not more important, than the drugs. Of course, the purpose of the whole cartel enterprise is to garner profits and power; drugs are just a means to those ends.

The violent international drug cartels operating on both sides of the border are criminal, and they collectively pose a national security threat to our Nation. International drug trafficking organizations operate in our cities, suburbs, rural areas, in our national parks and our public lands, and in our prisons. Information about their operations must be made available to our federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners. Without their involvement, we will never have the detailed knowledge of local drug-trafficking cells and their drug, money, and weapons distribution networks necessary to dismantle the international criminal organizations that threaten not only our Nation, but also our partners throughout the region.

Using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act), the Department of Homeland Security is making major investments at the border, including: \$100 million for nonintrusive inspection systems; \$60 million for tactical communications equipment and radios; and \$420 million for planning, management, design, alteration, and construction of CBP Ports of Entry. In addition, also using Recovery Act funds, much-needed Department of Justice law enforcement funds will provide: \$2 billion for Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants; \$225 million for Byrne Competitive grants; \$125 million for Rural Law Enforcement; \$40 million for the Southern Border, \$10 million of which is specifically for ATF's Project Gunrunner; and \$225 million for Tribal Law Enforcement Assistance. I am not going to tell you we can solve this problem with a new strategy or with budget initiatives in a single year. But I do want to tell you that I am confident we have already begun to move in the right direction.

Central America and the Caribbean

The Caribbean represents another U.S. border region that is exploited by drug trafficking organizations. President Obama, as one of his first actions in 2009, met with the leaders of the Western Hemisphere at the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago. He pledged to strengthen security and promote citizen safety in the region. That is a key objective of the

Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), through which the governments of the Caribbean nations and the U.S. will partner to work together in the areas of law enforcement, public safety, security, and social justice. Through this security cooperation partnership, the governments will work to substantially reduce illicit trafficking of narcotics and associated crime, advance public safety and security, and further promote social justice across the Caribbean Region. We are working closely with the Department of State to enhance the capacity and capability of the forces in the Caribbean to reduce the flow of drugs through the region and the corruption, consumption, and destabilization that accompany drug trafficking.

Our Central American partners are experiencing the consequences of the criminal organizations operating in their countries. In part, that is because it has become relatively more difficult for trafficking organizations to operate in Mexico. We are working through our partnership with the Organization of American States' Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) experts to provide training on resisting drug use and improve administration of treatment efforts. Drug trafficking, and the money and violence that accompany it, challenge local police forces in Central America. We are working closely with the Department of State in the execution of the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI – formerly the Merida Initiative) for those countries, in order to assist with basic law enforcement training and equipment, and to strengthen those governments in the areas of money laundering, asset forfeiture, and firearms interdiction.

Russia

At their July 2009 summit meeting in Moscow, President Obama and President Medvedev created a Bilateral Commission to improve relations between our two countries in numerous areas. As part of this effort, I have been named as Co-Chair of the Drug Trafficking Working Group with my Russian counterpart, Director Viktor Ivanov. I traveled to Moscow and met with Director Ivanov on February 4th to advance the important work of this Commission. Director Ivanov and I have committed to partnering to combat the flow of illegal narcotics from Afghanistan and the Andean region that affect the strategic interests of both the U.S. and Russia. Additionally, both nations recognize the importance of increasing demand reduction efforts, specifically in the areas of prevention, treatment, and recovery. Russian authorities are especially interested in our experience with Drug Treatment Courts, which have existed for over 20 years in the U.S., and now number greater than 2,300. I look forward to making significant strides in our partnership, as both the U.S. and Russia work to develop new, comprehensive drug control strategies for our respective nations.

Afghanistan

During my recent trip to Afghanistan and Russia, I was able to view first-hand the impact illegal drugs are having on both societies. At the source, illicit drugs from Afghanistan are fueling a growing regional drug addiction problem that extends northward into Central Asia, Europe, and Russia. As you know, most of the drugs that originate in Afghanistan do not make it to U.S. streets, but they do provide a financial support structure for the Taliban and their associated networks. As part of the U.S. counter-drug effort for Afghanistan, we are enhancing interdiction to deprive the illegally generated drug funding to the Taliban and their allies. We are also working closely with the host government of Afghanistan, our international partners, and multilateral organizations such as the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to

broaden our engagement with affected nations and counter the threats Afghan illegal narcotics pose to our respective national security interests.

West Africa

We will also remain focused on assisting other countries and regions, especially in the developing world, grappling with the terrible impact of the drug trade. West Africa is one example. The UNODC has been instrumental in calling international attention to the rise in narco-trafficking, particularly from the Andean source countries through West African nations. Already, this increased trafficking has been harmful to stability and good governance. Though domestic consumption in West African nations is not significant yet, we know from experience elsewhere that transit states develop domestic markets. There are signs this is beginning to happen in West Africa. The U.S. will work with the UNODC and the European Union to build capacities in this and other regions of the developing world to address the rising threat posed by illicit drug trafficking and use.

Asia/Pacific

Whereas Central and South America continue to be the source and transit zones for cocaine destined for the U.S., and Afghanistan remains the world's top producer of heroin destined for markets mostly outside of the U.S., the Asian region generates the majority of the important precursor chemicals that are diverted to produce synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine and 3,4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine (Ecstasy or MDMA). ONDCP, in close partnership with our interagency colleagues, plays an important role in coordinating a coherent response to this threat. In 2009, we hosted the Executive Working Group of the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF)-West, responsible for anti-drug efforts in the Pacific Region. As the synthetic drug threat grows, JIATF-West's mission becomes more important. I am committed to ensuring the success of this important task force in a region that has traditionally received less attention when it comes to drug trafficking. As part of our anti-drug efforts in the Pacific region, I have also committed to working more closely with China. During a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador in August 2009, I reaffirmed our intention to work closely with China to stem the diversion of precursor chemicals to illegal synthetic drug production. The abuse and trafficking of methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs pose a significant threat to the health and safety of citizens in the U.S., China, and other nations around the world.

Conclusion

As a major drug consuming nation, it is in our best interest to work collaboratively with our international partners to reduce the global drug trade. Such efforts not only protect the public health and safety of our citizens, they also fulfill our responsibilities to assist those nations which have been severely impacted by drug use outside their borders. Success against international drug trafficking organizations will require close and sustained partnerships with other countries. These partnerships should include, but not be limited to, interdiction and eradication – it is also vital that we help countries build their institutions and grapple with their own drug abuse and drug-related crime and violence. Building such partnerships can be challenging, due to varying levels of capability and commitment and conflicting priorities and interests. Regardless, for long-term success there is no substitute for local knowledge and strong partnerships with international allies. Fortunately, the past two decades have witnessed a strengthening worldwide resolve to address the threat of drug production, trafficking, and abuse.

At home, we must also do a better job of building partnerships. As a former police chief I recognize that sometimes these relationships can be difficult and that greater effort is required by Federal agencies to share information, eliminate duplication, and provide, to the extent possible, financial support.

Finally, let me commend this Committee's effort to address the shared regional public health and safety threats we face from drug production, trafficking, and abuse. ONDCP looks forward to working with the Committee's Members to address these challenging and important issues. I recognize that none of the many things ONDCP and my Executive Branch colleagues want to accomplish for the Nation are possible without the active support of Congress. I stand ready to come back to testify again in the future, and to meet with Committee Members, to ensure you have all of the information you need. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify and for the support of the Committee on this vital issue.