

**Statement of John F. Tierney  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee on Oversight  
and Government Reform U.S. House of Representatives**

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

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Good morning. Today, the Subcommittee continues its oversight of the national security threats from illicit global drug enterprises.

In October, we held our first hearing with a panel of non-government experts who focused on disrupting and dismantling drug operations in Southwest Asia, Latin America and West Africa. We heard then about the mounting evidence that the drug trade is closely tied to international criminal and terrorist organizations and poses a national security threat to the United States.

Today we welcome witnesses from the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Department of Defense, the State Department, and the Treasury Department to respond to the recommendations that emerged from our October hearing. We are also pleased to have with us today the White House Director of National Drug Control Policy. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) estimates that the global proceeds from illicit drugs range from \$100 billion to more than \$1 trillion per year. The amount of money garnered by the drug trade puts enormous power in the hands of criminal actors who have every incentive to disrupt law enforcement, displace legitimate enterprise, and destabilize governments.

The President’s drug control budget request for fiscal year 2011, now before Congress, asks for \$15.5 billion, of which \$6 billion is slated for international support and interdiction. This includes funding for efforts to halt drug flows from abroad into the United States. One question we must address is whether this overall amount is adequate. A second question is whether the amount targeted to international drug cartels and interdiction is sufficient to mitigate the national security threats emanating from the expanding global drug trade and associated criminal syndicates.

Our last hearing highlighted a number of policy and strategy issues. In Afghanistan, the ever-changing and increasingly complex relations between the drug trade, the insurgency, and terrorism continue to challenge us. Our main counternarcotics initiatives over the past nine years – eradication, interdiction, justice reform, and the promotion of alternative livelihoods – continue to evolve. These programs are supposed to be interwoven with our counterinsurgency efforts, but a recent Inspector General

report questions whether those efforts are actually integrated. The witnesses at our October hearing cautioned that no single counternarcotics approach will work successfully since traffickers are quick to adapt. They also emphasized that regional, cultural, and economic differences across the country must be taken into account for any effort to succeed.

The extreme violence we have seen in recent years along the Mexican border has exposed the tragic consequences of the drug trade, as well as the acute threat these enterprises pose to our own nation and to our neighbors. The United States has long-standing counternarcotics efforts in Latin America, including the multi-year, multi-billion dollar Plan Colombia, and the on-going Merida Initiative in Mexico and Central America. While eradication has been an entrenched aspect of U.S. drug control policy in Latin America for many years – in part because it was seen as cutting off drugs at their source – some witnesses told us that forced crop eradication in the absence of “real” alternative livelihood programs was a doomed drug control policy.

West Africa is fast becoming a pre-eminent international “drug hub,” and the threats from the region are still not fully understood. New transit routes where drugs travel from Latin America to West Africa, and then on to Europe, represent lucrative opportunities for criminal enterprises. These organizations threaten stability in an area of the world that is already prone to violence and corruption, and where we are seeing the rise of terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. The UNODC estimated that close to \$2 billion worth of cocaine passed through West Africa in 2007, which would make cocaine one of the largest exports of the region.

Transnational drug enterprises did not evolve overnight and have shown remarkable flexibility, alliance-building capacity, operational fluidity, and top-to-bottom organizational sophistication that many licit businesses would envy. The United States, working closely with our partners, must break the back of transnational drug enterprises and sever the “drug-terror nexus” where the monetary proceeds from drug trafficking helps fund terrorist organizations such as the FARC in Colombia, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

While not the focus of our hearing today, I want to note the importance of addressing the demand for drugs that comes from within our own borders. Until we are more successful at reducing demand and taking the profits out of drug trafficking, we will continue to face significant challenges in our international counternarcotics efforts.

With those sobering thoughts in mind, I look forward to hearing from today’s witnesses, who have been charged by the American people with the challenging task of dismantling international drug enterprises, stopping the flow of money to terrorist and criminal organizations, and protecting our national security.