



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

***Enhancing Border Security: Addressing Corruption in Central America***

**June 11, 2021**

Corruption adversely affects every aspect of society. It limits economic opportunities, fosters crime and violence, and erodes public trust. Such conditions have forced thousands of families and children to flee in search of better, safer lives. Combatting corruption in the region—particularly in the Northern Triangle—has long been a bipartisan goal. However, President Trump’s rhetoric and inaction to hold political leaders accountable has made matters worse.

In the past two years, the international-backed organizations responsible for investigating corruption in Honduras and Guatemala were disbanded. The recent vote by El Salvador’s new Congress to remove its Supreme Court judges and Attorney General is also concerning since an independent judiciary is essential to democracy. I commend the Biden Administration for recognizing these actions for what they are—a threat to our national security.

Strengthening governance in Central America will not only improve the quality of life for the region’s residents, but also decrease the movement of illicit goods and wealth to the United States. This has several positive implications for border security and would allow the Department of Homeland Security to focus on other vital missions, such as addressing ever-evolving cyber threats. But the new Administration cannot make progress alone. Building capacity to enhance transparency and the rule of law at all levels will be key.

I applaud Vice President Harris for engaging with political leaders about corruption during her visit to Guatemala and Mexico earlier this week, and for establishing a Call to Action to encourage American businesses and nonprofits to invest in the Northern Triangle. These investments can create economic opportunities that offer mutual benefits, such as good jobs for residents and new markets for U.S. companies. Empowering civil society to hold the public and private sectors accountable can also create more just and equitable policies.

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