



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Oversight, Management, & Accountability Subcommittee Chairman Lou Correa (D-CA)

Stakeholder Perspectives on Addressing Migration Push Factors

May 6, 2021

We're here to discuss what drives people in Central America to leave their homes and migrate north to the United States. Far too often we focus on the immediate challenges on our Southern border and don't take a step back to look at the bigger picture. So today we are going to talk about the longstanding causes of migration and the role our country can play as a regional partner.

For decades, the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador have struggled to combat widespread violence, political instability, corruption, and food insecurity. These longstanding problems have only been exacerbated by recent natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have crippled economies and left thousands on the brink of starvation and homelessness. As people lose hope in a better future, they feel there is no other choice but to make the dangerous trip north. Efforts to reduce migration cannot succeed without addressing this overwhelming and pervasive feeling of hopelessness. Until they have a reason to stay, people will continue to leave their home countries and seek a better future for themselves and their children elsewhere.

In order to address some of the most pressing needs of the region, including emergency food services and disaster relief, President Biden plans to send over \$400 million to Central America in humanitarian aid. Aid money for food and shelter alone will not address the systemic corruption, inequality, and violence that disrupts economic and social growth. Which is why the President has also outlined an ambitious 4 year, 4 billion dollar plan to address these longstanding factors driving migration from Central America. This strategy will require close collaboration with regional partners to best understand the individual problems in each country and to ensure that there is buy-in on U.S. involvement.

Vice President Harris has spearheaded this diplomatic outreach, and just last week she met with the Guatemalan president and committed resources from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Working to develop partnerships with foreign governments is part of how DHS is contributing to the overall goal of developing a framework for managing migration in the region. Acting in an advisory capacity, the Department has worked closely with local officials in Central American countries to strengthen customs enforcement and prevent illegally obtained wealth from exiting the country, a key way to combat government corruption.

Furthermore, DHS has assisted Northern Triangle countries with efforts to improve security and prevent widespread violence at the hands of gangs and trans-national criminal organizations. But there is still a great deal of work that needs to be done. I am looking forward to hearing from our witnesses today on how we can make sure that U.S. resources are utilized to the greatest extent possible.

Understanding the failures and success of past programs implemented in Central America is key to creating effective and meaningful change moving forward. That means making sure that our plans take

into consideration the realities of the moment. For example, communities must be built back with an understanding of how climate change will continue to impact the region. And assistance to overworked and underfunded public health systems is particularly critical in the ongoing fight against COVID-19. We have seen that with continued and targeted support, the U.S. can help Central American countries grow more prosperous, secure and politically stable.

To that end, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the living conditions that push people to migrate from Central America and how the U.S. can most effectively help our regional partners build communities that provide people with hope.

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