

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND TERRORISM
SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Opening Statement of Senator Jon Kyl

“Combating International Organized Crime:
Evaluating Current Authorities, Tools, and Resources”

1 November 2011

Introduction

Chairman Whitehouse, thank you for holding this hearing.

As the world becomes more globalized, we know that organized crime no longer poses a strictly local or regional threat to the societies in which it is found. Increasingly, it is a global problem and, as such, the United States must increase its vigilance and step up efforts to combat transnational organized crime and the associated — and growing — threats it poses to our national security. Specifically, I would like to focus my remarks on the need to strengthen efforts to interdict, investigate, and prosecute transnational organized crime and its perpetrators, as well as the need to disrupt transnational drug trafficking.

Strengthening Interdiction, Investigations, and Prosecutions

As a senator from Arizona, I intimately understand the problems associated with cross-border crime along the border with Mexico. We must continue to pursue vigorous interdiction efforts to ensure that our borders are secured and the public is not threatened. I have been a supporter of innovative border enforcement efforts in the past (such as BEST, the Border Enforcement Security Task Force),

and I urge President Obama to make organized crime on our southern border a top priority.

Recently, this subcommittee heard testimony about the threat posed to our nation by terrorist financing activities. Just as terrorist-affiliated organizations continuously evolve to evade domestic and international law enforcement efforts, so too do transnational organized criminal groups. It is of utmost importance that our investigative and prosecutorial tools reflect the criminal threats we face. I have long worked hard to ensure our law enforcement agencies have the statutory framework and legal tools necessary to fight transnational criminal activity. I stand ready to continue that work today.

Disrupting Drug Trafficking

The sale and use of illegal narcotics continue to threaten the health and security of every American. We must diminish these threats by maximizing the use of current legislation (such as the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act) by blocking all property and interests in property, subject to U.S. jurisdiction, owned or controlled by significant foreign narcotics traffickers. This act, and others similar to it, will also aid in the prosecution of persons involved in illegal activities linked to drug trafficking.

The fight against drug trafficking is also a fight against terrorism. Many drug trafficking organizations are not pushing drugs just for financial ends, but look to use that money as a means to further their terrorist aims. That is why we must utilize our intelligence agencies more effectively to combat trafficking outfits in Mexico, South America, Europe, Asia, and — in particular — the Middle East and Africa. Disrupting the funding for this crime-terror relationship will serve a

dual purpose in decreasing the amount of drugs that come into our country while also undercutting the ability of terrorist groups to be successful.

I also remain deeply concerned about the intersection of transnational organized crime and WMD proliferators. We know that those who peddle narcotics, counterfeit cigarettes, or nuclear weapons-related materials and equipment rely on many of the same facilitators, bankers, smugglers, front companies, and transportation networks to conduct illicit activities. The U.S. government knows all too well that states such as North Korea earn desperately needed hard currency from a combination of criminal activities and illicit proliferation. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today on the administration's efforts to disrupt the dangerous nexus between transnational organized crime and WMD proliferators.

Conclusion

The fight against transnational organized crime is an important one. Today's hearing will consider the administration's efforts to disrupt and deter this pernicious activity. I look forward to learning more about the administration's strategy to combat transnational organized crime in all of its forms, and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses that are to testify before the Subcommittee today.

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