



PULTE INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Addressing the Sex and Gender-Based Violence in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador Fueling the U.S. Border Crisis

Corruption, Impunity, and Violence Against Women and Girls

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Pervasive sex and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, together known as the “Northern Triangle of Central America” (NTCA), is perpetrated by gangs, narco-traffickers, human traffickers and a machismo culture fueled by corruption and impunity leading to some of the highest rates of SGBV in the world, including femicide and violence against women and girls. This sexual violence is causing severe harm, including rape, domestic and sexual servitude, sexual assault, forced disappearances, human trafficking and even death in the region, forcing women and girls to flee the NTCA and migrate to the U.S. Much of the sexual violence is perpetrated by gangs including rape of women and children if they do not comply and become “girlfriends” of gang members, sexual violence if they fail to pay gang members, and sexual servitude to gang members for women as a gang initiation. Gangs specifically target women, children, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people and these groups are often the targets of gang violence, including forced gang initiation. Gang initiations for men and women differ. Men are usually subject to violent beatings; whereas, women often are forced to have sex with various gang members. Those who have refused to help gangs for reported crimes are particularly vulnerable, as are those who are related to, or have collaborated with, the police. Fear of gangs has had significant impact on youth and their education. In 2016, it is reported that at least 39,000 children abandoned their education and refused to attend school due to the fear of gangs.

Women leaders and human rights defenders are also increasingly becoming targets in the region because of their work. The epidemic of sexual violence continues in the NTCA unabated and without consequence given an overall impunity rate of 97 percent. In Guatemala, only 3 percent of all crimes are punished, in El Salvador only 3 percent of recent court cases involving violence against women and girls have resulted in guilty verdicts, and in Honduras 95 percent of all femicides remain unsolved.

In 2019 U.S. Customs and Border Protection apprehended almost 68,000 migrants from the NTCA, over 80 percent of which were families and unaccompanied children, many seeking asylum. Women and girls face additional harm during the journey to the U.S. including rape, sexual assault and death and a growing humanitarian crisis at the U.S. border. Female migrants report sexual

violence or rape in transit in exchange for shelter, protection or money. Much of the immigration policy discussion in the United States, both by federal agencies and members of Congress, has centered on stemming the migration flow by erecting physical barriers, i.e. building a wall, on the U.S./Mexico border or negotiating bilateral agreements with sending and transit countries requiring these countries adjudicate any claims for international protection, thereby effectively preventing these forced migrants from having any access to the U.S. asylum system. These reactionary efforts do not address the causes or “push factors” that force individuals to flee the region and therefore these migrants will continue to risk serious harm or even death to escape violence and corruption. A comprehensive approach is required, and it must address the root causes of the violence, in particular sex and gender-based violence, and the corruption that enables this violence to continue with impunity.

While there have been some efforts to provide federal funding to programs that combat sex and gender-based violence and corruption, to date, U.S. foreign assistance to the NTCA has been in a scatter shot approach, and often 50 percent of the diminishing aid is held back by the Department of State due to Congressionally mandated conditions and triggers. U.S. foreign aid to the region reached a high water mark of \$750 million in 2016, dropping to a little under \$520 million for 2020. Compounding matters, the Trump administration “re-programmed” or reallocated over \$404 million in foreign aid funding that was congressionally directed to be spent by federal agencies on efforts in the NTCA in the spring of 2019 to other unrelated programs in other parts of the world. These actions severely impacted important programs to address the root causes of violence, because there were no longer federal funds supporting these programs. The funding to address SGBV is even smaller. Only one percent of U.S. foreign aid budget to El Salvador went to address violence, an astonishingly low amount of funding for a country that has the highest rate of femicides in Latin America and the third highest rate of femicides in the world. The combination of conditions, cuts, withholding and re-programming of U.S. funding has hindered impactful programming and meaningful evaluation of U.S. funding to address root causes of the child migration crisis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Pulte Institute for Global Development at the University of Notre Dame has conducted several evaluations of programs that address the root causes of migration in NTCA. The Institute's work has examined key protective factors for violence involvement, ways to reduce recidivism, perceptions of security, and migration intentions. As evidence of the need for continued funding in NTCA, we have found that: the homicide rate has fallen faster and perception of security has risen faster in areas with programs supported by U.S. foreign assistance than at the country level. As violence diminishes and perception of security improves, migration intentions decrease.

Yet there is an opportunity for significant and sustained U.S. foreign assistance in a multi-year effort to prevent and address SGBV in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador by supporting successful programs and policies. In 2019, a number of bills introduced in the U.S. Congress enjoyed bi-partisan support including root causes legislation that was sponsored by the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and passed the U.S. House of Representatives. In the House and Senate bi-partisan legislation was introduced to address SGBV in the Northern Triangle by providing, over three years, \$30,000,000 in the Senate and \$60,000,000 in the House for the U.S. State Department to enter into bilateral agreements with Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras to protect women and girls from violence and strengthen criminal justice systems and family courts. Bi-partisan support for root causes legislation is an exception to the sharp partisan divide on immigration legislation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cory Smith is the Former Vice President of Policy, Advocacy, and Communications for Kids in Need of Defense. Smith began his work on a report on sex-and-gender-based violence (SGBV), affecting women and girls and forced migration from the Northern Triangle countries of Central America. This project will present the successes and challenges associated with providing U.S. foreign assistance to prevent SGBV in these areas. The report will present clear policy recommendations regarding more effective U.S. funding in the region.

Corruption, Impunity, and Violence Against Women and Girls

According to the U. S. Department of State, systemic and endemic corruption in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras is one of the most significant challenges these countries face. Corruption undermines rule of law and trust in public institutions, disrupts economic development and poverty reduction and facilitates a culture of lawlessness and lack of accountability. Corruption leads to impunity and organized crime and fuels the pervasive sexual violence in the Northern Triangle region of Central America. International sponsored anti-corruption initiatives, like the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), have had significant success in combatting corruption by networks of corrupt officials. Given that success, however, the mandates of these initiatives have been ended by officials to protect themselves and can serve as models for future efforts to combat sex and gender-based violence in the region.

The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)

Guatemala made progress fighting corruption with the establishment of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) in 2007. The CICIG was established by the United Nations in cooperation with the Guatemalan Attorney General. Its mission was to combat organized crime, root out corruption and strengthen the rule of law. Proponents have cited success in the Commission's dismantling of organized crime networks, clandestine security networks and prosecuting of previously untouchable, high-level officials and elites like the former President and Vice President as well as relatives of President Morales. The Commission dismantled 70 criminal networks resulting in the prosecution of 670 individuals including 400 sentences, the seizure of tens of millions of dollars to date, disrupting 70 criminal networks and requests to lift immunity for around 100 government officials.

The CICIG was shuttered in September 2019 and its mandate was not renewed in 2020, a victim of its success fighting corruption, impunity and graft. President Morales, aided by the national legislature, led efforts to dismantle the Commission after CICIG charged the President's brother

and son and began investigating Morales himself for corruption in his 2015 presidential campaign. In all, the Commission investigated three of the last four Guatemalan presidents. The Morales administration was protected from any pressure or push back by the Trump administration to renew the Commission's mandate after Guatemala moved its Israel embassy to Jerusalem and increased bilateral cooperation with the U.S. to stem the flow of migration from Guatemala and the Northern Triangle region.

The International Crisis Group argues that over a ten year period, from 2007 to 2017, the Commission, through its work, prevented 4,658 homicides and reduced the homicide rate annually by 5 percent while the homicide rate increased 1 percent annually in neighboring countries.

The Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH)

The MACCIH was established in April 2016 by the Organization of American States at the request of the Government of Honduras after the embezzlement of more than \$335 million from the Honduran Social Security Institute. At least some of the stolen funds were used to finance campaigns of the governing National Party leading to widespread protests across the country. The Mission established an anti-corruption court and an elite prosecutorial unit to combat impunity and supported criminal prosecutions by Honduran prosecutors, however, it lacked the independent prosecutorial discretion like the CICIG.

President Juan Orlando Hernandez's administration refused to renew the Mission claiming it overreached its mandate by infringing on rights and constitutional protections. Critics allege the government's termination of the mandate was due to the Mission's success combatting corruption and threatening entrenched, powerful elites including members of the current government. The Mission's mandate expired January 19, 2020. The Mission presented a number of high-level corruption cases including former President Porfirio Lobo and his wife, first lady Rosa Elena Bonilla. The Mission was responsible for the passage of two SGBV related laws by the Honduran National Congress in 2017: 1) the Police Career Law incorporating the concept of community policing, a gender perspective and the civilian nature of police duties; and 2) a law on the protection of human rights, defenders, journalists, social communicators and justice officials. It is believed that the Mission was a victim of its own success in fighting corruption and impunity.

The Honduran political elite were emboldened by the success of President Morales terminating the CICIG and the lack of international opposition.

The International Commission Against Impunity in El Salvador (CICES)

Anti-corruption and anti-impunity entities are ending in Guatemala and Honduras while a new commission is beginning in El Salvador as part of efforts by President Nayib Bukele to fulfill election promises to battle corruption. President Bukele, elected in June, established the International Commission Against Impunity in El Salvador (CICES) by Presidential Decree in September 2019. Following the decree, the Government of El Salvador and the OAS signed an agreement to establish the CICES “to support, strengthen and actively collaborate with the institutions of the Republic of El Salvador charged with preventing, investigating and punishing acts of corruption and other related crimes, including crimes related to public finances, illicit enrichment, money laundering, and national and transnational organized crime, in non-limiting terms.” Bukele wants to emulate the UN CICIG model of collaboration but it is unclear what role the UN will play. Regardless of the structure, it is critical that the commission be separated from the executive branch to ensure independence, provide a check on executive power and include an elite team of highly-vetted public prosecutors. The formation of the CICES also presents a unique opportunity to establish prevention of SGBV as part of its mission. The Commission could include a specific focus on combatting impunity as it relates to the sexual violence and femicides against women and girls.

IMPUNITY

One of the other significant challenges in combating SGBV in the NTCA is that high levels of violence occur with widespread impunity. Rampant unchecked criminal activities have created a “pervasive culture of fear and violence.” In the Northern Triangle region, SGBV crimes have impunity rates of 97 percent. Indeed, as more women in the Northern Triangle become political leaders and engage in human rights defense there is more targeting of these women with violence because of this work.

In addition to the violence in their home countries, many migrants are subject to exploitation and sexual violence as they make their journey to the United States. According to a report by Doctors without Borders, “[a] significant number of male and female migrants in the surveys mentioned the

occurrence of sexual violence, rape, and sex in exchange for shelter, protection, or money. Out of the 429 migrants and refugees that answered questions related to sexual and gender-based violence, 31.4 percent of women and 17.2 percent of men said they had been sexually abused during their transit through Mexico. Women often initiate birth control prior to their migration knowing the high risk of rape and unwanted pregnancy.”

Out of 1,817 refugees and migrants treated by Doctors without Borders for mental health issues over the last two years, 92.2 percent survived a violent event in their country of origin or on their journey seeking safety that threatened their mental health and well-being.

Guatemala

In Guatemala, corruption in the various government branches operates with impunity and has stymied efforts to shut down illegal operations, including drug trafficking and other criminal enterprises. In Guatemala, only 3 percent of all crimes are punished. UN Women estimate that while rates of impunity for crimes against women have declined, the impunity rate for femicides is 98 percent and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), in a June 2018 report, documented an impunity rate of 97.05 percent for crimes involving violence against women. In addition to generalized violence and lack of order, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence. For example, in 2017 six out of every ten disappearances were of women and girls. Moreover, the Public Prosecutor’s Office recorded 7,689 reports of sexual violence in the first nine months of 2018, including 4,576 instances of sexual assault of children under 18 years old.

Honduras

Honduras is rampant with violent crime and its murder rate is still one of the highest in the world. In 2018, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) the annual murder rate was 40 homicides per 100,000 persons. In addition, Honduras is particularly dangerous for human rights defenders. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights cited Honduras as one of the “most hostile and dangerous countries for human rights defenders” in the Americas. Weak governmental institutions have created conditions ripe for criminal networks, drug cartels, and gang violence. Gender-based violence is incredibly high with the second highest femicide rate in Latin America, 5.8 killings per 100,000

persons and the unsolved murder rate while improving still hovers at around 90 percent. There is widespread public distrust in security forces and police. A recent poll by the Autonomous University found that 80.3 percent of those interviewed believe security forces are involved in corruption. In an interview by the International Crisis Group, an asylum seeker surmised “They [the police and gangs] are the same thing. If I go to the police, in minutes I would have a gang member in front of my house.”

El Salvador

In El Salvador a 2017 study found that 67.4 percent of women and girls report having experienced gender-based violence at some point in their lifetimes, and 40 percent report having experienced sexual violence. In El Salvador reportedly only 3 percent of court cases involving violence against women resulted in guilty verdicts between 2016 and 2017. In 2018 in El Salvador a woman was murdered every 24 hours. The number of femicides in El Salvador has more than doubled between 2013 and 2017.

In August 2017, prosecutors from a newly-established specialized unit of the attorney general’s office filed charges against eight gang members for murdering three transgender people. Gang-related violence is part of a broader spectrum of violence in El Salvador that often affects women and children. Child abuse and spousal rape are major problems. Femicides have been linked to domestic disputes, gangs, and other crimes such as human trafficking; they resulted in the deaths of some 551 women in 2017.” More than 60 percent of the 4,304 cases of sexual violence recorded in 2018 involved 12 to 17-year-olds, according to a report published by the Organisation of Salvadoran Women for Peace. About 20 percent of the 560 cases of missing women last year were also among this age group. In 2017, the number of sexual violence cases was 3,290. Overall the country has witnessed a 13 percent increase in number of instances of violence against women, from 5,781 in 2017 to 6,673 last year. Salvadoran refugees and migrants reported being victims of blackmail or extortion, 56 percent had a relative who had died due to violence, and 67 percent said they never felt safe at home.”

CONCLUSION

In order to combat pervasive SGBV in the region, a coordinated international response is needed. Specifically, an international commission should include capacity building and training for prosecutors and investigators

in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador to address and prevent SGBV. Additionally, U.S. foreign assistance funding is a significant asset in combating sex and gender-based violence in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. For its full potential to be realized however, certain targeted funding needs to be appropriated by Congress. Below are a set of recommendations for an international sponsored justice commission to fight SGBV by bolstering criminal investigation and prosecution resources and detailed recommendations for targeted U.S. funding and legislation to address SGBV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) The Commission Against Sex and Gender-Based Violence (CASGBV)

Political will, targeted policies and dedicated resources in the Northern Triangle region have led to significant reductions in homicides in general and this success portends real potential for significantly reducing femicides and SGBV. For example, El Salvador’s homicide rate fell by 60 percent over three years in the 50 most violent areas due to effective programming. Research has also concluded that the CICIG reduced homicides 5 percent annually in Guatemala and homicide rates declined by 32 percent in Honduras from 2015 to 2018 due to U.S.-based foreign assistance. The potential to realize significant gains in reducing violence against women and girls through U.S. foreign assistance is even more promising in context of the U.S. providing only \$600,000 or less than 1 percent of foreign assistance to El Salvador in 2018 to combat violence.

The demise of the anti-corruption and anti-impunity entities in Guatemala and Honduras and the recent election of President Bukele in El Salvador, along with Bukele’s willingness to stand up a new anti-corruption mission present a unique opportunity to establish a new internationally sponsored justice initiative that would combat sex and gender-based violence in the Northern Triangle region.

The U.S., the EU and the UN working with the governments and civil society in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador could collaborate collectively to sponsor a new initiative with clear mandates to combat pervasive SGBV in the NTCA. Specifically, the Commission Against Sex and Gender-Based Violence (CASGBV) (a new, international-backed justice initiative) in partnership with the governments of the affected countries in the

region, and international support from the U.S., the EU, the United Nations and the Organization of American States must provide significant resources and support to target the impunity gap around sexual and gender-based violence. So while policies of prevention are important, it is crucial that perpetrators of this violence are held accountable through national criminal justice systems. This Commission would provide a holistic approach to addressing SGBV and impunity throughout the region. The Commission would address and prevent pervasive SGBV against women and girls, a significant push factor in forced migration from the region. Also by focusing on SGBV it would avoid the political controversies that engulfed the CICIG and MACCIH.

Operationally, the Commission would be given a five-year mandate subject to renewal. It would be structured to ensure that it is constitutional in each country while maintaining independence from the executive branch. Its core mission would be to support national prosecutors and existing national tribunals and courts targeting femicides and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. The CASGBV would not seek to pass new laws addressing SGBV in the national legislature, propose constitutional reforms or regulatory change, but instead focus on providing funding, capacity and resources to enforce existing laws, prosecute the perpetrators and provide survivor aftercare. The Commission would assist each country in establishing SGBV courts or supporting existing specialized courts. Assistance would be provided to victims of SGBV for cases that were referred to shelters by these Courts. The Commission would include highly-vetted prosecutors to focus on investigating, prosecuting and convicting perpetrators of SGBV violence and establish parallel state and local police SGBV units. Other services would include gathering and analyzing forensic evidence like DNA, the provision of legal representation and providing protective orders. Accountability for perpetrators would include both punishment and rehabilitation to address the patriarchal and machismo culture in the NTCA. The U.S. would provide \$150 million in foreign assistance to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras to establish the new Commission with additional funding designated to each nation's Attorney General conditioned on cooperation and support of the CASGBV. The Commission would seek a 10 percent annual reduction in SGBV beginning by year three of its first mandate.

2) Targeted U.S. Funding to Combat Sex and Gender-Based Violence and Corruption

In addition to international backed justice initiatives to combat corruption, the U.S. government must enact legislation to address root causes of SGBV and provide federal funding as foreign assistance to the NTCA to address SGBV and combat corruption. Such legislation would build upon two current bills that have been introduced in this legislative session, the "US-Northern Triangle Enhanced Engagement Act of 2019" (HR 2615) and "Central American Women and Girls Protection Act of 2019" (HR 2836/S1781) and provide more robust funding to address root causes.

President Trump in the President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 22 and the U.S. Congress in the Fiscal Year 22 State, Foreign, Operations spending bill should provide \$1 billion to civil society and NGOs to the U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America to address the root causes of forced migration from the NTCA. Of the \$1 billion, \$225 million should be appropriated to address and prevent sex and gender-based violence including targeting SGBV by gangs and human traffickers and combatting impunity and corruption.

Of the \$225 million to address the root causes of SGBV Congress should provide \$60 million each to El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala for a total of \$180 million to create the CASGBV that would combat sex and gender-based violence in the NTCA. Plus \$15 million each for the Attorney Generals of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador to prevent and combat SGBV should be conditioned on cooperation with the Commission Against Sex and Gender-Based Violence (CASGBV).

Congress must pass at least a five-year authorization that can be reauthorized with funding for each of the countries in the Northern Triangle region that would address SGBV and would combat drug cartels, criminal gangs, human traffickers and address impunity and corruption—key drivers of SGBV violence in the region. In addition to addressing the root causes of the current migration crisis this bill would authorize the CASGBV and recommended funding for the Commission and the Attorneys Generals of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Congress should condition anti-corruption foreign aid on the restoration of the CICIG in Guatemala, the restoration of the MACCIH in Honduras and the establishment of an anti-corruption entity (CICES) in El Salvador. Upon restoration of these anti-corruption entities

the U.S. will provide \$100 million each to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to support the anti-corruption initiatives. None of the congressional requirements on U.S. foreign assistance requiring reprogramming in the spending packages to the NTCA shall apply to funding to: 1) programs to combat sex and gender-based violence; 2) the Commission Against Sex and Gender-Based Violence; 3) restoration of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala; 4) restoration of the Mission

to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras; and 5) establishment of the International Commission Against Impunity in El Salvador (CICES).

Overall, the pervasive sex and gender-based violence in the Northern Triangle region can be reduced significantly if there is regional cooperation and foreign assistance that addresses the root causes of the violence and combats corruption and impunity. These recommendations are concrete steps towards this approach.

¹ Cristina Eguizábal et al., *Crime and Violence in Central America's Northern Triangle*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Latin America Program (2015) p. 2.

² "Femicide is a term used to describe the killing of females by males because they are females (Russell 1992: xiv)" and "since the 1990s, the term has been used in Latin America as a theoretical and political category to describe and analyze the killing of women due to gender discrimination." Thiago Pierobom de Avila, *The Criminalisation of Femicide*, in *Intimate Partner Violence, Risk and Security: Securing Women's Lives in a Global World* (eds. Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Sandra Walkate and Jude McCulloch (Routledge 2018).

³ Laura Schroeder, *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Migration in Central America*, 17 *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 10 & 11 (June 22, 2017).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Juan Forero, *Women in Latin America are Being Murdered at Record Rates*, *Wall Street Journal* (Dec. 19, 2018).

⁶ Leda Lozier, *Mapping Gender Violence Narratives in the Northern Triangle of Central America*, in *Intimate Partner Violence, Risk and Security: Securing Women's Lives in a Global World* (eds. Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Sandra Walkate and Jude McCulloch (Routledge 2018) (discussing various cases where femicides were not investigated or the victims were blamed for their murders); HIGH COMM'R FOR REFUGEES, CHILDREN ON THE RUN: UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN LEAVING CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO AND THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION 9 (2014) [hereinafter *Children on the Run*], http://www.unhcrwashington.org/sites/default/files/1_UAC_Children%20on%20the%20Run_Full%20Report.pdf.

⁶ Peter J. Meyer, U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America: Policy Issues for Congress, CRS Report R44812 (Nov. 12, 2019), available at, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20191112_R44812_41d987addf0d4f3f2bad927a7daf155c14fb3c7e.pdf.

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⁸ Jessica Gramajo, *La Impunidad supera el 97% en Guatemala*, *Prensa Libre* (April 3, 2017), available at, <https://www.prensalibre.com/guatemala/politica/la-impunidad-supera-el-97-en-guatemala/>.

⁹ Louise Donovan and Christina Asquith, "El Salvador Kills Women as the U.S. Shrugs," (March 7, 2019), *Foreign Policy*, available at, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/07/el-salvador-kills-women-as-the-us-shrugs/>

¹⁰ IACHR (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights). 2011. *Annual Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2010*. Washington, DC: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/docs/annual/2011/TOC.asp>.

¹¹ Peter J. Meyer, U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America: Policy Issues for Congress, CRS Report R44812 (Nov. 12, 2019), available at, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20191112_R44812_41d987addf0d4f3f2bad927a7daf155c14fb3c7e.pdf.

¹² <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/research/invisible-war-central-americas-forgotten-humanitarian-crisis>

¹³ For example, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141) stipulated that 25% of the "assistance for the central governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras" could not be allowed to be obligated until the Secretary of State certified that each government was (1) informing its citizens of the dangers of the journey to the southwest border of the United States; (2) combating human smuggling and trafficking; (3) improving border security, including preventing illegal migration, human smuggling and trafficking, and trafficking of illicit drugs and other contraband; and 4) cooperating with U.S. government agencies and other governments in the region to facilitate the return, repatriation, and reintegration of illegal migrants arriving at the southwest border of the United States who do not qualify for asylum, consistent with international law. Peter J. Meyer, U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America: Policy Issues for Congress, CRS Report R44812 (Nov. 12, 2019) at 15. More recently in the 2020 Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of the \$520 million provided to the Northern Triangle Region to combat root causes of violence and eliminate corruption, fifty percent may not be released (i.e. obligated) to government programs in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras until after the U.S. Secretary of State has certified that these governments have met congressionally specified terms that in some cases are not contributing to sex and gender-based violence or corruption, such as requiring that these countries demonstrate improvement to their border security and a requirement that these countries provide information to the public about the dangers of making a journey to the U.S. southern border. H.R. 1865, P.L. 116-94 § 7045 (a)(2)(A) (Dec. 20, 2019).

¹⁴ Further Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020, H.R. 1865, P.L. 116-94 § 7045 (Dec. 20, 2019).

¹⁵ Peter J. Meyer, U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America: Policy Issues for Congress, CRS Report R44812 (Nov. 12, 2019) at 12, available at, https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20191112_R44812_41d987addf0d4f3f2bad927a7daf155c14fb3c7e.pdf; Mary Beth Sheridan and Kevin Sieff, *Trump Plans to Cut Aid to 3 Central America Countries in Fight Over U.S.-bound Migrants*, *Wash. Post* (Mar. 30, 2019), available at, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/trump-plans-us-aid-cut-to-3-central-american-countries-as-fight-widens-over-us-bound-migrants/2019/03/30/d6814b42-52ff-11e9-bdb7-44f948cc0605_story.html.

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