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FEATURED Q&A

Will the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Be Effective?

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U.S. Secretary of State Hillary

Clinton told Caribbean leaders June 10 in Barbados that the United States is committed to the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, which was launched in May in an effort to fight growing drug and weapons trafficking and other transnational crime. Will the initiative be effective in fighting crime in the Caribbean? How significant a threat does organized crime pose to the region and to the United States? Is Washington pledging enough resources for the effort?

A

Ronald Sanders, business consultant and former Caribbean ambassador:

"Organized crime in the Caribbean is a far greater threat to democracy, the integrity of political institutions and the outcome of general elections in Caribbean countries than it is to the United States. The links between drug traffickers and political figures in some Caribbean countries are a matter of concern for governance in the region. Unfortunately, the CBSI is focused on U.S. concern about the flow of drugs through the Caribbean, and while this is a legitimate U.S. worry, the initiative does not sufficiently address the Caribbean's problems, which are increasing unemployment and poverty. These two conditions render the Caribbean vulnerable to the monies available from drug trafficking. The focus of the CBSI is on strengthening security forces mostly for drug interdiction. This will help to stem the flow of drug trafficking, but it will not

address the fundamental problems of economic underdevelopment nor will it end drug trafficking. Forty-five million dollars has been identified this year for the Caribbean. It is a small sum for 15 countries spread over the wide Caribbean sea, and it does not deal with the issues of the deportation of criminals or of illegal weapons from the United States. At the root of all this are two factors: the demand for illegal narcotics within the United States, which is still not receiving adequate U.S. government attention, and the failure of the U.S. government to agree with the Caribbean on a program of assistance that tackles poverty and unemployment, reverses the policy of deporting criminals and helps to build institutions of democracy and accountability in the political life of the region."