



# U.S. Programs and Engagement Promote a Prosperous, Secure, and Well-Governed Central America

*“The United States views the security and prosperity of Central America as key to regional stability and to the security of the United States. We affirm our strong relationship with Central America and the region...”*

- White House Statement on the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America, June 2017

Central America is at a pivotal point in its history. Compared to the 1980s, the region is relatively free from armed conflict, politically stable, and a strong economic partner, importing over \$27 billion in U.S. goods in 2017. However, the region suffers from high rates of violence and crime with weak judicial systems to prosecute criminals and protect those affected. Roughly half of Central America’s people live in poverty.

**The U.S. Strategy for Central America (Strategy)** is a bipartisan, multi-year U.S. government plan promoting institutional reforms and addressing developmental challenges. The Strategy aims to protect American citizens by addressing the security, governance, and economic drivers of illegal immigration and illicit trafficking, while increasing opportunities for U.S. and other businesses.

**The United States is providing more than \$2.6 billion in foreign assistance** to Central American countries in fiscal years 2015-2018. But we are not doing this alone. The Strategy complements the region’s Alliance for Prosperity (A4P) initiative. In 2016-2017, the governments of **El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras (Northern Triangle)** committed **\$5.4 billion of their own funds** to support the A4P initiative to develop opportunities for their people, improve public safety, enhance access to the legal system, and strengthen institutions. Outside the Northern Triangle, the Strategy

supports **Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama** to address similar challenges.

To accomplish these goals, our approach addresses three overarching lines of action.

## Promoting Prosperity

U.S. assistance promotes economic growth, energy security, poverty reduction, workforce development, education and training, and greater regional integration that will increase jobs for Central Americans and improve opportunities for U.S. and other businesses.

- » U.S. assistance improved cargo management, contributing to a reduction in the average time to export goods from Guatemala by 40 percent and reduced transport and logistics costs by 30 percent from early 2016 to 2017.
- » In the Northern Triangle, U.S. programs contributed to \$92.2 million in exports and domestic sales and the creation of over 29,000 jobs in Central America in 2017.
- » U.S. support helped establish the Mexico and Central America Interconnection Commission in May 2016 to advance power market integration, which will lead to lower power costs for the region, spurring increased economic activity.



## Enhancing Security

U.S. programs combat transnational criminal organizations, stem drug trafficking, enhance citizen security, reduce gang violence, strengthen borders, and deter human smuggling and trafficking by focusing on professionalizing police and military institutions, and improving their ability to address these issues on their own.

- » U.S. support increases regional governments' capacity to stop illegal drugs from reaching the United States. With U.S. support, Costa Rica seized a record 30 metric tons (MT) of cocaine in 2017, up from 24.4 MT in 2016. With U.S. support, Panama seized a record 77 MT of cocaine in 2017, up from 56 MT in 2016.
- » As a result of government actions and U.S. support, homicides per 100,000 people in El Salvador dropped from 81 in 2016 to 60 in 2017 and in Honduras from 59 in 2016 to 46 in 2017.
- » In September 2017, U.S. government support for Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador contributed to a coordinated operation against gang members throughout the region. The operation resulted in the arrest of more than 3,800 individuals in the United States and Northern Triangle, primarily members of MS-13 and Barrio 18 gangs.

## Improving Governance

U.S. assistance supports anti-corruption efforts that improve the ease of doing business, strengthen the rule of law, promote strong institutions and government accountability, reduce impunity, and improve fiscal management by promoting efficient tax collection, civil society engagement, and institutional reform.

- » U.S. support for the anti-corruption efforts of the Northern Triangle Attorneys General, the UN International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), and the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH) builds local populations' confidence in their governments' ability to fight for them.
- » With U.S. support, MACCIH has strengthened and collaborated with the judiciary and Public Ministry to prevent, investigate, and punish acts of corruption. MACCIH and the Public Ministry established an anti-corruption unit with more than 45 analysts, investigators, and prosecutors. The unit, with MACCIH advisors, has pursued 10 cases since its launch in November 2017.
- » U.S. programming supports financial management in the Northern Triangle to improve tax collection and fiscal transparency, including improving the effectiveness of public spending and professionalizing the civil service. U.S. support in Guatemala, for example, assisted in the reduction of required steps from 28 to five in order to submit a customs and tax complaint to prompt an investigation.

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*“A secure and prosperous Central America contributes to a safer, more prosperous United States and Western Hemisphere. The United States recognizes the region as an important area in our foreign policy agenda...”*

Remarks at the Conference for Prosperity and Security in Central America, June 2017

