



**Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi**  
**Statement and Questions as Prepared for Delivery**  
**Oversight Hearing on the U.S. Department of Justice**  
**U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder**  
**House Committee on the Judiciary**  
*June 7, 2012*

Welcome back, Attorney General. I realize it has been a long hearing and, as you say, the eighth occasion on which you appear before us. As I stated before, the first thing I will say is that I have to commend your demeanor, your patience, your decorum in appearing before us and subjecting yourself sometimes to a process that I do not believe is fair. If anything, this Committee should always try to afford due process. And I just have to say that sometimes here you are interrupted in a way that is not deserving to the position you are holding. So I for one, I thank you.

Now, as you expected, I want to complain a little bit. The familiar subject of my questioning is the federal government's response to drug-related violence in Puerto Rico and the neighboring U.S. Virgin Islands. The murder rate in Puerto Rico and the USVI is nearly six times the national average and nearly three times higher than any state. Most of these homicides are linked to the cross-border trade in illegal drugs—which is primarily, although not exclusively, a federal responsibility to combat.

During your previous testimony, you stated that drug-related violence in our nation's Caribbean territories was a national security issue we had to confront. You also stated that Puerto Ricans are American citizens who deserve the protection of their government.

I know you and your team have been working to address this problem. You and the heads of DOJ's component agencies have always made yourselves available to talk to me, despite your busy schedules. And there have been some major success stories in recent months, including a joint federal-state operation yesterday that resulted in the arrests of dozens of airline workers in Puerto Rico who were smuggling drugs on flights to the mainland U.S. Your men and women in Puerto Rico are doing terrific and courageous work. I hope you know that I recognize and respect that.

But it also clear to me, and to any reasonable observer, that far more needs to be done. The CJS Appropriations bill this year says so explicitly. It states:

“The Committee is aware that efforts by Federal law enforcement to reduce drug trafficking and associated violence in the Southwest border region have affected trafficking routes and crime rates in the Caribbean. The Committee expects the Attorney General to address these trends by allocating necessary resources to areas substantially affected by drug-related violence, and reporting such actions to the Committee.”

I have two questions.

- First, I wrote to the President earlier this week, asking him to direct ONDCP to prepare and publish a Caribbean Border Counternarcotics Strategy, which would outline a federal government-wide plan of action to address drug trafficking and related violence in Puerto Rico and the USVI. ONDCP already does this for the Southwest Border and the Northern border. Do you see any reason why ONDCP should not prepare and publish such a document?
- Second, can you explain the concrete steps that DOJ has taken to strengthen the agency's presence in Puerto Rico? Wouldn't it be appropriate for DOJ to increase the resources it devotes to the Island, even if it is only a temporary surge, just as the federal government did when there was a spike in violence on the U.S. side of the Southwest border? I know we are living in a environment of constrained resources, but this is a matter of prioritizing the limited resources you do have and making sure they are being allocated to the areas where the need is the most pressing. There has been a moderate increase in the number of DEA agents assigned to Puerto Rico. However, I understand that the number of FBI and ATF personnel assigned to Puerto Rico has remained stagnant or even gone down in the last few years. It just doesn't seem to me that the federal government is acting with the sense of urgency that the situation demands. So, please, tell me why I should feel better about this than I do.