



Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi
Statement and Questions to FBI Director Robert Robert S. Mueller, III
House Judiciary Committee
Oversight Hearing on the Federal Bureau of Investigation
May 9, 2012

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Director Mueller, like my colleagues, I want to thank you for your service to this country. You have one of the most challenging jobs in the government, and you perform it with great skill. So, thank you.

Director: I want to ask you about drug-related violence in the U.S. jurisdictions of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands—and to express my respectful but strong belief that the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies need to do far more to address this problem.

Let me briefly summarize the situation

While violent crime has decreased nationally, violent crime in Puerto Rico and the USVI has been on the rise for over a decade. The homicide rate in each territory is about six times the national average and almost three times higher than any state. Puerto Rico has nearly the same

number of murders each year that Texas does, even though Texas is home to 25 million people and Puerto Rico is home to fewer than four million U.S. citizens.

According to estimates, three-quarters of the homicides in Puerto Rico are linked to the international drug trade. As the U.S. government has increased resources along the Southwest Border, drug trafficking organizations have adapted, turning back to well-established routes in the Caribbean to get their product to market.

This is a problem of national scope. About three-quarters of the cocaine that enters Puerto Rico is then transported to the U.S. mainland. Because Puerto Rico is an American jurisdiction and NOT a foreign country, once drugs enter the Island, they are easily delivered to the states without having to clear customs or otherwise undergo heightened scrutiny.

In order to reduce drug-related violence in Puerto Rico, and to make the Island a less attractive transshipment point for drug trafficking organizations seeking to supply the U.S. market, Puerto Rico's governor and I have proposed that the Administration establish a Caribbean Border Initiative. Our nation has a Southwest Border strategy and a Northern Border strategy. But it has no comprehensive, cross-agency counter-drug strategy when it comes to our maritime border in the Caribbean. The consequences of this non-strategy are crystal clear: the violent deaths of tens of thousands of my constituents. I cannot escape the conclusion that if this level of violence were occurring in any of the 50 states, it would be treated as a national emergency requiring immediate federal action.

And I am not the only one who believes that the federal government has yet to dedicate the resources and personnel necessary to address this problem. The CJS Appropriations bill that the House will approve this week includes the following language: “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.”

Director Mueller: I know that we are all working in a constrained fiscal environment. This is about prioritizing limited resources and responding to problems in relation to their severity. Your agents on the ground in Puerto Rico are doing terrific work in a dangerous environment, but I don't believe there are enough of them, that they have the resources and support they need, or that FBI and other agencies within DOJ and DHS have responded to the problem of drug-related violence in Puerto Rico with anything approaching the sense of urgency that this situation demands.

I'd like to hear your views.