



**Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi**  
**Statement and Questions as Prepared for Delivery**  
**Hearing on “U.S.-Caribbean Border Security**  
**House Committee on Homeland Security**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management**  
*June 21, 2012*

Thank you.

I want to begin by thanking Chairman McCaul for convening this hearing and for so graciously allowing me to participate. I also want to thank Ranking Member Keating, whom Governor Fortuño and I met with yesterday.

I think the previous speakers have framed the issue well. Let me just say a few words before I pose some questions to our panel.

As we have heard, the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I. have murder rates that far exceed that of any state, and most of these homicides are linked to the cross-border trade in illegal drugs—which is primarily a federal responsibility to combat. In the five-year period between 2007 and 2011, the number of murders nationwide fell by over 20 percent. In that same time period, the number of homicides in Puerto Rico rose by over 55 percent.

Imagine for a moment that this spike in violence were taking place in Florida. Does anyone seriously believe that federal law enforcement agencies within DHS and DOJ would continue to conduct business as usual, rather than surging resources to the state until meaningful progress was seen? It is absolutely inconceivable.

And, yet, that is precisely what is happening in the case of Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I. I have the numbers in front of me, supplied by the agencies themselves. In the last several years, the number of ICE, CBP and Coast Guard personnel assigned to Puerto Rico has generally remained stagnant. The story at DOJ is similar. In several component agencies, there have even been staffing reductions. In the rare case where we have seen an agency—like DEA—increase its presence in Puerto Rico, that increase has been fairly small, and the total number of agents assigned to the Island still lags far behind other jurisdictions with smaller populations and lower rates of drug-related violence.

All of the statistics point to a single conclusion: while federal law enforcement officers perform courageous and often heroic work in Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I., the federal government as a whole has yet to respond to the public safety crisis in these two American territories with the sense of urgency that the situation demands. If there is someone on the panel who contests that point, I would gently ask them to show me data that supports their argument.

1. My first question is to each panelist. When your agency allocates resources and personnel among U.S. jurisdictions, do you view Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I. in the exact same way that you view the states? Put differently, can you state for the record whether you

preference U.S. states over U.S. territories in any way, or whether you treat them absolutely the same?

2. In the *Homeland Security Appropriations Act* recently approved by the House for the coming fiscal year, the Committee said that public safety issues in the U.S. territories in the Caribbean “must be a priority” and that it expects the Secretary to “allocate the resources, assets, and personnel to these jurisdictions in a manner and to a degree consistent with that principle.” Can you tell me what concrete steps, if any, the Department intends to take in response to this language? If you cannot provide details in this forum, can you at least assure me that something meaningful will be done, beyond what is already being done?

3. Admiral Lee: between January 2009 and August 2011, Coast Guard Sector San Juan interdicted far more drugs than Sector Miami, which interdicted no cocaine, and Sector Key West, which interdicted no drugs of any type. Yet the Coast Guard devoted significantly more maritime surveillance hours to Miami and Key West than to Puerto Rico. This is not surprising when one considers that the Coast Guard has only four helicopters in Puerto Rico—which is less than Miami—and has no fixed-wing surveillance aircraft stationed on the Island. Rather, District 7 has multiple C-130s stationed in Clearwater, Florida and five HC-144s stationed in Miami. Late last year, the District 7 Commander was quoted in an official Coast Guard publication as saying that Miami is going to be provided two additional HC-144s, for a total of seven, and that he “hopes to put some in Puerto Rico, but only after they have been fielded to other Coast Guard districts.”

In addition, when it comes to boats, the Coast Guard is replacing its Island-Class cutters with better, Sentinel-Class cutters. According to the District Commander, the first six new cutters are scheduled to be assigned to Miami, the next six to Key West, and the Coast Guard will “eventually assign another six to Puerto Rico, pending congressional approval and funding.”

- Admiral, based on all of this, is it your testimony that Puerto Rico is being adequately resourced by the Coast Guard, both as an absolute matter and relative to other sectors within District 7?

4. This is a question for the two CBP witnesses. The total number of CBP personnel assigned to Puerto Rico has decreased between 2009 and 2012, with reductions seen in both the Office of Field Operations (OFO) and the Office of Air and Marine (OAM). Some of the personnel losses in OAM are the result of the closure of the San Juan marine unit in 2011. I also understand that the number of surveillance hours flown by the agency’s Dash-8 aircraft in Puerto Rico has gone down by over 20 percent between 2009 and 2011. In this year’s *Homeland Security Appropriations Act*, I included an amendment that will give CBP the explicit authority to draw on congressional appropriations to fund operations on the Island that the agency has been funding exclusively through the Puerto Rico Trust Fund. When that amendment becomes law, does CBP have plans to re-open its San Juan boat unit and to otherwise increase the resources it dedicates to Puerto Rico? If not, why not?

5. Assistant Director Ayala: According to my numbers, while ICE HSI is going great work in Puerto Rico, the division has over 10 percent of its authorized agent spots unfulfilled.

What is being done to fill those vacancies? Also, there are nearly twice as many HSI agents assigned to Miami, population 400,000, as to Puerto Rico, population 3.7 million. Can you explain that discrepancy to me?

Thank you.