

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 3, 2012

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

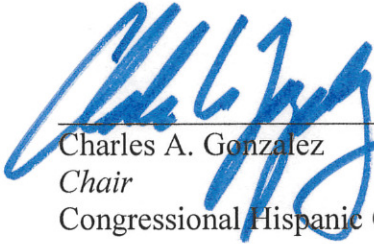
On behalf of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, we write to express our deep concern about increased drug trafficking through Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, the high level of violence that these two American jurisdictions have been experiencing as a direct result of this trafficking, and what we believe to be an insufficient response by the federal government to these problems. At a recent House Judiciary Committee hearing, Attorney General Holder stated, in response to questioning from our colleague from Puerto Rico, Congressman Pierluisi, that drug-related violence in our country's Caribbean territories "is a national security issue that we have to confront." We agree, and therefore respectfully request that your Administration establish a "Caribbean Border Initiative"—a determined, coordinated, inter-agency effort to increase the number of federal law enforcement personnel and resources assigned to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in order to improve public safety and protect American lives.

Because of their geographic location, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands serve as key U.S. entry and transshipment points for drugs produced in South America. The federal government's laudable efforts to prevent traffickers from transporting drugs across our nation's southwest border is creating a balloon effect, whereby traffickers are increasingly turning to the Caribbean region as a route for shipping drugs into the United States. For example, cocaine seizures in Puerto Rico increased by 30% from 2009 to 2010. Approximately 70-80% of the cocaine that enters Puerto Rico is subsequently transported to the U.S. mainland, where it devastates communities. Moreover, as a result of increased drug trafficking in the Caribbean, the number of murders committed in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands has remained unacceptably high, even though the U.S. homicide rate has declined substantially in recent decades.

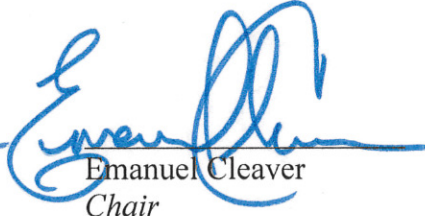
We know you share our view that, from the federal government's perspective, the death of an American citizen in Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands is of no less importance than the death of an American citizen anywhere else in the country. Yet, it seems clear to us that, for too long, the focus of the federal government has been on preventing illegal drugs from reaching the U.S. mainland from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, not on preventing drugs from entering these two American jurisdictions in the first place. This approach must change.

We urge you to take concrete action now to establish a Caribbean Border Initiative and to substantially increase the level of personnel and other resources devoted to fighting drug-related violence in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

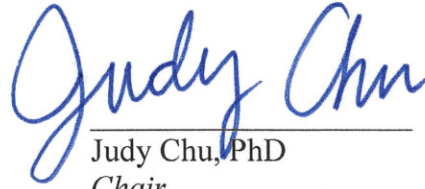
Sincerely,



Charles A. Gonzalez
Chair
Congressional Hispanic Caucus



Emanuel Cleaver
Chair
Congressional Black Caucus



Judy Chu, PhD
Chair
Congressional Asian
Pacific American Caucus