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Caribbean Basin Security Initiative

The United States developed the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), a regional U.S. foreign assistance program, in 2009 through a process of dialogue with Caribbean countries. The initiative seeks to reduce illicit trafficking in the region, advance public safety and security, and promote social justice. Because of their geographic location, many Caribbean nations are vulnerable to being used as transit countries for illicit drugs from South America destined for the U.S. and European markets. Strengthened U.S. counternarcotics cooperation with Mexico and Central America—through the Mérida Initiative and the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI)—led U.S. policymakers to anticipate a potential increase in narcotics trafficking through the Caribbean. Many Caribbean countries have also suffered high rates of violent crime, including murder, often associated with drug trafficking activities.

President Obama announced the initiative at the fifth Summit of the Americas in April 2009. U.S. and Caribbean representatives followed up with several meetings and in 2010 held an inaugural Caribbean-U.S. Security Cooperation Dialogue, which approved a declaration of principles, a framework for engagement, and a broad action plan. Seven additional Caribbean-U.S. security cooperation dialogues have been held, with the most recent in May 2019 in Washington, DC.

In June 2017, the State Department released a U.S. strategy for engagement in the Caribbean (required by P.L. 114-291, the United States-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act of 2016). Among the priorities for engagement is security, with the objectives of strengthening mutual national security and advancing the citizens' safety through programs to dismantle criminal and terrorist organizations, curb the trafficking of illicit goods and people, strengthen the rule of law, improve citizen security, and counter vulnerability to terrorist threats—all efforts that have been central to the CBSI.

Congress has supported funding for the CBSI. From FY2010 through FY2020, Congress appropriated almost \$677 million for the CBSI benefiting 13 Caribbean countries—Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago (see **Table 1** and **Figure 1**). For each of FY2018 and FY2019, the Trump Administration requested \$36.2 million, about a 37% decrease from FY2017, but Congress rejected those cuts. For FY2018, Congress appropriated \$57.7 million in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141; H.R. 1625, Explanatory Statement, Division K), the same as in FY2017. For FY2019, Congress appropriated \$58 million for the CBSI in the Consolidated Appropriations

Act, 2019 (P.L. 116-6, H.J.Res. 31, conference report H.Rept. 116-9).

For FY2020, the Trump Administration requested \$40.2 million for the CBSI, about a 30% drop from that appropriated in FY2019. Ultimately, Congress appropriated not less than \$60 million for the CBSI for FY2020 (slightly more than that provided in FY2019) in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94, H.R. 1865, Explanatory Statement, Division G).

Coordinated by the State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere affairs and implemented largely by the State Department, USAID, and the Department of Defense, the CBSI has targeted U.S. assistance in five areas:

- **Maritime and Aerial Security Cooperation**, including assistance to strengthen Caribbean maritime and aerial operations capability, improve radar coverage, and sustain those capabilities;
- **Law Enforcement Capacity Building**, including assistance to improve law enforcement through police professionalization, anti-corruption training, and community-based policing;
- **Border/Port Security and Firearms Interdiction**, including support to improve capacity to intercept smuggled narcotics, weapons, bulk cash, and other contraband at airports and seaports;
- **Justice Sector Reform**, including support to increase the efficacy of prosecutors and criminal courts and reform and strengthen juvenile justice systems; and
- **Crime Prevention and At-Risk Youth**, including assistance to populations vulnerable to being victims of crime or at risk of recruitment into criminal organizations.

Although the State Department has not published CBSI funding statistics by country, a February 2019 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report shows that from FY2010 through FY2018, the Dominican Republic received almost 23% of CBSI funding, Jamaica just over 19%, 24% went to seven Eastern Caribbean countries, and 21% was for region-wide activities. The GAO report also recommended that (1) the State Department, along with USAID and other stakeholders, should create an initiative-wide planning and reporting mechanism for the CBSI that includes the ability to monitor, evaluate and report the results; and (2) the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs should develop and implement a data management system for centrally collecting program monitoring data for its CBSI activities.

Figure I. Caribbean Countries Receiving CBSI Assistance

Source: Congressional Research Service.

Notes: Belize receives assistance under CARSI. Haiti receives security-related U.S. bilateral assistance.

Table I. CBSI Funding By Foreign Aid Account, FY2010-FY2019 (U.S. \$millions)

Fiscal Year	ESF	DA	INCLE	NADR	FMF	Total
FY2010	14.000	6.000	27.300	—	14.500	61.800
FY2011	17.000	—	37.500	6.400	16.500	77.400
FY2012	17.000	—	30.000	2.000	15.000	64.000
FY2013	18.802	—	30.000	2.000	9.494	60.296
FY2014	29.200	—	25.000	1.800	7.500	63.500
FY2015	27.000	—	25.000	1.500	5.000	58.500
FY2016	25.000	—	25.221	—	7.500	57.721
FY2017	25.000	—	25.200	—	7.500	57.700
FY2018 (est.)	25.000	—	25.200	—	7.500	57.700
FY2019 (est.)	25.250	—	25.250	—	7.500	58.000
FY2020 (est.)	27.300	—	25.200	—	7.500	60.000
Total	250.552	6.000	300.871	13.700	105.494	676.617

Sources: U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, Annex: Regional Perspectives, Fiscal Year 2012 to FY2020; Explanatory Statement (Division K) to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, P.L. 115-141; Conference Report to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 (H.Rept. 116-9 to P.L. 116-6); Explanatory Statement (Division G) to the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94).

Notes: ESF = Economic Support Fund; DA = Development Assistance; INCLE = International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement; NADR = Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, De-mining and Related Programs; and FMF = Foreign Military Financing

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