

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 2009. U.S. and Caribbean representatives held follow-up meetings and, in 2010, an inaugural Caribbean-U.S. Security Cooperation Dialogue, which approved a declaration of principles, a framework for engagement, and a broad action plan. In October 2020, Caribbean and U.S. officials held the ninth dialogue virtually, with theme of strengthening regional coordination to address shared security challenges.

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 citizens' safety through programs to dismantle criminal and terrorist organizations, curb the trafficking of illicit goods and people, strengthen the rule of law, and counter vulnerability to terrorist threats—all efforts central to the CBSI.

Congress has supported funding for the CBSI. From FY2010 through FY2021, Congress appropriated \$751 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**).

From FY2018-FY2021, Congress did not approve Trump Administration budget requests that would have cut CBSI funding significantly. For FY2020, the Administration requested \$40.2 million for the CBSI, but Congress appropriated not less than \$60 million for FY2020 in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94, H.R. 1865, Explanatory Statement, Division G). For

FY2021, the Administration requested \$32 million for the CBSI, an cut of almost 47% from that appropriated in FY2020; Congress appropriated not less than \$74.8 million for the CBSI in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260, Explanatory Statement, Division K).

In other 116th Congress legislative action, the conference report to the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act (H.Rept. 116-617 to P.L. 116-283) states that enhancing partnerships between the United States and Caribbean nations is in the U.S. strategic interest and that the United States should pursue opportunities to strengthen engagement in the Caribbean consistent with the objections of the 2018 National Defense Strategy and the State Department's Caribbean 2020 strategy. In November 2020, the House approved H.R. 7703, the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Authorization Act, but the Senate did not consider the measure. The bill would have authorized \$74.8 million for the CBSI for each year from FY2021 through FY2025, including monitoring and reporting requirements for the CBSI.

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.

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-FY2021 (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	25.000	—	25.200	—	7.500	57.700
FY2019	25.250	—	25.250	—	7.500	58.000
FY2020 (est.)	27.300	—	25.200	—	7.500	60.000
FY2021 (est.)	32.300	—	35.000	—	7.500	74.800
Total	282.852	6.000	335.871	13.700	112.994	751.417

Sources: U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, Annex: Regional Perspectives, FY2012 to FY2021; 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); Explanatory Statement (Division K) to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260).

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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