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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 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, and, in 2010, U.S. and Caribbean representatives held an inaugural Caribbean-U.S. Security Cooperation Dialogue, which approved a declaration of principles, a framework for engagement, and a broad action plan. In May 2022, Caribbean and U.S. officials held the 10th security cooperation dialogue, with discussions focused on combatting firearms trafficking, countering illicit maritime trafficking and transnational organized crime, preventing youth crime and violence, cybersecurity and cybercrime, and human trafficking.

In 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 FY2023, Congress appropriated \$913 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 FY2021, 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).

For FY2022, the Biden Administration requested \$66 million for the CBSI, but in March 2022, Congress ultimately appropriated “not less than \$80 million” in the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2022 (P.L. 117-103; H.R.

2471), and required a spend plan for CBSI funds not later than 90 days after the bill's enactment.

For FY2023, the Administration requested \$63.5 million for the CBSI, almost 21% less than appropriated by Congress for FY2022 and 15% less than provided for FY2021. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (H.R. 2617, Division K), Congress appropriated “not less than \$82 million” for the CBSI, and the explanatory statement to the measure required a spend plan prior to the obligation of funds.

The Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Authorization Act (H.R. 4133), passed by the House in April 2022, would have authorized \$74.8 million for the CBSI for each fiscal year from FY2022 through FY2026 and would have established monitoring and reporting requirements for the program. In addition, the bill would have required the State Department, in coordination with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Inter-American Foundation, to submit a strategy to prioritize efforts to increase disaster response and resilience.

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 showed 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.

Table I. CBSI Funding By Foreign Aid Account, FY2010-FY2023 (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	27.300	—	25.200	—	7.500	60.000
FY2021	32.300	—	35.000	—	7.500	74.800
FY2022 (est.)	35.000	—	35.000	—	10.000	80.000
FY2023 (est.)	37.000	—	35.000	—	10.000	82.000
Total	354.852	6.000	405.871	13.700	132.994	913.417

Sources: U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2012 to FY2023; 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); and Explanatory Statements (Division K) to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260), Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (P.L. 117-103), and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (H.R. 2617).

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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