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Organization of American States: In Brief

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Organization of American States: In Brief

The Organization of American States (OAS) is a regional multilateral organization that comprises 34 of the 35 independent countries of the Western Hemisphere, including the United States; Nicaragua withdrew from the organization in 2023. The OAS was established in 1948 as a forum for Western Hemisphere countries to engage one another and address issues of mutual concern. Today, the organization concentrates on four broad objectives: democracy promotion, human rights protection, economic and social development, and regional security cooperation. With budget expenditures totaling \$165.2 million in 2025, the OAS carries out various activities to advance these goals, often providing policy guidance and technical assistance to member states.

The OAS has occasionally struggled to fulfill its mandate due to political and financial challenges. Since the early 2000s, increased ideological polarization among member states has made it more difficult to establish a common hemispheric agenda. In addition, member states have repeatedly assigned new responsibilities to the OAS without providing commensurate increases in funding. Consequently, the organization is sometimes unable to establish consensus on regional challenges or dedicate sufficient resources to address them effectively. OAS Secretary General Albert Ramdin, who began his five-year term in May 2025, has emphasized the importance of finding common ground among member states and strengthening the organization administratively and financially. The 56th regular session of the OAS General Assembly—the principal policymaking organ of the OAS—is scheduled to be held in Panama City, Panama, from June 22 to June 24, 2026.

The United States hosts the OAS headquarters in Washington, DC, and has been the largest financial contributor to the organization, providing an estimated \$90.3 million in FY2024. Historically, the U.S. government has sought to use the OAS to advance economic, political, and security objectives in the Western Hemisphere. The second Trump Administration is conducting a review of U.S. participation in the OAS and has suggested that the United States may withdraw from the organization unless the OAS demonstrates more concrete results in addressing hemispheric challenges. The Administration also has reviewed U.S. funding for the OAS, resulting in the termination of U.S. funding for some OAS activities and an apparent decision not to pay the United States' full assessed dues to the organization in FY2025 or FY2026. The Administration did not request funding for assessed or voluntary contributions to the OAS in FY2027.

The 119th Congress has helped shape U.S. policy toward the OAS through legislative and oversight activities. For example, the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026 (P.L. 119-75, Division F), provided funding for U.S. assessed contributions to international organizations, potentially including the OAS, and designated \$2.5 million in voluntary contributions to support OAS efforts to combat human trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean. The legislation also directed the State Department to use the voice and vote of the United States to implement various budgetary and management reforms at the OAS and to prioritize OAS activities related to democracy and human rights. In October 2025, the Senate confirmed Leandro Rizzuto, President Trump's nominee to be the U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS (PN26-41). Moving forward, Congress may examine the results of the Trump Administration's approach to the OAS and may influence U.S. engagement with the organization through the FY2027 appropriations process or other legislation.

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Introduction

The United States helped create the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1948 as a multilateral forum in which the countries of the Western Hemisphere could engage one another and address issues of mutual concern. The U.S. Senate gave its advice and consent to ratification of the OAS charter, allowing for U.S. membership in the organization.¹ Congress authorizes and appropriates funding for the OAS, and the executive branch represents and shapes U.S. policy through the State Department and the U.S. Mission to the OAS in Washington, DC.

Historically, OAS decisions often have reflected U.S. policy, as other member states have sought to maintain close relations with the dominant economic and political power in the hemisphere. This was especially true during the early Cold War period, when the United States was able to secure OAS support for many of its anti-communist policies.² OAS decisions again aligned closely with U.S. policy in the 1990s, following the end of the Cold War, due to a broad political consensus among member states in support of initiatives intended to strengthen democratic governance and liberalize markets.³ Since the early 2000s, the United States' ability to shape outcomes in the Western Hemisphere has declined as countries throughout the region have elected ideologically diverse leaders whose domestic and foreign policies have sometimes diverged from U.S. policy preferences.⁴

Congressional debate regarding the OAS has focused on how to ensure the organization fulfills its mandate to promote democracy, protect human rights, advance economic and social development, and foster security cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. Congress has designated funding to support such OAS activities and directed the State Department to advance certain reforms to the organization in annual appropriations measures. Congress also has enacted two legislative measures over the past 13 years intended to strengthen the OAS and enhance congressional participation in the organization: the OAS Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-41) and the OAS Legislative Engagement Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-343). At times, some Members of Congress have sought to withhold funding from the organization due to concerns that the OAS was failing to meet its core mission and/or engaging in actions outside its mandate.⁵

The second Trump Administration has reviewed U.S. participation in the OAS and terminated and withheld some funding for the organization. The 119th Congress may assess the current state of the OAS, the Trump Administration's policy approach, and whether and how to shape U.S. engagement with the organization.

This report briefly discusses the history and governance of the OAS, examines the organization's funding and activities, and raises potential legislative and oversight activities related to the OAS that Congress could consider.

¹ The Senate gave its advice and consent to ratification of the Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) in August 1950. The text of the charter is available at <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/charter.html>.

² George Meek, "U.S. Influence in the Organization of American States," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 3 (August 1975), pp. 311-325.

³ Carolyn M. Shaw, "Limits to Hegemonic Influence in the Organization of American States," *Latin American Politics and Society*, vol. 45, no. 3 (Autumn 2003), pp. 59-92.

⁴ Russell Crandall, "The Post-American Hemisphere: Power and Politics in an Autonomous Latin America," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 90, no. 3 (May/June 2011), pp. 83-95; and Inter-American Dialogue, *The Case for Renewed Cooperation in a Troubled Hemisphere*, April 2022, pp. 26-27.

⁵ See, for example, Josh Rogin, "House Panel Votes to Defund the OAS," *Foreign Policy*, July 20, 2011; and Letter from James Lankford, U.S. Senator, et al. to Honorable Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State, December 21, 2018.

History, Purpose, and Membership⁶

Multilateral relations among the countries of the Western Hemisphere date back to the International Conference of American States, held in Washington, DC, from October 1889 to April 1890. This conference was the first in a series of periodic meetings to establish norms and institutions to govern hemispheric relations and promote cooperation. The participating countries agreed to establish the International Union of American Republics, headquartered in Washington, DC, which was renamed the Pan American Union in 1910. In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt announced a “Good Neighbor” policy, which sought to emphasize hemispheric cooperation and trade and to distance the United States from its repeated military interventions in the region during the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁷ The policy shift paved the way for the adoption of the Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which recognized the equality of states and the principle of nonintervention in one another’s affairs.⁸ Close cooperation during World War II further strengthened hemispheric ties, which were reinforced with the adoption of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty)—a collective security pact—in 1947.⁹

In 1948, the United States and 20 other countries signed the OAS charter, which reconstituted the Pan American Union as the OAS and placed many of the hemisphere’s institutions and agreements (collectively known as the *inter-American system*) under the organization’s umbrella. According to the OAS charter, as amended, the purposes of the organization are

- To strengthen the peace and security of the continent;
- To promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of nonintervention;
- To prevent possible causes of difficulties and ensure the pacific settlement of disputes that may arise among member states;
- To provide for common action on the part of those states in the event of aggression;
- To seek the solution of political, juridical, and economic problems that may arise among them;
- To promote, by cooperative action, their economic, social, and cultural development;
- To eradicate extreme poverty, which constitutes an obstacle to the full democratic development of the peoples of the hemisphere; and
- To achieve an effective limitation of conventional weapons that will make it possible to devote the largest amount of resources to the economic and social development of member states.¹⁰

Over the decades, OAS membership gradually expanded to incorporate newly independent Caribbean countries and Canada. It now includes 34 of the 35 independent countries of the Western Hemisphere. Nicaragua, which was a founding member of the OAS, denounced the OAS

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is drawn from U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and House Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Inter-American Relations: A Collection of Documents, Legislation, Descriptions of Inter-American Organizations, and Other Material Pertaining to Inter-American Affairs*, Joint Committee Print, Prepared by the Congressional Research Service, 100th Cong., 2nd sess., December 1988, S.Prt. 100-168 (Washington: GPO, 1989); and OAS, “Our History,” http://www.oas.org/en/about/our_history.asp.

⁷ See CRS Report R42738, *Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2023*.

⁸ The Senate gave its advice and consent to ratification of the Convention on the Rights and Duties of States in June 1934. The text of the treaty is available at <https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/a-40.html>.

⁹ The Senate gave its advice and consent to ratification of the Rio Treaty in December 1947. The text of the treaty is available at <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/b-29.html>.

¹⁰ Charter of the OAS, Chapter 1, Article 2.

charter in November 2021, initiating a two-year withdrawal process that resulted in Nicaragua’s departure from the organization in November 2023.¹¹

Government participation and representation in the OAS also have varied over time. For example, Cuba has not participated in the OAS since 1962 (see **text box**, “Cuba and the Organization of American States”). In April 2017, then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro (2013-2026) denounced the OAS charter, initiating the country’s withdrawal from the organization. The then-opposition-controlled National Assembly, which OAS member states recognized as the legitimate government of Venezuela, halted the two-year withdrawal process in February 2019, however, and appointed a representative to the OAS in April 2019. That representative departed the OAS in January 2023, and Venezuela has not participated in the OAS since then. The government of Venezuelan President Delcy Rodríguez (January 2026-present) has asserted that Venezuela is no longer a member of the OAS.¹²

Cuba and the Organization of American States

Cuba was one of the founding members of the Organization of American States (OAS), and—as a signatory to the OAS charter—it remains a member. It has not participated in the organization since 1962, however, due to a decision at the Eighth Meeting of Consultation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to suspend Cuba for its adherence to Marxism-Leninism and alignment with the communist bloc. The resolution to exclude Cuba was controversial when it was adopted, and the reintegration of Cuba into the inter-American system has remained a frequent source of contention among the countries of the hemisphere ever since.

At the 2009 OAS General Assembly, member states adopted a measure to repeal the 1962 resolution that suspended Cuba from participation in the OAS. The measure stated that Cuba’s eventual participation in the OAS “will be the result of a process of dialogue initiated at the request of the Government of Cuba, and in accordance with the practices, purposes, and principles of the OAS,” which include representative democracy and respect for human rights. Although the Cuban government declared the repeal a “major victory,” it also stated that it had no interest in participating in the OAS.

Sources: OAS, Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ser. C/II.8, January 22-31, 1962; OAS, *Resolution on Cuba*, AG/RES. 2438 (XXXIX-O/09), June 3, 2009; and Voice of America, “Cuba Says No to OAS Membership,” June 4, 2009.

Institutional Governance

Three primary bodies are responsible for setting and carrying out the agenda of the OAS: the General Assembly, the Permanent Council, and the General Secretariat. The OAS also includes other councils, committees, and institutional organs that implement portions of its mandate with varying levels of autonomy. For example, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), composed of seven independent commissioners, and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, composed of seven independent judges, are the OAS bodies charged with promoting and protecting human rights (see “Human Rights Protection”).

General Assembly

The General Assembly is the principal policymaking organ of the OAS. It meets annually to debate issues, approve the organization’s budget, and set policies to govern the other OAS

¹¹ Nicaragua denounced the OAS Charter after the OAS General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring that Nicaragua’s 2021 elections had no democratic legitimacy.

¹² Yvan Gil, Canciller de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela (@yvangil), X post, March 31, 2026, <https://x.com/yvangil/status/2039086209079640274>.

bodies.¹³ The General Assembly comprises the delegations of each participating member state (often led by foreign ministers), and each state has a single vote. The body is empowered to adopt most decisions with the affirmative votes of an absolute majority of member states; however, some decisions—including adoption of the agenda and approval of budgetary matters—require the affirmative votes of two-thirds of member states. The 56th regular session of the OAS General Assembly is scheduled to be held in Panama City, Panama, from June 22 to June 24, 2026.¹⁴

Permanent Council

The Permanent Council meets regularly at OAS headquarters in Washington, DC, and conducts the organization’s day-to-day business.¹⁵ Among other activities, the Permanent Council works to maintain friendly relations among member states, assists in the peaceful settlement of disputes, carries out decisions assigned to it by the General Assembly, regulates the General Secretariat when the General Assembly is not in session, receives reports from the various bodies of the inter-American system, and submits recommendations to the General Assembly. Additionally, the Permanent Council is empowered to undertake diplomatic initiatives in the event of an unconstitutional alteration of government in a member state. Each member state appoints one representative to the Permanent Council (including the U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS), and each member state has a single vote. Most decisions require the affirmative votes of two-thirds of member states.

In October 2025, the U.S. Senate confirmed President Trump’s nominee, Leandro Rizzuto, as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS (PN26-41). The U.S. Permanent Representative leads the U.S. Mission to the OAS, which serves as the central coordination point between the U.S. government and the OAS, interacting with other offices in the State Department, interagency partners, OAS member states, and other inter-American organizations.¹⁶

General Secretariat

The General Secretariat, directed by the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General and consisting of about 960 staff, is charged with implementing policies set by the General Assembly and the Permanent Council.¹⁷ The General Assembly elects the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General to serve five-year terms with the possibility of one reelection. According to the OAS charter, the Secretary General serves as the organization’s legal representative and is allowed to participate in all OAS meetings but does not have a vote. The Secretary General also is empowered to establish offices and hire personnel to implement OAS mandates.

In March 2025, a special session of the General Assembly elected Albert Ramdin—the then-foreign minister of Suriname and a former OAS Assistant Secretary General (2005-2015)—by acclamation to be Secretary General for 2025-2030.¹⁸ Since taking office in May 2025, Ramdin’s

¹³ A special session of the General Assembly can be convoked by a two-thirds vote of the Permanent Council.

¹⁴ OAS, *Place, Date and Theme of the Fifty-Sixth Regular Session of the General Assembly*, AG/RES. 3049 (LV-O/25), June 27, 2025.

¹⁵ The Headquarters Agreement Between the Organization of American States and the Government of the United States of America (Treaty Doc. 102-40) is available at <http://www.oas.org/legal/english/docs/bilateralagree/us/sedeusa.htm>.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, Foreign Affairs Manual, 1 FAM 154 U.S. Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States (WHA/USOAS), <https://fam.state.gov/FAM/01FAM/01FAM0150.html>.

¹⁷ OAS, “Organizational Structure,” March 31, 2026, <https://www.oas.org/opdbweb/default.aspx?Lang=En>.

¹⁸ Another special session of the General Assembly, held in May 2025, elected Laura Gil of Colombia to be the Assistant Secretary General for 2025-2030. She began her term in July 2025.

priorities have included improving the organization’s administrative efficiency and financial sustainability, demonstrating the value of the OAS for the governments and people of the hemisphere, and building consensus among member states.¹⁹

Funding

OAS expenditures totaled \$165.2 million in 2025 (see **Table 1**). The largest portion of the budget is the Regular Fund, which covers the organization’s day-to-day operating expenses. The Regular Fund is financed through the assessed contributions, or membership dues, of OAS member states. These contributions are calculated based on each member state’s gross national income, with adjustments for debt burden and low per capita income. The United States is responsible for the largest assessed contribution, equivalent to 49.99% of the Regular Fund in 2026.²⁰ The OAS also collects Specific Funds—voluntary contributions from member states, permanent observers, and other international donors that are directed to specific projects or programs.²¹

According to the Audit Committee of the OAS, for over a decade, annual OAS budgets have “fallen significantly short of covering both programmatic and administrative requirements.”²² The Audit Committee notes that member states “have made efforts to incrementally increase funding, streamline mandates, and address aging infrastructure.”²³ Nevertheless, the Audit Committee argues that the OAS remains financially vulnerable due to the organization’s dependence on the prompt payments of member states’ assessed contributions and its heavy reliance on a few key member states and donors.

Table 1. Organization of American States Budget: Calendar Years 2023-2027
(millions of current U.S. dollars)

	2023 (executed)	2024 (executed)	2025 (executed)	2026 (approved)	2027 (proposed)
Regular Fund	81.8	88.7	88.6	92.0	98.4
Specific Funds^a	68.8	71.4	69.4	NA	NA
Indirect Cost Recovery^b	7.3	6.9	7.2	8.6	8.9
Total	157.9	167.0	165.2	NA	NA

Sources: OAS, *Proposed Program-Budget 2027*, p. 25; OAS, *Annual Report 2025 of the OAS Audit Committee to the Permanent Council for the Years Ended December 31, 2025 and 2024*, CP/doc.6207/26, April 30, 2026; OAS, *Report to the Permanent Council: Annual Audit of Accounts and Financial Statements for the Years Ended December 31 2024 and 2023*, JAE/doc.55/25, June 5, 2026; and OAS, *Report to the Permanent Council: Annual Audit of Accounts and Financial Statements for the Years Ended December 31, 2023 and 2022*, JAE/doc.54/24, June 5, 2024.

Notes: The OAS fiscal year is from January 1 to December 31, whereas the U.S. fiscal year is from October 1 to September 30; as a result, OAS and U.S. annual funding data may not align or be comparable. NA = not available.

¹⁹ See, for example, OAS, *Progress Report on the Administration of the Secretary General*, CP/INF.10899/26, April 1, 2026.

²⁰ OAS, *Financing of the Program-Budget of the Organization for 2026 and Convening a Special Session of the General Assembly to Consider and Approve the Program-Budget for 2026*, AG/RES. 3048 (LV-O/25), June 26, 2025.

²¹ For more information on permanent observers to the OAS, see OAS, “Permanent Observers,” https://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/perm_observers/countries.asp.

²² OAS, *Annual Report 2025 of the OAS Audit Committee to the Permanent Council for the Years Ended December 31, 2025 and 2024*, CP/doc.6207/26, April 30, 2026, p. 8.

²³ OAS, *Annual Report 2026 of the OAS Audit Committee*, p. 8.

- a. Specific Funds data are not yet available for 2026 and 2027 since Specific Funds are financed through individual donor agreements and do not align with the OAS budget cycle.
- b. A percentage (7%) of all contributions to Specific Funds is directed to the Indirect Cost Recovery account to defray indirect costs incurred by the General Secretariat in administering Specific Fund projects.

U.S. Contributions

The United States has been the top financial contributor to the OAS. In U.S. FY2024, for example, the United States provided \$90.3 million in assessed and voluntary contributions to the organization. U.S. contributions to the OAS appear to have declined to \$51.6 million in FY2025, but the United States remained the top contributor (see **Table 2**).²⁴

U.S. assessed contributions generally have been provided through the Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) account in annual Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs (as of FY2026, National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs, or NSRP) appropriations legislation. Congress typically has appropriated a lump sum to the CIO account each fiscal year, and the executive branch has allocated funding to specific organizations, including the OAS, based on assessment levels and U.S. policy priorities. In FY2025, the Trump Administration paid \$29.2 million (about 63%) of the \$46.3 million U.S. assessed contribution to the OAS. As of March 1, 2026, the Administration had paid \$29.3 million (about 62%) of the \$46.9 million U.S. assessed contribution for FY2026; the Administration asserts that it could provide additional funds to the OAS over the remainder of the fiscal year.²⁵ The OAS charter does not provide for the revocation of voting rights and the organization generally has not imposed any other sanctions for late or non-payment of dues.

Some U.S. agencies typically have obligated additional funding over the course of each fiscal year as voluntary contributions to the OAS. In FY2024 (most recent year for which comprehensive data are available), U.S. agencies obligated nearly \$45 million to the OAS to implement various projects. These included regional activities focused on promoting human rights, strengthening democracy, and combating illicit narcotics, among other topics, as well as projects in particular countries, like a national identification card program to facilitate elections in Haiti and a justice sector strengthening program intended to combat organized crime in Ecuador.²⁶

Congress sometimes designates voluntary contributions to the OAS through various accounts in annual NSRP legislation. For FY2026, the explanatory statement accompanying P.L. 119-75 directed that \$2.5 million in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement assistance be made available for “partnerships between nongovernmental organizations and the Organization of American States to combat human trafficking in Latin America and the Caribbean.”²⁷ The explanatory statement also directed the Secretary of State to “consider voluntary contributions to the Organization of American States for human rights and democracy programs.”²⁸

²⁴ In calendar year 2025, the top member state contributors after the United States were Canada (\$22.2 million), Brazil (\$11.9 million), Mexico (\$8.6 million), and Argentina (\$7.5 million). The top permanent observer contributors were the European Union (\$14.3 million), Spain (\$2.8 million), and Germany (\$2.6 million).

²⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification, Appendix 1, Fiscal Year 2027, U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Engagement*, April 2026, p. 367.

²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Contributions to International Organizations, 2024*, March 9, 2026, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-contributions-to-international-organizations-2024/>.

²⁷ Explanatory Statement Submitted by Mr. Cole, Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations, Regarding H.R. 7006, Financial Services and General Government and National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026, *Congressional Record*, vol. 172, no. 10 (January 14, 2026), p. H861; and H.Rept. 119-217.

²⁸ Explanatory Statement Submitted by Mr. Cole, H868.

The Trump Administration has not requested any assessed or voluntary funding for the OAS for FY2027. The Administration has requested \$5 billion for a new America First Opportunity Fund, however, which the Administration asserts could be used to provide an unspecified amount of funding for international organizations, among other foreign policy priorities.²⁹

Table 2. U.S. Funding for the OAS: FY2023-FY2027

(obligations in millions of current U.S. dollars)

	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025 (estimate) ^a	FY2026 (estimate)	FY2027 (request)
Assessed Contribution	43.2	45.6	29.2	29.3	0.0
Voluntary Contributions	30.1	44.7	22.4	NA	NA
Total	73.3	90.3	51.6	NA	NA

Sources: U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Contributions to International Organizations, 2023*, December 3, 2024; U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Contributions to International Organizations, 2024*, March 9, 2026; U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification, Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Fiscal Year 2027*, April 2026, pp. 55 and 120; and CRS analysis of monthly OAS financial statements on “Specific Funds – Contributions from the Government of the United States” for 2024 and 2025.

Notes: The U.S. fiscal year is from October 1 to September 30, whereas the OAS fiscal year is from January 1 to December 31; as a result, U.S. and OAS annual funding data may not align or be comparable. NA denotes that comprehensive data are not available.

- a. In the Recissions Act of 2025 (P.L. 119-28), Congress rescinded \$168.8 million in FY2025 funding for the Contributions to International Organizations (CIO) account and \$436.9 million in FY2025 funding for the International Organizations and Programs (IO&P) account, among other unobligated balances. It is unclear how these recissions may have affected the funding available for the OAS.

Trump Administration Reviews

On January 20, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order (E.O.) 14169, pausing U.S. foreign assistance for 90 days “pending reviews of such programs for programmatic efficiency and consistency with United States foreign policy.”³⁰ U.S. agencies directed the OAS to suspend implementation of 49 projects funded through U.S. voluntary contributions. According to the OAS, as of January 2026, U.S. agencies had lifted suspensions on 18 programs and terminated the remaining 31, which had unexecuted balances totaling \$13.1 million.³¹ The terminated programs included a mix of development and security assistance activities, including a counterterrorism information-sharing initiative launched with U.S. support during the first Trump Administration.³² More than 50 OAS personnel were separated from the organization due to the terminations, and some 30 additional staff were released and then rehired due to the suspensions.³³

²⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Congressional Budget Justification, Appendix I, Fiscal Year 2027, U.S. Department of State Diplomatic Engagement*, April 2026, pp. 37, 365, and 366.

³⁰ Executive Order 14169 of January 20, 2025, “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid,” 90 *Federal Register* 8619, January 30, 2025.

³¹ OAS, *U.S. Funds Suspensions Contingency*, CP/CAAP-4188/26, January 23, 2026.

³² OAS, *Status of Programs, Projects, and Activities Impacted by the Suspension of US Funds*, CP/CAAP/INF-4120/25, August 11, 2025; and OAS, “OAS to Develop Inter-American Network on Counterterrorism to Facilitate Immediate Exchange of Information on Terrorist Threats,” October 3, 2019.

³³ OAS, *Note from the Office of the Executive Director Proving Information On the Number of Workforce Separated as a Result of the Termination of United States-Funded Awards*, CP/CAAP/INF. 616-26, February 11, 2026.

E.O. 14199, issued on February 4, 2025, directed the Secretary of State to conduct a review of the OAS and all other international organizations of which the United States is a member and all conventions and treaties to which the United States is a party to determine if they are “contrary to the interests of the United States” and whether they can “be reformed.”³⁴ During the June 2025 OAS General Assembly, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau suggested that the United States may withdraw from the OAS unless the organization demonstrated more concrete results in addressing hemispheric challenges such as the crises in Venezuela and Haiti.³⁵ Although the OAS was not among the 66 international organizations and agreements from which the President directed U.S. agencies to withdraw in January 2026, the review remains ongoing.³⁶

Activities

The Strategic Vision of the OAS, adopted by the General Assembly in 2014, states that the four core pillars of the organization’s mission are strengthening democracy, promoting and protecting human rights, advancing integral development, and fostering multidimensional security.³⁷ In his election speech, Secretary General Ramdin asserted that these goals “exist in unison” and that “without one the other cannot be fully attained.”³⁸ Ongoing OAS activities aligned with the organization’s core pillars are described below.

Democracy Promotion

Democracy promotion has been a top priority of the OAS, especially since the 1980s, when many countries in the region began to transition from authoritarian rule to civilian governance. Member states approved a series of instruments designed to support democratic governance, culminating in the 2001 adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which asserts that the peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it.³⁹ The OAS has sought to uphold these commitments through support for, and observation of, elections; technical assistance and other programs to foster institutional development and good governance; and the coordination of collective action when democratic institutions are threatened.

Some scholars have found that OAS electoral observation missions have played an important role in the legitimization of electoral processes and long-term institution building throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.⁴⁰ In 2023 and early 2024, for example, the OAS arguably helped

³⁴ Executive Order 14199 of February 4, 2025, “Withdrawing the United States From and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to All International Organizations,” 90 *Federal Register* 9275, February 10, 2025.

³⁵ Christopher Landau, Deputy Secretary of State, “Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau at the Organization of American States General Assembly,” U.S. Department of State, June 26, 2025.

³⁶ Memorandum of January 7, 2026, “Withdrawing the United States from International Organizations, Conventions, and Treaties That Are Contrary to the Interests of the United States,” 91 *Federal Register* 2281, January 16, 2026. The withdrawal directive includes the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, an Inter-American Specialized Organization under the OAS charter that aims to facilitate technical cooperation in the fields of cartography, geography, history, and geophysics. For more information on the organization, see <https://www.ipgh.org/en/>.

³⁷ OAS, *Strategic Vision of the Organization of American States*, AG/RES. 2814 (XLIV-O/14), June 4, 2014.

³⁸ OAS, *Remarks by H. E. Albert Ramdin Upon His Election as Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Delivered at the Fifty-Sixth Special Session of the General Assembly*, AG/INF. 5 (LVI-E/25), March 18, 2025.

³⁹ OAS, *Inter-American Democratic Charter*, http://www.oas.org/OASpage/eng/Documents/Democratic_Charter.htm.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Lisa Vasciannie, “The Organization of American States: Evolution of Election Observation in the Inter-American System 1962-2017,” *Caribbean Journal of International Relations & Diplomacy*, vol. 5, no. 1 (March (continued...))

ensure a democratic transfer of power in Guatemala through its observation and diplomatic efforts.⁴¹ Nevertheless, analysts have sometimes questioned the findings of particular OAS electoral observation missions, contributing to controversy around some disputed electoral processes.⁴² In 2025, nine member states invited the OAS to observe their elections.⁴³ The second Trump Administration has praised the OAS's electoral observation efforts and encouraged other member states to increase their financial support for observation missions.⁴⁴

There is a lack of consensus among member states regarding how to respond to democratic backsliding in some countries in the region. Many member states adhere to the principal of nonintervention, which is enshrined in the OAS charter, and are largely unwilling to interfere in the internal affairs of another member state unless there is an abrupt democratic breakdown.⁴⁵ Consequently, the OAS General Assembly and Permanent Council arguably have been slow to respond to situations where elected leaders establish authoritarian governments through the gradual elimination of checks and balances and consolidation of power, as occurred in Venezuela and Nicaragua. Even in cases when member states have been unable or unwilling to act, however, the IACHR and other OAS institutions have often played important roles documenting democratic erosion.⁴⁶

Human Rights Protection

During the initial decades following the IACHR's 1959 creation, the commission's documentation of human rights violations brought international attention to the abuses of repressive regimes. Although the human rights situation in the hemisphere improved considerably with the spread of democracy, the IACHR received nearly 3,400 allegations of human rights violations in 2025.⁴⁷ The IACHR investigates alleged human rights abuses, issues requests to governments to adopt "precautionary measures" to protect individuals or groups at risk of suffering abuses, and observes and reports on the general human rights situations in OAS member states. Occasionally, the IACHR has established special independent teams of experts to conduct in-depth investigations into some high-profile and politically sensitive human rights issues.⁴⁸ The

2018), pp. 89-112; and Ferran Martínez i Coma, Alessandro Nai, and Pippa Norris, *Democratic Diffusion: How Regional Organizations Strengthen Electoral Integrity*, University of Sydney and Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Executive Report, 2016.

⁴¹ See, for example, Sir Ronald Sanders, "From Crisis to Democracy: OAS Shines in Guatemala's Political Transition," *Caribbean News Global*, January 18, 2024.

⁴² See, for example, Anatoly Kurmanaev and María Silvia Trigo, "A Closer Look at Bolivia's Election Muddies Tampering Claims," *New York Times*, June 7, 2020.

⁴³ The OAS observed elections in Belize, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Saint Lucia, and Suriname. OAS, Secretariat for Political Affairs, Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation, "Electoral Observation Missions and Recommendations Database," accessed April 2026.

⁴⁴ U.S. Mission to the OAS, "U.S. Ambassador Rizzuto Urges OAS Member States to Strengthen Support for Electoral Observation Missions," December 18, 2025.

⁴⁵ Article 19 of the OAS charter states, "No State or group of States has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other State. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed force but also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the State or against its political, economic, and cultural elements."

⁴⁶ For example, the annual reports of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) each include a chapter (Chapter IV since 1998) on human rights situations deemed to merit special attention. See IACHR, "Annual Reports," <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/IA.asp>.

⁴⁷ IACHR, *Annual Report 2025*, February 26, 2026, p. 64.

⁴⁸ In February 2025, for example, the IACHR launched such a group to investigate the 2016 assassination of Berta Cáceres, a prominent Indigenous leader and human rights defender in Honduras. The group's final report is available at https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2026/006.asp.

IACHR also has created 13 rapporteurships to draw attention to certain human rights issues, such as freedom of expression, and to groups that it deems particularly at risk of human rights violations.⁴⁹ In June 2025, the General Assembly elected Rosa María Payá, a Cuban human rights and democracy advocate nominated by the Trump Administration, to serve as an IACHR commissioner from 2026 to 2029.⁵⁰

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, installed in San José, Costa Rica, in 1979, is a judicial institution charged with interpreting and applying the hemisphere's human rights conventions.⁵¹ It considers cases submitted by the IACHR to determine whether OAS member states are responsible for human rights violations and, if so, the measures to be adopted to redress the consequences of such violations. The court also provides advisory opinions to member states and other OAS bodies, and it orders member states to adopt “provisional measures” to protect the rights of individuals or groups at urgent risk of suffering irreparable harm. Currently, 21 OAS member states accept the court's jurisdiction; the United States does not.⁵²

Human rights advocates generally have praised the work of the IACHR and the Inter-American Court and have sought to defend the independence of both institutions to ensure they are able to carry out their mandates without political interference. Some member states have sought to curtail that independence, however, in apparent efforts to avoid criticism and/or perceived intrusions on their sovereignty.⁵³ In March 2026, the Trump Administration criticized the IACHR for holding hearings on lethal U.S. military strikes on alleged drug trafficking vessels in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific. The Administration asserted that the IACHR lacks competence to review the strikes—arguing that they concern the interpretation and application of international humanitarian law rather than human rights law—and called on the IACHR to refrain from intervening in matters that are subject to active domestic litigation.⁵⁴

Economic and Social Development

The OAS began to place greater emphasis on economic, social, cultural, scientific, and technological programs during the 1960s, coinciding with President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress to promote development in Latin America. Although the region has made considerable strides in terms of economic growth and social inclusion, poverty and inequality levels remain high in many countries and the OAS continues to support development efforts today. The Secretariat for Integral Development provides an array of training and capacity-building support to member states regarding economic, human, and sustainable development. It

⁴⁹ The 13 thematic rapporteurships focus on freedom of expression; economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights; memory, truth, and justice; and the rights of Indigenous peoples; women; migrants; children; human rights defenders; persons deprived of liberty; Afro-descendants; lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual, and intersex persons; older persons; and persons with disabilities.

⁵⁰ IACHR commissioners serve in their personal capacities and do not represent governments. U.S. Mission to the OAS, “Rosa María Payá Elected to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights,” July 16, 2025.

⁵¹ For the text of the conventions, see IACHR, “Basic Documents in the Inter-American System,” https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/mandate/basic_documents.asp.

⁵² Inter-American Court of Human Rights, *Annual Report 2025, 2026*, p. 14. The United States has not ratified any of the inter-American human rights conventions. The United States is subject to the jurisdiction of the IACHR under the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (adopted in 1948 alongside the OAS charter), but the U.S. government argues that the declaration does not create legally binding obligations.

⁵³ See, for example, José Miguel Vivanco and Tamara Taraciuk Broner, “Why a Human Rights Icon Needs Its Independence,” *Americas Quarterly*, September 2, 2020.

⁵⁴ Thomas Pigott, Principal Deputy Spokesperson, “Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) Thematic Hearing on U.S. Counternarcotics Operations in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific,” U.S. Department of State, March 13, 2026. A video of the hearing is available at <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/sessions/hearing.asp?Hearing=3896>.

also fosters policy dialogue and serves as a clearinghouse for best practices. In addition to those activities, the OAS Development Cooperation Fund provides seed funding to support national and multinational development projects. During the 2024–2027 programming cycle, a total of \$1.9 million is expected to be allocated to climate-related activities in 15 countries.⁵⁵

Some analysts have asserted that the accumulation of development programs at the OAS has stretched the organization’s mandate and resources while undermining its efficiency. They contend the OAS should transfer such programs to other institutions, such as the Inter-American Development Bank, so it can focus more clearly on the remaining portions of its mission.⁵⁶ Conversely, some officials from member states—particularly Caribbean countries—have argued that the OAS has placed too much emphasis on democracy and human rights issues and should reprioritize development efforts.⁵⁷ Secretary General Ramdin, who is the first OAS Secretary General from the Caribbean, has identified “advancing a prosperity agenda,” including improved health, education, job creation, investment, trade, and connectivity, as one of the key strategic goals for his term.⁵⁸

Regional Security Cooperation

The OAS has dedicated greater attention to hemispheric security issues over the past two decades as member states have become more concerned about transnational threats. In 2005, the OAS created the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security in an attempt to address security issues in a more comprehensive manner and better coordinate member states’ efforts. The Secretariat supports a wide variety of activities, including efforts to reduce crime and violence, strengthen security institutions, and remove land mines. In Haiti, for example, the OAS is providing training, procuring nonlethal equipment, and supporting the development of forward operating bases to assist the efforts of the Haitian National Police and a UN-authorized Gang Suppression Force to combat gang-related violence.⁵⁹

The OAS also supports regional coordination on anti-drug efforts through the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and regional coordination on counterterrorism and cybersecurity efforts through the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE). CICAD assists OAS member states in strengthening their anti-drug policies by developing and recommending legislation, providing technical assistance and specialized training, and conducting assessments, among other activities. CICTE’s 25th Regular Session, held in May 2025, focused on links between terrorist financing and transnational crime and efforts to strengthen regional counterterrorism legal frameworks, responding to policy shifts in the United States and other countries in the region to treat drug trafficking organizations as terrorist groups.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ OAS, *Eligibility and Budget for the OAS Development Cooperation Fund: Presentation on the Status of the 2024–2027 Programming Cycle of the Development Cooperation Fund (FCD)*, AICD/JD/INF.127/26, March 20, 2026.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Ben Raderstorff and Michael Shifter, *Rebuilding Hemispheric Consensus: A Reform Agenda for the Organization of American States*, Inter-American Dialogue, February 2018, pp. 15–16. For more on the Inter-American Development Bank, see CRS Report R41170, *Multilateral Development Banks: Overview and Issues for Congress*, by Rebecca M. Nelson.

⁵⁷ See, for example, Anton Edmunds, Ambassador of St. Lucia to the United States, remarks during a virtual Center for Strategic and International Studies event on “A New Agenda for the Hemisphere: Perspectives from Ambassadors,” August 16, 2021.

⁵⁸ OAS, *OAS Strategic Plan for 2026–2030*, CP/doc.6198/26, March 31, 2026.

⁵⁹ OAS, *Report of the Department of Public Security (DPS) on Progress in the Promotion of Hemispheric Cooperation to Address Criminal Gangs*, CP/CSH-2394/26, April 14, 2026.

⁶⁰ OAS, *Annual Report 2025 of the Secretariate of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE)*, (continued...)

Issues for Congress

Countries throughout the Western Hemisphere are contending with challenges, including the erosion of democratic institutions and growth in organized crime. As the preeminent multilateral forum in the hemisphere, the OAS is well placed to facilitate regional cooperation on such issues, though political differences among member states and internal financial constraints may pose challenges. Members of Congress may seek to influence OAS actions and U.S. policy toward the organization through various oversight and legislative activities.

Oversight. Over the past 13 years, Congress has enacted the OAS Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-41) and the OAS Legislative Engagement Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-343), which were intended to strengthen the OAS and increase congressional involvement in the organization. Congress also has directed the State Department to support certain OAS reforms in annual NSRP appropriations legislation (e.g., §7045(j) of P.L. 119-75). Congress may monitor how the Trump Administration is complying with the directives included in those measures and the extent to which the OAS is adopting Congress’s recommended reforms. Congress also may conduct oversight of the Trump Administration’s approach to the OAS, and to what extent, if any, its actions—including terminating some funding and not fully paying assessed dues—have affected the OAS and U.S. influence within the organization.

Appropriations. Congress may assess U.S. funding for the OAS during the FY2027 appropriations process. As noted previously, the Trump Administration’s FY2027 budget proposal did not request funding for the OAS but sought some flexible funding that could potentially be used for contributions to the OAS and other international organizations. During the appropriations process, Congress may consider whether to specifically designate funding for the U.S. assessed contribution to the OAS, prior year dues, and/or voluntary contributions to support particular OAS activities or objectives. Alternatively, Congress could consider appropriating a lump sum for international organizations, through existing or new funding accounts, and leave allocation decisions to the Administration.

Other Legislation. Congress also may consider other legislative measures to help shape U.S. policy toward the OAS. For example, as part of a potential foreign relations authorization measure, Congress could direct the State Department to pursue particular objectives at the OAS. Congress also could establish reporting requirements or other mechanisms to support congressional oversight of the Administration’s policy approach.

Advice and Consent. The Senate could shape U.S. policy toward the OAS by drawing on its constitutional authority to provide advice and consent on treaties. For example, the Senate may monitor the Trump Administration’s ongoing review of U.S. participation in international organizations and agreements pursuant to E.O. 14199, and assess any presidential decisions to withdraw the United States from Senate-approved inter-American organizations or treaties.⁶¹ The Senate also could consider various inter-American treaties that the United States has negotiated at the OAS but has not ratified.⁶²

CICTE/doc.6/26.rev.1, April 9, 2026, pp. 1-2. For background on related U.S. policy shifts, see CRS Insight IN11205, *Designating Cartels and Other Criminal Organizations as Foreign Terrorists: Recent Developments*.

⁶¹ For analysis of executive and legislative powers related to the termination of treaties, see Congressional Research Service, “Breach and Termination of Treaties,” Constitution Annotated, https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/essay/artII-S2-C2-1-10/ALDE_00012961/.

⁶² For example, the American Convention on Human Rights (Treaty Doc. 95-21), the hemisphere’s primary human rights treaty, has been awaiting the advice and consent of the Senate since 1978, and the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking of Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (Treaty Doc. 105-49) has been awaiting the advice and consent of the Senate since 1998.

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