

A Strategy for Defeating the Criminal Insurgency in Central America's Northern Triangle

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The lack of security caused by Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) is the most significant disease plaguing El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, a region commonly referred to as the Northern Triangle. It is one of the most violent regions in the world creating massive instability and preventing economic prosperity for the citizens of the region. In 2020, the largest cities in each country remain in the top 50 most violent cities in the world.¹ TCOs are conducting a criminal insurgency that will require a counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy to defeat it, not a typical law enforcement strategy focused on simply getting the “bad guys” off the streets. Successfully quelling this criminal insurgency will establish a foundation of security that will promote stability and enable economic prosperity for the region's population, greatly reducing the volatility that has been driving massive migration from the region.

As was seen by the increased threat posed to Israel and the Palestinian Authority when Hamas took control of the Gazan government, the criminal capture of a state exponentially increases the threat posed to its neighbors.² Likewise, the criminal capture of the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras would threaten hemispheric security and the US's influence in the region because the impact of their criminal activity will be felt, at a minimum, across the hemisphere.³ It would grant TCOs unfettered access to financial markets, enable them to perpetuate corruption, expand their criminal enterprises, give them a monopoly on violence, and expand regional and social instability. However, successfully countering the TCOs and strengthening the democratic intuitions within each of these countries also offer several opportunities for the US: it would reaffirm the US commitment to the region as a strategic partner; it would create new economic opportunities for US corporations; and it would strengthen the liberal international world order.

Strategic Context

Transnational Criminal Organizations in the Northern Triangle

The primary culprits of the instability and violence within the Northern Triangle are TCOs conducting a criminal insurgency that is yet to be fully appreciated. A

criminal insurgency has all the characteristics of a traditional insurgency except for ideology.⁴ Instead of ideology, criminal insurgents, or TCOs, are focused on raw power and retaining the freedom to conduct their criminal enterprise.⁵ TCOs in the Northern Triangle can be generally categorized into drug cartels and third generation gangs, such as the Mara Salvatruchas (MS13). While they share many of the same characteristics, historically, they have differed in their primary objective. Cartels are focused on the various aspects of the drug enterprise (e.g. production and shipment) and gangs are primarily focused on territorial control. Collaboration between them has increased, however, over recent years as has the expansion of their enterprises.

The expanding threat of TCOs in the Northern Triangle is a phenomenon that mostly began during the 2000s. In large part, it is a result of five converging manifestations. First, in the late 1990s the US began deporting large numbers of Salvadorans and some Guatemalan and Hondurans that were in the US illegally upon completing their prison sentences for various crimes.⁶ Many of these individuals had been in the US since their early childhood and suddenly found themselves in a country, that while their birthplace, was foreign to them. Thus, they banded together for survival and continued their criminal activity.⁷ Second, US and Mexican counter-narcotics efforts forced many of the Mexican cartels to seek friendlier environments to operate in. Third, US and Colombian counter-narcotics efforts, including Plan Colombia, shifted many of the Colombian cartel efforts to Central America. Fourth, Central America's access to both the Caribbean and Pacific oceans coupled with ample ungoverned spaces were fertile ground for TCO's criminal enterprises to take root. Lastly, weak government institutions and known susceptibility to corruption of government officials within the Northern Triangle provided the permissive environment necessary for the TCOs to thrive.

The criminal enterprises of these TCOs are expansive. Some estimates place the strength of TCOs in the Northern Triangle at over 100,000 members, with additional members in the US, Mexico, South America, and West Africa.⁸ Of more concern, preliminary research on the MS13's recruitment chain details a sophisticated process that begins with children as young as four to five years old; figure one details MS13's production chain.⁹ However, it is unknown if similar recruitment structures exist for other TCOs. There is also recent evidence that members are receiving military training, significantly increasing their success against government law enforcement entities.¹⁰

The business lines of TCOs consist of a host of illicit activities including drug production and trafficking, human trafficking, extortion, money laundering, and weapons trafficking.¹¹ The financial resources they generate from these activities dwarf those of the regional governments. In 2017, the combined Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) of the El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras was \$123.41 billion.¹² By contrast, the global drug trade alone was valued at over \$320 billion annually, and \$150 billion of that is attributed to the Americas.¹³ Other activities, such as extortion, also generate significant revenue for TCOs. For example, extortion in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras totaled \$651 million in 2015.¹⁴ These revenues, along with those generated from their various business lines, enable them to fundamentally dominate their relationship with their host states.

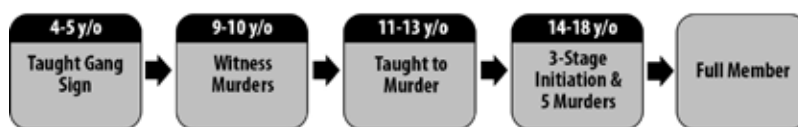


Figure 1. MS13 Member Production Chain

Source: Author

TCOs thrive on weak governance, corruption, and extortion and will even enter into government positions in order to enable their criminal enterprise. In some cases, often at the sub-state level, TCOs are successful at capturing or completely supplanting the government.¹⁵ Thus, how TCOs interact with a state varies, but can be divided into three primary methods: 1) corruption, 2) infiltration, and 3) competition.¹⁶ Each method can occur within or against the national, provincial, or local governments of a given country, and each are occurring within the Northern Triangle. TCOs are known to pay off officials in all branches of government to allow them to operate with impunity; in TCO-controlled territory, TCO members themselves might run for office.¹⁷ For example, in El Salvador, mayors have been reported to be MS13 members¹⁸ and in Guatemala some members of congress are reported to be members of TCOs.¹⁹ Lastly, in many of the ungoverned territories or TCO-controlled territories, the TCOs themselves are providing public services such as utilities and education in direct competition with the state.²⁰

El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras Context

The governments of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have each attempted to counter the TCOs operating in their respective countries in various ways. Each attempted a version of *Mano Dura* (hard hand), which led to overpopulation of prisons and reports of extrajudicial killings.²¹ El Salvador even attempted a truce in March 2012 that is credited with temporarily subsiding the violence, however, the TCOs there simply changed tactics and continued to act with impunity forcing the Salvadoran government to end the truce.²² Recently, the militaries of the three governments have begun sharing information and intelligence about TCOs.²³ The effectiveness of these efforts will need to be assessed at a future date.

United States Context

The US approach to countering TCOs in the Northern Triangle has been through a series of individual programs that are often uncoordinated. Unfortunately, the US has not recognized the problem as a criminal insurgency, thus, preventing the comprehensive approach needed to successfully counter it. Instead, TCOs are primarily treated as a counter-narcotics or counter-gang issue addressed by traditional law enforcement methods, prioritizing arrests and drug seizures over other methods proven effective in counterinsurgency operations.²⁴ One positive recent development, however, was the recognition of MS13's transnational threat and their formal designation as a TCO in 2011.²⁵ This enabled the US Treasury department to leverage their sanction authorities against known MS13 members.

Why Should the United States Care?

The US has historically sought to maintain a leadership role in the Western Hemisphere. That role is being threatened by the instability being fomented by TCOs operating in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. First, they pose a direct threat to the US through their operations within the US and the narcotics and other illicit goods they are bringing to the US (a national *security interest*). Second, the instability and insecurity they cause prevents the economies of the Northern Triangle to prosper, inhibiting the trade potential and economic partnership that would benefit the US and the region's population (*prosperity interest*). Lastly, as a criminal insurgency, TCOs pose a direct threat to the rule of law within the Northern Triangle, transparent democratic institutions, and the liberal international world order (*values interest*). Thus, the US has a significant interest in countering the ongoing criminal insurgency in this region and preventing them from successfully capturing or supplanting the state and sub-state governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Assumptions

While some might argue that it is diminishing, it is assumed that the US still wields significant influence with the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and throughout the region.²⁶ This influence will be critical to garner the cooperation from the respective governments on difficult matters such as counter-corruption efforts. It is also assumed that the US will be able to garner support from other partners within the hemisphere. A third assumption is that TCOs have linkages to the highest levels of government within each of the three Northern Triangle countries.²⁷ Lastly, it is assumed that the respective governments'

influence is at most weak outside of their metropolitan areas, thus leaving them with large swaths of ungoverned territories.

Strategic Aim

The strategic aim of this article is to propose a strategy to defeat the TCOs' parasitic criminal insurgency by providing a foundation of security that enables the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to strengthen their democratic institutions and increase capacity to effectively provide security and prosperity for their citizens.

As a criminal COIN strategy, "the population is the strategic objective in COIN because winning the population equates almost directly to winning the conflict."²⁸ As can be observed in figure 2, winning the population in the Northern Triangle will require a three-pronged effort: a foundation of security, trust in government institutions, and access to economic prosperity. While the three will be addressed in this strategy, a foundation of security is most critical in the short to mid-term in order for the other two to areas to have fertile ground to take root in.



Figure 2. Winning the population.

Source: Author

Objectives, Ways and Means

The focus of this strategy is to provide a foundation of security that will create the required space for effective governance and economic prosperity to grow. However, it fully recognizes that an effective counterinsurgency strategy will require multiple mutually supporting lines of effort in order to succeed.²⁹ As such, this strategy is composed of five objectives that should be accomplished simultaneously. The first two objectives focus on initiating the systemic governmental change needed for sustaining security. The third and central objective focuses on

establishing the foundation of security. The last two objectives focus on the societal changes needed in both the Northern Triangle and US for sustained security.

1. Establish a Framework for Effective, Transparent Governance

Addressing systemic corruption and weak governance are long term endeavors. Thus, this strategy focuses on establishing a framework for anti-corruption efforts in the region. First, the US Department of State (DOS) should take the lead in applying diplomatic pressure on Guatemala to reverse their current position against the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).³⁰ This United Nations' (UN) sponsored effort has proven to be an effective tool against corruption in Guatemala. Second, the US should provide its full support and work with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the government of Honduras to strengthen the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (MACCIH), in order to have the same positive results as CICIG.³¹ Additionally, the US should work with El Salvador, the OAS, and the UN to establish an anti-corruption entity similar to CICIG and MACCIH within El Salvador.

To strengthen the public and justice ministries of each government, the US State Department should partner with the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to work with each country to increase their prosecutorial capacity, judicial expertise, and judicial independence. Initial efforts should focus on the national capacity and should also be inclusive of provincial and municipal capacity, as appropriate. To reinforce the importance of an independent judiciary, the DOS and DOJ should apply diplomatic pressure on the governments of each country to make the necessary constitutional changes to create longer term or life term appointments to their national courts, to lessen the potential for political influence of the judiciary by elected leaders. Lastly, to create a culture of transparency, DOS and DOJ should work with their counterparts to develop a mechanism to publicize the efficacy of the judicial system. This could include the number of cases litigated, the types of cases being litigated, and the number of cases closed. To complement these efforts, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) should work with the press corps in each country to create an independent Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) focused on verifying the information provided by the respective judicial branches.

2. Professionalize Regional Law Enforcement

A professional law enforcement force who has earned the trust of the population they serve is pivotal to establishing and maintaining the long term security necessary to defeat the ongoing criminal insurgency in the Northern Triangle. The first

step in gaining this trust is structural: separating law enforcement agencies and functions from the military. As such, the DOS and Department of Defense (DOD) should work with Canada, Costa Rica, and the OAS to apply diplomatic pressure on the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to separate their respective national law enforcement agencies from their ministries of defense, and transition them to their respective ministries of justice. This transition should be accompanied with the requisite constitutional changes to relinquish law enforcement authorities from the defense ministries.

Additionally, the DOS and DOJ should establish a coalition of law enforcement partners, and help fund if necessary, with Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and the US, to train and transform the national and sub-state law enforcement agencies in the Northern Triangle. The transformation should include structural changes such as:

- Inducing each agency to recruit and hire a force ethnically and culturally representative of the population they serve
- Persuading each agency to create a non-commissioned officer corps within the force that is accepted as contributive to vice competitive
- Enabling the establishment of a merit-based promotion process that encourages retention
 - The training should include:
 - Community policing practices that establish trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve
 - Technical skills based on international norms and standards in such areas as problem solving, communications, chain of custody, conducting investigations, and information and intelligence gathering
 - Tactical skills based on international norms and standards in such areas as apprehensions, diffusing hostile situations, and patrol counter ambush

3. Subdue Criminal Insurgency Operations

Central to the success of this strategy is a foundation of security. This could be achieved through the combined use of law enforcement and military forces to have the maximum and most expeditious effect. First, the US Intelligence Community (IC) should increase its priority, capabilities, and effort on Western Hemisphere TCOs and should work with their coalition partners to do the same. The IC should first focus on identifying all the host and foreign government officials from every level of government (state and sub-state) suspected to be collaborating with TCOs or suspected to be members of TCOs. Second, once those government officials are identified:

- The Department of Treasury (DOT) should sanction their personal financial assets
- The DOS and DOJ should work with the host nation governments to indict and prosecute, or if appropriate, indict in the US and seek extradition for prosecution in the US
- The DOS should partner with the DOD, IC, and OAS to establish an information campaign emphasizing that all public officials collaborating with TCOs will be identified and prosecuted

Third, the IC should then focus on understanding everything possible about the TCO networks: social networks, logistics, illicit activities (not just narcotics), international ties, and so forth. Fourth, the DOS, DOD, DOJ, and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) should use the derived intelligence to induce Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico to conduct coordinated, simultaneous operations against key individuals that are centers of gravity (COG) within the TCO networks operating in each of the countries, to include the US. Of note, this should include COGs for all illicit activity (e.g., extortion, human smuggling and trafficking, arms trafficking, money laundering, and so forth), not simply narcotics related. It should also include enhancing information and intelligence sharing where applicable, such as sharing the known criminal records of deported individuals. Fifth, all the individuals identified and detained during these operations should be handled through the same process detailed in the second step above for government officials.

Sixth, the DOS should persuade the OAS to establish a Combined Interagency Task Force (CIATF) and enable a volunteer member state, based on their proven track record, to lead it. The CIATF should be inclusive of law enforcement and military forces from the Northern Triangle governments; DOS and DOD should also persuade or induce OAS member states to contribute vetted forces. Once established, the CIATF should be chartered to operate in the Northern Triangle for five years, with two optional extension years. Its mission would be to directly counter the TCOs waging the criminal insurgency and their networks while enhancing El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras's organic capacity to do the same. While the CIATF should partner with the US DOD, it cannot have any formal command relationship with it or any other US entity. Simultaneously, the DOS should work diligently to persuade the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to allow the CIATF to be stationed and operate within each country. Seventh, the DOS and DOD should take the lead in securing financial support to help fund the CIATF. Potential financial contributors are Brazil, Canada, Chile, and Colombia.

4. Increase Economic Prosperity Opportunities

The lack of economic opportunities is one of the key driving factors pushing large sectors of the population to emigrate or seek better economic opportunities within the TCOs' enterprises. To turn this tide, four overarching areas need to be addressed. First, each government within Northern Triangle must gain control of their territory and provide basic services for their citizens. Unfortunately, all three countries have limited resources because of low tax rates and a low tax base. Thus, the DOS should diligently work with each government to increase their tax revenue. The Department of Treasury (DOT) and USAID should work with each country to improve their taxation laws, tax collection practices and processes, increase their tax base, and increase accountability and transparency throughout the tax collection process. DOS, DOT, and USAID should also partner with each country to help them expand their services, with the new revenue, to the most needy population centers; this step is dependent on successfully generating new tax revenue and would most likely begin in year two or three of strategy implementation. Apart from increasing tax revenue, the expansion of self-funded government services is not the focus of this strategy. The US, however, should lead international collaboration to increase education services, infrastructure, and employment.

Second, USAID should lead the expansion of primary and vocational education services throughout the region. They should partner with the DOS to incentivize each country to increase their commitment and spending on education for all the children and youth within each country. USAID should also collaborate with their international partners to steer NGO education projects to focus on developing those skills that are most employable. Third, DOS and USAID should actively solicit private, international, and governmental grants to improve the infrastructure within each country. They could also work with the Interamerican Development Bank and other international development banks to help secure grants or loans for these improvements. The infrastructure improvements should focus on extending electricity, potable water, and roads to as much of the population as possible. Emphasis should be placed on the roads between the rural areas and the larger municipalities to improve access to regional employment opportunities and government services. The US Government (USG) should focus on simply serving in a coordinating and advocacy role.

Fourth, the DOS, Department of Commerce (DOC), and Department of Labor (DOL) should partner with the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to grow and strengthen their respective commercial and labor markets. DOS and DOC should help them create incentives that are mutually beneficial to the host government and corporations to entice corporate foreign direct investment. As one incentive, DOC and the US Trade Representative (USTR) could

lead the establishment of a private/public insurance program provided to US corporations willing to create employment opportunities in the underdeveloped regions of the Northern Triangle. USAID could also work with their international partners to secure microloans or grants that can be used by entrepreneurs to start their own companies. DOS should encourage hemispheric partners to establish or expand temporary employment visas to serve as a prosperity bridge while new opportunities are created within the Northern Triangle. DOS and DOL should identify economic sectors within the US that could benefit from a targeted expansion of temporary employment visas. Lastly, USAID and DHS should partner with the host governments to target the reintegration of returning deportees that have been educated in the US, are bilingual, have vocational skills, and have no more than a non-violent criminal record. The reintegration should include “top-off” training based on previous experience to fill critical jobs such as: teachers, infrastructure construction, trades, and so forth.

5. Addressing the Domestic Contributing Factors

A comprehensive strategy to counter the criminal insurgency in the Northern Triangle must acknowledge two critical facts:

- The criminal insurgency is largely funded by the American demand for narcotics.
- The criminal insurgency is largely armed by weapons originating in the US.³²

Thus, both issues need to be addressed as part of this strategy. Drug addiction is a public health issue and has recently worsened by the opioid epidemic which killed over 72,000 Americans in 2017, impacting many communities throughout the US.³³ Congress has acted against this threat and appropriated over \$8 billion in 2018 alone to fight the opioid crisis, but a coordinated federal strategy does not exist.³⁴ The effectiveness of these efforts should be monitored closely by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) with best practices shared with states, territories, and local governments. Additionally, the Public Health Service (PHS) should be deployed to the most affected localities to augment local public health professionals to help expedite rehabilitation efforts, and to identify best practices that can be shared throughout the country. Lastly, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) should conduct an audit of federal spending on all counter-narcotics and drug rehabilitation efforts and recommend how to balance spending more effectively between counter-narcotics efforts and addiction and rehabilitation services.

The next step in addressing demand is to highlight the human damage done by the illegal narcotics industry. A potential option for accomplishing this would be

having the First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS) partner with the Surgeon General (SG) and Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to establish and lead an information campaign spotlighting stories of the children and women who are assaulted, families that are separated or murdered, or other horrors that are part of the illegal narcotics industry. To be most effective, this campaign should be a collaborative effort with the entertainment and sports industry across all media modicums, to reach as much of the American population as possible. Lastly, the DOS should encourage similar campaigns in large narcotics consuming regions such as Canada and Europe.

The second US factor that needs to be addressed is the illegal flow of arms from the US to Mexico and Central and South America. To start, the DHS should begin screening all outbound traffic on the Southern ports and all maritime ports with cargo destined to Mexico and Central America for weapons and weapons parts that can be assembled at their final destination. The DHS should also gift screening technology to Mexico's border forces to aide their screening efforts, and should increase the priority of weapons smuggling in their cross-border collaborative efforts with Mexico. Within the US, the DOJ's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) should take the lead in establishing an information campaign, preferably in partnership with organizations like the National Rifle Association, to target gun shows and those states with the least stringent gun laws. The narrative of the information campaign should focus on how to identify a weapons smuggler, on the death and destruction caused by the weapons trafficked illegally, and on linking the illegal narcotics trade plaguing the US with the illegal weapons trade plaguing our southern neighbors. Lastly, the ATF should work with congress and state and territorial legislators to identify and close loopholes exploited by weapons smugglers and to increase the severity of punishment for those individuals participating in weapons smuggling.

Tests of Strategy

Unfortunately, no strategy is full proof. Assessing the likelihood of this strategy's success requires an analysis of its suitability, feasibility, desirability, acceptability, and sustainability.

Suitability

The suitability of this strategy is assessed as high. By shifting the counter-TCO efforts from a criminal or counternarcotic problem to a counterinsurgency one, it provides a comprehensive approach to address a disease that has plagued the Americas for decades. The strategy counters the threat directly and advances the interests of values projection and economic prosperity by strengthening the rule

of law and developing economic opportunities. They both promote stability and economic growth that benefits the local citizenry, the region, and the US

Feasibility

The feasibility of this strategy is assessed as medium. The comprehensiveness of this strategy creates two challenges. First, it requires the US to advocate for each nation to relinquish some of their sovereignty to strengthen their institutions. While CICIG, a UN organization, was invited to operate by the Guatemalan government, it required a change in their constitution in order for CICIG to operate, relinquishing some of their sovereignty. The US needs to decide if advocating for CICIG and new similar organizations in El Salvador and Honduras is in the US national interest. Should the US advocate for a nation to relinquish part of their sovereignty? Second, the recommended investments in law enforcement and economic development are long term and could be perceived as costly. It will require US and international investments over a multi-year period.

Desirability

The desirability of this strategy is assessed as high. While the demonstrable results from this strategy will probably take two to three years to begin to be realized, they should be enduring. They are focused on the underlying drivers of the security challenge instead of simply treating the symptoms. By addressing these underlying symptoms, there will be a correlating decrease in the flow of illegal immigration into the US and a decrease in violence. Additionally, the resultant stability and the prosperity promotion efforts increase the economic opportunities for US corporations, jointly benefiting the regional and US economies.

Acceptability

The acceptability of this strategy is assessed as medium. Three audiences are part of the assessment of acceptability: domestic, host country, and international. The domestic audience recognizes there is a security problem in the Northern Triangle. However, there is apprehension towards what is perceived as “nation building” activities. The host countries not only recognize the security challenges they have, but they also joined forces in 2014 to form the Alliance for Prosperity, which suggests they are more willing to cooperate on this strategy.³⁵ As stated above, however, the US should expect less cooperation on the anti-corruption efforts based on recent experiences between the Guatemalan government and CICIG. Lastly, the international audience is composed of those nations and international organizations that the strategy proposes partnerships with. Apart from the UN, this strategy focuses partnership efforts with Western Hemisphere nations and organizations such as Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, and the OAS that will

help strengthen hemispheric ties. If those nations are unwilling to partner in these efforts, the US would need to commit more resources or scale down the strategy.

Sustainability

The sustainability of this strategy is assessed as medium. As in the desirability assessment, this strategy will take time and dedication to be effective. The US could lose patience before the results can be assessed. Another aspect impacting sustainability is the availability of resources.

Conclusion

While a fundamentally different approach to addressing TCOs, this strategy builds on some existing strategies such as the US Strategy for Central America and the USSOUTHCOM Theater Strategy. Therefore, this strategy has a relatively low financial cost. The biggest new costs would be on the second and third objectives: law enforcement professionalization and subduing the criminal insurgency. Some of this work is already underway, at a smaller scale, through USAID projects and USSOUTHCOM operations. The most significant cost associated with this strategy is diplomatic. This strategy relies heavily on the diplomatic prowess of DOS and the US missions in the region. They must be appropriately resourced and supported.

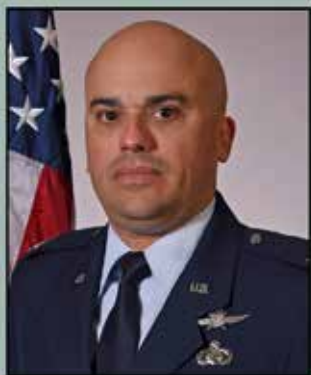
Regardless of how well resourced, every strategy has risks associated with it. The primary risk to this strategy is the potential for the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to refuse to cooperate. This risk could be mitigated by the US President's (POTUS) direct engagement and leadership. The POTUS's support and leadership bolsters the US's commitment to combat TCOs and should take advantage of the significant influence the US still holds in the region.³⁶ The primary risk from this strategy is a potential shift of the TCOs' operations to other countries in the hemisphere.

Ultimately, this strategy proposes a fundamental shift in addressing TCOs and the threat they pose to the US, the Northern Triangle, and the international community. It will require a carefully coordinated communications strategy to secure resources and support from Congress and international partners to secure support. It is long term and will require firm commitment by multiple administrations to build the governance and law enforcement capacity and develop the economic prosperity in the Northern Triangle necessary to quell this criminal insurgency. It is also comprehensive, addressing the consumer end of narcotics and the supplier end of weapons within the US. While complex, this strategy recognizes the evolution of TCOs into a criminal insurgency, and proposes an unorthodox approach defeat it. □

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