

RELEASE IN
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From: Valenzuela, Arturo A <ValenzuelaAA@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 10, 2011 6:43 PM
To: H
Cc: Steinberg, James B; Burns, William J; Sullivan, Jacob J; Jacobson, Roberta S
Subject: Briefing of Congressmen Mack and Engle on Regional Security

Madam Secretary,

You will recall that last year Congressmen Engle and Mack came to see you about WHA issues and asked that you consider appointing a Regional Security Coordinator for our citizen safety initiatives (Merida, Colombia, CARSI, CBSI.) The suggestion, primarily from then HFAC WHA Subcommittee chair Engle, stemmed from congressional concerns that there was no centralized coordination mechanism at State for these programs. You agreed to the suggestion. When Craig Kelly retired as PDAS and we appointed Roberta Jacobson to that position—we asked her to assume the newly created Coordinator role.

At the first HFAC Hearing of the WHA Subcommittee of the new Congress on February 15, 2011, we had included Roberta's appointment as part of my testimony. Mack staff asked that we not mention the matter because he apparently wanted to address it in a subsequent hearing—but Engle in his questioning pressed for details, revealing some difference of opinion between the new Chairman and the Ranking Minority member. I stated that following your instructions we had made an appointment, that we very much welcomed their input, and that we would be delighted to provide them with a briefing at their earliest convenience.

On March 9, 2011, Roberta went to brief Mack and Engel. She outlined progress on Merida and spelled out the steps we have taken to bolster CARSI and CBSI. She briefed on her trip to Colombia and Central America with Bill Brownfield, and noted the close working relationship between WHA and INL. Both Members offered strong congressional support on security issues in the Hemisphere. Representatives David Rivera and Jean Schmidt also dropped by the briefing.

Mack and Engel were delighted that you had agreed to this move and highlighted their role in asking you to create the position. They stressed their general agreement on key foreign policy priorities in the Western Hemisphere. Both asked whether we had adequate resources and offered their support as we move ahead (staff, budget), though we see no need for that now. Mack reviewed his frustration with the slow pace of Merida equipment delivery, but was very satisfied with Roberta's outline of this year's accelerated schedule. Engel and Mack asked for more communications and follow up with us, and we will work with their staff to increase the tempo of engagement; we are already scheduling a follow-up on CARSI and CBSI.

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