

Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control

“Countering the Global Narcotics Epidemic – The United States’ Counternarcotics Strategy”

Tuesday, June 11, 2019 Dirksen Senate Office Building Room 215, 2:30 p.m.

Prepared Statement of Chairman John Cornyn of Texas

*Good morning. I would like to thank Secretary Pompeo and members of the caucus for being here today.

*It is appropriate that we are joined today by Secretary Pompeo to discuss the rising global narcotics epidemic that is inflicting the highest rate of casualties in our nation’s history.

*In order to break this devastating cycle, we must take a holistic, whole of government approach to address the supply and demand, as well as expand treatment for those suffering from substance abuse.

*Today we will focus on supply, and in particular, international sources of narcotics and our nation's strategy to prevent them from reaching our borders and infiltrating our communities.

*The current effects of the narcotics epidemic cannot be overstated. It is not hyperbole to say that we have reached a crisis point. Allow me

provide some data to illustrate my point.

*According to the Center for Disease Control and National Institute on Drug Abuse, more than 70,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2017 — a two-fold increase in a decade, and over 11,000 more Americans than died in Vietnam.

*Think about that for a minute. We lost more people to drug overdoses last year than over a decade of war in Vietnam.

*The 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment reports that drug poisoning deaths remain the

leading cause of injury death in the United States.

*They are currently at their highest ever recorded level and, every year since 2011, have outnumbered deaths by firearms, motor vehicle crashes, suicide, and homicide. In 2016, approximately 174 people died every day from drug poisoning.

*My home state of Texas remains one of the most severely impacted states in terms of volume of trafficking and all related mayhem that accompanies the illicit activity.

*In 2017, nearly 3,000 Texans died from drug related deaths. Approximately half of those were overdose deaths involving opioids, with a dramatic increase in synthetic opioid related deaths.

*The emergence of fentanyl as a significant contributor to the opioid crisis has skyrocketed in prominence over the past few years, and has been the subject of previous caucus hearings.

*As these numbers indicate, illicit drugs, as well as the transnational and domestic criminal organizations who traffic them, continue to represent significant threats to public health, law enforcement, and national security in Texas and

across the United States.

*While the most evident focus of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control is to expand cooperation against drug abuse and narcotics trafficking, those efforts cannot occur in a vacuum.

*We need a comprehensive strategy that will focus on both drug supply, which we are examining today, as well as demand.

*That strategy must also take action against transnational criminal organizations which are

running rampant, and engaging in a broad range of criminal activities.

*The Sinaloa Cartel, Jalisco New Generation Cartel, Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas Cartel, and many others maintain a presence in Texas. They specialize in moving vast amounts of cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, and other illegal drugs throughout the region.

*It's not just drugs they're carrying, though. These groups will do whatever it takes to turn a profit. Human trafficking...Migrant smuggling... Money Laundering...Counterfeit goods... Public Corruption... The list of crimes is virtually never-

ending.

*In the face of all this violence and trauma, the groups fueling the cycle are becoming richer and growing their influence in the United States. Without intervention, their power will only grow.

*Because we cannot win this fight alone, our strategy must also improve security cooperation with our international partners, particularly Mexico.

*Finally, it must invest in economic security and promote a stronger, more stable Central America.

*Secretary Pompeo and the experts on our second panel will shed light on the growing narcotics epidemic in our hemisphere and across the globe.

*I look forward to hearing their testimony and learning how we can work together to form a comprehensive, whole of government strategy that reduces the flow of illicit drugs into the United States and keeps our citizens safe.

*I will now turn it over my co-chairman Feinstein

for her opening remarks.