**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#1)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

It is clear that the United States faces an increasing number of global narcotics threats. It is also clear, that as the United States and other countries increase their interdiction and enforcement efforts, drug traffickers adapt. **In your view, what is the most pressing drug threat facing the United States, and do we have adequate resources and programs in place to address this threat?**

**Answer:**

The Department of State views fentanyl and other synthetic drugs as the most pressing drug threat facing the United States given their extreme potency, low production costs, and endless potential for chemical alterations. Criminals increasingly adulterate plantbased drugs with these lethal synthetic drugs, exacerbating the threat from cocaine, heroin, and other narcotics. The Department, in partnership with other departments and agencies, combats these challenges through programs that: (1) promote accelerated scheduling of illicit drugs at the national level and the implementation of other treaty-mandated obligations; (2) increase the capacity of law enforcement and justice sector officials to investigate and prosecute drug crimes; facilitate real‑time intelligence sharing; (3) curb sales of synthetic drugs online and through the international mail; advance engagement with industry; and (4) engage diplomatically with countries that are the source of illicit fentanyl found in the United States.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#2)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

It is clear that the United States faces an increasing number of global narcotics threats. It is also clear, that as the United States and other countries increase their interdiction and enforcement efforts, drug traffickers adapt. **What new emerging trends should we be aware of, and how is the State Department proactively addressing these trends?**

**Answer:**

The Department of State has developed a *Five-Year Global Plan of Action to Combat Emerging Synthetic Drug Threats* to disrupt the supply of synthetic drugs that fuel the U.S. opioid crisis. We are closely watching Southeast Asia and India to see if fentanyl flows change following China’s implementation of class scheduling. Reports about the growth of fentanyl production in Mexico are also of concern. The Department works with the International Narcotics Control Board, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and the World Health Organization to identify emerging synthetic drugs. Additionally, we will continue to work with national governments to mobilize governments to expend resources and synchronize efforts in combating synthetic drugs.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#3)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

It is clear that the United States faces an increasing number of global narcotics threats. It is also clear, that as the United States and other countries increase their interdiction and enforcement efforts, drug traffickers adapt. **Are there any additional tools or resources that Congress can provide to assist the State Department in its counternarcotics efforts?**

**Answer:**

 The rapid proliferation of synthetic drug analogues is a major challenge. The Department of State uses its foreign assistance and diplomatic engagement overseas to build capacity and gather will to address this threat. While we cautiously await follow-through enforcement actions, China’s recent steps to schedule fentanyl as a class demonstrates the effectiveness of our diplomatic tools. We encourage Congress to continue to shine a spotlight on the epidemic at home and abroad. By also meeting with representatives from industries including chemical, pharmaceutical, e-commerce, shipping, and social media, you can stress the important role they play in preventing their products from being misused by criminal actors. While on Congressional travel, visit our programs and reiterate our messages with partner nations to do more.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#4)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control**

**June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

The 2019 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report pointed to the challenges that Central and South American countries face when it comes to drug trafficking.  Despite these challenges, key U.S. Ambassador positions remain vacant, including in Belize, Honduras, Panama, Brazil and Chile.  In addition, the President waited almost a full year before submitting a nominee to Congress for U.S. Ambassador to Mexico until March of this year.  **What role does the U.S. Ambassador in a foreign country play in facilitating the implementation of joint counternarcotics and law enforcement policies?**

**Answer:**

U.S. ambassadors are responsible for directing, supervising, and coordinating our broad array of counternarcotics and law enforcement programs and operations in foreign countries. At each embassy, the Law Enforcement Working Group, made up of representatives from all agencies with counternarcotics responsibilities at post, advises the ambassador on counternarcotics policies. In cases where U.S. ambassadors are not yet assigned or are temporarily out of their country, a qualified Foreign Service Officer is designated as chargé d’affaires. I remain dedicated to working with Congress to fill critical posts around the globe with Senate-confirmed ambassadors.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#5)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

The 2019 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report pointed to the challenges that Central and South American countries face when it comes to drug trafficking.  Despite these challenges, key U.S. Ambassador positions remain vacant, including in Belize, Honduras, Panama, Brazil and Chile.  In addition, the President waited almost a full year before submitting a nominee to Congress for U.S. Ambassador to Mexico until March of this year.  **How does the lack of confirmed and permanent U.S. ambassadors in these countries impact the State Department’s counternarcotics efforts?**

**Answer:**

In cases where U.S. ambassadors are not yet assigned or are temporarily out of their country of assignment, a qualified Foreign Service Officer – usually the deputy chief of mission – is designated as chargé d’affaires. In accordance with relevant U.S. law, chargés have the same authority as ambassadors to direct, supervise, and coordinate U.S. counternarcotics efforts in their country of assignment. I am confident in our team’s ability to advance the Department’s counternarcotics efforts. I remain dedicated to working with Congress to fill critical posts around the globe with Senate-confirmed ambassadors.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#6)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
July 11, 2019**

**Question:**

The 2019 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report pointed to the challenges that Central and South American countries face when it comes to drug trafficking.  Despite these challenges, key U.S. Ambassador positions remain vacant, including in Belize, Honduras, Panama, Brazil and Chile.  In addition, the President waited almost a full year before submitting a nominee to Congress for U.S. Ambassador to Mexico until March of this year.**How has the relationship with Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador’s administration been affected due to the absence of a formally appointed U.S. Ambassador to Mexico?**

**Answer:**

The U.S. Mission in Mexico has been in the very capable hands of a senior career Foreign Service Officer and a country team with many years of experience in Mexico. They go above and beyond every day in leading one of our most important bilateral relationships. On March 26, President Trump nominated Christopher Landau as the next U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. I continue my commitment to working closely with the White House and the Senate through the nomination process to ensure we have ambassadorial leadership at the head of Mission Mexico as soon as possible.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#7)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

It is my understanding that in October 2018, the State Department announced that it would not develop a specific counternarcotics strategy for Afghanistan. I also understand that the State Department’s South Asia Strategy, which guides its overall work in the region, does not include any focus on counternarcotics. I and others on the Caucus have long been concerned about the lack of a specific U.S. counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan and have requested that the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) review the U.S. government’s existing counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan. **Please explain what factors the State Department considered in making the decision not to have a counternarcotics strategy that is specific to Afghanistan.**

**Answer:**

Since President Trump announced the South Asia Strategy in August 2017, there has been no disruption to the U.S. government’s counternarcotics efforts. The Department of State remains committed to a strategy that ensures Afghanistan is never again used by terrorists to threaten the United States and that lays the groundwork for a stable and prosperous post‑settlement future for the nation. Our counternarcotics programs will continue to support the Afghan government’s interdiction efforts, including targeting drug kingpins. We will help Afghans preserve the gains of the past 18 years by supporting the civilian government and their tradition of self-reliance.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#8)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

It is my understanding that in October 2018, the State Department announced that it would not develop a specific counternarcotics strategy for Afghanistan. I also understand that the State Department’s South Asia Strategy, which guides its overall work in the region, does not include any focus on counternarcotics. I and others on the Caucus have long been concerned about the lack of a specific U.S. counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan and have requested that the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) review the U.S. government’s existing counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan. Without any current, detailed counternarcotics goals and objectives for Afghanistan, **how is the Administration guiding remaining counternarcotics efforts in the country and measuring their progress and impact?**

**Answer:**

Working with the Department of Treasury, Drug Enforcement Administration, and others, the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) continues to focus on interdiction and targeting drug kingpins. The United States supports the Afghan government’s counternarcotics strategy, the National Drug Action Plan, and specialized Afghan counternarcotics units. A lasting and durable peace in Afghanistan would present greater opportunities for expanded counternarcotics support as more areas of the country become accessible to Afghan government counternarcotics forces. INL utilizes outcome indicators within the bureau and Afghanistan Integrated Country Strategy and individual performance metrics on each counternarcotics program to measure progress over time.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#9)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

It is my understanding that in October 2018, the State Department announced that it would not develop a specific counternarcotics strategy for Afghanistan. I also understand that the State Department’s South Asia Strategy, which guides its overall work in the region, does not include any focus on counternarcotics. I and others on the Caucus have long been concerned about the lack of a specific U.S. counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan and have requested that the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) review the U.S. government’s existing counternarcotics efforts in Afghanistan.  **As it continues to assist in negotiating peace between the Afghan government and the Taliban, what steps is the State Department taking to ensure that the Taliban ends its involvement in narcotrafficking?**

**Answer:**

The U.S. government supports Afghan-led counternarcotics efforts, which have resulted in interdiction and revenue denial for insurgents and terrorists. Our joint support with the Department of Defense and the Drug Enforcement Administration for Afghan interdiction units has focused on targeting insurgent and terrorist income streams and resulted in important progress for these units. The U.S. government will continue to support efforts that ensure Afghanistan is never again used by terrorists to threaten the United States and that protect our investment in the gains of the past 18 years.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#10)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

U.S. counterdrug assistance to Mexico is primarily funded through the Merida Initiative. Since it began in 2008, Congress has appropriated nearly $3 billion for this Initiative, which, unfortunately, has not reduced the flow of drugs into the United States or violence in Mexico. **Do you believe that the United States and Mexico share any common goals in terms of addressing drug trafficking and violence? If so, what are they, and how is the State Department working with the Mexican government to achieve these common goals?**

**Answer:**

Mexico and the United States share common goals of addressing the impact of the drug trade on the United States and related violence in Mexico. The U.S. and Mexican governments leverage Merida Initiative programs to target the business model of transnational criminal organizations, including the illicit drug trade. Our partnership with Mexico has led to the removal of hundreds of tons of drugs that would otherwise be on American streets, dramatic improvements in the capacity of Mexican law enforcement and criminal justice institutions, and increased bilateral law enforcement and security cooperation. Nonetheless, much more work is needed to address this threat. The Department of State is committed to achieving improved results of joint counternarcotics efforts accountable to the many Americans impacted by illicit drugs.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#11)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

In Fiscal Year 2020, President Trump requested $76.3 million for the Merida Initiative. If this request were enacted, it would represent a nearly 50 percent cut compared to the previous year’s funding level of $145 million. Given that there are already difficulties with the Merida Initiative in terms of reducing the illicit drug flow into the United States and violence in Mexico, **how would this proposed funding reduction impact U.S. counternarcotics efforts in Mexico? Specifically, which programs would no longer be able to be funded, and on what criteria would this decision be based?**

**Answer:**

The President’s FY 2020 budget request for the Merida Initiative reflects a greater emphasis on counternarcotics efforts compared to prior year requests. Our objectives are to reduce the supply of heroin and synthetic drugs like fentanyl and methamphetamine, dismantle the business model of transnational criminal organizations, strengthen border security and migration controls, and bring criminals to justice. The decision to continue a program or to start a new one will be based on whether the program will help achieve these objectives.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#12)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

Between fiscal years 2014 and 2019, there has been a 102 percent increase in methamphetamine seized by U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Border Patrol. During this same time frame, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there has been a 140 percent increase in psychostimulant deaths, which includes methamphetamine, in the United States. In California, there were 1,916 psychostimulant deaths in 2017 alone. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration’s most recent National Drug Threat Assessment, the vast majority of methamphetamine found in the United States is produced in Mexico and smuggled across the Southwest Border. In light of these facts, **please explain how the State Department is working, both with its federal partners and with its Mexican counterparts, to better address and prevent the production and export of methamphetamine into the United States.**

**Answer:**

The Department of State engages regularly at all levels of the Mexican government to shut down methamphetamine laboratories; track and seize methamphetamine and precursor chemicals before they reach the U.S. border; investigate and prosecute illicit drug producers and traffickers; minimize the associated financial incentive; and coordinate drug and precursor chemical scheduling. In conjunction with our federal partners, we work to improve Mexico’s partnership with U.S. law enforcement through training, mentoring, and shared investigations, and by offering technical expertise.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#13)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

The United States has appropriated over $10 billion to fund Plan Colombia since the year 2000. Since that time, Colombia has made great progress in strengthening its institutions, but has failed to sustain long-term reductions in coca production. In fact, with 209,000 hectares of coca in 2017, cultivation reached record high levels. I understand that the United States and Colombian governments reached an agreement last year to reduce coca cultivation by 50 percent in the next five years.  **Do you believe this goal is attainable? How is the State Department working with the Colombian government to achieve this goal?**

**Answer:**

Thanks to President Duque’s aggressive eradication efforts, Colombia destroyed more than 60 percent more coca in the first four months of 2019 than during the same period in 2018, and coca cultivation decreased for the first time in 2018 since 2012. This level of effort puts Colombia on track to meet our joint five-year goal, but we have a way to go. We continue to encourage the Colombian government to do more, but they need robust U.S. assistance to bring coca down to a manageable level and sustain it. The Department of State is working closely with Duque to implement a whole-of-government counternarcotics strategy. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) provides critical support for Colombia’s eradication and interdiction operations. INL also supports Colombia’s effort to expand the police’s rural presence in under-governed areas with high levels of coca cultivation and cocaine trafficking.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#14)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

The United States has appropriated over $10 billion to fund Plan Colombia since the year 2000. Since that time, Colombia has made great progress in strengthening its institutions, but has failed to sustain long-term reductions in coca production. In fact, with 209,000 hectares of coca in 2017, cultivation reached record high levels. I understand that the United States and Colombian governments reached an agreement last year to reduce coca cultivation by 50 percent in the next five years. In his fiscal year 2020 budget request, the President recommended cutting assistance for State Department and USAID programs in Colombia by 23%. What impact would this proposed cut have on the State Department’s efforts to work with the Colombian government to eradicate and interdict cocaine before it reaches the United States? What specific programs would be impacted if Congress were to enact this request?

**Answer:**

The FY 2020 request concentrates resources where they best address U.S. priorities. The FY 2020 International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement request for Colombia will support counternarcotics, law enforcement, and criminal justice assistance to directly enable the Colombian government’s efforts to achieve our joint goal of reducing coca cultivation and cocaine production by 50 percent by the end of 2023. I recognize the need to balance counternarcotics and security assistance with support for development, governance, and human rights in the country in order to achieve our goal of reducing coca cultivation. This is why the FY 2020 Economic Support and Development Fund budget request for Colombia requests resources to foster reconciliation; expand state presence, good governance, and human rights to regions historically under the control of the FARC; and promote rural economic development in marginalized communities.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#15)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

Transnational criminal groups often derive funding from illicit activities, including drug trafficking. Historically, it has been a challenge for the U.S. government to assess the amount or location of these groups’ assets. **How can we obtain more specific data on illicit money leaving the United States bound for Mexican, Colombian and other transnational drug trafficking organizations?**

**Answer:**

The Department of State supports U.S. interagency efforts to obtain more specific data on illicit money leaving the United States by bolstering our foreign counterparts’ capacity to collect, analyze, and share information. Our programs work to ensure partners’ ability to set and enforce anti-money laundering laws consistent with international standards and good practices. Following these standards and best practices, our partners are able to collect and share better information and data on money laundering to our own institutions. In turn, the U.S. interagency can better protect our country and keep money from the hands of transnational drug trafficking organizations.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#16)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

Transnational criminal groups often derive funding from illicit activities, including drug trafficking. Historically, it has been a challenge for the U.S. government to assess the amount or location of these groups’ assets. **How can the United States strengthen its international partnerships to better map, target, and dismantle illicit financial networks?**

**Answer:**

The United States can strengthen its international partnerships by continuing to provide technical assistance to jurisdictions around the world to combat money laundering. The Department of State, with the collaboration of other U.S. agencies, provides foreign regulators, financial intelligence units, law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges with the skills and tools necessary to map, target, and dismantle illicit financial networks. The Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs also supports regional anti-money laundering efforts at its regional international law enforcement academies, which rely on U.S. interagency expertise for leadership and instruction on these topics.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#17)**

**Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control**

**June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

Extradition is a strong and feared procedure. It is a critical tool in disrupting organized criminal networks and drug trafficking organizations. **Do you believe that the United States government pursues the extradition of foreign narcotics manufacturers and traffickers vigorously enough? Please explain.**

**Answer:**

The United States government vigorously uses extradition to facilitate the return of drug traffickers and other fugitives to the United States so they may be held accountable for violations of U.S. laws, including drug laws. We are successful in many of these cases. I refer you to the Department of Justice for additional questions.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#18)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

Plan Colombia was a comprehensive strategy that focused on security, alternative development, and interdiction. Despite increases in coca cultivation, Plan Colombia was successful in strengthening Colombia’s institutions. Similar to Colombia in the early 2000s, countries in the Northern Triangle are experiencing high levels of violence, drug trafficking, corruption and human rights abuses, which is causing their citizens to flee to the United States. While there are some commonalities in each of these countries, there are also distinct differences. In light of this, **do you believe that a plan similar to Plan Colombia could be successful in the Northern Triangle? If so, should a regional plan be developed, or should it be three separate bilateral plans between the United States and each of these individual countries, given the differences in the push factors leading to migration?**

**Answer:**

The U.S. Strategy for Central America, a whole-of-government approach to improve the region’s security, governance, and prosperity to address drivers of migration, is the best model for this region. The strategy complements the Northern Triangle governments’ own reform initiative, the Alliance for Prosperity. The strategy, while regional in nature, allows us to tailor our approach to the specific conditions on the ground, including addressing the different push factors leading to emigration. Our assistance can only be one part of this effort, and we have made it clear to the Northern Triangle governments they need to do more to prevent drug trafficking and emigration from their countries.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#19)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

Following the peace agreement with the FARC, Colombian coca cultivation and cocaine production reached record high levels in 2017. Moreover, it has been reported that many FARC dissidents continue to participate in the drug trade, and that they are partnering with other armed and criminal groups in Venezuela.  Further complicating matters, the actions of the Maduro regime have generated significant levels of political unrest that directly impact Colombian security forces, which dilutes their ability to focus on the illicit drug trade. **Given the lack of U.S. presence in Venezuela, how is the State Department working to ensure that Venezuela does not become an even bigger transit point for cocaine than it already is?**

**Answer:**

FARC dissidents and members of the National Liberation Army are engaged in illicit activities in Venezuela. Both groups continue to pose a threat to Colombian security forces and our joint efforts to promote a more secure and prosperous region. The Department of State continues to support Colombia as it combats narcoterrorism, transnational organized crime, and the political crisis in Venezuela. In the absence of U.S. presence in Venezuela, our continued and robust support for Colombia and other countries bordering Venezuela will help stem the flow of Andean cocaine through Venezuela.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#20)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

Following the peace agreement with the FARC, Colombian coca cultivation and cocaine production reached record high levels in 2017. Moreover, it has been reported that many FARC dissidents continue to participate in the drug trade, and that they are partnering with other armed and criminal groups in Venezuela. Further complicating matters, the actions of the Maduro regime have generated significant levels of political unrest that directly impact Colombian security forces, which dilutes their ability to focus on the illicit drug trade. **Does the United States have a clear picture of drug trafficking routes in Venezuela and the potential activities of drug cartels in the country?**

**Answer:**

Venezuela continues to be a major drug transit country and is one of the preferred trafficking routes in the Western Hemisphere for illegal drugs, predominately cocaine. Venezuela’s porous border with Colombia, weak judicial system, almost nonexistent international drug control cooperation, and corrupt environment provide ideal conditions for drug trafficking operations and associated violence. Under the regime of former President Nicolás Maduro, the country’s porous borders offer a permissive environment to known terrorist groups involved in drug trafficking, including the FARC and the National Liberation Army.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#21)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

Mexican drug trafficking organizations and cartels often vie for control of commercial maritime ports and land ports of entry in order to move their illegal contraband. In an effort to reduce corruption and violence at these ports, it is my understanding that the Mexican marines have taken over port security. **How is the Department of State working with the government of Mexico to strengthen its capacity to increase security and reduce corruption at its maritime and land ports of entry?**

**Answer:**

The Department of State partners with the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice to help Mexico address institutional weaknesses and vulnerabilities that allow transnational crime to exist. Through the Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), we provide foreign assistance to bring Mexican land, air, and sea ports of entry up to improved security standards, professionalize Mexican officials, and enhance coordination between U.S. and Mexican agencies. INL provides equipment and funds training and mentoring by the U.S. Coast Guard to improve the Mexican Navy’s seaport management and maritime interdiction capabilities.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Secretary of State Michael Pompeo by
Senator Dianne Feinstein (#22)
Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control
June 11, 2019**

**Question:**

According to both the Defense Intelligence Agency and the U.S. Coast Guard, the Eastern Pacific is the primary smuggling route used by narcotics traffickers seeking to transport drugs into the United States. They further report that because of sustained interdiction efforts with international partners, including Mexico and Colombia, traffickers are beginning to adapt. To the extent that additional resources and attention are being focused on migration at the Southern Border and on interdiction efforts in the Eastern Pacific transit zone, **is there any concern that traffickers may begin to alter their routes or methods to ensure their illicit narcotics can reach the United States? If so, what areas and methods should we be concerned about?**

**Answer:**

Drug traffickers continuously alter their methods and routes. The Department of State’s goal is to protect Americans by reducing the impact of the most significant emerging drug threats. Synthetic drugs like fentanyl pose a new challenge because they are lethal in tiny doses, can be manufactured anywhere, and are shipped in small, hard-to-detect quantities. Reports about the growth of fentanyl production in Mexico are of concern. To address the threat posed by synthetic drugs, the Department’s strategy – the *Five-Year Global Plan of Action to Combat Emerging Synthetic Drug Threats* – aims to disrupt this supply. In addition, cocaine and heroin continue to pose a threat. The Department works with governments around the world to detect and interdict drugs and to dismantle illicit financial networks in an effort to remove revenue from criminal organizations that traffic and profit from illicit drugs.