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NORTH AMERICAN, CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN OFFICE

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Agenda Item 5: Safety Oversight Developments

THIRD BORDER INITIATIVE

(Presented by the United States of America)

SUMMARY

President Bush launched the Third Border Initiative (TBI) at the April 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City. TBI is designed to strengthen the capabilities of Caribbean institutions to address economic and social issues, counter transnational crimes and promote regional security. Using the Economic Support Funds, TBI funding supplements United States Government (USG) bilateral assistance to the CARICOM Member States and the Dominican Republic. In the aviation arena, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has partnered with selected Caribbean States to develop the capabilities of the Regional Aviation Safety Oversight System (RASOS) and its Member States. Future funding under this initiative is very uncertain; new ways to support and sustain aviation infrastructure development are needed.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The United States and the island nations of the Caribbean are closely linked by travel and immigration. Each year, millions of Americans visit the Caribbean, while tens of thousands of Caribbean visitors and immigrants arrive in at U.S. ports-of-entry. Transnational issues such as the illicit trafficking in persons, the illegal drug and firearms trade, potential terrorism, and other criminal activities directly affect U.S. domestic and regional security interests. Furthermore, many Caribbean nations are vulnerable to adverse global economic conditions, are environmentally fragile, and share the risk of hurricanes and other natural disasters. The Third Border Initiative (TBI) continues to strengthen partnerships with our Caribbean neighbors in countering natural and man-made threats to our regional security.

1.2 2007 marks the fifth program year for TBI. Much of the USG's TBI assistance goes directly to programs designed to help Caribbean countries establish stronger and more effective security measures, such as securing seaports, strengthening customs and immigration practices, and information-sharing measures that may prevent the easy access and transit of criminals and illegal goods. Through TBI, the aviation safety sector is also enhanced by supporting infrastructure development and formal training in all aspects of aviation safety oversight. The USG implements TBI-funded programs through several federal agencies and International organizations such as the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CICTE), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the FAA.

2.0 DISCUSSION

2.1 Through the use of TBI funds, the U.S. supports the following programs:

- a) Through the IOM, Border Management Assessments are conducted in cooperation with regional governments. Assessments in the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago have recently been completed and TBI has obligated funds for projects to strengthen entry/exit systems in The Bahamas and the Dominican Republic.
- b) With the assistance of the OAS/CICTE, Port Security Assessments and targeted training for compliance with international security standards are being conducted. TBI is also funding projects to assist with customs enforcement training in the areas of cargo enforcement for land borders, seaports and international airports.
- c) The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has partnered with regional governments to repair and enhance regional all-hazard disaster early warning and communication systems that have improved both Caribbean and U.S. disaster preparedness capabilities.
- d) The U.S. Department of State's Office of Economic Support has initiated a "White Water to Blue Water" program that promotes regional public/private partnerships to better manage integrated watershed and ecosystem-based systems, thus reducing the effects of natural disasters.

2.2 TBI programs continue to have a positive effect on the safety and security of travelers to the region. Through technical assessment surveys in 12 Caribbean countries and follow-on measures to implement integrated immigration entry-exit systems, TBI is strengthening regional and local border management, while protecting against criminal and terrorist elements who seek to travel freely to and through the region. Enhancing border security in the region will become an issue of paramount importance in 2007 with the Caribbean hosting the Cricket World Cup – the world's third largest sporting event after the Olympics and World Cup Football. Thousands of visitors from all parts of the world will significantly increase the already large numbers of tourists frequenting the region.

2.3 Better planning for natural disasters is also becoming an area of increased importance. Through TBI funding, the U.S. assists Caribbean governments prepare for natural disasters through technical improvements to the region's disaster early warning and communication systems, and conducting regional exercises in disaster prevention, ensuring that disaster risk reduction and mitigation concepts are explicitly integrated into the region's economic planning and implementation.

3. Aviation Infrastructure Developments under TBI

3.1 Supporting the creation of a viable civil aviation infrastructure in the Caribbean region is critical to the USG's aviation safety and security interests. In particular, the Regional Aviation Safety Oversight System (RASOS) is one of the premier success stories for regional aviation safety oversight efforts.

3.2 Since 2002, FAA activity in the Caribbean has been targeted towards developing the proficiency necessary to meet international safety standards as confirmed by the USG's International Aviation Safety Assessment (IASA) Program. An IASA Category 1 rating is essential for establishing or expanding existing commercial air service to the U.S., for entering into code sharing arrangements with U.S. airlines, and for the sharing of airworthiness responsibilities. To assist Caribbean countries meet international standards, the FAA is encouraging the formation of regional organizations at numerous international fora, particularly at ICAO.

3.3 With the assistance of a modest amount of TBI funding, RASOS is making great strides in the area of safety oversight. The FAA's technical assistance has helped Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and the ECCAA (an entity of the OECS) gain IASA Category 1 ratings, while FAA technical assistance also supported the Jamaican Civil Aviation Authority to retain its Category 1 rating. Overall, RASOS is expanding its positive influence in the region, and internationally. For example, RASOS and its Member States have provided well-received advice and assistance to African and Middle Eastern States on establishing similar regional safety organizations. As RASOS matures, the FAA and RASOS will turn their attention to other important areas, such as aerodromes and air navigation infrastructure improvements, —both of which, if nurtured, will foster aviation growth and economic development in the region.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Funding from TBI expires in September 2007. Since the FAA lacks the adequate budgetary means and infrastructure to provide technical assistance to foreign governments free of charge, new funding mechanisms must be found. The FAA is willing to work with our partners in the region to find new funding sources in order to further strengthen and enhance regional aviation safety.

4.2 The meeting is invited to note the information in this paper.