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INL Hosts Experts and Practitioners at Anti-Gang Conference in Mexico City

From June 2–5, INL, in collaboration with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), hosted the Third Annual International Anti-Gang Conference in Mexico City. At the conference, specialists highlighted increasing gang involvement with the criminal activities of larger transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), allowing for worrisome expansion of dangerous transnational groups. Experts suggested that greater communication and information sharing across the region, as well as across agencies, is a possible solution.

“Strengthened international cooperation is our best weapon against gangs and TCOs. Through the Merida Initiative, the U.S. government—specifically the State Department, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—is working with Central America and Mexico to build law enforcement capacity to counter the gang threat,” stated U.S. Ambassador to Mexico E. Anthony Wayne.

Throughout the conference, gang experts trained over 400 officials from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras on gang identification and combat methods. Participants included federal and state prosecutors, investigators, prison officials, and military personnel from the four nations.

Today, gangs are able to operate internationally through the use of social media, email, and cell-phones. Gangs can also use these new communication methods to more easily organize criminal activity from behind prison walls.



Ambassador Wayne (center) during International Anti-Gang Conference

While gangs are changing their methods, they are also supporting the criminal activities of larger TCOs, such as money laundering and extortion. To respond to this evolution and increased sophistication of gangs, specialists during the conference called for increased information sharing and communication.

Currently, the U.S. Mission to Mexico provides anti-gang training, such as tattoo identification and interrogation techniques. In the future, INL will seek to strengthen Mexico's ability to combat gangs by collaborating with the Government of Mexico to develop specialized gang-units in law enforcement agencies.

Liberian Sexual Gender-Based Crimes Unit Delivering Justice for Rape Victims

The Liberian Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Crimes Unit is a specialized prosecution and protection unit of the Ministry of Justice, which has as its fundamental goal the reduction of SGBV in this post-conflict society. This specialized unit is supported by INL's Criminal Justice Program Support (CJPS) project, implemented by Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE).

Even after more than a decade of peace in Liberia, SGBV remains a pre dominant and largely unreported crime in Liberia, placing women and girls at physical and emotional risk. Of the 1139 sexual violence crimes documented in Liberia during 2014, 657 allegedly involved girls under the age of 18, and five young girls between the ages of 5 and 14 died of injuries from rape. Already in 2015, five more young girls have died from rape.

Nevertheless, survivors seeking justice may soon see progress. During the first six months of 2015, the Liberian SGBV Crimes Unit obtained 121 criminal indictments. By comparison, the unit obtained nine sexual offense indictments during the first six months of 2014. One of the individuals who had a hand in this radical change is CJPS Justice Advisor Samuel Nugent.

Over the past 11 months, Nugent has been embedded at the SGBV Crimes Unit, working directly with staff to improve policies, procedures, and motivation. A former prosecutor from Ohio, Mr. Nugent initiated new procedures and trained the unit in several professional skills including indictment drafting. Consequently, sexual gender-based violence prosecutors have increased more than tenfold their preparation of indictments for review and presentation to a Grand Jury. Nugent also developed procedures that successfully assigned approximately 300 pending sexual violence cases to individual prosecutors.

On the defense side, the SGBV Crimes Unit has facilitated the appointment of defense counsel for approximately half of the 264 sexual violence pre-trial detainees at Monrovia's central prison. This is an unprecedented step in Liberia, where arraignment can take years; courts do not have a pre-indictment legal responsibility to move criminal cases forward. Some of these detainees have been incarcerated for more than four years without a single court appearance to address the charges against them. Involving legal counsel in sexual violence cases is expected to move cases forward and secure just convictions.

The SGBV Crimes Unit staff demonstrates a new-found sense of pride and passion. Word of the SGBV unit's achievements is spreading too -- other prosecution sections within the Ministry of Justice have taken notice and begun to implement similar systems and procedures for different types of crimes.



INL Justice Advisor Sam Nugent (back left) with the Government of Liberia SGBV Crimes Unit staff in Monrovia

International Law Enforcement Academy Offers Training for Senior Judiciary Leaders

In July, the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Roswell conducted a particularly noteworthy multinational training, featuring 31 senior level delegates from Colombia, Mexico, and Panama – including over 20 federal judges and prosecutors. The Colombian delegation was led by Sandra Lucia Yepes Arrova of the Office of the Supreme Court, and included nine delegates who are members of the Supreme Court Office. The Colombians played a critical role during the course in leading discussions on how to advance anti-corruption within the legal framework of the nations present at the ILEA.

The ILEA training covered a good deal of ground, featuring presentations on "Leadership in Crisis," "Multi-national Approaches to Countering Terrorism," and "The Role of Physical Evidence in Criminal Investigations," among others. The delegates also participated in an Executive Leadership Law Enforcement Panel, consisting of senior U.S. officials at the Federal, State and local levels.



LEA Senior Level delegates from Colombia, Mexico, and Panama—including over 20 federal judges and prosecutors

ILEA senior level participants engaging in presentations including "Leadership in Crisis," "Multi-national Approaches to Countering

The Colombian, Mexican, and Panamanian participants also benefited from hands-on courtroom trainings, with District Court Judge Freddie Romero and Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) Senior Legal Instructor Michelle Helamy hosting the delegates during a trial at the Chaves County Courthouse.



Terrorism," and "The Role of Physical Evidence in Criminal Investigations"

Interest by the delegates in the courtroom session was so strong that Judge Romero and Helamy arranged supplemental after hours sessions to discuss legal questions related to U.S.–Colombia cooperation on investigative and prosecutorial issues. The delegates expressed a strong desire to take back with them a clearer understanding of the U.S. "adversarial" legal system, which they are implementing in their own respective countries. Other questions concerned the interaction between the U.S. and Colombia related to extradition, the taking of statements outside one's national boundaries and international cooperation between the U.S. and their respective national legal systems.

ILEA Roswell is part of a global network of international law enforcement academies administered by the State Department. Since it was established in 1995 the ILEA program has trained over 55,000 criminal justice practitioners at its facilities in Budapest, Bangkok, Gaborone, San Salvador, and Roswell, NM.

INL Helps Liberian Communities Prevent Violence and Resolve Rural

Disputes



The MLDL staff and INL visitors at the MLDL field office in Ganta (Nimba County)

Since 2011, INL's Mitigating Local Disputes in Liberia (MLDL) program has been bringing citizens of rural communities together with law enforcement and security actors from the government to resolve disputes and security concerns locally. This provides an alternative to the communities having to rely on distant and overburdened formal justice sector institutions.

Currently implemented by The Kaizen Company, this unique project creates dispute resolution councils at the community, district, and county levels. The councils allow citizens selected by their communities – including women, youth, and elders – to share concerns and mediate to find appropriate remedies for civil and criminal matters. Matters requiring law enforcement or judicial intervention are referred by the community-level councils up to district councils comprised of mid-level law enforcement officials and community leaders. For more intractable

conflicts, the issues go to county councils which include senior law enforcement, tribal, political, and religious community leaders at the highest level.

This community-based approach strengthens security in the far reaches of the country by preventing and managing conflict at a local and regional level. It also facilitates early warning to the national government so that it can promptly respond to security incidents and predict patterns of instability. Meanwhile, as communities increasingly resolve disputes, the burden and costs to the overtaxed formal justice system are reduced and peace is sustained in areas predisposed to civil unrest.

MLDL's success is seen in the numbers: over 768 security disputes have been resolved at the community level alone since 2011. For example, recently MLDL quelled a potential conflict with an international mining company by bringing a community together with their Superintendent to discuss mining blasts that cracked building foundations and damaged homes. The Superintendent explained how the MLDL structure could facilitate mediation with the company to reach a resolution. Local residents who wanted to violently halt the company's work were calmed, and together everyone involved created a plan of action involving mediation. Citizens reported feeling empowered by this process.

To date, MLDL has established two county security councils, six district security councils, and six community councils. It has also provided 35 training sessions to over 4,000 participants; developed computer literacy among 40 community council members; and trained 580 law enforcement officials on community policing, social cohesion, crime management, crime scene investigation management, and the use of crime scene forensics kits.

This year, MLDL is establishing 11 more councils and is expanding to at least one more county. It will conduct awareness raising activities of MLDL's role for community members and local authorities, and will train 115 council members on such topics as early warning and early response, conflict management and resolution, land education, human safety, and security threats.

MLDL is increasing citizen involvement in security and justice in a country that has struggled with violence and distrust of law enforcement for decades. As MLDL expands and gives citizens a voice and role in their own security needs and concerns, it fosters greater trust and respect for state security actors.

Jamaican Law Enforcement Bolster Their Maritime Security Skills with Visit to INL's Partners in Miami

In June, seven officers from the Jamaica Constabulary Force Marine Division (JCFMD) traveled to Miami for a first-of-its-kind training focusing on law enforcement. INL partners PortMiami and Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) developed a week-long program, funded by INL and also featuring the U.S. Coast Guard, to give Jamaican officials an opportunity to observe and learn from port and maritime security operations here in the United States. The Jamaican group included the operational commander and district commanders for Falmouth and Montego Bay as well as maintenance technicians. PortMiami and MDPD provided full access to their operations covering over 300 miles of Florida coastline, providing insight into their work and

JCFMD officers on patrol with MDPD Marine Patrol off the southern coast of Miami-Dade County

boat maintenance.



PortMiami Security Division providing a demonstration of the Command Control Center (C3) automated vessel tracking system. Harbor Patrol officers are alerted by the C3 when vessels intrude on harbor security zones

JCFMD participants observed the Harbor Patrol at work as they responded to a jet ski speeding into space restricted in order to protect visiting cruise ships. PortMiami is the largest cruise port in the United States with 4.8 million cruise passengers in 2014. Sharing PortMiami's extensive knowledge and experience with cruise ship security has direct benefits for JCFMD as they perform harbor security in Jamaica, where a burgeoning cruise ship industry brought 1.4 million passengers through their ports last year.



The visit came at a critical time as JCFMD incorporates 10 INL-funded Boston Whaler boats into their marine enforcement operations. MDPD performed a full day of scheduled maintenance on two Harbor Patrol vessels while JCFMD observed and shared their own experiences. To further support the JCFMD, the United States Coast Guard Station Ft. Lauderdale provided an overview of Coast Guard operations in the region, covering maintenance procedures for their 33-foot vessels used for law enforcement.

Finally, in a demonstration of how marine operations are not restricted to harbors and the shoreline, Jamaican officers accompanied the MDPD dive unit to recover a stolen vehicle hidden in an inland canal. JCFMD officers expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to meet and observe the MDPD Marine and Harbor Patrol operations and learn about the Coast Guard perspective on marine patrols and vessel maintenance. The program paves the way for future cooperation between Jamaica, PortMiami, and MDPD on maritime law enforcement and port security.