



**Hon. Pedro R. Pierluisi**  
**Statement As Prepared For Delivery**  
**Oversight Hearing on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security**  
**House Committee on the Judiciary**  
*October 26, 2011*

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Secretary, I would first like to applaud you for crafting a common sense policy of exercising discretion over which immigration cases to prosecute.

But I would now like to address the Department's drug interdiction work in the Caribbean region, particularly Puerto Rico. Many experts, including the U.S. Attorney in Miami, have recognized that, as the federal government curtails the flow of drugs across our Southwest border, drug trafficking organizations are increasingly turning to the Caribbean as an alternate means to get their products to end users in the United States.

According to estimates provided to my office, approximately 80% of the South American cocaine that arrives in Puerto Rico is subsequently transported to the U.S. mainland. And the 20% of cocaine that remains in Puerto Rico for local consumption is the primary cause of the Island's unacceptably high number of murders. I know you share my view that, from the federal government's perspective, the violent death of an American citizen from Puerto Rico is of no less consequence than the violent death of an American citizen from Florida, New York, or any other state.

ICE has made several high-profile drug arrests on the Island over the past year, but I remain concerned that ICE and other DHS component agencies are not devoting sufficient resources to address the surge in drug trafficking through Puerto Rico. I have two main questions for you:

1. First, how has DHS responded to the "balloon effect" that I just described, whereby drug traffickers are shifting part of their operations from the Southwest border to the Caribbean? Have you increased the personnel and assets you are deploying in the Caribbean?
2. Second, while most drugs are still entering Puerto Rico through its west coast from the Dominican Republic, I have been advised that there is a surge in drugs entering the Island through its east coast from smaller Caribbean islands. I understand that it can take the

Coast Guard over an hour to respond to a suspected incoming drug shipment in the eastern part of the Island and that CBP's presence in that area is minimal. What is the Department doing to address drug trafficking through Puerto Rico's eastern region?

Madam Secretary, I have previously met with Attorney General Holder to discuss the amount of federal resources the Justice Department is devoting to combat drug-related violence in Puerto Rico. Given the overwhelming importance of this issue, I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you in the near future to discuss this matter in greater detail.