WMD, Drugs, and Criminal Gangs in Central America:

Leveraging Nonproliferation Assistance to Address Security/Development Needs With UN Security Council Resolution 1540

The Stimson Center
and the Stanley Foundation

By Brian Finlay

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In 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Helsinki offered a seed grant to bring together national governments, regional and subregional organizations, and nongovernmental experts in an innovative effort called the Next 100 Initiative. The purpose of that effort was to promote implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 more effectively and sustainably by breaking down the artificial barriers between the "security" and "development" communities, whose goals are often similar, but whose methods rarely intersected. Over time, that initiative grew into a multifaceted outreach effort from the Caribbean Basin to the Middle East, Africa, and Central America. Four years later, this informal consortium of interests has helped breathe new life into not only global nonproliferation efforts, but also into an array of citizen security and economic development objectives across the Global South.

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Additional information on the Next 100 Initiative can be found at *http://www.stimson.org/mab/next100*. A comprehensive source for information on UN Security Council Resolution 1540 can be found at *www.1540hub.org*. Forthcoming publications will consider innovative approaches to implementing UNSCR 1540 in the Middle East and in East Africa.

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Executive Summary

Few regions of the world better illustrate the intimate nexus between human development and security than does Central America. A region of inherent economic and social promise, its fortunes have been frustrated by a plethora of overwhelming security challenges related to small arms, drugs, and criminal gangs. Although a long and innovative roster of instruments has been developed to counter these scourges, a lack of technical and financial support has often prevented their full realization. Moreover, institutional vulnerabilities at the local and state levels have further complicated the implementation of national and regional strategies designed to break this cycle of violence and underdevelopment. The global economic downturn now threatens to reverse progress made to date and again place countries of the region squarely on a downward economic and security trajectory.

According to a recent report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), no issue has had a greater impact on the stability and development in Central America than crime. The Central American region has emerged as the most violent in the world, with the average number of homicides in Central America in 2008 rising to 33 per 100,000 people—three times the global average. While these statistics are rooted in a complex array of social, political, and economic circumstances that have depressed economic opportunity and inflated levels of violence, Central American scholars and regional government officials generally agree that their security and development challenges are rooted in the culture of illegality embodied most graphically by the triple threat of small arms proliferation, drug trafficking, and criminal and youth gangs.

Addressing these growing threats to citizen security and economic prosperity in Central America will require not only the preservation of existing assistance streams, but also the identification of innovative new sources of technical and financial assistance. Using UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540), governments of the region could identify novel streams of assistance to address capacity shortfalls to improve customs facilities and migratory border facilities, receive training for the tracking of illegal immigration, improve capacities to prevent money laundering and drug and human trafficking, enhance the training of public and private officials linked to maritime trade, improve their human resources and legal infrastructures, and strengthen the competencies of government institutions. This "dual-use" assistance would not only promote global nonproliferation, it would address directly the critical security and downstream development concerns of Central American governments: the drug trade, small arms trafficking, and the growth of organized criminal gangs.

In this report, we propose an innovative, "whole-of-society" approach to bridging the security/development divide that would leverage donor investments in both security assistance and development assistance, so as to ensure recipient state buy-in and an enduring return on investment. The goal of this strategy should be threefold: (1) to identify new sources of assistance to address endemic threats in the developing world, such as poverty, corruption, infectious diseases, and economic underdevelopment; (2) to expand a successful new engagement model that treats the root causes of proliferation, rather than its symptoms; and (3) to reinforce the legitimacy of the United Nations as an effective mechanism to address transnational issues. It is incumbent upon the international community to develop scalable, sustainable, and replicable pilot efforts that pragmatically pair states in need of development assistance with those states willing to offer such assistance under the auspices of national security.

UNSCR 1540 is the logical platform from which to launch this new model for security and global development. The resolution mandates that all member states implement a set of supply-side controls and criminalize proliferant activities within their territories. Significantly, the resolution includes a provision that encourages states with the capacity to provide international assistance in meeting the 1540 mandate to do so; and, in turn, encourages states in need to request any assistance that will enable them to meet the requirements of 1540.

There is perhaps no region that could benefit from this approach to security and development more than Central America. Long plagued by a socioeconomic underdevelopment reinforced by weak borders, small arms proliferation, drug trafficking, and the rise of youth and other organized criminal activities, the region will require the type of robust dual-use assistance that will respond to these local scourges while simultaneously promoting implementation of global nonproliferation objectives.

New assistance pathways for a broad variety of these needs could be identified via the assistance template offered by the UN 1540 Committee and backed by nonproliferation "donors" around the world. At present, more than $2 billion is spent annually on targeted nonproliferation assistance by G-8 and partnering governments. This funding source could leverage existing Central American counter-trafficking initiatives, border-strengthening efforts, tertiary education and training programs, rule of law initiatives, and a host of technical and other assistance measures aimed at ameliorating the triple threat of small arms, drugs, and gangs that have trapped Central American countries in a catastrophic cycle of insecurity and underdevelopment.

The author prepared this report as part of a larger project on regional implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540. The report has been informed by meeting discussions and contains the author's views and recommendations, and not necessarily those of the Stanley Foundation.

Project Report

The Varied Contexts of Security

With a population of nearly 1 million people, La Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción, or Guatemala City, is the economic, governmental, and cultural capital of its republic. The city's remarkable growth, in aggregate population and industrial capacity, has turned this historic and landlocked city into one of the premier economic epicenters of Central America. Yet as with so many urban centers across the region, daily life in that city is regularly challenged by a range of development and security threats that make it one of the most dangerous places in the Americas. In 2008, approximately 40 murders per week were reported on average in Guatemala City. That level of violence not only has obvious and tragic human consequences, but its impact cuts across all strata of Guatemalan society in the form of diminished opportunities and severely stunted economic growth. For instance, criminal gangs funded by a thriving drug trade traveling north, and equipped with small arms funneled south, are terrorizing Guatemala City's bus network. As the country's only viable means of public transit, Guatemala City's bus system is central to the movement of people throughout the country and is thus key to the country's economic performance. By extorting bus drivers of "protection money"—amounting on average to two-thirds of a driver's salary—criminal gangs have developed a profitable side business while seriously compromising citizen security and dramatically restricting economic output. Thus far in 2010, more than 170 drivers have been killed.[1]

Such struggles are by no means unique to Guatemala. In the words of authorities across the region, Central American governments are struggling against a culture of illegality that facilitates numerous immediate threats to human security: small arms proliferation, drug trafficking, money laundering, human trafficking, organized crime and youth gangs. These scourges are, in turn, fed by weak or overwhelmed judicial systems, inadequate institutional structures, and a general lack of capacity to manage these multiple, complex, and interconnected challenges. None of these challenges operate in a vacuum. Intimately connected, each feeds off the last and they have perpetuated a vicious cycle of violence and underdevelopment across the region.

It was against this backdrop that in 2004 the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1540, which mandates a sweeping array of supply-side efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons of mass destruction—including for Central American countries. Promoted as part of a broader tapestry of formal and informal mechanisms to prevent proliferation globally, the resolution was seemingly ill-connected to the daily challenges facing much of the world—particularly countries of the Global South where proliferation capacity is growing in an environment that is often unprepared to manage it.

Speaking at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington this year, President Obama noted that "it is increasingly clear that the danger of nuclear terrorism is one of the greatest threats to global security—to our collective security."[2] The president's recently released National Security Strategy reinforces this view, calling proliferation the "gravest danger to the American people and global security."[3] This sentiment has been reiterated by leaders across the developed world with increasing frequency, especially since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Even UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has agreed that terrorism, and specifically WMD terrorism, is one of the primary threats facing the international community today.[4] Yet while few can question the disastrous consequences of a WMD terrorist incident, in the face of the daily threats to citizen safety and security—both economic and physical—in Central America and much of the Global South, such pronouncements are not only inaccurate, they are *prima facie* unreasonable. Requiring resource-strapped governments to divert attention from more

immediate challenges to the seemingly distant threat of WMD terrorism is a proliferation-prevention strategy that is destined to fail—if not from a lack of political will then from a sheer lack of implementation capacity in these countries.

Bridging this divide by appealing to the immediate needs and interests of developing world governments should be a central element of our common global nonproliferation strategy. Without the sustained buy-in among those governments of the Global South that are emerging as increasingly prominent links in the global proliferation supply chain, either as dual-use technology innovators and manufacturers, or as critical transshipment points and financial centers, international efforts to prevent the world's most dangerous weapons from falling into the world's most dangerous hands will inevitably fail.

Addressing the Culture of Illegality: The Case of Central America

According to a recent report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), no issue has had a greater impact on the stability and development in Central America than has crime.[5] The Central American region is now the most violent in the world, with the average number of homicides in Central America in 2008 rising to 33 per 100,000 people—three times the global average.[6](See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Homicides in Central America [7]

Country	Homicides per 100,000 Persons, 2008
Belize	32
Costa Rica	11
El Salvador	52
Guatemala	48
Honduras	58
Nicaragua	13
Panama	19
Region Average	**33**

Beyond the immediate and tragic human consequences, the economic fallout of this violence for long-term development is significant. According to the United Nations, as a result of skyrocketing homicide rates, "the net accumulation of human capital" in Latin America and the Caribbean has been halved over the past 15 years.[8] A recent study published by the National Council of Public Security of El Salvador indicates that the consequences of violence cost Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica upwards of $6.5 billion in 2006, the equivalent of 7.7 percent of regional gross domestic product (GDP).[9] And according to a report commissioned by the Inter-American Development Bank, in 1999 violence in Latin America cost $16 billion, or 14.2 percent of regional GDP with intangible losses from investment, productivity, employment, and consumption accounting for over 50 percent of such costs.[10] The Inter-American Development Bank further estimated that GDP per capita in Latin America would be 25 percent higher if crime rates were closer to the global average.

While these statistics are attributable to a complex array of social, political, and economic circumstances that have depressed economic opportunity and inflated overall levels of violence, Central American scholars and government officials generally agree that their security and development challenges are rooted in a culture of illegality embodied most graphically by the triple threat of smalls-arms proliferation, drug trafficking, and criminal and youth gangs.

Small Arms Proliferation in Central America

Firearms are used to commit more than 70 percent of all homicides in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras; according to the UNODC, Central American countries report some of the highest intentional homicide rates among all countries for which reliable data are available.[11] These statistics reflect a higher total toll than the number of deaths resulting from the intense armed conflicts that gripped the region during the last third of the 20th century. It is estimated that as of 2005, there were almost 2 million illegal small arms in Central America, which then had an aggregate population of 40 million people. Of those weapons in circulation, it is believed that two out of every three are held illegally.[12]

Figure 2: Firearms in Central America [13]

Country	Legal Arms	Illegal Arms	Total	Percent of Homicides Caused by Firearms (2005)
Belize	–	–	–	–
Costa Rica	148,001	97,000	245,001	58
El Salvador	149,719	280,000	429,719	77
Guatemala	235,514	800,000	1,035,514	82
Honduras	151,003	650,000	801,003	78
Nicaragua	90,133	160,000	250,133	56
Panamá	65,436	130,000	195,436	59.7
Total	**839,806**	**1,987,000**	**2,826,806**	**68.6**

Small arms trafficking in Central America has a long and complicated history. Largely unsuccessful attempts to reintegrate ex-combatants into post-conflict civil society, especially in post-civil war states such as El Salvador and Nicaragua, have plagued the region since the 1980s, and today have helped to fuel the widespread proliferation of small arms. Efforts to control the proliferation of weapons have been complicated by endemic underdevelopment across the region. This chronic economic dislocation in Central America has translated into thousands of underpaid or unpaid public servants becoming susceptible to corruption and graft. Weak governance in many violence-prone areas has led to a further deterioration in the security environment—because of a lack of state authority, but also as a result of the transfer of erstwhile legal weapons to criminal factions and a tradition of arming communities to redress their own insecurity.[14] According to the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress, a Costa Rica-based nongovernmental organization, the vast majority of illegal weapons in circulation today were either bought from, lost by, or stolen from legal entities—civilian authorities, the police, or private security companies.[15]

Meanwhile, the flow of weapons into the region is aided by extremely porous, poorly defined, and undermonitored borders across Central America. More than 4,000 miles of coastline form a natural funnel between North and South America. In addition, more than 3,000 clandestine airstrips in Central America have served as illicit entry points of weapons, most of which arrive from the southern United States.[16] The inability of governments across the region to control these borders

directly translates into the ability of small arms traffickers to move weapons virtually unfettered through the region. These illicit networks are aided by free trade zones and offshore banking facilities that provide natural funding and financial hubs for small arms traffickers.

It is no secret that the United States has been the primary contributor to small arms proliferation in Central America through ongoing commercial sales negotiated by the arms industry or middlemen and approved for export by the Departments of State and Commerce; open government-negotiated military aid or sales; clandestine government-supplied arms; and illegal purchases and shipments from the United States by private actors operating for financial gain.[17] This supply chain often begins in the United States, continues into Mexico, and ends in Central America, where its deadly effects have been felt most acutely.

The majority of arms smuggled across the US-Mexico border are through the so-called *hermiga* runs: repeated trips across the border with one or a few guns. A "straw purchaser" can legally buy firearms from gun stores in American border towns and give them to a trafficker, who smuggles them across the border on foot or in the trunk of a car.[18] Smugglers make repeated *hermiga* runs after their straw purchasers visit gun stores and shows throughout the American southwest and Florida.[19] There are approximately 6,600 gun stores on the US side of the border, and due to the "private-sale loophole," unlicensed people are allowed to sell guns without conducting background checks.[20] These weapons are then given to the narcotics cartels either for their own use (in funding paramilitary-style private armies) or for further trafficking down to Central America.

In addition to the massive sourcing from the United States, South American countries—including Venezuela, Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador—are sources of small arms trafficking into Central America. This more recent trafficking route funnels weapons through Panama and into the rest of Central America.[21]

Over time, small arms and drug trafficking have become inextricably linked. Today, small arms play a crucial role in the drug trade that passes through Central America from Colombia en route to the United States. Despite the ongoing struggle against Colombian and Mexican narcotics cartels, they have armed their paramilitary forces with military-style weapons that often outclass and outnumber national police/security arsenals, presenting practical challenges to even the most effective state enforcement agency.[22] In short, the network developed to ship drugs now supplies arms as well.

Although Central American governments have developed concrete plans to stem the persistent and growing threat of small arms in the region, the sheer size and complexity of the problem pose practical challenges to the effective implementation of those plans. According to national governments and regional experts, newly created public security forces in the region have not had the time, training, or resources to make the transition from military to civilian institutions while keeping pace with rising levels of crime and violence. While these forces were trained to conduct some or all aspects of low-level counterinsurgency warfare, corruption and infiltration by narcotics/arms cartels has often compromised their effectiveness. In addition, public security forces remain overwhelmed by both the sheer numbers of trafficking and crime agents as well as by staggering levels of violence and homicide throughout the region.[23]

A variety of domestic programs and international assistance efforts to address these weaknesses and capacity shortfalls are ongoing and include:

- Assistance designed to strengthen governments' capacity to inspect and interdict unauthorized drugs, goods, arms, and people, particularly at border crossings across the region.[24]

- Assistance to vet, train, and equip law enforcement with a stronger capacity to crack down on illicit trafficking.

- Firearms interdiction and destruction assistance.

- Assistance to develop national regulations on possession and use of firearms.[25]

- Assistance for harmonization of legislation for small arms and light weapons control across Central America to eliminate legal and technical voids.[26]

- Assistance targeted to build the capacity of prosecutors across the judicial systems of Central American countries.

- Information Exchange Programs to promote information sharing and best practices.[27]

- Support for electronic tracing of small arms in the Western Hemisphere through the "e-trace" system.[28]

- Targeted training on criminal justice management and anti-gang operations.[29]

- The provision of nonintrusive inspection equipment, ion scanners, and canine units for Central American authorities to interdict all manner of contraband, including small arms.[30]

Despite these efforts, a lucrative arms trade continues to flourish throughout Central America, owing in part to the insufficient or unequal resources aimed at stemming these flows.

Drug Trafficking in Central America

Again, because of its strategic location between suppliers and consumers in North and South America, Central America has also been a central front in the war on drugs. In the past two years, the amount of drug traffic passing through Central America has skyrocketed. According to a report from the US National Drug Intelligence Center, less than 1 percent of the estimated 600 to 700 tons of cocaine that departed South America for the United States in 2007 transited Central America.[31] Today, however, US officials estimate 60 to 90 percent of the cocaine that enters the United States travels through Central America via land and maritime routes.[32]

Figure 3: Cocaine Seizures In Central America[33]

Country	Seizures of Cocaine (Base and Salts) in Kilograms			
	2004	2005	2006	2007
Belize	734	239	83	33
Costa Rica	4,590	7,029	22,891	32,435
El Salvador	2,704	33	102	4,075
Guatemala	4,481	5,074	280	711
Honduras	3,935	473	2,714	—
Nicaragua	3,703	6,947	9,720	13
Panamá	7,068	15,608	36,000	60,000

While Central America is principally a transit route for illicit drugs, this lucrative trade has given rise to a variety of drug-trafficking organizations operating inside the region. The trade itself has become well-organized (and well-armed) and thus inextricably linked with organized crime and gang activity across the region. As the influence of transnational crime rises, small but violent gangs, known as *maras,* have become associated with foreign drug cartels.[34] Gang members usually join as contract killers, extortionists, and drug dealers; however, local officials fear that the *maras* could go into the drug business for themselves, evolving into regional drug cartels and exerting considerable influence due to their connections within the major urban areas of Central America.

It is now the more powerful Mexican cartels that appear to be overwhelmingly responsible for the recent growth in land-based narcotics smuggling through Central America, as well as the rise in drug-related violence across the region. Mexican traffickers see Central America as a natural route between suppliers in Colombia and buyers in the United States.[35]

Due to successful interdiction efforts along Caribbean transit routes, Mexican drug-trafficking organizations have begun to rely on these land-based smuggling routes from South America to Mexico. According to the US ambassador to Guatemala, cocaine now passes through that country at a rate of approximately 300 to 400 tons per year.[36] The same switch was true in the 1990s, when successful interdiction efforts in the Eastern Caribbean stopped the Colombian drug passage northeast to Florida (either directly or via Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, or the Lesser Antilles).

Of course, Mexican cartels probably do not rely exclusively on any single route through the region. But according to most experts, the initial challenges related to establishing a safe route across Central America make it likely that existing routes are maintained even after they have been detected and, if necessary, are defended by heavily armed paramilitary groups.[37] This poses additional problems to the often underequipped and underprepared law enforcement agencies in the region. Nonetheless, it also provides for interdiction opportunities at key choke points across the supply chain should Central American law enforcement agencies be properly trained and funded to conduct counterdrug operations in concert with the judicial and customs organs.

Because Central American governments have struggled historically with corruption and a dearth of financial resources arising from a lack of economic opportunity, drug traffickers have often used bribes rather than physical intimidation to secure the transit of drug shipments.[38] This has established an alarming imbalance of capacity and a tempting opportunity for corrupt local enforcement officials. For example, the gross domestic product of Honduras is $12 billion, while the estimated share of the drug trade controlled by the Mexican cartels is an estimated $20 billion.[39]

Although violent drug-related clashes have not been common in Central America because the region's difficult terrain has made the shipment of drugs from South America burdensome and complicated, drug violence has become increasingly deadly in the last decade. According to the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, as Mexico's pushback against violent drug cartels within its own borders places more pressure on the cartels' shipment routes and delivery methods (as well as increased US efforts to interdict smuggling of illicit goods into the United States through the southern border and through the Caribbean), the Mexican cartels and their Central American affiliates will likely seek to establish themselves more firmly in the Central American countries where widespread gang activity, higher levels of corruption, and poorly developed security forces provide a perfect environment for them to thrive.[40]

A variety of domestic programs and foreign assistance efforts to address drug trafficking challenges in Central America are ongoing, including:

- Assistance designed to strengthen governments' capacity to inspect and interdict unauthorized drugs, particularly at border crossings across the region. [41]
- Assistance to train and equip law enforcement to conduct source raids and destroy clandestine laboratories across the region.
- Assistance targeted to build prosecutorial capacity and support the rule of law.
- Training, equipping, and deploying indigenous special forces to maintain order and combat corruption.
- Training in information exchange and cooperation when conducting transborder interdiction operations.[42]
- Targeted training on criminal justice management.[43]
- The provision of nonintrusive inspection equipment, ion scanners, and canine units for Central American authorities to interdict all manner of contraband, including drugs.[44]

Although international donors have renewed emphasis on combating drug trafficking in Central America in recent years, historical patterns suggest that these investments are often transitory and unsustainable. As trafficking routes are temporarily pushed to other regions, including back to the Caribbean, investments are likely to diminish, particularly amid the global economic downturn. Identifying new and alternative funding streams will be critical in solidifying progress made as a result of these efforts.

Youth Gangs in Central America

Few challenges in the Central American region match the level of complexity of the rising scourge of gangs and other organized violence. Spurred directly by the drug trade, small arms proliferation, and societal breakdown, gang violence in the region has manifested itself most tragically in the lives of the most vulnerable: Central American youth. Domestic/social violence, economic instability, and weak community institutions are significant risk factors in the spread of gangs across Central America. But the unchecked proliferation of small arms and the wide availability of drugs often turn the petty misdemeanors of youth into violent or lethal organized crimes.

By way of example, in Honduras males 15 to 24 constitute 11 percent of the population, making opportunities for employment and education quite rare, particularly in a country where 30 percent of the population lives on less than $2 a day, and approximately 35 percent of the population is unemployed or underemployed.[45] A 2007 World Bank risk assessment for Honduras stated that the country faces significant large numbers of unemployed youth who are not in school and unable to acquire the skills necessary to attend university or obtain skilled employment.[46] It is this population that has traditionally provided a ready pool of gang recruits. When given small arms and motivated or influenced by the drug trade, these otherwise directionless youth can become hostile and deadly actors.

Of course, the dearth of economic opportunities is not the only motivation for gang membership. In the 1990s, US deportation policy (established by the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant

Responsibility Act of 1995) became more aggressive in targeting individuals with criminal records for deportation from the United States. Any noncitizens, including legal permanent residents of the United States, who were convicted of a crime whose sentence might last longer than a year were subject to removal from the United States after serving their full jail sentence. Trends indicate that illegal immigrants deported from the United States face significant barriers to reintegration into their home states, and seek validation and "life purpose" by joining one of many gangs operating within urban and rural areas of Central America.[47] In a three-year period (1994-1997), this deportation strategy prompted the forced migration of more than 150,000 individuals back to their home country.[48] These gang-deportees have in turn "exported" a gang culture to Central America, and the "alumni" of MS-13 and Calle 18 gangs have recruited new members from the local populations. As such, they formed the core leadership structure of new youth gangs based on "Los Angeles models" of organization.[49]

Estimates of the number of gangs and gang members in Central America vary. Some conservative estimates claim that there are 70,000 to 100,000 gang members in the region, while higher-end estimates suggest that the number is three times higher.[50] Estimates of Central American gang membership by country also vary from source to source; UNODC estimates from 2005 are cited in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Estimated Gang Membership in Central America[51]

Country	Gang Membership Estimates
Belize	100
Costa Rica	2,660
El Salvador	10,500
Guatemala	14,000
Honduras	36,000
Nicaragua	4,500
Panama	1,385
TOTAL	**69,145**

As a result of burgeoning gang membership across Central America, a range of criminal activities—including kidnapping; human trafficking; and drug, auto, and weapons smuggling—have risen dramatically. Gangs have been involved in extortions of residents, bus drivers, and business owners in major cities throughout the region. MS-13 members have also been known to work in close collaboration with Mexican drug cartels. These foreign cartels are reportedly contracting local gangs on an ad hoc basis to carry out revenge killings and to act as middlemen or as primary traffickers in the northward flow of illicit drugs and small arms.

Domestic and international assistance efforts to address the youth-gang challenge in Central America include:

- The funding of new outreach programs to promote the close collaboration with civil society, the private sector, churches, mayors, and international donors in order to leverage limited public

resources. These include community crime prevention programs, outreach centers for at-risk youth, rehabilitation and reinsertion programs for former gang members, and the construction of sports and recreational facilities, as opposed to more heavy-handed crackdowns by law enforcement officials, which have proven, in some instances, to be counterproductive.[52]

- The regional sharing of best practices in combating youth crime.
- Early intervention programs in schools, including cross-cultural youth life-skills and leadership training, education, job training, and microcredit and job creation to provide alternative outlets for youth.
- The promotion of secondary school education; provision of social, health, and economic support services; and targeted life and job-skills training connected to a readily available job market. [53]
- The development of enabling legislation and the conduct of anti-gang research designed to strengthen state capacity to identify early and prosecute criminal activities.[54]
- Capacity building among educational and enforcement structures of government.
- Training in the proper use of DNA technologies to support prosecution of crimes.
- The training of local agencies in "intelligence-led policing."[55]
- A variety of economic development programs targeted at building employment opportunities for the region's vulnerable youth populations.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540

While seemingly unrelated to the spread of unconventional weapons, the programmatic responses to addressing the trafficking in small arms and drugs and the rise of youth gangs are directly relevant in this new era of WMD proliferation. Increasingly, incidents of proliferation are being detected through the disruption of illicit networks. Many of them function as illicit transportation networks whose goal is profit, and therefore, whose wares are rarely restricted to a single contraband—be it drugs, humans, or dual-use nuclear gadgetry. Today more countries than ever—many of which have never been considered "WMD capable"—are forming potential links in the nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons supply chain. The growing impact of proliferation from these countries in the wake of the A.Q. Khan affair has become a more broadly recognized threat. Prior to the exposure of the Khan network, strategies to address this phenomenon became more focused on technology denial—including export controls, strengthened and expanded safeguards, sanctions, and even regime change. Little thought was given by government security agencies to the need for comprehensive outreach to the full array of new actors with a role to play in proliferation prevention, including, most notably, governments of the Global South. Strategies designed to stem the supply were themselves limited by governments' lack of coordinated effort to curtail demand. Scant attention was paid to the integration of hard security and supply-side programming with soft security, demand-side incentives to build buy-in and ensure sustainability from the next generation of potential proliferators.

However, in April 2004, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1540, creating an opportunity to leverage hard and soft security approaches to preventing proliferation. The resolution mandates that all member states implement a set of supply-side controls related to the

nonproliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, and criminalize proliferant activities within their territories. Specifically, this legally binding resolution calls upon states to:

- Adopt and enforce laws that prohibit any nonstate actor from manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, developing, transporting, transferring, or using nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their means of delivery.

- Develop and maintain measures to account for and secure such items in production, use, storage, or transport.

- Develop and maintain effective physical protection measures.

- Develop and maintain effective border controls and law enforcement efforts to detect, deter, prevent, and combat illicit trafficking.

- Establish, develop, review, and maintain appropriate effective national export and trans-shipment controls over such items.[56]

The resolution also established a Committee of the Security Council to report to the council on the implementation of the resolution. UNSCR 1540 further calls upon all member states to present a first report no later than six months from adoption of the resolution to the 1540 Committee (comprising all members of the Security Council and supported by a group of technical experts) on steps they have taken or intend to take to implement its provisions, and it recognizes that some states may require assistance in implementing the provisions of the resolution, inviting other states in a position to do so to offer assistance in response to specific requests.[57]

To date, approximately 85 percent of countries have issued their initial report to the committee—the first step toward compliance with the terms of the resolution. The committee, the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs, regional organizations, and several nongovernmental organizations have exerted significant effort to raise the awareness necessary to encourage both the mandated reporting on the status of national implementation of 1540, as well as national action plans that fulfill the mandate of the resolution. The subject of 1540 has been raised and debated formally at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum and within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of American States. By the end of 2010, UN-sponsored implementation workshops will have been held in Argentina, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, the Kyrgyz Republic, Peru, Romania, Vietnam, and elsewhere. Additional awareness-raising workshops have been convened by a host of nongovernmental organizations, and the subject has found its way into the deliberations of the Senior Political Committee of NATO and the UN Conference on Disarmament Issues in Japan.

The result of these outreach initiatives has been the issuance of formal statements of support from a multiplicity of foreign ministries and regional organizations.[58] In addition, a greater proportion of national operating authorities are at least aware of their obligations under UNSCR 1540. The quality and thoroughness of the reports vary dramatically from country to country. In addition, the 1540 Committee in New York has received sporadic requests for assistance with implementation of the resolution. At present, 27 requests sit before the committee, although many lack sufficient specificity to be actionable.[59]

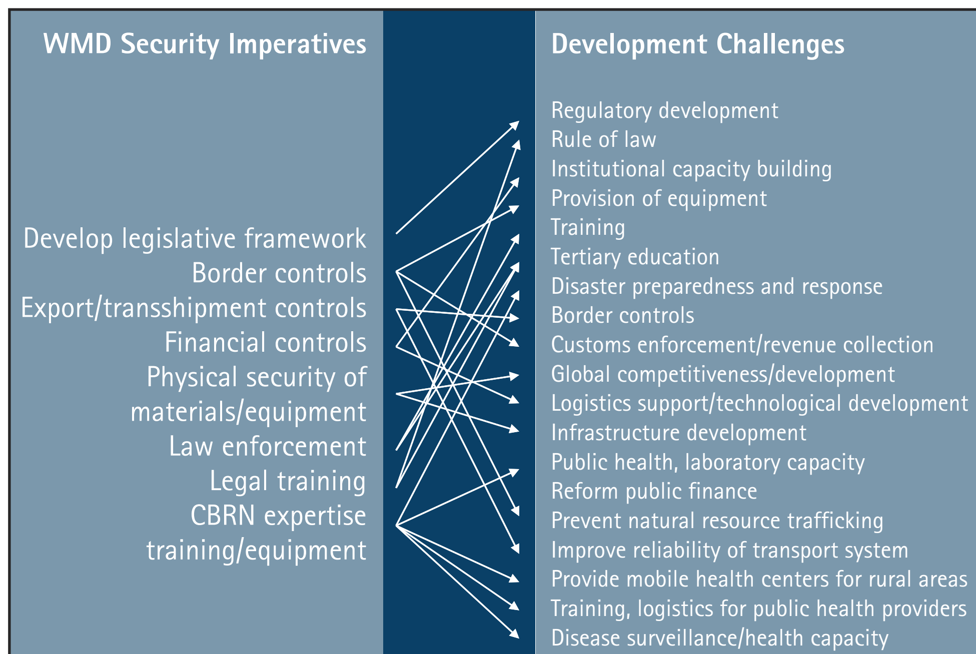
Implementation Challenges for 1540

Beyond these outreach and awareness-raising efforts, some have concluded that because little material evidence of systemic implementation of the resolution is readily evident on the ground, Resolution 1540 is a moribund effort. These skeptics point out that broad swaths of the globe are plagued if not by nonreporting, then by underreporting to the 1540 Committee. The committee is itself said to be underresourced for the herculean task it has been assigned.[60] Perhaps most importantly, the tangible political will needed to turn 1540 from a multifaceted mandate to a pragmatic instrument of nonproliferation has, more often than not, been lacking on the part of both potential donors of the developed North, and in the Global South where the potential for proliferation has been growing for decades.

In many ways, this is hardly surprising. Governments of the developed world have often proven unimaginative in their nonproliferation assistance, favoring quick "technology drop" fixes to more sustainable and longer-term approaches. Furthermore, for the vast majority of the developing world where proliferation-prevention measures are often judged to be most lax, attention and resources are rightly driven by the concerns confronting daily life (overwhelming public health challenges, endemic underdevelopment, eroding educational infrastructures, pervasive civil violence spurred by drug flows and small arms trafficking, and so on) rather than by the fears associated with WMD proliferation. Convincing these governments to make greater and more sustainable investments in counterproliferation activities while their public education and health infrastructures, for instance, suffer from neglect is not an easy—or even realistic—task.

Despite the halting progress, where 1540 assistance has been advanced on the basis of its inherently dual-use benefits—that is, with both nonproliferation and development goals, such as promoting local, national, or regional needs related to economic development, public health, or citizen security—implementation of the resolution has taken a firm hold. By better understanding the modalities of implementing UNSCR 1540, dual-use benefits can be derived, thereby initiating a conversation on proliferation prevention that includes tangible efforts to address the more immediate concerns of target states. This dual-use assistance is displayed in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Dual-Use 1540 Assistance



One area where we have seen a dramatic rise in both state reporting and tangible evidence of pragmatic implementation of UNSCR 1540 is in the Caribbean Basin. In one year, the Caribbean as a region has gone from a 1540 black hole to a model for implementation of the resolution around the globe. This progress was not a result of dictating legal mandates from the Security Council, but rather is a reflection of the countries' realization that 1540 implementation is in their best interests because it not only helps to address endemic security challenges related to the flow of drugs and small arms, but also promotes their plans for economic diversification through port security and other enhancements to trade.[61]

Responding to UNSCR 1540 With Development and Capacity-Building Assistance in Central America

For the governments of Central America, the balance of interests is no different. While all governments of the region have, at a minimum, satisfied the initial reporting requirements under the resolution, comprehensive implementation of 1540 remains a challenge because of limited resources and the immediacy of competing security and economic threats to human security across the region. Most dramatically, these include the proliferation of small arms, drug trafficking, and the rise of youth gangs.

To ensure effective implementation of more-rigorous nonproliferation measures around the globe, the first priority must be to correct the misperception on the part of donor states that the provision of assistance to countries of proliferation concern will instinctively elevate the issue among recipient governments. Neither financial assistance, one-off trainings, nor high-tech equipment will provide enduring solutions to the long-term sustainability in many regions of the world—particularly where there is an endemic lack of a security culture committed to maintaining the instruments of nonproliferation. Because of the overwhelming political and economic barriers to implementation, recipient states must begin to experience the value of receiving assistance in connection with 1540 so that their misperceptions of the resolution as a North-driven priority (to the South's detriment) will be overcome. Thus, there is a need to demonstrate the potential benefits of 1540, by helping to meet urgent domestic and related priorities, and then by serving as a foundation for effective and sustainable nonproliferation measures.

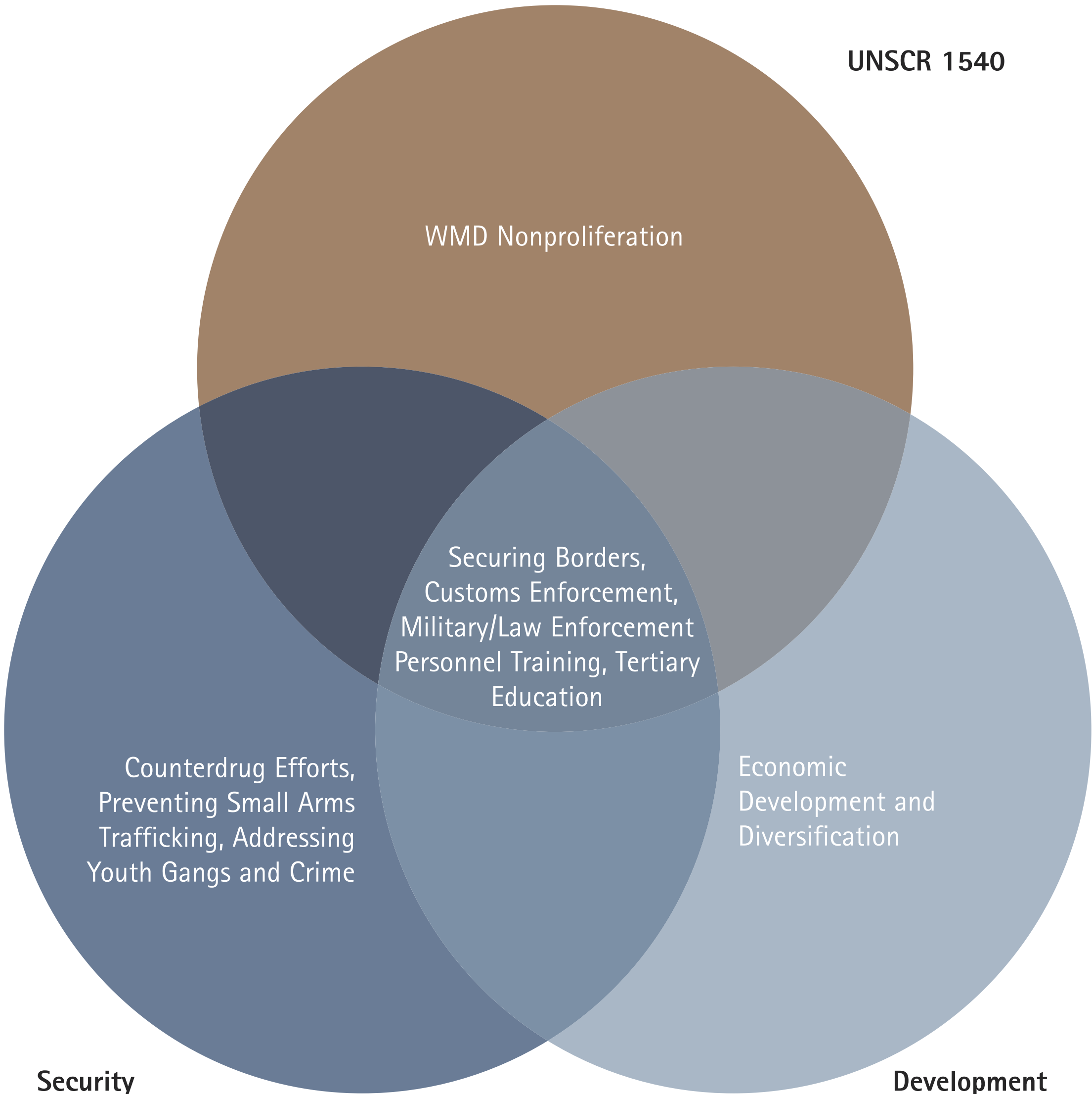
In short, addressing the capacity-building needs of recipient states will foster the conditions for sustainable implementation of the resolution and provide a viable approach for holistically addressing states' political will and capacity needs, while building the requisite long-term buy-in for the assistance being offered. Of course, helping to meet the states' development priorities cannot be presented as a quid pro quo, but as a starting point for a package of assistance that will strengthen states internally and enable them to simultaneously support broader nonproliferation goals. The goal is not to militarize development aid but to use the vastly more significant appropriations for security and defense to meet parallel development goals.

Focusing nonproliferation investments, at least initially, in areas of dual-use benefit in Central America—namely, countering small arms and drug trafficking and addressing the threat of youth gangs—will yield a mutually beneficial and sustainable return on investment. In addition, such an approach will promote a more enduring buy-in to wider nonproliferation efforts at the subregional, regional, and global levels.

By way of example, and as noted above, responding to the small arms challenge across the region requires the strengthening of government capacity to inspect and interdict unauthorized transfers

within and across borders, the development of legal and regulatory standards on trafficking, assistance targeted at building legal capacity, as well as the provision of inspection equipment and training at key "choke points" in Central America. In addition, the training of law enforcement and anticorruption measures are required to stem the flow of illicit drugs through Central America. And in order to confront the rising tide of criminal gang activity, additional resources must be brought to bear in order to share best practices, break down policy and responsive stovepipes, promote tertiary education, and build capacity across educational and enforcement structures of government. Investments made in each of these programmatic areas will simultaneously build requisite nonproliferation capacity to comply with UNSCR 1540 and help prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. By the same token, assistance rendered to promote implementation of 1540 can be shown to have unequivocal benefit to these higher priority regional security and development challenges. Figure 6 depicts the overlapping benefits of investments in nonproliferation to both regional security and development needs.

Figure 6: UNSCR 1540, Security, and Development in Central America



With a diminishing donor base to meet these regional priorities, the international community is unlikely to witness robust implementation of UNSCR 1540 if it requires a further shift of technical and financial resources away from addressing regional security and development objectives. Beyond this immediate competition for resources, the wherewithal of small governments in Central America to allocate sufficient human resources to implementation of 1540 is questionable. Therefore, identifying innovative resource streams that can provide dual-use benefit to these governments—that is, assistance that aids with defined in-country needs while promoting global nonproliferation—and assisting with the institutional requirements of the resolution will be critical for successful implementation of 1540 across Central America.

Regional Burden and Capacity Sharing: The Central American Integration System

In 1993, the seven states of Central America entered into a framework for regional economic and security cooperation under the institutional coordinating mechanism of SICA, the Central American Integration System.[62] Two years later, member states signed the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America with the goal of leveraging SICA as the coordinator for recommendations and proposals related to regional security.[63] SICA's role was, therefore, to integrate national security initiatives with the goal of facilitating coordination among national and international agencies to further combat criminal activity. SICA is also tasked with identifying and coordinating the financial and technical resources and subsequent training demanded by national institutions responsible for security.

It is this mandate that situates SICA as the logical institution for coordinating the implementation of UNSCR 1540 in Central America. Not only can the organization help build and coordinate national implementation plans, but it can also identify new streams of assistance and better leverage that assistance so as to avoid the need to replicate highly specialized expertise within each national context. With SICA coordinating centers of excellence and ensuring the proper sharing of best practices and resources across national boundaries, security and development assistance funneled into the region can be better leveraged to ensure a maximum return on investment.

Much of this work has already been undertaken by SICA, and indeed, much of this coordination is directly relevant to 1540 implementation. For example, through the Central American Institute of Advanced Police Studies, SICA works with Interpol to integrate and strengthen the regional police intelligence community. In addition, SICA enhances border security by promoting best practices and facilitating regional cooperation in combating organized crime. Under its innovative Program for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, the organization provides support for and coordinates region-wide efforts to combat the trafficking of small arms and light weapons.[64] The organization has also established a regional Commission for the Eradication of Production, Trafficking, Consumption, and Illicit Use of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, which broadly coordinates the Central American counterdrug strategy and works to prevent the diversion of critical precursor materials. Finally, SICA is in the process of building a program to identify, assess, and ultimately addresses the risk of terrorism. This regional effort to combat terrorism is closely linked with presidential commitments to fight organized crime by strengthening border security and stemming unchecked immigration flows.

As the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security is fully realized, 1540 implementation efforts will complement the emerging regional understanding regarding the indivisibility of security and development. The treaty is a logical framework within which to realize the objectives of UNSCR 1540 owing to their shared spirit of nonproliferation, their mutual interest in fighting organized crime and strengthening operational coordination mechanisms, and their promotion of a culture of prevention, peace, and legality across the region.[65]

These common objectives and pragmatic efforts, particularly the organization's competence in the security realm, make SICA a logical conduit through which 1540 implementation can be coordinated. Using the Caribbean Community as a model for action, SICA should establish a full-time 1540 regional coordinator to assist member states in meeting their commitments under the UN resolution. The coordinator would be responsible for outreach efforts that would link UNSCR 1540 to the broader security and economic development mandate of the organization. (See Figure 6.) A robust workplan should then be developed by the coordinator in close consultation with SICA and under the legal auspices of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security. The regional coordinator should then begin working systematically with member states to provide updated national reports to the 1540 Committee, and ultimately initiate the development of national implementation action plans. The coordinator would be responsible for working with member states of SICA on sensitization trainings, evaluations, and to provide guidance relating to compliance with the resolution. The coordinator could also facilitate workshops in targeted areas of need and assist in the development of additional requests for assistance to the 1540 Committee in the event that financial gaps or capacity shortfalls are identified. Coordinating these requests through SICA would reassure donor states that assistance across the region is being harmonized and leveraged, and would provide donors with a regional ally to promote sustainability of those investments over the long term. In the long run, the development of a reference legal framework may prove useful for member states in adopting relevant antitrafficking and nonproliferation legislation.

Conclusion

As UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan made the famous remark that long-term security is not possible without development and that there is no development in the absence of security.[66] Although leaders in the developed world have frequently borrowed from this language in their policy speeches, recognition of the interconnected relationship between these diverse policy portfolios has not been followed by a commensurate shift in national spending habits. In 2008, net development assistance worldwide was approximately $90 billion, while total military expenditures exceeded $1.5 trillion.[67]

Although development and security programs are treated as conflicting priorities in national budgets, untapped opportunities leverage each in mutual support. This entails not simply a reallocation of resources, but also a wiser, more strategic expenditure of those investments. When viewed through this prism, the opportunities for synergy are plentiful. For instance, as with countering the scourge of infectious diseases, the detection of and response to the use of a biological weapon requires a functioning disease-surveillance and public-health infrastructure. The ability to prosecute criminals who are marketing materials of mass destruction requires a noncorrupt police force and a functioning judiciary. The prevention of human trafficking relies upon many of the same resources and capacities necessary to detect and prevent nuclear proliferation. Moreover, trade expansion and business development cannot occur unless borders and ports are safe, efficient, and secure.

We propose an innovative, "whole of society" approach to bridging the security/development divide that would leverage donor investments in both security and development assistance, so as to ensure recipient state buy-in and an enduring return on investment.

The goal of this strategy should be threefold: (1) to identify new sources of assistance to address endemic threats in the developing world, such as poverty, corruption, infectious diseases, and economic underdevelopment; (2) to expand a successful new engagement model that treats the root causes of proliferation, rather than its symptoms; and (3) to reinforce the legitimacy of the United Nations as an effective mechanism to address transnational issues. It is incumbent upon

the international community to develop scalable, sustainable, and replicable pilot efforts that pragmatically pair states in need of development assistance with those states willing to offer such assistance under the auspices of national security.

UN Security Council Resolution 1540 is the logical platform upon which to base this new model for security and global development. The resolution's assistance provision has created a unique opportunity for poorer countries to begin tapping traditional security-related assistance from developed countries to meet their development goals.

Application of this model of bridging the security/development divide into Central American states offers a win-win solution for regional governments and for the global nonproliferation regime. Long plagued by socioeconomic underdevelopment reinforced by weak borders, small arms proliferation, drug trafficking, and the rise of youth and other organized criminal activities, the region will require the type of robust dual-use assistance that will respond to these local scourges while simultaneously promoting implementation of global nonproliferation objectives. New assistance pathways for a broad variety of these needs—from border security to the detection of fraudulent migration documents to nonintrusive portal monitoring—could be identified via the assistance template offered by the UN 1540 Committee and backed by nonproliferation "donors" around the world. At present, more than $2 billion is spent annually on targeted nonproliferation assistance by G-8 and partnering governments. This funding source could leverage existing Central American countertrafficking initiatives, border-strengthening efforts, tertiary education and training programs, rule of law initiatives, and a host of technical and other assistance measures aimed at ameliorating the triple threat of small arms, drugs, and gangs that have trapped Central American countries in a catastrophic cycle of insecurity and underdevelopment.

Few regions of the world better illustrate the intimate nexus between human development and security than does Central America. A region of inherent economic and social promise, its fortunes have been frustrated by a culture of illegality promoted by overwhelming security challenges related to small arms, drugs, and criminal gangs. While a long and innovative roster of instruments has been developed to help countries of the region respond to these scourges, a lack of technical and financial support has prevented their full realization. Moreover, institutional vulnerabilities at the local and state levels have complicated the implementation of national and regional strategies designed to break this cycle of violence and underdevelopment. The global economic downturn now threatens to reverse progress made to date and to place countries of the region squarely back on a downward economic and security trajectory. Using UNSCR 1540, governments of the region have an opportunity to show that they can help donor states better leverage diminishing assistance dollars to improve customs facilities and migratory border facilities; receive training for the tracking of illegal immigration; improve capacities to prevent money laundering and drug and human trafficking; enhance the training of public and private officials linked to maritime trade; improve their legal infrastructures, including human resources and legal frameworks; and strengthen the competencies of government institutions across a broad range of needs.

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About the Project

The goal of this project is threefold: (1) to identify new sources of assistance to address endemic threats in the developing world, such as poverty, corruption, infectious diseases, and economic underdevelopment; (2) to expand a successful new engagement model that treats the root causes of proliferation, rather than its symptoms; and (3) to reinforce the legitimacy of the United Nations as an effective mechanism to address transnational issues. A joint initiative of the Stimson Center and the Stanley Foundation, it aims to develop scalable, sustainable, and replicable pilot efforts that pragmatically pair states in need of development assistance with those states willing to offer such assistance under the auspices of national security.

Unlike traditional assistance measures, this effort helps bridge the gap between "soft" security (development) and "hard" security (nonproliferation) objectives, thereby addressing identified in-country needs of the Global South while building state capacity to manage and ensure the sustainability of nonproliferation and global security efforts. The result is less duplication of effort, and more-efficient utilization of limited resources for the global good. Further information can be found at *www.stimson.org/mab/next100*.

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The Managing Across Boundaries Program works to address an array of transnational challenges—from WMD proliferation and illicit drugs to the small arms trade, human trafficking, and counterfeit pharmaceuticals—by providing a forum for information sharing and developing innovative partnerships across the public and private sectors.

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