



Latin America and the Caribbean: Key Issues for the 113th Congress

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Summary

Geographic proximity has ensured strong linkages between the United States and the Latin American and Caribbean region, with diverse U.S. interests, including economic, political, and security concerns. U.S. policy toward the region under the Obama Administration has focused on four priorities: promoting economic and social opportunity; ensuring citizen security; strengthening effective democratic institutions; and securing a clean energy future. There has been substantial continuity in U.S. policy toward the region under the Obama Administration, which has pursued some of the same basic policy approaches as the Bush Administration. Nevertheless, the Obama Administration has made several significant policy changes, including an overall emphasis on partnership and shared responsibility.

U.S. policy toward the region is conducted in the context of a Latin America that is becoming increasingly independent from the United States. The region has diversified its economic and diplomatic ties with countries outside the region. Over the past few years, several Latin American regional organizations have been established that do not include the United States, including the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) designed to boost regional integration and cooperation. While to some extent CELAC's establishment reflects declining U.S. influence in Latin America, the United States still remains very much engaged in the region bilaterally and multilaterally. A looming challenge for the United States, however, is how to deal with the next Summit of the Americas, scheduled to be hosted by Panama in 2015. Several Latin American leaders have pledged that they will not attend if Cuba is not invited. Cuba had expressed interest in attending the sixth summit in 2012 in Colombia, but ultimately was not invited to attend. The United States and Canada had expressed opposition to Cuba's participation. Previous summits have been limited to the hemisphere's 34 democratically elected leaders.

Congress plays an active role in policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean. In recent years, legislative and oversight attention have focused on the continued increase in drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico and assistance under the Mérida Initiative; efforts to help Central American and Caribbean countries contend with drug trafficking and violent crime; and continued counternarcotics and security support to Colombia. The 2010 earthquake that devastated Haiti continues to focus attention on the enormous task of disaster recovery and reconstruction. Other areas of congressional oversight have been the deterioration of democracy and media freedom in several Latin American countries and the activities of Iran and Hezbollah in the region. U.S. sanctions on Cuba, particularly restrictions on travel, remain a contentious issue in the debate over how to support change in one of the world's last remaining communist nations. Other broad issues of congressional interest are relations with Mexico and the status of reforms under the new administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto; prospects for Colombia's peace negotiations and the potential ramifications for U.S. policy; the status of democracy in Venezuela and U.S.-Venezuelan relations in the post-Chávez era; progress on negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that includes three Latin American countries (Chile, Mexico, and Peru); and the operation and activities of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Legislative action to date in the 113th Congress has included: the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79), with provisions modifying the U.S. cotton program related to a trade dispute with Brazil and requiring State Department reports on a U.S.-Mexico water dispute in the Rio Grande Basin; approval of the U.S.-Mexico Transboundary Hydrocarbons Agreement (a provision in P.L. 113-67); a measure directing the Secretary of State to develop a strategy for adoption of proposed reforms at the OAS (P.L. 113-41); and omnibus appropriations legislation for FY2013 (P.L. 113-

6) and FY2014 (P.L. 113-76), which included foreign aid appropriations for those years with numerous provisions on Latin America.

Other legislative action has included Senate approval of comprehensive immigration reform (S. 744); Senate approval of a resolution on Haiti's recovery and reconstruction (S.Res. 12); and House approval of a measure requiring State Department reports on specific aspects of Haiti's post-earthquake recovering and development efforts (H.R. 3509). In addition, FY2014 Financial Services and General Government appropriations bills were reported in each house (H.R. 2786 and S. 1371) with different provisions on U.S. policy on travel to Cuba, but ultimately the FY2014 omnibus appropriations measure (P.L. 113-76) did not include any of these provisions.

This report, which will be updated about twice yearly, provides an overview of U.S. policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean, including the Obama Administration's priorities; examines changes in the region's economic and political environment that affect U.S. relations with the region; and analyzes U.S. policy toward the region and various recommendations made by policy analysts and think tanks. The report then examines the role of Congress and congressional interests in Latin America, looking at selected regional and country issues, including key issues that the 113th Congress is facing. Appendices provide U.S.-Latin America trade statistics and a listing of hearings focused on Latin America.

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U.S. Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean

U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere are diverse, and include economic, political, security, and humanitarian concerns. Geographic proximity has ensured strong economic linkages between the United States and the region, with the United States being the major trading partner and largest source of foreign investment for many countries. Free trade agreements (FTAs) have augmented U.S. economic relations with 11 countries in the region. Latin American nations, primarily Mexico and Venezuela, supply the United States with almost one-third of its imported crude oil. The Western Hemisphere is also the largest source of U.S. immigration, both legal and illegal, with geographic proximity and economic conditions being major factors driving migration trends. Curbing the flow of illicit drugs from Latin America and the Caribbean has been a key component of U.S. relations with the region and a major interest of Congress for some three decades, and in recent years has included close security cooperation with Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean to combat drug trafficking and related violence. With the exception of Cuba, the region has made enormous strides in terms of democratic political development over the past three decades, but the rise of undemocratic practices in several countries, especially Venezuela, has been a U.S. concern. The United States has often taken the lead in responding to natural disasters in the region, as was demonstrated once again in the aftermath of Haiti's catastrophic 2010 earthquake.

Four Priorities for the Region

The Obama Administration has set forth a broad framework for U.S. policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean centered on four pillars or priorities:

- promoting economic and social opportunity;
- ensuring citizen security;
- strengthening effective institutions of democratic governance; and
- securing a clean energy future.

The State Department maintains that these policy “priorities are based on the premise that the United States has a vital interest in contributing to the building of stable, prosperous, and democratic nations” in the hemisphere that can play an important role in dealing with global challenges.¹ The Obama Administration has stressed that its policy approach toward the region is one that emphasizes partnership and shared responsibility, with policy conducted on the basis of mutual respect through engagement and dialogue.² President Obama reemphasized the theme of equal partnership at the sixth Summit of the Americas in April 2012 when he said that “in the Americas there are no senior or junior partners, we’re simply partners.”³ In remarks at the June

¹ U.S. Department of State, Arturo Valenzuela, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, “U.S.-Latin American Relations: A Look Ahead,” January 6, 2011.

² *Ibid.*; and U.S. Department of State, Arturo Valenzuela, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, “U.S. Foreign Policy in the Obama Era,” October 9, 2010. The same general policy approach has continued under current Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Secretary Roberta Jacobson, who was confirmed by the Senate in March 2012.

³ White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Remarks of President Barack Obama—As Prepared for Delivery— (continued...)”

2012 Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly meeting in Bolivia, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson reiterated the commitment of the United States to work with hemispheric nations “in the spirit of genuine and equal partnership to advance liberty and prosperity for all the citizens of the hemisphere.”⁴

In a November 2013 OAS address, Secretary of State John Kerry asserted that “the era of the Monroe Doctrine is over.”⁵ He emphasized the importance of the United States working with other hemispheric nations as equal partners to promote and protect democracy, security, and peace; to advance prosperity through development, poverty alleviation, and improved social inclusion; and to address the challenges posed by climate change.

Economic and Social Opportunity

The policy priority of expanding economic opportunity focuses on one of the key problems facing Latin America: lingering poverty and inequality. At the end of 2013, an estimated 164 million people in Latin America were living in poverty—almost 28% of the region’s population—while 66 million people or 11.5% were living in extreme poverty or indigence. These statistics reflect a significant improvement from 2002, when almost 44% of the region’s population lived in poverty.⁶ Moreover, the statistics show an improvement from 2009, when the region faced an uptick in poverty because of the global financial crisis.

In addition to traditional U.S. development assistance programs focusing on health and education, expanding economic opportunity also has involved several innovative programs and initiatives. **The Pathways to Prosperity Initiative**, initially launched in 2008, is designed to help countries learn from each other’s experiences through the exchange of best practices and the goal of promoting inclusive growth, prosperity, and social justice.⁷ The Organization of American States’ **Inter-American Social Protection Network** began in 2009 with U.S. support to facilitate an exchange of information on policies, experiences, programs, and best practices in order to reduce social disparities and inequality and reduce extreme poverty.⁸ President Obama launched the **100,000 Strong in the Americas** initiative in 2011 to increase the number of Latin American students studying in the United States as well as to increase the number of U.S. students studying in countries throughout the hemisphere.⁹ As part of the Obama Administration’s **Feed the Future**

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Summit of the Americas Opening Plenary,” April 14, 2012.

⁴ U.S. Department of State, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta S. Jacobson, “Remarks to the 42nd OAS General Assembly,” June 4, 2012.

⁵ U.S. Department of State, Secretary of State John Kerry, “Remarks on U.S. Policy in the Western Hemisphere,” November 18, 2013. In an address to Congress in December 1823, President James Monroe warned European powers not to interfere in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. This policy eventually became known as the Monroe Doctrine and emerged in the early 1900s as a foundation of U.S. foreign policy.

⁶ U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2013*, Briefing paper, November 2013.

⁷ U.S. Department of State, “Pathways to Prosperity in the Americas, Fact Sheet,” April 18, 2013, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2014/221495.htm>; also see the website of the Pathways initiative, available at <http://www.pathways-caminos.org/en/Home.html>

⁸ U.S. Department of State, “Inter-American Social Protection Network, Fact Sheet,” April 23, 2013, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2013/208096.htm>; also the website of the Inter-American Social Protection Network at <http://www.socialprotectionet.org/>

⁹ U.S. Department of State, “100,000 Strong in the Americas, Fact Sheet,” September 13, 2013, available at (continued...)

Initiative to combat global hunger and advance food security, three countries in the Americas—Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras—receive targeted funding for the development of poor rural areas aimed at helping vulnerable populations escape hunger and poverty.¹⁰

At the sixth Summit of the Americas held in Colombia in April 2012, President Obama announced several initiatives to expand economic opportunity. The **Small Business Network of the Americas (SBNA)** is an initiative designed to help small businesses participate in international trade by linking national networks of small business support centers.¹¹ The **Women’s Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas)** program is a public-private partnership designed to increase women’s economic participation and address barriers to women starting and expanding small and medium enterprises.¹² The **Innovation Fund of the Americas**, launched by USAID, is an initiative to help finance lower cost and more effective solutions to difficult development challenges.¹³

Citizen Security

The policy priority of advancing citizen security reflects one of the most important concerns among Latin Americans. High levels of crime and violence, often associated with drug trafficking, are a significant problem in many countries. The Central America-Mexico corridor is the route for 95% of South American cocaine entering the United States, while murder rates in several Central American and Caribbean countries are among the highest in the world and drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico has risen to unprecedented levels.

U.S. support in this area includes a series of partnerships to help countries combat drug trafficking and organized crime such as the **Mérida Initiative** for Mexico, the **Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI)**, and the **Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)**. The **Colombia Strategic Development Initiative (CSDI)** aligns U.S. assistance with the follow up strategy to Plan Colombia that is designed to develop a functioning state presence in remote, but strategically important, areas.

While these programs only began in the last few years, U.S. support to counter drug trafficking and production in the region has been a key focus of U.S. policy toward the region for more than 30 years. The most significant U.S. support program was Plan Colombia, begun in FY2000, which helped the Andean country combat both drug-trafficking and terrorist groups financed by the drug trade.

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<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2013/214201.htm>

¹⁰ See the website of Feed the Future, The U.S. Government’s Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative, available at <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/>

¹¹ U.S. Department of State, “Small Business Network of the Americas,” Fact Sheet, August 26, 2013, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2013/213495.htm>

¹² U.S. Department of State, “Women’s Entrepreneurship in the Americas (WEAmericas),” Fact Sheet, October 16, 2012, available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/10/199202.htm>

¹³ USAID, “Innovation Fund of the Americas,” Fact Sheet, December 4, 2013, available at <http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/innovation-fund-americas>

Democratic Governance

The policy priority of strengthening democratic governance has the goal of building on progress that the region has made over the past three decades, not only in terms of regular free and fair elections, but also in terms of respect for political rights and civil liberties. Despite this progress, many countries in the region still face considerable challenges (see “Latin America’s Economic and Political Environment” below). The United States provides foreign aid to support the rule of law and human rights, good governance, political competition, and consensus-building and civil society. Improving and strengthening democratic governance includes support to improve the capacity of state institutions to address citizens’ needs through responsive legislative, judicial, law enforcement, and penal institutions, as well as support to nongovernmental organizations working on democracy and human rights issues. It also includes defending press freedoms and democratic rights, such as free and fair elections and the protection of minority rights.

U.S. officials have continued to speak out about human rights abuses in countries such as Cuba and threats to political rights and civil liberties in other countries in the region. Assistant Secretary of State Jacobson has spoken out about the erosion in the full respect for freedom of expression in some countries, and has also contended that hemispheric nations should collectively remain on guard against efforts to weaken the Inter-American human rights system.¹⁴

Clean Energy Future

The Obama Administration introduced the **Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA)** in 2009 designed to strengthen inter-American collaboration on clean energy. Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are vulnerable to climate change, and struggle with energy security. ECPA includes voluntary bilateral and multi-country initiatives to promote clean energy, advance energy security, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Some of the initiatives involve international and regional organizations and the private sector.¹⁵ At the sixth Summit of the Americas in April 2012, President Obama joined with Colombia in **Connecting the Americas 2022**, an initiative with the goal of achieving universal access in the hemisphere to reliable, clean, and affordable electricity.¹⁶

Latin America’s Economic and Political Environment

U.S. policy toward the Latin American and Caribbean region is conducted in the context of significant economic and political changes in the hemisphere as well as the region’s increasing independence from the United States.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Policy Toward the Americas: The Summit and Beyond,” Remarks by Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson, May 11, 2012.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of State, Fact Sheet, “Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas,” May 31, 2012, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2012/191563.htm>; also see the website of the ECPA at <http://www.ecpamericas.org/>

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, Fact Sheet, “Connecting the Americas 2022,” October 23, 2012, available at <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2012/199772.htm>

A Changed Region

Political Changes. The Latin American and Caribbean region has made significant advances over the past three decades in terms of both political and economic development. In the early 1980s, 16 countries in the region were governed by authoritarian regimes, both on the left and the right, but today, all nations with the exception of Cuba are elected democracies. This past December, Argentina celebrated 30 years of civilian democratic rule since its military relinquished power in 1983 after seven years of harsh dictatorship. Some observers contend that the region overall, despite some exceptions, appears to be moving politically toward the ideological center, focusing on centrist, pragmatic polices.¹⁷ The threat to elected governments in the region from their own militaries has dissipated in most countries, although the 2009 ouster of President Manuel Zelaya in Honduras is an exception. Colombia's ongoing peace negotiations with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which began formally in October 2012, has raised hopes that the hemisphere's oldest civil conflict, which dates back to the 1960s, may be resolved.

Free and fair elections have become the norm in most countries in the region, even though some elections have been controversial with allegations of irregularities. In 2013, seven nations in the hemisphere held elections for head of government. In the most recent of these, former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010) was elected to a new four-year term in December and will be inaugurated in March 2014. Bachelet has promised reforms aimed at reducing inequality, including a gradual move toward free higher education.

In 2014, El Salvador and Costa Rica held first round presidential elections in early February, and both will hold runoff elections in March and April respectively. In El Salvador, the candidate of the ruling leftist Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), Salvador Sánchez Cerén (a former guerrilla commander and current Vice President), came close to winning the first electoral round with almost 49% of the vote, 10% more than the candidate

of the rightist National Republican Alliance (ARENA), Norman Quijano. Given his strong showing in the first round, most observers believe that Sánchez Cerén will win the runoff, resulting in a second FMLN government. During the campaign, Sánchez Cerén called for expanding the government's social welfare benefits, while Quijano emphasized security issues by criticizing the FMLN's brokering of a gang truce in 2012 and calling for getting the army involved in combatting gangs. In Costa Rica's runoff, Luis Guillermo Solís of the center-left Citizen Action Party (PAC) is thought to have a slight lead over Johnny Araya of the ruling centrist National Liberation Party (PLN). Araya has tried to distance himself from the unpopular ruling PLN government of President Laura Chinchilla, while Solís has run a campaign focused on reducing inequality, combating corruption and improving government efficiency.

Other upcoming presidential elections in 2014 include Panama and Colombia in May, Brazil and Uruguay in October, and Bolivia in December. In Panama's presidential race, the candidate of the ruling center-right Democratic Change (CD) party, José Domingo Arias, is leading opinion polls

2014 Elections

Costa Rica—February 2; April 6
El Salvador—February 2; March 9
Panama—May 4
Colombia—May 25; June 15
Brazil—October 5; October 26
Uruguay—October 26; November 30
Bolivia—December
Antigua and Barbuda—TBD
Dominica—TBD

¹⁷ Michael Shifter, "Latin America, A Surge to the Center," *Journal of Democracy*, January 2011; Daniel Zovatto, "Latin America 2013: Political and Electoral Balance," Brookings Institution, January 3, 2014.

over his rivals from the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) and the center-right Panameñista Party (PP). Support for Arias has been buoyed by the strong performance of the Panamanian economy. Current President Ricardo Martinelli is constitutionally prohibited from running for re-election, but his wife, Marta Linares, will be a vice presidential candidate for the CD. Analysts see her candidacy as a way for the popular Martinelli to retain influence in the next government. For many observers, Colombia's upcoming presidential election can be viewed as a referendum on the ongoing peace talks between the government of President Juan Manuel Santos and leftist guerrillas. Santos is leading polls for his re-election bid (see more below in Colombia section). The Caribbean also will see at least two parliamentary elections in 2014, where elections are due this year in Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

Despite significant improvement in political rights and civil liberties, several in the region still face considerable challenges. In a number of countries, weaknesses remain in the state's ability to deliver public services, ensure accountability and transparency, advance the rule of law, and ensure citizen safety and security. Many of the street protests that swept Latin America in 2013, most notably in Brazil, were sparked by new middle classes demanding better public services. There are also numerous examples of elected presidents over the past 25 years who left office early amid severe social turmoil, often with economic crises, high-profile corruption, or even the presidents' own autocratic actions contributing to their ousters.

The quality of democracy in several countries in the region also has been eroded by two key factors in recent years. One factor is increased organized crime. Mexico and several Central American countries have been especially affected because of the increased use of the region as a drug transit zone and the associated rise in corruption, crime and violence.¹⁸ A second factor negatively affecting democracy is the executive's abuse of power in several countries that has led to a setback in liberal democratic practices, with elected leaders seeking to consolidate power at the expense of minority rights. In recent years, there has also been a deterioration of media freedom in several countries in the region precipitated by the increase in organized crime-related violence and by politically driven attempts to curb critical or independent media.

Some analysts see the growth of leftist populism in the region in such countries as Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua as a threat to democracy because of the tough treatment of political opponents and the dismantling of institutional checks and balances. They contend that a type of competitive or electoral authoritarianism is taking hold in these countries, in which democratic institutions exist but abuse by the incumbent skews the playing field against opponents.¹⁹ Some also fear that El Salvador under Sánchez Cerén could join that group. In January 2014, Nicaragua's National Assembly, dominated by President Daniel Ortega's Sandinista party, approved constitutional changes eliminating presidential term limits and eliminating the 35% threshold requirement needed for election. This paves the way for Ortega to seek a fourth term in 2016.

¹⁸ For example, see Emily Edmonds-Poli, *The Effects of Drug-War Related Violence on Mexico's Press and Democracy*, Wilson Center, Mexico Institute and University of San Diego, Trans-border Institute, April 2013.

¹⁹ See Kurt Weyland, "Latin America's Authoritarian Drift, The Threat from the Populist Left," *Journal of Democracy*, July 2013. Also see Sebastián Mazzuca, "The Rise of Rentier Populism," *Journal of Democracy*, April 2013; Steven Levitsky and James Loxton, "Populism and Competitive Authoritarianism in the Andes," *Democratization*, January 2013; and *Latin American Populism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Carlos de la Torre and Cynthia J. Arson (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

The human rights group Freedom House compiles an annual evaluation of political rights and civil liberties in which it categorizes countries as free, partly free, and not free. In its 2014 report (covering 2013), the group ranked just one country as not free: Cuba; 10 countries as partly free—Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Venezuela; and the remaining 22 countries of the region as free. While the Dominican Republic was categorized as free, Freedom House noted a decline in civil liberties in the country because of a court ruling that could render thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent stateless, an action that was criticized by other Latin American countries and the United States. In Panama, Freedom House maintained that political rights declined because of concerns about a lack of investigations of government corruption and verbal attacks against journalists investigating corruption. In contrast, political rights and civil liberties were reported to have improved in Nicaragua because of, among other things, advances in transparency, progress in women’s rights, and efforts to combat trafficking.²⁰ (The Freedom House evaluation, however, was completed before Nicaragua’s Sandinista-dominated legislature approved constitutional changes in late January 2014 that eliminated presidential term limits.)

Economic Changes. The region has also undergone a significant economic transformation. While the 1980s were commonly referred to as the lost decade of development as many countries became bogged down with unsustainable public debt, the 1990s brought about a shift from a strategy of import-substituting industrialization to one focused on export promotion, attraction of foreign capital, and privatization of state enterprises. Latin America experienced an economic downturn in 2002 (brought about in part because of an economic downturn in the United States), but recovered with strong growth rates until 2009, when a global economic crisis again affected the region with an economic contraction of about 2%.²¹ Some countries experienced deeper recession in 2009, especially those more closely integrated with the U.S. economy, such as Mexico, while other countries with more diversified trade and investment partners experienced lesser downturns. The region rebounded in 2010 and 2011, with growth rates of 5.6% and 4.3% respectively.²²

Economic growth rates declined since to a regional average of 3.1% in 2012 and 2.6% in 2013. Last year, the weak performances of Brazil (2.4%) and Mexico (1.3%) dragged down the regional average. ECLAC’s regional forecast for 2014 is for an improved growth rate of 3.2% based on increasing external demand tied to improving economic conditions in the global economy and better economic performance in Brazil and Mexico.²³ Poor economic performance in China, the United States, and Europe, however, could have a significant effect on the economic outlook for Latin America. There is also increasing concern about economic conditions in Venezuela, which is facing shortages of basic food and consumer items, electricity shortages, high inflation (56% at the end of 2013), and falling international reserves. The recent plunge of Argentina’s peso, which fell by 15% in January 2014, has also focused attention on that country’s difficult economic situation characterized by high inflation and declining international reserves.

²⁰ Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2014,” 2013.

²¹ Sidney Weintraub, “An Economic Storm Hits Latin America,” *Current History*, February 2009.

²² U.N. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Economic Survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013*, July 2013.

²³ ECLAC, *Preliminary Overview of the Economies of Latin America and the Caribbean*, November 29, 2013; *Economic and Social Panorama of Latin America and Caribbean States, 2013*, January 2014.

As noted above, Latin America has made significant progress in combating poverty and inequality. Two key factors accounting for this decline are increasing per capita income levels and targeted public expenditures known as conditional cash transfer programs for vulnerable sectors. Brazil and Mexico were pioneers in these targeted programs that have spread to other countries. In terms of income distribution, while Latin America is still the most unequal region in the world, inequality has declined in many countries since 2002, and there has been a clear downward trend in income concentration in the region over the past decade.²⁴ Rising growth and income levels and progress in poverty reduction also have helped expand Latin America's middle class by about 50% over the past decade, according to the World Bank. Now more than 150 million people in the region (about 30% of total population) are considered in the middle class.²⁵

Latin America's Increasing Independence

Latin America's relatively stable economic performance in recent years has increased the region's confidence in solving its own problems, and has lessened the region's dependency on the United States. The region's growing ideological diversity in recent years has also been a factor in the region's increased independence from the United States, as has Brazil's rising regional and global influence.

Latin American and Caribbean countries have diversified their economic and diplomatic ties with countries outside the region. China, for example, has become a major trading partner for many countries in the region, ranking as one of the top two export and import markets. Total Chinese trade with the region grew from almost \$18 billion in 2002 to about \$259 billion in 2012.²⁶ (Nevertheless, the United States remains the single largest trading partner for many countries; total U.S. trade with the region amounted \$845 billion in 2012, more than three times that of China's trade with the region.)²⁷

Several Latin American regional integration organizations have been established in the past few years, a reflection of both the region's increasing independence and its growing internal cooperation. In December 2011, 33 hemispheric nations—excluding the United States and Canada—met in Caracas to establish the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) to boost regional integration and cooperation. While some observers have concerns that CELAC could be a forum for countries that have tense or difficult relations with the United States, others point out that strong U.S. partners in the region are also members. Some observers have predicted that CELAC could diminish the role of the OAS, while others maintain that CELAC does not have a permanent staff or secretariat that could compete with the OAS. CELAC held its first summit in Chile in January 2013, in which Cuban President Raúl Castro assumed the presidency of the organization for a year. CELAC's second summit was held in late January 2014 in Havana, Cuba. At the summit, leaders declared their region a “zone of peace” pledging to resolve disputes as respectful neighbors. The leaders also committed their nations to

²⁴ ECLAC, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2012*, p. 21. For further discussion of progress in reducing inequality in the region, see Nora Lustig, “Latin America's Inequality Success Story,” *Current History*, February 2013.

²⁵ World Bank, *Economic Mobility and the Rise of the Latin American Middle Class*, by Francisco H.G. Ferreira et al, 2013.

²⁶ Trade figures cited are drawn from the *Global Trade Atlas*, using trade statistics reported by China.

²⁷ U.S. trade statistics are drawn from the *Global Trade Atlas*, using statistics reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

nonintervention and pledged to respect “the inalienable right of every state to choose its political, economic, social, and cultural system.”²⁸

While to some extent CELAC’s establishment reflects declining U.S. influence in Latin America, the United States still remains very much engaged in the region bilaterally and multilaterally through the OAS and its numerous affiliated organizations. In addition, the Summit of the Americas process (affiliated with the OAS) remains an important mechanism for the United States to engage with Latin American nations at the highest level. While the sixth Summit of the Americas held in Colombia in April 2012 displayed U.S. divergence from the region in terms of policy toward Cuba and anti-drug strategy, the meeting also included a variety of initiatives to deepen hemispheric integration and address key hemispheric challenges.

A looming challenge for the United States, however, is how to deal with the next Summit of the Americas, scheduled to be hosted by Panama in 2015. Several Latin American leaders have pledged that they will not attend if Cuba is not invited; such a scenario could be a significant policy dilemma for the Obama Administration. Cuba had expressed interest in attending the sixth summit in 2012 in Colombia, but ultimately was not invited to attend. The United States and Canada had expressed opposition to Cuba’s participation. Previous summits have been limited to the hemisphere’s 34 democratically elected leaders, and the OAS (in which Cuba does not participate) has played a key role in summit implementation and follow-up activities.

Another regional organization is the 12-member Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), established in 2008 (largely because of Brazil’s influence) to promote political, economic, and security coordination in South America. It has served as a forum for dispute resolution. For example, the organization played a role in defusing tensions between Colombia and Venezuela in 2008, and helped resolve internal political conflicts in Bolivia in 2008 and Ecuador in 2010. Some analysts, however, have raised questions about UNASUR’s overall efficacy, financial support, and ability to develop specialized capabilities and programs.²⁹

The Venezuelan-led Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA, originally established as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas), was launched by President Hugo Chávez in 2004 with the goals of promoting regional integration and socioeconomic reform and alleviating poverty. In addition to Venezuela, this nine-member group currently includes Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, as well as the Caribbean island nations of Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and most recently St. Lucia, which became a member in July 2013. Some observers maintain that ALBA has lost its initial energy. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper maintained in January 2012 congressional testimony that ALBA was “created in part to spread Chávez’s influence in the region” but “is only muddling through.”³⁰ In the aftermath of President Chávez’s death in March 2013, some observers question the future of the Venezuelan-founded alliance.

²⁸ Peter Orsi, “LatAm Leaders Declare Region a ‘Zone of Peace,’” *Associated Press*, January 29, 2014.

²⁹ Michael Shifter, “The Shifting Landscape of Latin American Regionalism,” *Current History*, February 2012; Testimony of James R. Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, January 31, 2012, “Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community,” available at <http://intelligence.senate.gov/120131/clapper.pdf>

³⁰ *Ibid.*

There was strong reaction among Latin American governments to the case of Edward Snowden, wanted on espionage charges for releasing classified information about U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) surveillance programs. In July 2013, Venezuela announced that it would offer asylum to Snowden; Bolivia and Nicaragua also reportedly agreed to take him, and Ecuador said that it would consider granting him asylum if he could reach Ecuadorian territory.³¹ On August 1, 2013, Russia granted temporary asylum to Snowden for one year, but some observers speculated that Snowden could eventually end up in Latin America. There would likely be a significant negative effect on U.S. bilateral relations with any Latin American country that might grant Snowden asylum.

Revelations about the U.S. surveillance program not only rankled leftist populist Latin American governments that have had adversarial relations with the United States in recent years and often spout anti-U.S. rhetoric, but it also raised concerns among other countries that have close relations with the United States such as Colombia, Chile, and Brazil. Press reports regarding alleged NSA activities in Brazil (including surveillance of President Dilma Rousseff) led Brazil to postpone a state visit to the United States in October 2013. For Latin American countries that have made transitions to democracy from military dictatorships, the issue of spying and surveillances is very sensitive, and raises memories of past U.S. support for military dictatorships in the region. Many Latin American leaders were also incensed over the treatment of Bolivian President Evo Morales, whose plane, after leaving Moscow, was denied fly-over permission by several European countries in early July 2013 because of the suspicion that Snowden was on board; many believed that U.S. pressure was behind the airspace denial.³²

Continuity and Change in U.S. Policy

Under the Obama Administration, there has been significant continuity in U.S. policy toward Latin America from the Bush Administration. Some of the same basic policy approaches have been continued, although in many cases there has been a change of emphasis.

Like the Bush Administration, the Obama Administration has provided significant anti-drug and security support to Colombia and significant support to Mexico and Central America to combat drug trafficking and organized crime through the Mérida Initiative and CARSI. Assistance to Mexico, however, has shifted toward more support for rule of law programs (including police, judicial, and penal reform) and programs to help communities withstand the pressures of crime and violence. In anticipation of a potential “balloon effect” of drug trafficking shifting to the Caribbean region, the Obama Administration also established the CBSI, the origin of which, however, dates back to the Bush Administration. Assistance for Colombia has become more evenly balanced between enhancing rule of law, human rights and economic development programs on the one hand, and continuing efforts on security and drug interdiction on the other. Overall U.S. assistance levels to Colombia have begun to decline as the country is increasingly taking over responsibility for programs once funded by the United States.

³¹ In mid-2012, Ecuador provided asylum to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, where he remains; Assange is wanted for questioning by Sweden on charges of sexual assault and could eventually face charges in the United States for the dissemination of classified information.

³² “William Neuman and Alison Smale, “Barring of Bolivian Plane Infuriates Latin America as Snowden Case Widens,” *New York Times*, July 4, 2013.

Implementing bills for FTAs with Colombia and Panama that were negotiated under the Bush Administration ultimately were introduced and enacted into law in October 2011 after extensive work by the Obama Administration to resolve outstanding congressional concerns related to both agreements. Another trade initiative begun informally under the Bush Administration and continued by the Obama Administration through formal trade negotiations is the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement, which involves negotiations with Mexico, Chile, and Peru and eight other Pacific countries. A framework for a TPP agreement was announced in November 2011; the goal was to reach an agreement in 2013, but negotiations are still continuing.³³ In July 2013, the United States became an observer to the Pacific Alliance, a regional integration initiative formed by Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru.

Just as the Bush Administration had, the Obama Administration has expressed support for comprehensive immigration reform, an especially important issue in U.S. relations with Mexico and Central America. Reform efforts were stymied in 2007 when the Senate failed to invoke cloture and limit debate on two comprehensive reform measures, and Congress did not return to consideration of such measures. In January 2013, however, a bipartisan group of Senators announced their efforts to draft comprehensive reform legislation for passage this summer. The bipartisan framework, which led to Senate passage of a comprehensive bill in June 2013, includes a pathway for citizenship for some 11 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States, including an estimated 6.7 million from Mexico. To date the House, has not considered comprehensive immigration reform and it is unclear whether it will do so before the end of the 113th Congress.

In other areas, the Obama Administration has made policy changes on Latin America that have more clearly differentiated it from the Bush Administration. Early on, the Administration put more of an emphasis on partnership and shared responsibility in its policy toward the region. The Administration increased and sustained higher levels of development assistance to the region even in recent years as overall U.S. assistance to the region has declined. The Administration has also implemented several changes in Cuba policy by lifting restrictions on family travel, easing restrictions on other types of purposeful travel, and restarting semi-annual talks with Cuba (although talks have not been held since January 2011). At the same time, the Administration has continued the long-standing U.S. policy of maintaining economic sanctions on Cuba and speaking out about the poor human rights situation on the island.

In assessing U.S. policy toward Latin America under the Obama Administration, many observers and policy analysts have commended the Administration for its emphasis on partnership and multilateralism; for deepening security cooperation with Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean focused on ensuring citizen security; for broadening relations with Colombia beyond counternarcotics and counterterrorism issues; and for a strong U.S. response to the earthquake in Haiti. According to a former State Department official, U.S. diplomacy in the region today “is focused on being relevant to practical needs widely felt by other peoples—the way it should be,” and that socioeconomic changes in the region, which the United States helped support, “are fostering a convergence of basic values and interests that can and should define relationships that are bright, cooperative, and productive for decades to come.”³⁴

³³ See CRS Report R42694, *The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Negotiations and Issues for Congress*, coordinated by Ian F. Fergusson.

³⁴ William McIlhenny, “Get the Story Right: Time for Stories of Fading U.S. Interest to Fade,” *Americas Quarterly*, AQ Web Exclusive, November 26, 2012.

On the other hand, a number of analysts have urged the Administration to articulate a strategic vision and more cohesive policy approach toward Latin America.³⁵ In looking at President Obama's first term, some analysts contend that as problems have arisen in the region, U.S. responses have been reactive rather than proactive, and can be characterized "as improvised and lacking a sense of strategic direction."³⁶ Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) senior associate Howard Wiarda argues that a "coherent, mature policy for the region" needs to be articulated, although he contends that the United States has accomplished a great deal at individual country-level policies in terms of democracy, development, modernization, and in fostering good bilateral relations.³⁷ Peter Hakim of the Inter-American Dialogue has described U.S. policy toward Latin America as adrift, with a growing separation of the United States from Latin America and a shrinking U.S. vision for Latin America. He contends that while U.S. leaders regularly affirm the importance of the region to the United States, they have not been able to devise a strategy to effectively exploit what former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described as the "power of proximity."³⁸

Many policy analysts and think tanks across the political spectrum have called for the Administration to elevate U.S. relations with both Brazil and Mexico, the two economic powerhouses of the region. Many advocate a deepening and broadening of U.S. relations with Brazil in the areas of defense and security, trade, energy, and also multilateral issues given Brazil's rising global profile. With regard to Mexico, many argue that the Obama Administration should, in addition to continuing strong security cooperation, seize the opportunity to work with a new government in Mexico in deepening economic relations, including energy cooperation, and engaging Mexico on global issues.³⁹ On immigration, in particular, many Latin America policy analysts have called for U.S. efforts to fix its immigration system as a means of improving relations not only with Mexico, but with the region overall. Michael Shifter of the Inter-American Dialogue maintains that meaningful immigration reform would be welcomed throughout Latin America, especially in Mexico, "where the issue has long been a source of tension in the bilateral relationship."⁴⁰

Think tanks and policy analysts have made numerous other recommendations for U.S. policy toward the region.⁴¹ With regard to drug policy, there are calls for the United States to reevaluate

³⁵ *Shifting the Balance, Obama and the Americas*, ed. Abraham F. Lowenthal, Theodore J. Piccone, and Lawrence Whitehead (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), p. 21.

³⁶ Laurence Whitehead and Detlef Nolte, "The Obama Administration and Latin America: A Disappointing First Term," *GIGA Focus*, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Number 6, 2012.

³⁷ Howard J. Wiarda, "Recommendations for a New Administration: Base Hemispheric Relations on Opportunities, Not Threats," CSIS, November 26, 2012.

³⁸ Peter Hakim, "The Incredibly Shrinking Vision: U.S. Policy in Latin America," *Política Exterior* (Madrid), July 5, 2012.

³⁹ Wiarda, *op. cit.*; Andrew Selee and Christopher Wilson, "A New Agenda with Mexico," Wilson Center, November 2012; Duncan Wood, "Recommendations for a New Administration: Safeguarding Progress with Mexico," CSIS, December 10, 2012; Peter Hakim and Sergio Muñoz Bata, "A Second Term Agenda for Latin America," *Infolatam*, January 22, 2013; James M. Roberts and Ray Walser, "Latin America and the Caribbean: A Wish List for 2013," Issue Brief, Heritage Foundation, January 7, 2013; Roger F. Noriega and José R. Cárdenas, "An Action Plan for US Policy in the Americas," American Enterprise Institute, December 2012; Johanna Mendelson Forman, with Alek Suni, "Recommendations for a New Administration: Building a Dynamic U.S.-Brazil Partnership," CSIS, December 19, 2012; and "A More Ambitious Agenda, A Report of the Inter-American Dialogue's Commission on Mexico-U.S. Relations, Inter-American Dialogue," February 2013.

⁴⁰ Michael Shifter, "Will Obama Kick the Can Down the Road?" *Revista Ideele* (Peru), December 27, 2012.

⁴¹ In addition to the various reports cited in footnote 31, also see Stephen Johnson, "Recommendations for a New (continued...)"

its anti-drug strategy, pointing to efforts by some Latin American leaders and others to explore drug policy alternatives. While some stress the need to sustain a strong international drug control regime focused on eradication and interdiction, others appear to emphasize the need for more efforts to address U.S. domestic drug addiction and consumption. With regard to Cuba, some argue for moving away from the sanctions-based approach toward Cuba, while others contend that sanctions should be maintained as long as the government continues its harsh human rights violations. With regard to democracy promotion, some analysts argue that U.S. engagement with the region should include a more vibrant democracy promotion component, especially in countries facing challenges; others contend that the United States already has strong democracy and human rights programs; and some question the efficacy of such programs.

Congress and Policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean

Congress plays an active role in policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean. Legislative and oversight attention to the region during the 112th Congress focused on the increase in drug trafficking-related violence in Mexico and U.S. assistance to Mexico under the Mérida Initiative; efforts to help Central American and Caribbean countries contend with drug trafficking and violent crime; and continued counternarcotics and security support to Colombia. The 2010 earthquake that devastated Port-au-Prince, Haiti, continued to focus congressional attention on the enormous task of disaster recovery and reconstruction. As in past years, U.S. sanctions on Cuba, particularly restrictions on travel and remittances, remained a contentious issue in the debate over how to support change in one of the world's last remaining communist nations. Another area of congressional oversight was the deterioration of democracy in several Latin American countries, especially Nicaragua and Venezuela. Congressional concern also increased about Iran's growing relations in the region, especially with Venezuela, and about the activities of Hezbollah.

Many of these issues have continued to be the focus of congressional attention in the 113th Congress. Hearings on Latin America have focused on a variety of topics, including: an overview of U.S. interests and policy in the Western Hemisphere; energy security issues centering on Mexico and Canada; the posture of the U.S. Northern and Southern Commands; U.S. security cooperation with Mexico under the Mérida Initiative, with Central America under CARSI, and with the Caribbean under CBSI; U.S.-Brazil trade and investment relations; Iranian activities in Latin America and U.S. policy; human rights in Honduras; Cuba's attempted transfer of weapons to North Korea; challenges to democracy in the Western Hemisphere, including media freedom; assistance to Haiti; human rights and peace talks in Colombia; security and commerce at the border with Mexico; NAFTA after 20 years; and terrorist groups in Latin America. (see **Appendix B**).

(...continued)

Administration: Interests, Policies, and Challenges in the Americas," CSIS, November 21, 2012; Anton Edmunds, "Recommendations for a New Administration: Be a Good Neighbor to the Caribbean," CSIS, December 26, 2012; Phillip McLean, "Recommendations for a New Administration: Move Beyond the Drug Focus in the Andes," CSIS, January 3, 2013; and Cynthia J. Arnson, "Setting Priorities for U.S. Policy in Latin America," Wilson Center, January 2013.

Other broad issues of congressional interest in the 113th Congress include relations with Mexico, and the status of reforms, under the new administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto; the status of democracy in Venezuela and U.S.-Venezuelan relations in the post-Chávez era; prospects for Colombia's peace negotiations with the FARC and the potential ramifications for U.S. policy and foreign aid; whether and how to strengthen relations with Brazil; progress on negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that includes three Latin American countries (Chile, Mexico, and Peru); and the operation and activities of the OAS.

Legislative action to date in the 113th Congress has included:

- the 2014 farm bill (P.L. 113-79), with modifications to the U.S. cotton program related to a trade dispute with Brazil over U.S. subsidies and a reporting requirement on a U.S.-Mexico water dispute in the Rio Grande Basin;
- approval of the U.S.-Mexico Transboundary Hydrocarbons Agreement in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-67);
- the Organization of American States Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-41), which directs the Secretary of State to develop a strategy for the adoption of proposed reforms at the OAS; and
- omnibus appropriations legislation for FY2013 (P.L. 113-6) and FY2014 (P.L. 113-76), which included foreign aid appropriations for those years, with numerous provisions on Latin America. (The explanatory statement to the FY2014 omnibus measure also referenced reports accompanying the House and Senate Appropriations Committee reported versions of the foreign operations appropriations bills, H.Rept. 113-76 to H.R. 2855 and S.Rept. 113-81 to S. 1372, that contained numerous directives and reporting requirements unless specifically contradicted by the explanatory statement or enacted measure.)

Other legislative action has included Senate approval of comprehensive immigration reform (S. 744); Senate approval of a resolution on Haiti's recovery and reconstruction (S.Res. 12); and House approval of a measure requiring State Department reports on specific aspects of Haiti's post-earthquake recovering and development efforts (H.R. 3509). In addition, FY2014 Financial Services and General Government appropriations bills were reported in each house (H.R. 2786 and S. 1371) with different provisions on U.S. policy on travel to Cuba, but ultimately the FY2014 omnibus appropriations measure did not include any of these provisions.

Figure I. Map of Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: Map Resources, edited by CRS.

Notes: While Belize is located in Central America and Guyana and Suriname are located on the northern coast of South America, all three countries are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Regional Issues

U.S. Foreign Aid

Although many Latin American and Caribbean nations have made significant development progress in recent years, foreign aid remains an important tool for advancing U.S. policy priorities in the hemisphere. Current aid programs reflect the diversity of the region. Some nations receive a broad range of U.S. assistance, with projects in areas such as democracy promotion, economic reform, basic education, human health, environmental protection, citizen security, and counternarcotics. Others have largely outgrown U.S. assistance but continue to receive low levels of aid, usually targeted toward strengthening security capabilities. Absolute assistance levels for the region have declined each year since FY2010. In FY2013, the United States provided an estimated \$1.7 billion of aid to Latin American and Caribbean nations through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department. Some countries in the region received additional assistance through the Department of Defense, the Inter-American Foundation, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and/or the Peace Corps.

Key Policy Issues: The 113th Congress has spent a substantial amount of time considering appropriations for foreign aid and other programs. Final action on FY2013 appropriations was not completed until March 2013, when Congress approved the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013 (P.L. 113-6). That measure generally provided funding at FY2012-enacted levels, but country allocations were reduced by budget sequestration. Final action on FY2014 appropriations was also delayed, with the President signing into law the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76) on January 17, 2014. Prior to the adoption of P.L. 113-76, FY2014 funding had been provided through two continuing resolutions (P.L. 113-46 and P.L. 113-73).

Since P.L. 113-76 and its explanatory statement do not provide specific funding allocations for most countries, it is currently unclear how much aid will go to Latin America and the Caribbean in FY2014. The Administration requested almost \$1.6 billion in assistance for the region through State and USAID, including most foreign aid accounts with the exception of food aid (P.L. 480). Without considering food aid, the request represents a cut of some \$116 million, or about 7%, compared to the estimated amount provided in FY2013. All of the funding levels that are specified in P.L. 113-76 or its explanatory statement either meet or exceed the Administration's request. Congress also included numerous conditions on assistance to various Latin American and Caribbean countries and programs in the legislation, explanatory statement, and two related committee reports (S.Rept. 113-81 and H.Rept. 113-185, which act as directives unless contradicted by the explanatory statement). In the coming months, Congress will begin consideration of the President's foreign aid request for FY2015.

For additional information, see CRS Report R43043, *State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs: FY2014 Budget and Appropriations*, by Susan B. Epstein, Alex Tiersky, and Marian L. Lawson. For historical trends, see CRS Report R42582, *U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean: Recent Trends and FY2013 Appropriations*, by Peter J. Meyer and Mark P. Sullivan.

Trade Policy

The Latin America and Caribbean region is one of the fastest-growing regional trading partners for the United States. The average rate of growth in trade between the United States and the region since 1998 surpasses that of U.S. trade with Asia and the European Union. Despite challenges such as diplomatic tensions or violence in certain countries, economic relations between the United States and most of its trading partners in the region remain strong. The United States accounts for roughly 40% of the region's imports and exports. Most of this trade is with Mexico, which accounts for 60% of U.S. imports from and 54% of U.S. exports to the region. In 2013, total U.S. exports to Latin America and the Caribbean were valued at \$407 billion, while U.S. imports were valued at \$438 billion (see **Appendix A**).

The United States has strengthened economic ties with the region over the past two decades through the negotiation and implementation of free trade agreements (FTAs). Starting with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which entered into force twenty years ago, in January 1994, the United States has entered into a total of six FTAs involving 11 countries in the region, including Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru. Some of the largest economies in South America, however, such as Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela, have resisted the idea of forming trade integration agreements with the United States. As a result, there are numerous other bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements throughout the Western Hemisphere that do not include the United States. In addition to FTAs, the United States extends unilateral trade preferences to some countries in the region through trade preference programs such as the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA). In the early 1990s, the United States began extending unilateral trade preferences to certain countries in the Andean region under the Andean Trade Preference Act (ATPA). However, trade preferences for Ecuador, the only remaining designated beneficiary country under ATPA, expired on July 31, 2013; in late June 2013, Ecuador had renounced its participation in the program.

As wages rise in East Asia and productivity increases in countries that have an FTA with the United States, such as Mexico, numerous analysts have proposed that the United States employ trade policy to further hemispheric cooperation and focus on improving regional supply networks. The next possible step toward trade integration may be the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which could have significant implications for U.S. trade and investment ties with the three Latin American countries participating in the negotiations—Mexico, Chile, and Peru—as well as with Canada and seven other countries in the Pacific involved in the negotiations (other Latin American countries could also join in the future). The proposed TPP may open some issues related to NAFTA and strengthen provisions in areas such as intellectual property rights (IPR) protection, labor rights, and environmental protection.

Key Policy Issues. The TPP negotiations are likely to continue to be of congressional interest, especially in the areas of services trade, IPR protection, worker rights, environmental issues, and regulatory cooperation. Given that only three countries from Latin America are participating in the negotiations, this could raise questions as to whether the United States should consider broadening trade policy efforts to the region as a whole. Another possible issue of interest for Congress is the Pacific Alliance, a trade liberalization initiative among Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. The United States was granted observer status to the Alliance in July 2013, which will allow it to attend negotiating rounds and also makes it a candidate for full membership. Congress may also be interested in the recent passage of energy reform in Mexico and the implications for U.S. oil imports from Mexico and for investment or business opportunities for U.S. companies.

Congress also could consider trade policy with Brazil in an effort to boost U.S. exports, especially now that there is a possibility of trade talks between Mexico and Brazil. (Also see sections on “Brazil” and “Mexico” below.)

For additional background, see CRS Report R42965, *NAFTA at 20: Overview and Trade Effects*, by M. Angeles Villarreal and Ian F. Fergusson; CRS Report R42694, *The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Negotiations and Issues for Congress*, coordinated by Ian F. Fergusson; CRS Report R41429, *Trade Preferences: Economic Issues and Policy Options*, coordinated by Vivian C. Jones; and CRS Report RS22548, *ATPA Renewal: Background and Issues*, by M. Angeles Villarreal.

Drug Policy

Latin America and the Caribbean feature prominently in U.S. counternarcotics policy due to the region’s role as a source and transit zone for several illicit drugs destined for U.S. markets—cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and opiates. Contemporary drug trafficking and transnational crime syndicates in the region have contributed to degradations in citizen security and economic development, often resulting in record levels of violence and drug trafficking-related homicides. Despite significant efforts to combat the drug trade, many governments in Latin America continue to suffer from overtaxed criminal justice systems and overwhelmed law enforcement and border control agencies. Moreover, extensive government corruption, entrenched by deeply influential criminal kingpins, frustrates efforts to interdict drugs, investigate and prosecute traffickers, and recover illicit proceeds. There is a widespread perception, particularly among many Latin American observers, that continuing U.S. demand for illicit drugs is largely to blame for the Western Hemisphere’s ongoing crime and violence problems.

Ongoing struggles to deal with the violent and destabilizing effects of the illicit drug trade, however, have spurred some Latin American leaders and others to explore drug policy alternatives. In 2009, the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy (later renamed the Global Commission on Drug Policy) advocated the decriminalization of drug consumption and treatment of drug addiction as a public health matter as well as a redoubling of law enforcement efforts to crack down on drug trafficking-related organized crime. At the sixth Summit of the Americas held in April 2012, several Latin American presidents criticized current international drug control efforts. As a result, Summit participants tasked the OAS Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) to prepare two inter-related reports to evaluate current Latin American drug policies and provide policy options for alternative drug control approaches.

The first of these two OAS reports assessed the scope of the drug problem in the Americas. It concluded that there is no single manifestation of the drug problem in the region. For example, it found that health-related consequences of drug consumption were most apparent in end-user countries while criminal activity and related violence predominantly affected drug production and transit countries. As a result, the report suggests that regional responses may benefit from greater policy flexibility that allows for a diversity of approaches tailored to the problems facing individual countries. Such flexibility may include changes in national legislation or international law to permit the decriminalization or legalization of marijuana.

The second OAS report presents four potential scenarios for the future direction of the drug problem in the Americas, depending on the policy decisions taken by regional actors between 2013 and 2025. Collectively, policy options identified include (1) addressing insecurity and weak

governance through institutional capacity building in the justice sector; (2) experimenting with alternatives to the current prohibitionist drug control regime, including but not limited to the decriminalization or legalization of marijuana; (3) mitigating drug-related violence and addiction through local community and civic engagement; and (4) allowing drug traffickers to operate freely and with impunity in order to reduce the visibility of drug trafficking-related violence.

The OAS drug reports were highlighted at its most recent General Assembly session in June 2013, where the theme of the conference was “For a Comprehensive Policy Against the World Drug Problem in the Americas.” Many stakeholders had hoped that the OAS reports would spur further consideration of alternative drug policy options, including in particular changes in policy approaches to marijuana-related crimes. To date, the Obama Administration’s position on this issue remains firmly against national-level policies that would legalize or decriminalize controlled substances, including marijuana. Some countries in Latin America have already begun the process of modifying domestic drug laws to decriminalize and reduce or alter the penalties and consequences of certain aspects of the drug control regime, such as for drug possession and consumption. In an unprecedented move, Uruguay enacted legislation to establish a nationally regulated legal market for domestic, recreational consumption of cannabis in late December 2013. Bolivia has also sought a different approach to counternarcotics policy, including a reduced reliance on U.S. counternarcotics support and the decriminalization of certain activities involving coca leaf.

Advocates of counternarcotics policy reform have hailed recent Latin American initiatives as a breakthrough, praising such efforts as overdue, given the perception that existing policies have not translated into enduring counterdrug progress for the region. Others, however, consider the prospect of a growing divide between U.S. and Latin American drug control policy as one of the most serious threats to the integrity of the global drug control regime. Such critics are concerned that variations in national drug control policies could provide criminal elements additional opportunities to exploit gaps in drug enforcement. It remains unclear whether such policy debates may translate into lasting improvements to reduce the production, trafficking, use, and consequences of illegal drug trade.

Key Policy Issues: The future direction of regional debates on drug policy reform may have implications for the 113th Congress as it evaluates the Obama Administration’s counternarcotics goals in the Western Hemisphere, including counternarcotics and foreign aid budget plans. The 113th Congress may also address this issue as it evaluates the distribution of domestic and international drug control funding, and the relative balance of civilian, law enforcement, and military roles in regional anti-drug efforts.

For additional information, see CRS Report RL34543, *International Drug Control Policy: Background and U.S. Responses*, by Liana Rosen; and CRS Report R41215, *Latin America and the Caribbean: Illicit Drug Trafficking and U.S. Counterdrug Programs*, coordinated by Clare Ribando Seelke.

Terrorism Issues

U.S. attention to terrorism in Latin America intensified in the aftermath of the September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, with an increase in bilateral and regional cooperation. In its 2012 *Country Reports on Terrorism* (issued in May 2013), the State Department maintained that the threat of a transnational terrorist attack remained low for most countries in the hemisphere. It reported that the majority of terrorist attacks in the hemisphere

were committed by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). With regard to Mexico, the State Department maintained that “international terrorist organizations do not have a known operational presence in Mexico and no terrorist group targeted U.S. citizens in or from Mexican territory.”

Cuba has remained on the State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism since 1982 pursuant to Section 6(j) of the Export Administration Act. Both Cuba and Venezuela are on the State Department’s annual list of countries determined to be not cooperating fully with U.S. antiterrorism efforts pursuant to Section 40A of the Arms Export Control Act. U.S. officials have expressed concerns over the past several years about Venezuela’s lack of cooperation on antiterrorism efforts, its relations with Iran, and potential support for Colombian terrorist groups, although improved Venezuelan-Colombian relations have resulted in closer cooperation on antiterrorism and counter-narcotics efforts and border security. Both Cuba and Venezuela have actively supported ongoing peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC being held in Cuba since 2012.

Over the past several years, policymakers have been concerned about Iran’s increasing activities in Latin America. Concerns center on Iran’s attempts to circumvent U.N. and U.S. sanctions, as well as on its ties to the radical Lebanon-based Islamic group Hezbollah. Both Iran and Hezbollah are reported to be linked to two bombings against Jewish targets in Argentina in the early 1990s. The 112th Congress enacted the Countering Iran in the Western Hemisphere Act of 2012 (P.L. 112-220) in December 2012, which required the Administration within 180 days to conduct an assessment and present “a strategy to address Iran’s growing hostile presence and activity in the Western Hemisphere.” In June 2013, the State Department submitted the required report to Congress. While most of it was classified, an unclassified annex stated that “Iranian influence in Latin America and the Caribbean is waning.” Critics maintain that the State Department is playing down the threat posed by Iran in the region, while others contend that while Iran’s involvement in the region is a concern, its level and significance are being exaggerated. As in past years, the State Department 2012 terrorism report maintains that there are no known operational cells of either Al Qaeda or Hezbollah in the hemisphere, but noted that “ideological sympathizers in South America and the Caribbean continued to provide financial and ideological support to those and other terrorist groups in the Middle East and South Asia.”

Key Policy Issues. The 113th Congress is continuing its oversight of terrorism concerns in the Western Hemisphere, especially the activities of Iran and Hezbollah. The State Department assessment of Iranian activities in the region and the U.S. strategy to address was the subject of two House hearings in 2013, and another House hearing on terrorist groups in Latin America was held in February 2014 (see **Appendix B**). In terms of legislative initiatives, two have been introduced so far in the 113th Congress related to Cuba. H.R. 1917 (Rush) would, among its provisions, rescind any determination of the Secretary of State in effect on the date of enactment of the Act that Cuba has repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism. H.Res. 262 (King) would call for the immediate extradition or rendering to the United States of all fugitives from justice who are receiving safe harbor in Cuba in order to escape prosecution or confinement for criminal offenses in the United States. The issue of Cuba’s harboring of fugitives wanted in the United States has been mentioned for several years in the State Department’s annual report on terrorism.

For additional information, see CRS Report RS21049, *Latin America: Terrorism Issues*, by Mark P. Sullivan and June S. Beittel.

Organization of American States

Since its foundation in 1948, the Organization of American States (OAS) has served as a forum through which the United States has sought to foster regional cooperation and advance U.S. priorities in the Western Hemisphere. OAS actions reflected U.S. policy for much of the 20th century as other members sought to closely align themselves with the dominant economic and political power in the region. As the other 34 members have developed more independent foreign policies, however, the OAS has become less receptive to U.S. initiatives and more prone to inaction. A number of Members of Congress have expressed concern about the organization's direction in recent years. Some assert that the OAS advances policies counter to U.S. interests and argue that the United States should no longer fund the organization. Others assert that the OAS continues to be an important hemispheric institution but worry that administrative and financial problems are preventing it from effectively carrying out its core missions of democracy promotion, human rights protection, economic and social development, and regional security cooperation.

Key Policy Issues: The 113th Congress has maintained considerable interest in the OAS, and has adopted legislation designed to strengthen the organization. On October 2, 2013, President Obama signed into law the OAS Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-41), which had been passed by both houses of Congress in September 2013. The measure expresses support for the OAS, asserts that the organization could carry out its mission more effectively by implementing certain management and programmatic reforms, and directs the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to ensure the proposed changes are adopted. It also directs the Secretary of State to submit the strategy to Congress within 180 days of enactment, and provide quarterly briefings on the implementation of the proposed reforms.

The 113th Congress has also continued to demonstrate support for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), an autonomous OAS institution. The explanatory statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76), which was signed into law on January 17, 2014, designates \$2 million for the IACHR. Likewise, S.Rept. 113-81, which accompanied the Senate Appropriations Committee's FY2014 foreign aid funding measure, recognized "the essential role of the IACHR in providing justice for victims of human rights violations and protecting basic freedoms in many Latin American countries whose justice systems are weak and influenced by corruption." Moreover, a provision of the Countering ALBA Act of 2013 (H.R. 1687), introduced in April 2013, would direct the U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS to use the voice, vote, and influence of the United States to protect and strengthen the IACHR.

For additional information, see CRS Report R42639, *Organization of American States: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Peter J. Meyer.

Selected Country and Sub-Regional Issues

Argentina

U.S.-Argentine relations generally have been strong since the country's return to democracy in 1983, although at times there have been tensions in the bilateral relationship. While the United States and Argentina have a bilateral investment treaty in place, Argentina has taken actions in recent years that have dampened the investment climate, especially for new entrants to the

market, according to the Department of State (2013 *Investment Climate Statement*). There are some eight pending U.S. arbitration cases against Argentina at the World Bank's International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) out a total of some 24 Argentine cases. Moreover, Argentina has not complied with ICSID rulings involving a total of \$300 million, plus interest, to two U.S. companies. As a result, in March 2012 the United States announced the suspension of Argentina's eligibility as a beneficiary of the Generalized System of Preferences.

A significant economic challenge for the government of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (who leads the leftist faction of the Peronist or Justicialist Party, PJ) is how to resolve Argentina's outstanding defaulted external debt, including debt owed to Paris Club countries (almost \$6.5 billion, not including interest and penalties, with debt to the U.S. government amounting to some \$550 million) and remaining private creditors (about \$11.2 billion, including interest). In 2001, Argentina had defaulted on \$81.8 billion of sovereign debt. Argentina has restructured this debt twice, and although this resolved 92% of outstanding debt, it left the remainder held largely by hedge funds subject to court-ordered judgments and attachment orders. The outstanding debt has effectively blocked Argentina from the international credit markets. On January 20, 2014, Argentina made an offer to repay its Paris Club debt. The Paris Club reportedly is studying the offer and reportedly it could take several months to work out an accord.⁴²

U.S. federal court rulings have ordered Argentina to pay some litigating private creditor holdouts the full value of their claim, \$1.3 billion, but Argentina reportedly will ask the U.S. Supreme Court in early 2014 to review an Appeals Court ruling.⁴³ Requirement for the payment of full value to the holdouts could jeopardize Argentina's ability to pay creditors who participated in the 2005 and 2010 debt restructurings. In an unrelated case, the Supreme Court agreed in early January 2014 to hear an appeal by Argentina on a lower court ruling as to whether a holdout creditor from Argentina should be allowed to seek bank records about the country's international assets.⁴⁴

President Fernández was elected twice in 2007 and 2011 (her deceased husband, former President Néstor Kirchner, had served 2003 to 2007), but she is ineligible to run for a third time in 2015. The Fernández government has been lauded for its efforts to bring to justice former members of the military and police for killings, disappearance, and torture committed during the era of military rule. There has been some criticism of the government, however, regarding press freedom because of its effort to compel a major media company to sell some of its assets; the government maintains that its efforts are geared to create more competition in the media market. The recent plunge of Argentina's peso, which fell by 15% in January 2014, has also focused attention on that country's difficult economic situation characterized by high inflation and declining international reserves.

Key Policy Issues: Congress maintains an interest in Argentina because of international arbitration rulings in favor of U.S. companies that remain unpaid by Argentina, other pending arbitration cases involving U.S. companies, and outstanding defaulted debt owed to the U.S. government and private creditors. Some Members of Congress also have expressed concern about

⁴² "Paris Club Says Will Study Argentina's Debt Offer," *Reuters*, January 22, 2014.

⁴³ "U.S. Appeals Court Denies Argentina's Appeal in Holdout Creditor Case," *Wall Street Journal*, November 18, 2013.

⁴⁴ Brent Kendall, "Supreme Court to Hear Argentina Appeal in Records Case," *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 2014.

the state of democracy and Argentina's difficult economic situation and its current macroeconomic policy framework.

For background information, see the following two archived reports: CRS Report R41029, *Argentina's Defaulted Sovereign Debt: Dealing with the "Holdouts"*, and CRS Report R43022, *Argentina's Post-Crisis Economic Reform: Challenges for U.S. Policy*.

Brazil

U.S. policy toward Brazil remains in flux as officials adjust to the country's increasingly global reach. Brazil enjoyed strong economic growth from 2004 to 2010 and is now the world's seventh-largest economy. The country has utilized its economic clout to exert more influence on global matters. As a result, the United States and Brazil increasingly engage on international issues in addition to bilateral concerns. The changing relationship has occasionally frustrated U.S. policymakers as the two multicultural democracies' shared values have not always translated into common approaches to international affairs. Some analysts assert that the independent foreign policies and occasionally divergent national interests of Brazil and the United States will inevitably lead to disputes, but that the countries can maintain a constructive partnership through transparent and respectful engagement. Such engagement has proven challenging in recent months, however, as press reports have alleged that the National Security Agency (NSA) has intercepted Brazilian communications, including those of President Dilma Rousseff and the state-owned oil company, Petrobras. The reports led Brazil to indefinitely postpone a state visit that Rousseff was scheduled to make in October 2013, and have contributed to a general cooling of relations.

Key Policy Issues: The 113th Congress has expressed interest in several aspects of U.S.-Brazil relations, though commercial ties have received particular attention. In June 2013, for example, the House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Trade held a hearing examining the opportunities and challenges of the U.S.-Brazil trade and investment relationship (see **Appendix B**). The hearing witnesses generally agreed with one another that there is considerable room for growth in commercial relations, and called for Brazil and the United States to work together to address barriers to trade and investment.

The 2014 farm bill (H.R. 2642, P.L. 113-79), signed into law February 7, 2014, could have significant implications for bilateral trade. In 2009, the World Trade Organization (WTO) authorized Brazil to impose trade retaliation measures, potentially including higher tariffs on a range of U.S. products and the suspension of certain intellectual property rights obligations, as a result of a dispute regarding the U.S. cotton program. The United States has thus far avoided trade retaliation as a result of a temporary agreement with Brazil, signed in 2010, which required the United States to provide annual contributions of \$147 million to a fund to assist Brazilian cotton producers while Congress considered changes to the U.S. cotton program as part of the farm bill reauthorization. The United States has failed to comply with the temporary agreement since the previous farm bill extension (P.L. 112-240) expired at the end of FY2013. Although the new farm bill includes several modifications to the cotton program, it is currently unclear whether Brazil will deem the changes sufficient.

The 113th Congress has also considered several other issues related to Brazil. The explanatory statement accompanying the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76), which was signed into law on January 17, 2014, stipulates that \$10.5 million of the funds appropriated should support environmental programs in the Brazilian Amazon. The Border Security, Economic

Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 744), which was passed by the Senate in June 2013, includes a provision that would require U.S. consular missions to explore options for expanding visa processing capacity in Brazil. Two other bills, introduced in February 2013, are designed to pressure Brazil to amend its constitution and allow the extradition of Brazilian nationals; H.R. 571 would suspend foreign assistance to Brazil and H.R. 572 would suspend the issuance of visas to Brazilian nationals.

For additional information, see CRS Report RL33456, *Brazil-U.S. Relations*, by Peter J. Meyer, and CRS Report R43336, *Status of the WTO Brazil-U.S. Cotton Case*, by Randy Schnepf.

Caribbean

Because of their geographic location, many Caribbean nations are transit countries for illicit drugs from South America and the Caribbean destined for the U.S. and European markets. Currently, of the 15 countries in the Caribbean region, President Obama identified 4—the Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica—as major drug-producing or drug-transit countries in September 2013 pursuant to annual legislative drug certification requirements. Many other Caribbean nations, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean, are also vulnerable to drug trafficking and associated crimes. Homicide rates in several Caribbean countries have increased in recent years because of gangs and organized crime, competition between drug trafficking organizations, and the availability of firearms.

In 2009, the Obama Administration developed the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) through a process of dialogue with Caribbean countries with the goal of reducing illicit trafficking in the Caribbean, advancing public safety and security, and promoting social justice. U.S. funding for the program from FY2010 through FY2013 amounted to \$263.5 million with assistance in the following five areas: maritime and aerial security cooperation; law enforcement capacity building; border/port security and firearms interdiction; justice sector reform; and crime prevention and at-risk youth.

Key Policy Issues: For FY2014, the Obama Administration requested an additional \$63.5 million for the CBSI. The explanatory statement to the FY2014 omnibus appropriations measure (P.L. 113-76) provided full CBSI funding for two foreign aid accounts, \$29.3 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and \$25 million in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) assistance. Moreover, both the House and Senate Appropriations Committee versions of the FY2014 foreign aid appropriations measure, H.R. 2855 and S. 1372, as reported out of committee expressed support for CBSI funding. However, the report to the Senate bill (S.Rept. 113-81) expressed concern that funding should only be made available for governments that demonstrated a commitment to punishing corruption and reforming their security forces. The report to the House bill (H.Rept. 113-185) also requires a State Department report on CBSI funding on a country-by-country basis for FY2010 through FY2014.

In terms of oversight, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, held a hearing on the CBSI in June 2013 examining the status of the program (see **Appendix B**). Oversight questions for congressional consideration include what have been the results to date of three years of assistance under the CBSI? To what extent has U.S. support to Caribbean countries under the CBSI helped reduce drug trafficking and high homicide rates in the region? To what extent are Caribbean countries themselves investing in CBSI-related activities? Some observers have also called for a broader emphasis on economic development and trade in Caribbean beyond a focus on security-related issues.

Central America

In recent years, U.S. policymakers have expressed significant concerns about security and human rights conditions in Central America. Countries in the region—particularly El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras—have long struggled to deal with rising levels of crime and violence, which analysts have linked to inter-related factors such as widespread social exclusion and weak and corrupt security and justice sector institutions. These problems have been compounded by transnational criminal organizations seeking to control Central American territory in order to transport illicit narcotics from producers in South America to consumer markets in the United States and Europe. The U.S. government has sought to assist countries in the region through the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI). The initiative provides partner nations with equipment, training, and technical assistance to support immediate law enforcement operations, build long-term institutional capacity, and address underlying socioeconomic challenges. Congress appropriated \$642.1 million for CARSI between FY2008 and FY2013.

Key Policy Issues: Security and human rights concerns in Central America have continued to receive congressional attention during the 113th Congress. As noted above, the President signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76) into law on January 17, 2014. According to the explanatory statement accompanying the act, Congress is fully funding the Administration’s request of \$161.5 million for CARSI in FY2014. The measure also modifies human rights conditions on aid to Guatemala and Honduras, and designates \$5 million for continued support of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).

In terms of oversight, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a hearing that examined the effectiveness of CARSI in June 2013, and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a hearing that examined the human rights situation in Honduras in July 2013 (see **Appendix B** for links to the hearings). In September 2013, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report on CARSI, which had been commissioned by the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control. The report (GAO-13-771) examined the extent to which appropriated funds have been disbursed, how non-CARSI aid has supported CARSI goals, and by what means CARSI programs are being evaluated. Questions for ongoing congressional oversight might include: How much progress has been made toward U.S. objectives with the funds invested in CARSI thus far? To what extent are Central American nations undertaking the fiscal and policy reforms necessary to consolidate gains and sustain efforts? Are additional conditions on U.S. assistance or a greater focus on sequencing aid efforts necessary in order to ensure that the United States does not assist police and military forces that are engaged in corruption and/or human rights abuses?

For additional information, see CRS Report R41731, *Central America Regional Security Initiative: Background and Policy Issues for Congress*, by Peter J. Meyer and Clare Ribando Seelke; CRS Report RL34112, *Gangs in Central America*, by Clare Ribando Seelke; CRS Report RS21655, *El Salvador: Political and Economic Conditions and U.S. Relations*, by Clare Ribando Seelke; CRS Report R42580, *Guatemala: Political, Security, and Socio-Economic Conditions and U.S. Relations*, by Maureen Taft-Morales; and CRS Report RL34027, *Honduras-U.S. Relations*, by Peter J. Meyer.

Colombia

A key U.S. ally in the region, Colombia has endured an internal armed conflict for half a century. Drug trafficking has helped to perpetuate Colombia’s conflict by funding both left-wing and

right-wing armed groups. Over the years, Colombia and the United States forged a close partnership focused initially on counternarcotics and later counterterrorism. Building on that cooperation, the U.S.-Colombia partnership has broadened to include development, human rights, and trade.

The Colombian government, in close cooperation with the United States through a strategy known as Plan Colombia, has reestablished government control over much of its territory, reduced poverty and homicide rates, and made significant headway in combating drug trafficking and terrorist activities. Colombia has substantially improved citizen security and economic stability, but some observers continue to raise concerns about human rights conditions in the country. Between FY2000 and FY2013, Congress provided Colombia more than \$9 billion in assistance to carry out Plan Colombia and its follow-on strategies. This support is gradually being reduced as programs are turned over to Colombian control.

President Juan Manuel Santos, elected in 2010 from a center-right party, has governed with the backing of almost 90% of the Colombian Congress in a “national unity” coalition. In his first two years in office, President Santos launched a number of reforms and expanded trade relations with the United States, Colombia’s largest trade partner, and others. In late August 2012, he announced that exploratory peace talks were underway with the country’s main leftist insurgent group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Formal peace negotiations with the FARC began in Norway in October 2012, and moved to Cuba in November 2012, where substantive talks continue. While the peace talks passed their one year mark in late 2013 (the President’s original target date for completion), they are broadly popular in Colombia although their prospects remain uncertain and they face vocal opposition led by former two-term president Alvaro Uribe.

A framework agreement structuring the talks has provided a six-point negotiating agenda. There are five substantive topics—land and rural development; political participation of the FARC; ending the armed conflict including reinsertion of rebel forces into civilian life; illegal drug trafficking; victims’ reparations—and a final procedural point, the implementation of the final agreement, including its ratification and verification. As of early February 2014, two of the six issues have been resolved: the key issue of land and rural development (May 2013), and the controversial issue of FARC’s political participation after disarmament (November 2013). The current topic under negotiation, illegal drugs, may have implications for the close U.S.-Colombian partnership in the area of counternarcotics.

In early 2014, political campaigns were launched for congressional and presidential elections to be held in March and May, respectively. Colombia’s upcoming elections are in one respect a referendum on the FARC-government peace talks—the flagship initiative of the Santos government. In President Santo’s bid for re-election (May 25, 2014 is the first round of the presidential elections, with the possibility of a runoff in June), he faces opposition from Uribe’s political party, the Democratic Center, which opposes the peace talks and many other Santos policies.

Key Policy Issues. The 113th Congress has maintained a strong interest in Colombia’s progress in security, counternarcotics, human rights, and trade. In October 2011, the U.S. Congress approved implementing legislation for the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, which went into force on May 15, 2012, and will eventually eliminate most tariffs and barriers to bilateral trade. Members of Congress are monitoring Colombia’s peace negotiations and their effect on security conditions within the country, and may consider how U.S. assistance will shift in the event a peace accord is

signed. Members may also want to consider what role the United States should continue to play in Colombia's ongoing struggle with drug trafficking and illegal armed groups.

Regarding oversight of continued U.S. foreign aid to Colombia, key issues include funding levels for Plan Colombia's follow-on strategies, continuing allegations of human rights abuses including in the area of labor rights, assistance to Colombia for security training in third countries, and the future of cooperation on counternarcotics policies such as aerial eradication and alternative development. In the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76, signed into law January 17, 2014), Congress appears to have fully funded the Obama Administration's FY2014 request of approximately \$323 million for assistance to Colombia provided from State Department accounts.

For additional information, see CRS Report RL32250, *Colombia: Background, U.S. Relations, and Congressional Interest*, by June S. Beittel; CRS Report R42982, *Peace Talks in Colombia*, by June S. Beittel; and CRS Report RL34470, *The U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement: Background and Issues*, by M. Angeles Villarreal.

Cuba

Since the early 1960s, U.S. policy has consisted largely of isolating Cuba through economic sanctions. A second policy component has consisted of support measures for the Cuban people, including U.S. government-sponsored broadcasting (Radio and TV Martí) and support for human rights and democracy activists. In light of Fidel Castro's official departure as head of government in 2008, and the economic policy changes that have been made by the government of Raúl Castro, many observers called for a reexamination of policy. Two broad approaches have been at the center of debate. The first is to maintain the dual-track policy of isolating the Cuban government while providing support to the Cuban people. The second approach advocates lifting economic sanctions and focusing largely on increasing engagement with Cuba with the goal of changing attitudes in the Cuban government and society.

Since taking office, the Obama Administration has essentially followed the first approach. While the Administration has lifted all restrictions on family travel and remittances, eased restrictions on other types of purposeful travel, and engaged Cuba on several bilateral issues in the U.S. national interest, it has also maintained U.S. economic sanctions. The Administration welcomed the release of many political prisoners in 2010 and 2011, but it has also criticized Cuba's continued repression of political dissidents through thousands of short-term detentions and targeted violence. The Administration has continued to call for the release of U.S. government subcontractor Alan Gross, detained in 2009 and sentenced to 15 years in prison in March 2011.

Key Policy Issues: Strong interest in Cuba is continuing in the 113th Congress with attention focused on the human rights situation and U.S. sanctions. The continued imprisonment of Alan Gross remains a key concern for many Members. In March 2013, Congress completed action on full-year FY2013 appropriations with the approval of H.R. 933 (P.L. 113-6), which continues to provide funding for Cuba democracy and human rights projects and Cuba broadcasting (Radio and TV Martí).

In the FY2014 omnibus appropriations measure, H.R. 3547 (P.L. 113-76), Congress provided up to \$17.5 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) for programs and activities in Cuba (\$2.5 million more than requested) and stipulated that no ESF appropriated under the Act may be obligated by the U.S. Agency for International Development for any new programs or activities in Cuba. The joint explanatory statement to the bill stated that of the \$17.5 million, not less than

\$7.5 million shall be provided directly to the National Endowment for Democracy, and not more than \$10 million shall be administered by the State Department. With regard to funding for Cuba broadcasting, the FY2014 omnibus measure provided \$27.043 million, about \$3.2 million more than requested by the Administration.

With regard to Cuba sanctions, both the House and Senate Appropriation Committees' versions of the FY2014 Financial Services and General Government appropriations measure, H.R. 2786 and S. 1371, had different provisions that would have tightened and eased travel restrictions respectively, but none of these provisions were included in the FY2014 omnibus appropriations measure.

Several other initiatives on Cuba have been introduced in the 113th Congress. Several would lift or ease U.S. economic sanctions on Cuba: H.R. 214 and H.R. 872 (overall embargo); H.R. 871 (travel); and H.R. 873 (travel and agricultural exports). H.R. 215 would allow Cubans to play organized professional baseball in the United States. H.R. 1917 would lift the embargo and extend nondiscriminatory trade treatment to the products of Cuba after Cuba releases Alan Gross from prison. Identical initiatives, H.R. 778/S. 647 would modify a 1998 trademark sanction; in contrast, H.R. 214, H.R. 872, H.R. 873, and H.R. 1917 each have a provision that would repeal the sanction. H.Res. 121 would honor the work of Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez. H.Res. 262 would call for the immediate extradition or rendering of all U.S. fugitives from justices in Cuba.

For additional information, see CRS Report R43024, *Cuba: U.S. Policy and Issues for the 113th Congress*, by Mark P. Sullivan; and CRS Report RL31139, *Cuba: U.S. Restrictions on Travel and Remittances*, by Mark P. Sullivan.

Haiti

Just over halfway into President Michel Martelly's five-year term, Congress and the donor community have expressed concern about his commitment to the democratic process. At a House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) hearing on Haiti on October 9, 2013, Members on both sides of the aisle suggested that the failure to hold legislative elections already two years overdue could affect U.S. assistance to Haiti. Since then, the Haitian government published a new electoral law, allowing the process to move forward, and Martelly has promised elections in 2014.

Marking the fourth anniversary of the January 2010 earthquake that devastated its capital, Haiti continues to make progress in its overall recovery effort, but enormous challenges remain. Criticism abounds that reconstruction aid and efforts are moving too slowly, contributing to mounting public frustration with international donors and the government. A cholera epidemic broke out in late 2010. Scientific studies link its introduction to inadequate sanitation at a U.N. peacekeepers' camp. Victims filed a class action suit against the U.N. in a U.S. federal court in October 2013, seeking establishment of a U.N. standing claims commission to address claims for harm, and compensation for victims, including "\$2.2 billion that the Haitian government requires to eradicate cholera." The U.N. has refused to accept the complaint. Citing diplomatic immunity, the U.N. said earlier in 2013 that it would not compensate cholera victims.

To enhance citizen security, donors have encouraged Haiti to focus on further strengthening the Haitian National Police. Some 2,000 new officers were graduated from the police academy in 2012-2013. Despite opposition at home and abroad, Martelly has taken steps to re-create an army. Ecuador trained 41 Haitian military recruits last year to work on engineering projects. The

opposition-controlled Parliament would have to vote to reconstitute the army, which was abolished in 1995 after decades of gross violations of human rights and repeated coups.

The main priorities for U.S. policy regarding Haiti are to strengthen fragile democratic processes, continue to improve security, and promote economic development. Other issues include the cost and effectiveness of U.S. aid; protecting human rights; combating narcotics-, arms-, and human-trafficking; and alleviating poverty. Congress shares these concerns. The Obama Administration granted Temporary Protected Status to Haitians living in the United States at the time of the earthquake, and has extended it through July 22, 2014.

Key policy issues. The pressing issue for the remainder of the 113th Congress regarding Haiti will be to see that overdue elections are held soon in a free, fair, and transparent manner. A new concern is the impact for Haiti of a September 2013 court ruling in the Dominican Republic that could render some 200,000 Dominicans, mostly of Haitian descent, stateless. If the Dominican Republic were to render those people stateless and send them to Haiti, the impact on Haiti could be enormous. Haiti and the Dominican Republic are in talks to resolve these issues.

About 65 members of Congress called on the U.N. to “acknowledge its legal responsibility” for the cholera outbreak and “fully fund the Cholera Elimination Plan.” Recent reports criticizing labor practices in Haitian factories, including at the U.S.-funded Caracol Industrial Park, may renew Congressional concern over the alleged widespread underpayment of workers and unsafe working conditions.

The House passed H.R. 3509, the Assessing Progress in Haiti Act of 2013 on December 12, 2013; it was referred the next day to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. It would direct the Secretary of State to report to Congress within 120 days, and every six months thereafter through September 30, 2016, on the status of specific aspects of post-earthquake recovery and development efforts in Haiti. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014, P.L. 113-76, prohibits assistance to the central government of Haiti until the Secretary of State certifies that Haiti has held free and fair parliamentary elections, is respecting judicial independence, and is taking effective steps to combat corruption and improve governance. The bill also prohibits the obligation or expenditure of funds for Haiti except as provided through the regular notification procedures of the Committees on Appropriations; but allows Haiti to purchase defense articles and services under the Arms Export Control Act for its Coast Guard.

For background information, see CRS Report R42559, *Haiti under President Martelly: Current Conditions and Congressional Concerns*, by Maureen Taft-Morales.

Mexico

Congress has maintained significant interest in Mexico and played an important role in shaping U.S.-Mexico relations. President Enrique Peña Nieto of the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) assumed the Mexican presidency on December 1, 2012 after 12 years of rule by the conservative National Action Party (PAN). Upon his inauguration, President Peña Nieto pledged to enact bold structural reforms and broaden relations with the United States beyond security issues.

President Peña Nieto’s first year in office has brought with it mixed results. On the one hand, the economy has faltered (economic growth fell from 3.7% in 2012 to 1.2% in 2013) and significant security challenges remain. On the other hand, Peña Nieto’s “Pact for Mexico” agreement with

the PAN and leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) facilitated the passage of historic financial, education, telecommunications, and fiscal reforms. These reform efforts culminated in the December 20, 2013 promulgation of a series of energy reforms that will open up Mexico's hydrocarbons and electricity sectors to private investment.

As Mexico has experienced a domestic shift in power, U.S.-Mexican relations have also evolved. President Obama and Vice President Biden embraced President Peña Nieto's desire to bolster economic ties and focus on issues beyond security, including education, during their respective May and September 2013 visits to Mexico. U.S.-Mexican security cooperation has continued under the Mérida framework, albeit at a relatively slow pace. Friction has occurred in the relationship due to limits Mexico put on U.S. involvement in some law enforcement and intelligence operations and revelations of U.S. spying on former President Felipe Calderón and President-elect Peña Nieto. The recent U.S. approval of the Trans-Boundary Hydrocarbons Agreement signed in February 2012 on managing oil resources in the Gulf of Mexico and Mexican approval of energy reforms are likely to create opportunities for energy cooperation. Water disputes have arisen in the Rio Grande River Basin even as bilateral cooperation has increased in the Colorado River Basin. The Peña Nieto government has supported efforts to enact comprehensive immigration reform in the United States, but has urged U.S. policymakers not to militarize the U.S.-Mexico border.

Key Policy Issues: This year, a broad range of issues in U.S.-Mexican relations have received congressional attention. The Senate passed S. 744 in June 2013, a comprehensive immigration reform bill that includes additional funding for border security; in contrast, House committees have approved a series of discrete immigration measures, including H.R. 1417, which would require new border security metrics. In December 2013, Congress approved the U.S.-Mexico Transboundary Hydrocarbons Agreement that is intended to facilitate joint development of oil and natural gas in part of the Gulf of Mexico (P.L. 113-67). Congress has continued oversight of the Mérida Initiative and included at least \$200 million in assistance to Mexico in the FY2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act, P.L. 113-76, subject to human rights conditions, along with funding for additional customs inspectors and infrastructure at the U.S.-Mexico border. P.L. 113-76 also requires a State Department report on how it is addressing a U.S.-Mexico water dispute in the Rio Grande Basin. The 2014 farm bill, H.R. 2642 (P.L. 113-79), signed into law February 7, 2014, also has a provision requiring a State Department report on the issue.

U.S.-Mexican energy cooperation and the recent reforms that Mexico has enacted have generated congressional interest, as has how Mexico's participation in the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations may impact U.S.-Mexico economic relations, especially in the context of the 20th anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Potential oversight questions that Congress might consider include: How is security cooperation under the Mérida Initiative evolving to reflect Mexico's prioritization of violence reduction? On the border, how are security concerns being balanced against bilateral efforts to promote economic dynamism? What are the prospects for economic growth in Mexico and how might the recent enactment of fiscal and energy reforms in Mexico affect U.S. businesses?

For additional information, see: CRS Report R42917, *Mexico: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Clare Ribando Seelke; CRS Report R41349, *U.S.-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond*, by Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin Finklea; CRS Report RL32934, *U.S.-Mexico Economic Relations: Trends, Issues, and Implications*, by M. Angeles Villarreal; CRS Report R43313, *Mexico's Oil and Gas Sector: Background, Reform Efforts, and Implications for*

the United States, coordinated by Clare Ribando Seelke; and CRS Report R43312, *U.S.-Mexico Water Sharing: Background and Recent Developments*, by Nicole T. Carter, Clare Ribando Seelke, and Daniel T. Shedd.

Venezuela

While historically the United States has had close relations with Venezuela, a major supplier of foreign oil, friction in bilateral relations rose over the past decade under the populist government of President Hugo Chávez, who died in March 2013 after battling cancer for almost two years. First elected in 1998, Chávez had won reelection to another six-year term in October 2012, capturing about 55% of the vote compared to 44% for opposition candidate Henrique Capriles. After Chávez's death, Venezuela held presidential elections in April 2013 in which acting President Nicolás Maduro, who had been serving as Chávez's vice president, won by less than 2% of the vote. In both of those presidential elections, the incumbent candidate benefited from the use of state resources for his campaign.

Among the concerns of U.S. policymakers in recent years has been the deterioration of human rights and democratic conditions, Venezuela's significant military arms purchases, lack of cooperation on anti-terrorism efforts, limited bilateral anti-drug cooperation, and Venezuela's relations with Cuba and Iran. In late 2010, Venezuela revoked an agreement for U.S. Ambassador-designate Larry Palmer to serve in Caracas; the United States responded by revoking the diplomatic visa of the Venezuelan Ambassador to the United States. In September 2013, President Obama issued the ninth annual determination (as part of the annual narcotics certification process) that Venezuela had "failed demonstrably" to meet its obligations under international counternarcotics measures. The State Department maintains that individual members of the Venezuelan government and security forces were credibly reported to have engaged in or facilitated drug trafficking activities. The United States has imposed financial sanctions on several current or former Venezuelan government and military officials for allegedly helping the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) with drug and weapons trafficking. The United States has also imposed sanctions on three Venezuelan companies for alleged support to Iran and on several Venezuelan individuals for providing financial support to Hezbollah. Despite these and other tensions, the Obama Administration has maintained that the United States remains committed to seeking constructive engagement with Venezuela.

In 2014, there has been increasing concern about economic conditions in Venezuela, which is facing shortages of basic food and consumer items, electricity shortages, high inflation (56% at the end of 2013), and falling international reserves. High rates of crime and violence also continue. During the second week of February 2014, student-led protests were attacked by pro-government armed civilian groups leading to clashes in which three people were killed – two student demonstrators and a pro-government activist. Some 100 student protestors were arrested. The Venezuelan government blamed the opposition for the violence, and orchestrated its own march in support of the government. Secretary of State John Kerry expressed deep concern about rising tensions and violence, and called on the "Venezuelan government to provide the political space necessary for meaningful dialogue with the Venezuelan people and to release detained protestors."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, Secretary of State John Kerry, "Recent Violence in Venezuela," Press Statement, February 15, 2014.

Key Policy Issues: The 113th Congress is continuing oversight on the status of human rights and democracy in Venezuela as well as on drug trafficking and terrorism concerns, including the extent of Venezuela's relations with Iran. Of particular interest is the future of U.S.-Venezuelan relations in the aftermath of President Chávez's death in March 2013. To date, two legislative initiatives have been introduced: S.Res. 213 would express support for the free and peaceful exercise of representative democracy in Venezuela and condemn violence and intimidation against the country's political opposition; H.R. 1687 would, among other provisions, provide for the imposition of visa and financial sanctions against certain listed officials of four governments belonging to the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA)—Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Congress also faces consideration of the FY2014 foreign aid appropriations measure (H.R. 2855, S. 1372); the Administration's request included \$5 million to support civil society efforts to build and protect democratic freedoms and protect human rights.

For further information, see CRS Report R43239, *Venezuela: Background and U.S. Relations*, by Mark P. Sullivan, and CRS Report RS21049, *Latin America: Terrorism Issues*, which has a section on Venezuela's relations with Iran. For additional background, see the following archived reports: CRS Report R42989, *Hugo Chávez's Death: Implications for Venezuela and U.S. Relations*; and CRS Report R40938, *Venezuela: Issues for Congress, 2009-2012*.

Appendix A. U.S. Trade with Latin America and the Caribbean, 2007-2013

Table A-I. U. S. Imports from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) 2007-2013
(U.S. \$ Millions)

Partner Country	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2013/2012 % Change
Mexico	210,714	215,942	176,654	229,986	262,874	277,570	280,456	1.04
Venezuela	39,910	51,424	28,059	32,707	43,257	38,724	31,997	-17.37
Brazil	25,644	30,453	20,070	23,958	31,737	32,123	27,533	-14.23
Colombia	9,434	13,093	11,323	15,659	23,114	24,620	21,617	-12.20
Costa Rica	3,942	3,938	5,612	8,697	10,119	12,042	11,906	-1.13
Ecuador	6,135	9,048	5,273	7,451	9,622	9,485	11,489	21.13
Chile	8,999	8,196	5,949	7,017	9,076	9,371	10,363	10.59
Peru	5,272	5,812	4,223	5,243	6,605	6,418	8,122	26.55
Trinidad & Tobago	8,790	9,030	5,180	6,613	8,113	8,158	6,504	-20.28
Argentina	4,487	5,822	3,890	3,803	4,503	4,350	4,641	6.69
Total LAC	345,458	375,763	284,726	361,363	436,510	448,337	438,347	-2.23
World	1,956,962	2,103,641	1,559,625	1,913,857	2,208,055	2,275,320	2,266,855	-0.37

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce statistics as presented by *Global Trade Atlas*, February 2014.

Notes: Provides statistics on top 10 countries followed by total U.S. imports from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Table A-2. U.S. Exports to Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), 2007-2013
(U.S. \$ Millions)

Partner Country	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2013/2012 % Change
Mexico	135,918	151,220	128,892	163,665	198,069	215,931	226,153	4.73
Brazil	24,172	32,299	26,095	35,418	42,938	43,806	44,116	0.71
Colombia	8,558	11,437	9,451	12,068	14,321	16,355	18,606	13.77
Chile	8,148	11,857	9,346	10,907	15,979	18,766	17,585	-6.29
Venezuela	10,201	12,610	9,315	10,645	12,358	17,516	13,220	-24.53
Panama	3,669	4,887	4,293	6,066	8,247	9,835	10,782	9.63
Argentina	5,856	7,536	5,569	7,392	9,881	10,268	10,201	-0.65
Peru	4,120	6,183	4,919	6,750	8,335	9,345	10,056	7.61
Ecuador	2,936	3,450	3,938	5,409	6,066	6,692	7,330	9.53
Costa Rica	4,580	5,680	4,700	5,178	6,058	7,231	7,230	-0.01
Total LAC	241,830	287,015	237,381	301,421	365,110	396,714	407,444	2.70
World	1,148,199	1,287,442	1,056,043	1,278,495	1,480,290	1,545,709	1,578,851	2.14

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce statistics, as presented by *Global Trade Atlas*, February 2014.

Notes: Provides statistics on top 10 countries followed by total U.S. exports to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Appendix B. Hearings in the 113th Congress

Table B-I. Congressional Hearings in the 113th Congress on Latin America and the Caribbean

Committee and Subcommittee	Date	Title
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	February 28, 2013	Overview of U.S. Interests in the Western Hemisphere: Opportunities and Challenges
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	March 14, 2013	U.S. Energy Security: Enhancing Partnerships with Mexico and Canada
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade	March 20, 2013	Hezbollah's Strategic Shift: A Global Terrorist Threat
House Armed Services Committee	March 20, 2013	The Posture of the U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Southern Command
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	April 11, 2013	Energy Opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	May 23, 2013	U.S.-Mexico Security Cooperation: An Overview of the Mérida Initiative 2008-Present
House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Trade	June 12, 2013	U.S.-Brazil Trade and Investment Relationship: Opportunities and Challenges
Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere and Global Narcotics Affairs	June 18, 2013	Security Cooperation in Mexico: Examining the Next Steps in the U.S. Mexico Security Relationship
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	June 19, 2013	Regional Security Cooperation: An Examination of the Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI)
House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency	July 9, 2013	Threat to the Homeland: Iran's Extending Influence in the Western Hemisphere
Senate, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission	July 25, 2012	Human Rights in Honduras
Joint Hearing, House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	August 1, 2013	Examining the State Department's Report on Iranian Presence in the Western Hemisphere 19 Years after AMIA Attack
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere	September 10, 2013	Challenges to Democracy in the Western Hemisphere
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	September 26, 2013	A Closer Look at Cuba and its Recent History of Proliferation
House Foreign Affairs Committee	October 9, 2013	Haiti: Is U.S. Aid Effective?

Committee and Subcommittee	Date	Title
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission	October 24, 2013	Creating Peace and Finding Justice in Colombia
House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security	November 19, 2013	What Does a Secure Maritime Border Look Like?
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission	November 20, 2013	The Global Gender-Based Violence Threat
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	December 9, 2013	Improving Security and Facilitating Commerce with Mexico at America's Southern Border
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere	January 15, 2014	NAFTA at Twenty: Accomplishments, Challenges, and the Way Forward
House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation and Trade	February 4, 2014	Terrorist Groups in Latin America: The Changing Landscape

Source: Prepared by Anne Leland, Information Research Specialist, CRS.

Notes: The listed hearings are linked to PDF documents of the committee prints or committee webpages on the hearings, where available. See also hearing information at: House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere at <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/subcommittees/western-hemisphere>; House Committee on Homeland Security at <http://homeland.house.gov/legislation>; Senate Foreign Relations Committee, at <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/>

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