

STRATEGIC REPORT 05

Securing the Seams: Organized Crime, Legitimate Commerce and the Shield of the Americas

*Sector and Country Evidence, a Framework for the Security Pillar, and
Implications for U.S. National Security*

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Evidence discipline. This publication distinguishes documented facts, government determinations and HRS analytical judgments. Organizations are named only as they appear in government instruments, and no designation reproduced here is an HRS finding.

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About this report. Strategic Report 05 is the fifth publication in the HRS Resilience Foundation's Strategic Report series. It builds on Strategic Report 03,^[27] which found that readiness gaps are mostly gaps of institutional pace, and on Policy Brief 03,^[29] which read the Security Pillar through Ecuador, Chile and Panama. It draws on Country Readiness Assessments 04, 05, 07, 09, 11 and 12^{[31][32][33][34][35][36]} and on Sector Readiness Assessments 01, 02, 06, 07, 08 and 10.^{[37][38][39][40][41][42]} Public assessments of the Intelligence Community, U.S. Southern Command, DEA, CDC, CBP and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre supply the migration and drug-market data in Section 03.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Securing the Seams: Organized Crime, Legitimate Commerce and the Shield of the Americas

On 22 September 2026, fourteen governments joined the United States in declaring an intention to freeze assets, restrict visas and impose criminal liability for material support on 24 named criminal organizations, and to ask the Organization of American States to convene an Organ of Consultation under the Rio Treaty.^[1] The step followed the Americas Counter Cartel Joint Security Declaration and the launch of the Shield of the Americas in March 2026.^{[2][3]} It is a statement of intent. Whether it reduces the capacity of those organizations depends on what governments can do at the places where criminal activity meets ordinary commerce.

The Foundation's published assessments allow a close look at those places. Read together, the Sector Readiness Assessments and the country assessments for Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile and Panama document criminal activity inside ports, free-trade zones, export agriculture, fishing fleets, prisons and border corridors, and not merely alongside them. Container terminals that serve banana and oil exports also carry cocaine.^[33] A free-trade zone that supports legitimate re-export commerce is exposed to contraband and laundering.^[35] Treasury sanctions in August 2026 reached fishing businesses near Manta that supplied fuel, food and medical support to trafficking vessels.^[10] This report calls these recurring points of contact seams.

Five findings follow. First, exposure is concentrated in a small number of node types, and the same five appear in every country examined. Second, removing a leader has not removed a network: Ecuador recaptured the head of Los Choneros in June 2025 and extradited him in July, analysts describe a second wave of fragmentation, and ACLED recorded 42 percent more reported fatalities from gang violence in the first eleven months of 2025 than in the same period of 2024.^{[33][13]} Third, the geography of the first joint action is asymmetric. Fourteen of the 24 named organizations originate in jurisdictions that did not sign the Statement, while its measures apply inside each participant's own territory, so the practical reach of the Security Pillar is set by the control participants hold over their ports, financial systems, prisons and borders. Fourth, designations extend legal exposure to commercial actors who supply ordinary services, which makes published screening standards and due-diligence capacity part of the security task itself. Fifth, the costs fall on people as well as institutions: displacement and drug dependence follow the same routes as the trade, and they ignore borders.

The data on that fifth point need care. Criminal violence has driven displacement in the Americas to record levels: 10.5 million people were living in internal displacement at the end of 2025, and Haiti alone accounted for more than 80 percent of the displacements associated with criminal violence worldwide.^[20] Pressure at the U.S. border fell to record lows in fiscal year 2026, but the Intelligence Community and U.S. Southern Command both flag Cuba and Haiti as possible triggers of renewed movement.^{[15][16][19]} On drugs, global cocaine manufacture reached about 4,100 tonnes in 2024, more than four times the 2014 level, and UNODC reports growth in both supply and demand.^[11] U.S. overdose deaths have fallen three years in a row, to about 70,000 in 2025, and remain high.^[18] Brazil is a major departure point for cocaine and a large domestic market, and two Brazilian organizations have international reach. The cocaine that reaches the United States is predominantly of Colombian origin, and the data do not make Brazil its main source.^{[11][17][7]}

The report proposes the HRS Interface Security Framework, which applies five layers (Visibility, Screening, Integrity, Interdiction and Continuity) at each node type. It sets out solutions for displacement and dependence, assesses each for evidence, feasibility, cost and risk, lists the alternatives considered and the gaps in the evidence, describes the levels of engagement open to governments outside the signatory group, including Brazil, without taking a position on accession, and offers eleven recommendations for partner governments and seven for U.S. engagement, all civilian and institutional in character, and it sets out the implications for U.S. national security in terms of enduring interests. The recommendations are built from registers, inspections, financial reporting, custody control and prosecutorial careers. Every government needs these functions, which is why the design can remain useful as administrations and partner governments change.

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

Organized crime is hardest to dislodge where it has become a customer, supplier or contractor of legitimate systems. Security that outlasts any administration is therefore built at the points of contact: in the registers, inspections, financial reports, custody arrangements and prosecutorial careers of the states that host them.

SECTION 01

Purpose, Scope and Method

This report asks what the Foundation's published evidence implies for the Security Pillar of the Shield of the Americas. It does not add new country-level facts. It reads the Sector and Country Readiness Assessments against the Joint Statement on Defending Hemispheric Sovereignty (the Statement) and tests each cross-cutting claim against official United States and United Nations sources where those exist.

Three kinds of statement appear, and the text marks which is which. *Documented facts* come from official instruments, court records, statistical agencies or reporting cited in the underlying assessments. *Government determinations* are designations, decrees and determinations that this report reproduces without adopting. *HRS judgments* are the analytical conclusions of this report and are labeled as such.

Evidence Base	How It Is Used	Caution
Sector Readiness Assessments 01, 02, 06, 07, 08, 10	Supply the sector frameworks that the country assessments apply; this report uses the applications written into the country assessments. ^{[37][38][39][40][41][42]}	The sector assessments set out a method and do not rank countries.
Country Readiness Assessments 04, 05, 07, 09, 11, 12	Supply the documented country cases: Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, Panama and, for maritime cooperation, Guyana. ^{[31][32][33][34][35][36]}	Several facts rest on press reporting; this is noted where it matters.
Official U.S. instruments	The Statement, designations, the FY2027 determination, the National Security Strategy and Treasury actions. ^{[1][4][5][6][7][8][9][10]}	Instruments of one government; participants apply their own law.
United Nations data	Cocaine supply and seizure trends from UNODC; Ecuadorian police statistics on seizures and homicides; internal displacement from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. ^{[11][12][13][20]}	Estimates carry ranges and lags of one to two years.
U.S. public assessments	Unclassified Intelligence Community assessments, the U.S. Southern Command posture statement, DEA drug-threat and cocaine reports, CDC overdose statistics and DHS and CBP border data. ^{[15][16][17][18][19]}	The Foundation uses only public, unclassified products and does not characterize the work of any agency beyond them.
Brazilian sources	Federal Revenue Service data as reported, Federal Police operations and the national drug-use survey LENAD III. ^{[21][22]}	Survey and press-reported figures; dated where noted.

The report is civilian and institutional in scope. It does not address weapons systems, force structure or the conduct of military operations, which are matters for each government under its own law. It does not rank countries, assess individuals or characterize the legal status of any proceeding. Organizations are named only as they appear in government instruments.

SECTION 02

The Security Pillar: Commitments and Reach

The Security Pillar rests on a short sequence of instruments, each with a different legal weight. The table sets them side by side.

Instrument	What It Provides	Weight
Americas Counter Cartel Joint Security Declaration, Doral, 4–5 March 2026	Defense and security leaders of 17 countries commit to expand security cooperation and join a coalition against narco-terrorism and other common threats. ^{[2][3]}	Political commitment; launched the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition.
Shield of the Americas Summit, 7 March 2026	Presidential proclamation (No. 11015) recognizing the Americas Counter Cartel Coalition, which the Secretary of War established with representatives of 17 countries; heads of state and government of twelve countries attended the summit. ^[2]	U.S. proclamation; participation by each government under its own law.
Joint Statement on Defending Hemispheric Sovereignty, 22 September 2026	Three pillars. Under the Security Pillar: intention to impose asset freezes, immigration and visa restrictions, and criminal liability for knowing material support, including logistical support, on 24 listed organizations, "as applicable and in accordance with our respective international and domestic legal obligations." ^[1]	Declaration of intent by 15 governments; no common implementing standard.
Request for a Rio Treaty Organ of Consultation	Intention to co-sign a request to the President of the OAS Permanent Council; ministerial participation once a meeting is convened. ^[1] For a request under Article 13, the Permanent Council decides by absolute majority of the states that have ratified the Treaty whether to hold the meeting. ^[14]	Pending; this report did not locate confirmation that a meeting had been convened.
U.S. terrorist designations	Eight organizations designated on 20 February 2025, two Haitian groups in May 2025, Los Choneros and Los Lobos in September 2025, Barrio 18, Cartel de los Soles and Clan del Golfo between September and December 2025, two further Mexican groups in July 2026, and the PCC and Comando Vermelho effective 5 June 2026. ^{[4][5][6][7]}	U.S. domestic law; most of the 24 named organizations carry such designations.
FY2027 Presidential Determination, 15 September 2026	23 countries identified as major drug transit or producing countries; four, including Bolivia and Colombia, found to have failed demonstrably to meet counternarcotics obligations. ^[8]	Annual U.S. determination; places countries on the list because of geographic, commercial and economic factors.

Read as a package, the instruments say a good deal about *who* is targeted and about the *tools* available (designation, asset freezes, visa restrictions, criminal liability). They say little about the *places* where a designated organization actually touches a state: the terminal where a container is loaded, the free zone where a shipment is re-exported, the bank where proceeds are held, the prison where a leader is held, the corridor where a border is crossed. That is an HRS judgment, and it is the gap this report addresses. The Statement itself is explicit that measures will be applied in accordance with each participant's domestic obligations,^[1] so outcomes will vary with national law and with institutional capacity. The Economic Pillar's commitments on investment screening and trusted suppliers address ownership and control of the same nodes, and Policy Brief 02 set out how they can be put into practice.^[28]

HRS OBSERVATION

The Security Pillar names organizations and tools. Its effect on the ground will depend on a layer it does not specify: the controls at the nodes through which those organizations move people, goods and money.

SECTION 03

The Problem: Migration Pressure, Displacement and Drug Markets

Two pressures run through every case in this report. People leave places where criminal organizations hold ground, and cocaine moves toward markets that will pay for it. The U.S. government treats both as security matters. The National Security Strategy, released in December 2025, states the aim of a hemisphere stable and well governed enough to discourage mass migration to the United States, and whose governments cooperate against narco-terrorists, cartels and other transnational criminal organizations.^[9] The Intelligence Community's 2026 Annual Threat Assessment says that the drivers of migration are likely to continue, that instability in Cuba and Haiti could trigger migration surges, and that smugglers who operate as transnational criminal organizations profit from the resulting disorder.^[15] The 2025 assessment had already linked cocaine transshipment through Ecuador to violent criminal conflicts that spur regional migration.^[15] U.S. Southern Command's 2026 posture statement warns that gang violence in Haiti risks a maritime mass migration event.^[16]

Displacement and Migration

Indicator	Figure	Source
People living in internal displacement in the Americas	10.5 million, a record, mostly linked to enduring conflict and violence.	[20]
New displacements by conflict and violence, the Americas, 2025	Almost 1.6 million in the Americas, mostly in Haiti, Colombia and Ecuador, each at its highest conflict displacement on record. Haiti alone accounted for more than 80 percent of the displacements associated with criminal violence worldwide.	[20]
Largest national figures, 2025	Haiti about 977,000 new displacements; Colombia about 394,000, the highest recorded; Ecuador about 132,000.	[20]
Stock of internally displaced people	Colombia about 7.2 million at the end of 2025, 71 percent of the region's people displaced by conflict and violence; Haiti 14 percent.	[20]
Border Patrol apprehensions, U.S. southwest border, FY2026 (preliminary)	98,708. Nationwide CBP encounters of 379,243 were the lowest in the agency's history.	[19]

The two halves of the table describe different places. Pressure at the U.S. border fell to record lows in fiscal year 2026, according to preliminary DHS figures, while displacement inside the region reached record highs. The warnings about Cuba and Haiti concern the gap between the two: people displaced by criminal violence remain inside the region, and their neighbors bear the burden, until a trigger moves them. Colombia, for example, hosts the largest displaced Venezuelan population in the hemisphere while recording its own highest displacement on record.^{[31][20]} In HRS terms, border measures hold a line and do not reduce the displacement behind it. Reducing that displacement requires security at the urban nodes and rural corridors where criminal groups hold ground, which is what the framework in Section 09 and the measures in Section 10, assessed in Section 11, address.

Drug Supply and Dependence

Indicator	Figure	Source
Global cocaine manufacture, 2024	About 4,100 tonnes (range 3,800 to 4,700), more than four times the 2014 level.	[11]
Seizures made in South America	64 percent of the global total, the highest share since 1984. Colombia alone seized 966 tonnes, 40 percent of the global total.	[11]
Largest consumer market	North America: 6.5 million users, 1.9 percent of people aged 15 to 64, in 2024.	[11]
Origin of cocaine seized in the United States	About 84 percent of U.S. samples analyzed in DEA's Cocaine Signature Program (seizures of 10 kilograms or more) in 2024 were classified as Colombian in origin; DEA has identified Colombia as the primary source since 2000.	[17]

Indicator	Figure	Source
Contamination of the supply	DEA figures vary by dataset. NFLIS data cited in the 2025 threat assessment show fentanyl in one in four cocaine submissions, while DEA's own 2024 laboratory report found it in about 1 percent of exhibits in which cocaine was the primary drug.	[17]
U.S. overdose deaths, 2025 (provisional)	69,973, almost 14 percent below the 81,313 of 2024 and the third consecutive annual decline; deaths involving cocaine and psychostimulants also fell.	[18]
Drugs seized by CBP, FY2026 (preliminary)	Nearly one million pounds, about 63 percent above the average of the previous four years.	[19]

The table supports a precise reading. Supply is at record scale. UNODC reports that both supply and demand continue to grow and that cocaine is reaching new markets and new patterns of use, including a rise in crack use in Western and Central Europe.^[11] In the United States the death toll has fallen for three years but remains close to 70,000 a year, and fentanyl in part of the cocaine supply raises the risk for people who use stimulants alone.^{[17][18]} The pressure on the United States is one of sustained supply, contaminated product and a high residual death toll. The data do not show a rising trend in U.S. overdose mortality, and this report does not claim one.

Brazil: Transit Hub, Domestic Market and Organizational Reach

Brazil occupies a different place in the cocaine economy than the Andean producers. UNODC identifies Colombia, followed by Peru and Brazil, as the main departure countries of cocaine shipments over 2020 to 2024.^[11] The origin data for the United States point to Colombia, so Brazil's weight lies in other flows: shipments across the Atlantic toward Europe and Africa, and a large domestic market.^{[21][22]} DEA's signature analysis of Brazilian seizures (173 samples from seizures made between 2019 and 2022) sourced most of the cocaine to Peru and Bolivia, which fits Brazil's role as an export route for Andean cocaine.^[17] The Intelligence Community notes that Colombian groups have expanded their trafficking relationships with Ecuadorian and Brazilian gangs.^[15] Two Brazilian organizations, the PCC and Comando Vermelho, were designated by the United States effective 5 June 2026, and the State Department said their networks extend across the region and into the United States.^[7]

Brazilian institutions are active at the same nodes this report examines. Cocaine seized at the port of Santos fell to 7.4 tonnes in 2025 after the port became a focus of enforcement, while flows moved to other Brazilian ports, and Ecuador's annual seizures now exceed Brazil's, according to Brazilian Federal Revenue Service, public-security and Ecuadorian police data as reported.^[21] In June 2026 the Federal Police launched Operation Balkans against a network shipping cocaine to Europe by sea, after the interception of a sailboat carrying 2.7 tonnes off Cape Verde.^[21] On the demand side, the III National Alcohol and Drugs Survey (LENAD III) estimates, from data collected in 2023 that exclude people experiencing homelessness, that at least 11.4 million Brazilians over 14 (6.6 percent) have used cocaine or crack at some point, up from 4.4 percent in 2012, and that about 3.8 million (2.2 percent) did so in the past year, against 2.0 percent in 2012. Its authors say that current use does not appear to have worsened over ten years and caution against reading trends from two data points.^[22]

The evidence supports three statements about Brazil. It is a major departure point for cocaine bound mainly for Europe and Africa. It is a large domestic market with a significant public-health burden. And it is the home of two organizations with international reach. The evidence does not support describing Brazil as the main source of the cocaine that reaches the United States, and the sources reviewed do not document fentanyl trafficking from Brazil to the United States or Canada: DEA's assessment attributes the U.S. fentanyl threat chiefly to Mexican cartels and their networks,^[17] and the Intelligence Community's 2026 assessment says that Mexico-based organizations dominate the production and smuggling of fentanyl into the United States.^[15] Brazil is not among the signatories of the Statement, and engagement proceeds through its own institutions and bilateral channels. Treating the ports of Santos and the north-eastern coast as nodes, and Brazilian authorities as partners, addresses the Brazilian share of the problem without overstating it.

HRS OBSERVATION

Pressure moves in two directions. People leave the places where criminal groups hold ground, and cocaine moves toward the markets that will pay for it. Both flows pass through the same ports, borders, prisons and financial channels.

SECTION 04

Where Crime Meets Commerce: Five Interface Nodes

The assessments describe criminal activity in settings that are also essential to legitimate economic life. Five node types recur. In each, the same infrastructure, workforce or financial channel serves both a lawful and an unlawful flow, which is why the node cannot simply be closed and must be governed.

Node Type	Examples	Documented Evidence	Source
Movement	Container ports, export terminals, river and air corridors	Guayaquil and other Pacific terminals serve banana and oil exports and cocaine transshipment. In June 2026 Chilean authorities detected more than 100 tonnes of illicit drugs, mainly cocaine hydrochloride and ketamine, impregnated in about 1,080 tonnes of timber from Bolivia and intercepted at Arica, San Antonio and Valparaíso, the largest seizure in Chile's history according to the prosecutor's office. ^[24] Panama reported about 97 tonnes seized in its latest full year, mostly in Colón. UNODC finds that 64 percent of the world's cocaine seizures were made in South America in 2024, up from 40 percent in 1998, and names Colombia, Peru and Brazil as the main departure countries for 2020–2024.	[33][34][35][11]
Commercial cover	Export agriculture, fishing, shipping services	Banana and agricultural export logistics are exposed to criminal infiltration. Treasury's 20 August 2026 action identified fishing companies and ten vessels near Manta that supplied fuel, food, medical support and logistics to cocaine-laden boats, and alleged that one designated person coordinated 30 to 40 tonnes of cocaine a month.	[33][10]
Financial	Free-trade zones, customs declarations, company registries	The Colón Free Trade Zone, the largest in the Americas, is exposed to contraband and money laundering; mandatory export declarations took effect on 1 April 2026. Colombia lists asset freezes and financial-intelligence cooperation as security capabilities. Ecuador's assessment lists administration-independent financial-intelligence institutions among its durable measures.	[35][31][33]
Custody	Prisons and detention	In Ecuador, prisons have functioned as command centers; the leader of Los Choneros escaped in January 2024 and was recaptured in June 2025. The assessment's own readiness metric is the capacity of incarcerated leadership to direct external operations.	[33]
Corridor	Borders and migration routes	Networks exploit northern migration corridors in Chile for extortion, kidnapping and trafficking, according to Chilean authorities. In August 2026 the PCC and Comando Vermelho fought over trafficking corridors near San Matías in Bolivia, with nine deaths in five days reported by Bolivian officials. Clan del Golfo and FARC dissident groups are active in northern Ecuador.	[34][32][33]

How the Sector Assessments Apply

The sector assessments supply the method, and the country assessments apply it to the nodes above. The applications below are those written into the country assessments, so that the framework in Section 09 can be read as a consolidation of existing guidance and not as a separate program.

Sector Assessment	Application in the Country Assessments
SRA 06 Ports, Logistics & Maritime ^[39]	The Ecuador assessment calls this its central readiness gap and prescribes advanced cargo-screening technology at export terminals, port-security partnerships, customs and cargo digitization, protection of port power and communications, and consistent security standards across export and container terminals. ^[33] The Colombia assessment applies customs digitization and protection of port systems. ^[31]
SRA 07 Food Security & Agriculture ^[40]	Applied in Ecuador to export-logistics security and to rural alternatives to criminal recruitment, and in Colombia to legal crop value chains, since coca cultivation persists where legal agricultural value chains are weakest. ^{[33][31]}
SRA 01 Telecommunications ^[37]	Applied in Ecuador to harden broadcast and telecommunications facilities against armed intrusion, following the January 2024 seizure of a television station in Guayaquil, and to build secure coordination channels. ^[33]
SRA 02 Data Centers & AI ^[38]	Applied in Ecuador to data fusion across port, security and financial-intelligence information under defined governance, including anomaly detection in port logistics. ^[33]
SRA 08 Pharmaceutical & Medical Supply ^[41]	Applied in Ecuador to regional medical stockpoints independent of Guayaquil and Durán and to medical capacity inside the prison system, ^[33] and in Panama to joint medical-readiness work in Colón during PANAMAX 2026. ^[35]
SRA 10 Integration ^[42]	Applied in Ecuador as a national Security-Infrastructure Dependency Register spanning ports, prisons, borders and financial flows. ^[33]

Minerals and energy (SRA 03 to 05) show less direct criminal exposure in the country assessments. Where they do, it runs through shared logistics, as the Ecuador assessment notes for extractive-sector transport that uses the same ports.^[33]

SECTION 05

Country Evidence: Five Jurisdictions, One Pattern

Five country assessments document criminal-economy exposure in enough detail to compare. The table gives, for each, the documented exposure, the node types involved and the institutional gap that the assessment itself identifies. Guyana is relevant for maritime cooperation: the United States and Guyana agreed in September 2020 to conduct joint maritime and air patrols to interdict narcotics near the Venezuelan border.^{[25][36]}

Jurisdiction	Documented Exposure	Nodes	Gap Identified
Ecuador	Internal armed conflict declared by the government in January 2024 (the Constitutional Court has questioned the legal basis; the government reasserted it by decree in June 2026). Homicide rate of about 6.7 per 100,000 in 2019, above 46 in 2023 and about 51 in 2025. Los Choneros and Los Lobos linked to the Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG. Ecuador seized 294.6 tonnes of drugs, mostly cocaine, in 2024, a record, according to the National Police. ^{[33][6][10][13]}	Movement, commercial cover, custody	Leadership removal produced fragmentation twice; prisons remain command centers; port screening incomplete.
Colombia	Colombia held about two thirds of the world's coca area in 2023 (253,000 of 376,000 hectares), and global coca area reached a record 385,100 hectares in 2024. Clan del Golfo, FARC dissident groups and the ELN are named in the Statement. The FY2027 determination found that Colombia failed demonstrably to meet counternarcotics obligations. ^{[12][11][1][8][31]}	Corridor, rural production zones, financial	Rural legal value chains; accountable civilian law-enforcement capacity; financial controls.
Bolivia	PCC and Comando Vermelho conflict over trafficking corridors near San Matías (nine deaths in five days, August 2026). Bolivian officials report 17 traffickers expelled, about 283 tonnes of drugs seized, 58 light aircraft and 10 clandestine airstrips destroyed in the six months to August 2026. FY2027 determination: failed demonstrably. ^{[32][8]}	Corridor, movement (air and river)	Border-security capacity; judicial independence; financial integrity.
Chile	Conviction on 14 July 2026 of Tren de Aragua's Chile-based leadership; networks exploit northern migration corridors; more than 100 tonnes of illicit drugs, mainly cocaine hydrochloride and ketamine, detected in drug-impregnated timber at three ports in June 2026. ^[24] The lead prosecutor became the government's first security minister and was replaced on 19 May 2026. ^[34]	Movement, corridor	Continuity of prosecutorial expertise across ministerial changes.
Panama	158 homicides recorded by 14 April 2026, about 76 percent attributed to organized-crime structures; about 97 tonnes of cocaine seized in the latest full year, mostly in Colón; mandatory export declarations in the Free Trade Zone from 1 April 2026. ^[35]	Financial, movement	Standing capacity versus exercise-cycle cooperation; financial-integrity gaps in the Free Trade Zone.

Peru, Paraguay, Brazil and Venezuela are not examined here as criminal-economy cases, because the corresponding country assessments center on other questions. Their absence is a limit of this report and not a finding about those countries.

Three points emerge from reading the five together. The node types match: ports and terminals, free-trade or export zones, prisons and border corridors recur in every case. The assessments describe the institutions at those nodes as present but outpaced, which is the pattern Strategic Report 03 found across the cases it examined, where readiness failures were rarely failures of design and usually failures of pace.^[27] And the gaps named are mostly gaps of continuity (turnover, exercise cycles, leadership changes), not gaps in enforcement will.

SECTION 06

The Geography of the First Joint Action

The Statement lists 24 organizations. Grouped by principal area of origin, as described in public sources and government instruments, they distribute unevenly across signatory and non-signatory jurisdictions. The grouping is an HRS analytical convenience: these organizations operate across borders, and origin is not residence.

Area of Origin	Organizations Named in the Statement	No.	Government Among Signatories?
Mexico	Cartel de Sinaloa; CJNG; Cartel del Noreste; Cartel del Golfo; La Nueva Familia Michoacana; Carteles Unidos; Los Viagras; Juárez Cartel (La Línea)	8	No
Ecuador	Los Choneros; Los Lobos; Chone Killers; Los Tiguerones	4	Yes
Colombia	Clan del Golfo; FARC dissident groups (including FARC-Estado Mayor Central and FARC-Segunda Marquetalia); ELN	3	Yes
Venezuela	Tren de Aragua; Cartel de los Soles	2	No
Brazil	Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC); Comando Vermelho	2	No
Central America	Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13); Barrio 18	2	El Salvador and Honduras: yes. Guatemala: no.
Haiti	Gran Grif; Viv Ansanm	2	No
Peru	Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso)	1	Yes

Counting the two Central American organizations with the signatories El Salvador and Honduras, ten of the 24 originate in jurisdictions whose governments signed (Ecuador 4, Colombia 3, Peru 1, Central America 2) and fourteen do not (Mexico 8, Venezuela 2, Brazil 2, Haiti 2).^[1] That distribution was not designed; it follows from who joined the coalition and where these organizations grew.

The asymmetry matters for implementation. The Statement's measures (asset freezes, visa and immigration restrictions, criminal liability for knowing material support) apply within each participant's jurisdiction.^[1] They bite where an organization's goods, money and people pass through a participating state. Several of the organizations named already operate inside signatory territory, whatever their origin: Tren de Aragua's leadership was convicted in Chile, Los Choneros and Los Lobos work with Mexican partners from Ecuadorian ports, and PCC and Comando Vermelho figures were captured or expelled in Bolivia.^{[34][33][6][32]} The control that participants hold over their own ports, financial systems and prisons is therefore the main determinant of the Pillar's reach, even for organizations whose home bases lie elsewhere.

This also frames cooperation with governments outside the signatory group, including Brazil, whose institutions pursue these organizations under their own law and whose sovereignty is not in question. Practical cooperation with those governments proceeds through bilateral channels, and the nodes that both sides share (cargo data, financial-intelligence exchange, extradition and mutual legal assistance) are the natural starting points.

Pathways for Governments Outside the Signatory Group, Including Brazil

The Statement rests on voluntary participation, and each participant applies its measures under its own law.^[1] Participation has followed government decisions: Colombia and Peru joined after changes of government, and Brazil has not taken part.^[23] Public statements about whether Brazil was invited to the March 2026 launch have differed. A senior Brazilian official has said that Brazil supports cooperation with the United States against organized crime and does not intend to join the Shield, citing concern about foreign military action on national territory, and Brazil's President has said that Brazil accepts cooperation against organized crime and rejects foreign interference.^[23] Press reports add that the Brazilian government disagrees with the classification of the PCC and Comando Vermelho as terrorist organizations.^[23] This report takes no position on whether any government should join. The National Security Strategy states that the United States should not overlook governments with different outlooks with whom it shares interests and who want to work with it.^[9]

The analytical question is what each level of engagement adds. The table sets out four levels. They are options and not steps that a government is expected to take.

Level	What It Involves	Precedent or Basis	Consideration
Functional bilateral cooperation at shared nodes	Exchange of cargo data and financial-intelligence typologies, mutual legal assistance and extradition, through existing channels and under national law.	Joint investigation teams, such as the Eurojust-supported French and Brazilian team that acted against a network at Santos. ^[21]	Needs no accession and builds on existing institutions; limited to the bilateral relationship.
Technical workstreams on specific nodes	Participation by institutions of a non-signatory government in defined technical exchanges, such as port-screening standards, as participants may agree.	No observer or technical-participant category is documented in the instruments reviewed.	Would need to be agreed among participants.
Participation in the Statement's framework	Joining the Statement's pillars and, at the government's choice, the first joint action.	Colombia and Peru joined after changes of government. ^{[23][31]}	A sovereign decision with implications for domestic law and for the sovereignty concerns that Brazilian officials have stated. ^[23]
Leadership or coordination role	Hosting, chairing or coordinating regional activities.	None documented; the Shield is led by the United States. ^[2]	Not addressed by the instruments reviewed; this report does not propose it.

In HRS terms, the Pillar's reach grows with the participation of governments in the jurisdictions where the named organizations are based, and functional cooperation at shared nodes delivers part of that benefit without formal accession. How a government weighs that against its own sovereignty considerations and domestic law is for that government to decide.

HRS JUDGMENT

The first joint action is strongest where the signatories hold the nodes through which the named organizations must pass. Its limits lie where the organizations' home territories are outside the group, which makes node-level capacity inside signatory states the practical measure of success.

SECTION 07

Leaders Fall, Networks Adapt: Institutional Pace

The three cases that Policy Brief 03 examined supply the clearest evidence on durability.^[29] They are summarized here with the new data points added since.

Case	Documented Event	What Followed
Ecuador	The head of Los Choneros escaped in January 2024, was recaptured in June 2025 and extradited to the United States on 20 July 2025, the first Ecuadorian citizen extradited to face justice there, a step enabled by a 2024 constitutional reform. ^{[33][6]}	ACLED recorded 42 percent more reported fatalities from gang violence in the first eleven months of 2025 than in the same period of 2024, a period that included the extradition, and analysts describe a second wave of criminal fragmentation. In 2025 security forces ran nearly 53,000 operations, estimated losses to criminal structures at US\$243 million and captured 20 high-value targets, and the homicide rate reached about 51 per 100,000 (9,216 homicides), the highest recorded, according to the Interior Ministry. ^[33] In January to July 2026, homicides fell to 4,882 from 5,295 in the same period of 2025, although killings rose in 79 cities, which suggests that violence moves as well as ends, as reported. ^[13]
Chile	Conviction of Tren de Aragua's Chile-based leadership on 14 July 2026. The prosecutor who led the case became the government's first security minister and was replaced on 19 May 2026. ^[34]	Expertise built against a specific network sat with one official, and the ministry's leadership changed within the government's first three months. ^[34] ^[29]
Panama	PANAMAX 2026 brought about 1,700 personnel from 19 countries and included joint medical-readiness work in Colón with Panama's Ministry of Health, Joint Task Force Bravo and the Missouri National Guard. ^[35] ^[29]	The model works while the exercise runs. The open question is whether it becomes year-round capacity in the province with the country's most acute financial-integrity exposure. ^[29]

The market these institutions face has kept growing. UNODC estimates global cocaine manufacture at more than 4,000 tonnes in 2024, over four times the level of ten years earlier, with record seizures that track production closely.^[11] A single successful prosecution or extradition changes the leadership of an organization and leaves the commercial structure that supplies it largely intact. In HRS terms, the Strategic Dependency Test applied to the security response asks whether the response depends on one tactic and what would remain if that tactic were unavailable.^[27] In Ecuador the answer, as the assessment records it, is that the response depends heavily on leadership removal.^[33]

Strategic Report 03 found that across the cases it examined, institutions were usually sound in design and late in scale.^[27] The security cases fit the pattern. A prison-control protocol, a port-screening unit or a financial-intelligence unit takes years to build, and the networks it must contain adapt in months. Pace is a design variable, and it needs to be funded as one.

PROPOSITION

A capture ends on the day it happens. Control has to be operated every day, by people who may not be in office next year, with records that a successor can read.

SECTION 08

Designations and the Legitimate Economy

Terrorist designations are a tool for isolating organizations. According to the State Department, designation exposes the organizations, restricts their access to the United States and leads to the blocking of property subject to U.S. jurisdiction.^[5] The Statement adds a further element: criminal liability, under each participant's national law, for individuals who knowingly provide material support, including logistical support.^[1]

Treasury's August 2026 action shows how far that reach can extend into ordinary commerce. The 15 designated persons and entities and ten vessels included fishing businesses near Manta that, in Treasury's description, provided fuel, food, medical support and logistical assistance to cocaine-laden boats.^[10] Companies that supply vessels, move cargo or hold customer accounts at the nodes described in Section 04 can therefore face legal exposure that they may not be equipped to assess. That is an HRS judgment, drawn from the instruments above, and it applies in every jurisdiction that implements them.

Commercial Actor	Exposure Channel	What the Actor Needs from the State
Terminal operators and concessionaires	Cargo and counterparties handled at the terminal, including interim operators during concession transitions. ^{[35][30]}	Published inspection and counterparty standards; a register of owners and operators. ^[30]
Shipping agents and freight forwarders	Consignees and containers moved for clients.	Risk-based due-diligence guidance; a lawful reporting channel.
Fishing and provisioning firms	Fuel, food, medical support and logistics supplied to vessels. ^[10]	Vessel and ownership registers; clear rules on permissible supply.
Free-zone operators and re-exporters	Export and re-export declarations; contraband and laundering exposure. ^[35]	Declaration standards; shared customs data.
Banks and regulated financial entities	Customers linked to designated organizations.	Access to beneficial-ownership data; clear sanctions-implementation guidance.
Agricultural exporters	Export-logistics chains infiltrated by criminal groups. ^[33]	Export-logistics security standards; vetted handling arrangements.

Four design requirements follow. Standards should be published, so that a firm can read what is expected. Beneficial-ownership data should be accessible to regulated entities, so that due diligence is possible. Application should be proportionate, because small firms without compliance departments are the most likely to be pushed toward informality by an unclear regime. And the same criteria should apply to every owner and counterparty regardless of nationality, as Technical Paper 03 argued for port concessions.^[30] A government that meets these requirements protects its legitimate economy and strengthens the enforcement case at the same time.

SECTION 09

The HRS Interface Security Framework

The framework applies five layers at each node type. Each layer answers one question, uses a small set of instruments and carries a time-based indicator, in line with the convention of earlier series documents that every control should have a decision right, a public record and a clock.^[30]

Layer	Question	Typical Instruments	Time-Based Indicator
Visibility	What passes through the node, and who stands behind it?	Registers of terminals, operators and owners; cargo and vessel data; company and beneficial-ownership registries; interoperable records.	Share of strategic nodes with a public register; cargo-data latency in days.
Screening	Which flows and counterparties receive scrutiny, on which published criteria?	Risk-based inspection; counterparty and ownership due diligence; nationality-neutral criteria.	Inspection coverage at priority terminals; days from submission to a screening decision.
Integrity	Can the people and processes at the node be trusted?	Workforce vetting; anti-corruption controls; staff rotation; prison-control protocols.	Integrity incidents per year; share of staff vetted; audits of custody communications.
Interdiction	What happens when a flow or a person is identified?	Financial-intelligence analysis; asset tracing and freezes; judicial cooperation; extradition pathways; prosecution.	Days from alert to action; share of freezes sustained in court; case-resolution rate.
Continuity	Will the capability survive turnover, funding cycles and a change of government?	Statutory mandates; tenure protections; documented procedures; multi-year budgets; annual exercises.	Share of procedures documented independently of any official; staff retention; share of funding protected beyond the electoral cycle.

The layers apply the functions of the HRS Readiness Cycle to a specific question.^[26] They are a synthesis for the interface between organized crime and legitimate commerce, and they do not replace the Readiness Cycle or the Strategic Dependency Test. Visibility corresponds to Detect and Assess, Screening to Decide, Integrity and Interdiction to Coordinate and Deploy, and Continuity to Sustain and Learn. The matrix below shows how the layers apply at each node type, drawing on measures already prescribed in the country and sector assessments.

Node	Visibility	Screening	Integrity	Interdiction	Continuity
Movement	Terminal and vessel registers; cargo and customs data. ^{[30][33]}	Risk-based container inspection; cargo-screening coverage. ^[33]	Port workforce vetting; access control.	Joint cargo targeting; link from seizure to prosecution. ^[33]	Standing port-security unit; equipment maintenance capacity. ^[33]
Commercial cover	Registers of fishing vessels, suppliers and exporters. ^[10]	Ownership checks on supply contracts.	Licensing integrity; vetted export handling. ^[33]	Sanctions implementation; asset tracing. ^[10]	Guidance maintained across political cycles.
Financial	Customs and company-registry data feeds to financial-intelligence units. ^[35]	Beneficial-ownership due diligence.	Oversight of customs and compliance staff.	Financial-intelligence analysis; freezes. ^[31]	Independent, staffed intelligence units. ^[33]
Custody	Inmate and communications records.	Classification and isolation protocols. ^[33]	Staff rotation; audit.	Prosecution of orders issued from custody.	Continuity of the prison service across leadership changes. ^[33]
Corridor	Border and route monitoring. ^[33]	Targeted checks at crossings.	Border-post integrity.	Cross-border liaison; joint investigations. ^[29]	Standing bilateral mechanisms. ^[29]

A PRACTICAL TEST

Could a different government, five years from now, read the record that a container, a vessel's supplier, a transfer of shares or a prisoner's phone call leaves today?

SECTION 10

Solutions: Responding to Displacement and Dependence

Section 09 addresses the supply side of the interface. The two human pressures described in Section 03 need their own responses, because neither ends when a shipment is seized. The principle is the one used so far: each measure works at a point where the pressure is visible and governable, and each carries an indicator. The commander of U.S. Southern Command described the approach now under way as a campaign that applies friction across the whole network,^[16] which fits a response that combines controls at the nodes with measures for the people the networks affect.

Displacement and Migration Pressure

Measure	What It Does	Evidence	Indicator
Hold security where displacement starts	Civilian police presence and community protection in the urban districts and rural corridors where criminal groups hold ground, linked to the node measures in Sections 04 and 09.	Violence in Guayaquil and Durán has displaced residents inside Ecuador, and displacement in Colombia reached its highest recorded level in 2025. ^{[33][20]}	New displacements per year.
Register and protect displaced people	National registries that record who has been displaced, from where and why, with access to identity documents and legal protection.	IDMC's 2026 report describes Colombia's legal and institutional framework for assessing and registering displaced people, and notes that displacement in El Salvador, Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala is only partly captured because of a lack of systematic data collection. ^[20]	Share of displaced people registered.
Restore services and livelihoods in return areas	Link return and resettlement to legal value chains, health services and housing, so that return lasts.	The country assessments apply the sector frameworks to legal agricultural value chains and to regional medical stockpoints outside high-crime corridors. ^{[33][31]}	Share of displaced households with income and services twelve months after return.
Support host communities and labor-market integration	Skills registries and structured integration of displaced people into local labor demand, with services financed where hosts carry the burden.	Colombia hosts the largest displaced Venezuelan population in the hemisphere, and its assessment proposes a skills registry and labor-market integration. ^[31]	Integration rate; strain on host services.
Plan for Cuba and Haiti contingencies before a trigger	Civilian-led contingency plans for maritime and land movements, with early-warning indicators such as departure counts and displacement spikes, and pre-agreed reception, screening and humanitarian arrangements with willing governments under their own laws.	The Intelligence Community and Southern Command flag both countries as possible sources of surges, and Haiti recorded about 977,000 new displacements in 2025. ^{[15][16][20]}	Days from warning to activation; reception capacity identified.
Prosecute and disrupt migrant-smuggling networks	Treat smuggling as a financial crime: financial-intelligence analysis, asset tracing and prosecution of organizers at the corridor nodes.	The Intelligence Community notes that smugglers who operate as transnational criminal organizations profit from disorder in migration flows. ^[15]	Prosecutions of organizers; assets frozen.

Drug Dependence and Public Health

Measure	What It Does	Evidence	Indicator
Expand evidence-based treatment and recovery services	Psychosocial treatment, outpatient and residential places, and recovery support for people with cocaine and crack use disorders, integrated with primary care.	Brazil's survey estimates that at least 11.4 million people over 14 have used cocaine or crack, about 2.32 million of them crack; North America has 6.5 million cocaine users. ^{[22][11]}	Treatment places per 100,000 inhabitants; waiting time.

Measure	What It Does	Evidence	Indicator
Monitor the supply for contamination	Forensic laboratories that test seized and community samples and issue rapid alerts to health services when adulterants such as fentanyl are found.	DEA reports fentanyl in a minority of cocaine submissions, from about 1 percent of its own laboratory exhibits to one in four in NFLIS data. ^[17]	Days from detection to health alert.
Prepare emergency response	Training and equipment for first responders and emergency departments to recognize and treat overdoses involving stimulants and adulterants.	U.S. overdose deaths remain close to 70,000 a year despite three annual declines. ^[18]	Emergency response times; overdose survival rates.
Prevent early use among young people	School and community programs and early screening aimed at the ages when use begins.	UNODC reports that cocaine use is spreading to new social settings and that crack use is rising among disadvantaged groups in parts of Europe. ^[11]	Age at first use; program reach.
Keep national drug-use surveys current	Regular, comparable surveys and treatment-demand data, so that policy follows measured trends.	Brazil's LENAD III shows what a national survey can establish, including a past-year rate of 2.2 percent against 2.0 percent in 2012. ^[22]	Survey cadence; comparability across countries.
Watch the chemicals that complete the product	Customs monitoring of regulated chemicals used to convert cocaine base to hydrochloride, at ports of entry and in free zones.	DEA's signature analysis records the high availability of oxidizing agents such as potassium permanganate in illicit cocaine. ^[17]	Seizures and diversion cases of regulated chemicals.

Brazil: Options for Cooperation within Brazilian Law

Option	What It Does	Basis	Indicator
Exchange cargo and container data with destination ports	Federal Revenue and Federal Police data shared with port authorities in Europe, Africa and the United States.	Flows moved from Santos to other Brazilian ports after enforcement tightened. ^[21]	Days from container departure to destination alert.
Use joint investigation teams	Bilateral teams with destination countries, with shared evidence and coordinated arrests.	A Eurojust-supported team of French and Brazilian authorities acted against a network at Santos in March. ^[21]	Joint investigations opened; convictions.
Coordinate financial intelligence	Exchange of typologies on proceeds and trade-based laundering linked to port flows.	HRS judgment, following the financial-node measures in Section 09.	Days from alert to action.
Cooperate on treatment and prevention	Technical exchange between health authorities on crack and cocaine treatment, drawing on Brazil's survey and service experience.	LENAD III; North America is the largest market. ^{[22][11]}	Joint programs; treatment places.

Each option operates through Brazilian institutions and under Brazilian law. Most of the measures in this section use institutions that already exist: registries, forensic laboratories, health services and customs. Sequencing follows the same logic as the framework. Visibility measures (registries, data exchange and laboratory networks) come first and can start within twelve months. Services follow. Reception arrangements for Cuba and Haiti need to exist before a trigger and not after one. The Foundation has not costed these measures, and cost-effectiveness is a question for the governments that adopt them.

HRS OBSERVATION

A response that secures the nodes and leaves the people unattended leaves the damage in place. A response that serves the people and leaves the nodes open will have to be repeated every year. The two need to run together.

SECTION 11

Assessing the Solutions: Evidence, Feasibility, Cost and Risk

A reviewer should be able to see how much weight each solution can bear. The tables below assess every measure in Sections 09 and 10 on four criteria: the type of evidence behind it, how soon it can be implemented, its relative cost and its principal risk. The ratings are HRS qualitative judgments. The sources reviewed document practice and indicators; none contains an evaluation of the impact of these measures on supply, displacement or dependence, and the report does not claim one.

Evidence types. *Practice documented:* the measure operates in at least one jurisdiction examined. *Problem documented:* the sources document the problem the measure addresses, and the measure is an HRS proposal. *Judgment:* HRS proposal without direct evidence reviewed. **Feasibility:** time to first results. **Cost:** relative and not costed.

Framework Layers and Cooperation with Brazil

Measure	Evidence Type	Feasibility	Cost	Principal Risk and Mitigation
Visibility: registers, cargo and registry data	Practice documented (customs declarations in the Colón Free Trade Zone). ^[35]	12 months	Medium	Data protection and system costs. Mitigate with minimum-data rules and shared standards.
Screening: risk-based inspection and due diligence	Practice documented; effect not evaluated. ^{[33][35]}	1 to 3 years	High	Delays to legitimate trade. Mitigate with risk-based targeting and published service times.
Integrity: vetting, rotation, prison control	Problem documented. ^[33]	1 to 3 years	Medium	Due-process and labor-law limits; corruption displaced to other posts. Mitigate with independent audit and legal safeguards.
Interdiction: financial intelligence, freezes, prosecution	Practice documented (Treasury action; prosecutions in Chile). ^{[10][34]}	1 to 3 years	Medium	Wrongful freezes and legal challenge. Mitigate with judicial review and proportionality.
Continuity: statutes, tenure, funding	Problem documented (prosecutor turnover in Chile; institutional pace). ^{[34][27]}	3 or more years	Low to medium	Depends on political will across cycles. Mitigate with statutory anchoring and published indicators.
Functional cooperation with Brazil	Practice documented (joint investigation team). ^[21]	12 months to 3 years	Low to medium	Sovereignty sensitivities. Mitigate by letting Brazilian institutions lead and operate under Brazilian law.

Measures for Displacement and Dependence

Measure	Evidence Type	Feasibility	Cost	Principal Risk and Mitigation
Security where displacement starts	Problem documented. ^{[33][20]}	1 to 3 years	High	Heavy-handed enforcement and abuses. Mitigate with civilian-led policing and accountability.
Registration and protection	Practice documented (Colombia's Victims Unit). ^[20]	12 months to 3 years	Medium	Misuse of data. Mitigate with strict access rules.
Return and livelihoods	Judgment, drawing on the applications in the country assessments. ^{[33][31]}	3 or more years	High	Unsafe or forced return. Mitigate with voluntary, monitored return.
Host-community integration	Proposal in the Colombia assessment. ^[31]	1 to 3 years	Medium	Local resentment. Mitigate by financing host services.
Cuba and Haiti contingency planning	Problem documented. ^{[15][16]}	12 months	Low to medium	Legal and political sensitivity. Mitigate by making arrangements under each government's own law.
Disrupting migrant smuggling	Problem documented. ^[15]	1 to 3 years	Medium	Pushes migrants toward riskier routes. Mitigate by pairing with protection pathways.

Measure	Evidence Type	Feasibility	Cost	Principal Risk and Mitigation
Treatment and recovery services	Problem documented (survey scale). ^{[22][11]}	3 or more years	High	Capacity and stigma. Mitigate by integrating treatment into primary care.
Contamination monitoring	Problem documented. ^[17]	12 months	Low to medium	Laboratory capacity. Mitigate with shared protocols.
Emergency response	Problem documented. ^[18]	12 months to 3 years	Medium	Training turnover. Mitigate with recurring training.
Youth prevention	Judgment.	1 to 3 years	Medium	Uneven effectiveness. Evaluate before scaling.
Drug-use surveys	Practice documented (LENAD III). ^[22]	1 to 3 years	Medium	Recurring cost. Mitigate with a shared method.
Chemical monitoring	Problem documented. ^[17]	1 to 3 years	Medium	Burden on legitimate chemical trade. Mitigate with risk-based rules.

Alternatives Considered

Alternative	Why It Is Not Sufficient Alone	Role in This Report
Operations aimed at leaders	Leadership removal produced fragmentation twice in Ecuador. ^[33]	Complement; the conduct of operations is outside this report.
Border and migration controls alone	Border encounters reached record lows while regional displacement reached record highs. ^{[19][20]}	Complement; see Section 03.
Treatment and prevention alone	Does not reduce supply routes or the violence around them.	Included in Section 10.
A single regional agency or command	Raises sovereignty objections; Policy Brief 03 did not propose one. ^[29]	Not adopted.
Exclusion by the nationality of an owner or supplier	Conflicts with nationality-neutral standards and with each state's law. ^[30]	Not adopted; the same criteria apply to every owner.
An expanded military role as the primary instrument	Outside the scope of this report, which does not evaluate the use of force.	The civilian measures complement it.

What the Evidence Does Not Show

Question	What the Sources Show	What Is Missing
Do the measures reduce supply, displacement or dependence?	The sources document practice and indicators.	Impact evaluations. A baseline and an independent review should accompany adoption.
Is Brazil a source of fentanyl for the United States or Canada?	DEA attributes the U.S. fentanyl threat chiefly to Mexican cartels and their networks, and the Intelligence Community says Mexico-based organizations dominate fentanyl smuggling into the United States. ^{[17][15]}	No source reviewed documents fentanyl trafficking from Brazil.
What share of U.S.-bound cocaine transits Brazil?	DEA's origin analysis points to Colombia; UNODC lists Brazil third among departure countries worldwide. ^{[17][11]}	No published split of U.S.-bound transit by country.
How much migration does criminal violence cause?	IDMC counts displacement by cause; the Intelligence Community links Ecuadorian transshipment and conflict to regional migration. ^{[20][15]}	Cross-border movement has several drivers, and attribution to crime is not quantified.
Does enforcement at one node move trafficking elsewhere?	Flows moved from Santos to other Brazilian ports. ^[21]	Measures need regional coverage; displacement effects are not measured.
How reliable are the case facts?	Many rest on press reporting in the country assessments; the DHS fiscal year 2026 figures are preliminary. ^[19]	Primary-source verification should accompany the next edition.

SECTION 12

Recommendations for Partner Governments

Each recommendation is for a government to adopt under its own law and at its own pace. None prescribes a supplier, a technology or a foreign partner. They are ordered roughly from the quickest to the slowest to implement.

#	Recommendation	Layer and Node	Indicator
1	Publish a register of strategic nodes (ports, terminals, free zones, principal fishing and export hubs) naming the operator, the ownership chain to the ultimate controller and the competent authority. ^[30]	Visibility; all nodes	Share of strategic nodes with a published record.
2	Adopt risk-based, nationality-neutral inspection standards for container and export terminals, with published coverage targets. ^{[33][30]}	Screening; movement	Cargo-screening coverage; interdiction-to-throughput ratio. ^{[33][35]}
3	Require electronic customs declarations in free zones and connect them to financial-intelligence units. ^[35]	Visibility; financial	Declaration compliance rate. ^[35]
4	Give financial-intelligence units standing, lawful access to customs, port and company-registry data, under defined governance. ^[33]	Visibility and interdiction; financial	Days from alert to action.
5	Place prison leadership-isolation and communications-control protocols under independent audit. ^[33]	Integrity; custody	Capacity of incarcerated leadership to direct external operations. ^[33]
6	Create specialized prosecutorial units with statutory mandates and tenure protections, and document casework methods so that expertise survives staff changes. ^{[34][29]}	Continuity; all nodes	Share of procedures documented independently of any official.
7	Establish standing prosecutor-to-prosecutor and intelligence-unit channels with neighboring jurisdictions that face the same networks. ^[29]	Interdiction; corridor	Joint investigations opened; response time to cross-border requests.
8	Pair enforcement in source and recruitment zones with legal economic alternatives: legal crop value chains, rural roads and storage, and youth employment. ^{[31][33]}	Integrity and continuity; commercial cover	Reach of rural programs; recruitment and cultivation trends.
9	Publish due-diligence guidance for terminal operators, shipping agents, fishing and provisioning firms and free-zone operators, with a lawful channel to ask questions and report suspected links.	Screening; commercial cover	Share of regulated firms covered; reports received.
10	Protect people displaced by criminal violence and expand treatment for dependence: registers of displaced persons, protection and return pathways, and evidence-based prevention and treatment services in the places where trafficking and violence are concentrated. ^{[20][11]}	Integrity and continuity; corridor	Displaced persons registered and protected; treatment places per 100,000 inhabitants.
11	Fund institutional pace: multi-year budgets and staffing for items 1 to 10, published annual indicators and a scheduled independent review. ^[27]	Continuity	Share of budget protected beyond the electoral cycle.

SECTION 13

Recommendations for U.S. Engagement

The recommendations below are addressed to U.S. policymakers who support the Security Pillar. They are written to remain valid whichever administration holds office and whichever partner governments are in power, because they concern the capacity of institutions and not the choice of any particular operation.

#	Recommendation	Basis in the Evidence
A	Fund the nodes as well as the operations. Offer multi-year support, planned over five to ten years, to customs services, financial-intelligence units, prosecutorial units and port-security teams that the partner selects and owns.	Institutions are sound in design and late in scale; capacity concentrated in individuals or single operations is lost when they change. ^{[27][29]}
B	Help partners implement the Statement in domestic law. Provide technical assistance on asset-freeze procedures, visa measures and material-support liability so that measures are lawful, proportionate and sustainable in each jurisdiction.	The Statement applies measures "in accordance with" each participant's legal obligations; outcomes depend on national frameworks. ^[1]
C	Publish plain-language compliance guidance with each new designation, addressed to port, shipping, fishing and free-zone operators, and coordinate it with partner regulators.	Treasury's August 2026 action reached ordinary suppliers; firms need standards they can read. ^[10]
D	Work with jurisdictions outside the signatory group through bilateral channels, concentrating on shared nodes such as cargo-data exchange, financial-intelligence cooperation, mutual legal assistance and extradition, with full respect for each government's sovereignty and legal framework.	Fourteen of the 24 named organizations originate in jurisdictions that did not sign. ^[1]
E	Adopt common, published indicators for the five framework layers and review them annually with partners, including time-based measures such as days from alert to action.	The Security Pillar has no joint measurement today; Policy Brief 03 proposed continuity metrics. ^[29]
F	Plan programming and review points that do not depend on a single announcement cycle, with transition arrangements so that partner programs continue across changes of administration on either side.	Colombia's bilateral relationship moved sharply between 2025 and 2026 as governments changed. ^{[31][8]}
G	Support partner capacity to respond to displacement and dependence alongside enforcement: health ministries, treatment services and displacement registries, working with the international agencies already active in the affected areas.	Displacement in the Americas is at record levels, and cocaine supply and demand continue to grow. ^{[20][11]}

Agency Relevance

U.S. Department	Relevance to the Framework
Department of State (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs; Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs; Bureau of Counterterrorism)	Partner-capacity programs for justice and law-enforcement institutions; diplomatic coordination of the Statement; the designation process.
Department of the Treasury (Office of Foreign Assets Control; Financial Crimes Enforcement Network)	Sanctions-implementation guidance; financial-intelligence cooperation with partner units.
Department of Justice (including the Drug Enforcement Administration)	Prosecutorial cooperation, evidence sharing and extradition pathways; DEA cocaine-origin analysis that shows where U.S.-bound supply originates. ^[17]
Department of Homeland Security (including U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Coast Guard)	Cargo and vessel information exchange; maritime cooperation at shared ports and corridors. CBP's FY2026 figures on border encounters and drug seizures frame the homeland side of the problem. ^[19]
Department of Defense (including U.S. Southern Command)	The command's 2026 posture statement identifies thirteen designated organizations operating in its area of responsibility and warns of a maritime mass migration risk from Haiti. The civilian and institutional measures in this report complement operations by reducing the space in which these organizations work. ^[16]
Office of the Director of National Intelligence	Publishes unclassified annual assessments that link cocaine transshipment, criminal conflict and regional migration. The Foundation relies only on these public products. ^[15]
Department of Health and Human Services (CDC)	Overdose surveillance and the public-health evidence on cocaine, psychostimulants and fentanyl contamination, relevant to partner health ministries. ^[18]

Relevance is illustrative. The Foundation does not describe any agency's programs, authorities or intentions, and it does not cite or characterize the work of intelligence agencies other than through unclassified public assessments.

SECTION 14

Implications for U.S. National Security

The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, released in December 2025, states four aims for the hemisphere: stability and governance sufficient to discourage mass migration to the United States, government cooperation against narco-terrorists, cartels and other transnational criminal organizations, a hemisphere free of hostile foreign incursion or ownership of key assets that supports critical supply chains, and continued access to key strategic locations.^[9] The table relates each interest to the evidence in this report. The relation is an HRS judgment.

U.S. Interest	Connection to the Evidence	Implication
Cooperation against narco-terrorists, cartels and transnational crime	The Statement, the Doral declaration and the designations create the framework; capacity at ports, in finance and in custody determines results. ^{[1][2][33][35]}	Cooperation lasts when partner institutions can carry it between operations.
Stability and governance that discourage mass migration	The Americas hold a record 10.5 million internally displaced people, and criminal violence is a leading cause in Colombia, Ecuador and Haiti. Border encounters fell to record lows in FY2026, and the Intelligence Community and Southern Command flag Cuba and Haiti as possible triggers. ^{[20][19][15][16]}	Border results are strong, and the regional pressure behind them is at record levels and can resurface. Security at the nodes where displacement originates works as border security at a distance.
Secure strategic assets and critical supply chains	Ports that serve both trade and trafficking, concession transitions in Panama, and the logistics shared by extractive sectors. ^{[30][35][33]}	The screening capacity that addresses illicit actors also addresses unscreened ownership and control, on the same published criteria for every owner. ^[30]
Public health and drug supply	Global cocaine manufacture of about 4,100 tonnes in 2024; U.S. overdose deaths of about 70,000 in 2025, down for a third year but high; fentanyl detected in a minority of cocaine submissions (about 1 percent to one in four, depending on the DEA dataset); CBP drug seizures of nearly one million pounds in FY2026; 23 countries named as major transit or producing countries. ^{[11][18][17][19][8]}	Supply pressure persists across single operations and contamination raises the risk. Durable controls have to work where supply passes through, and partner treatment capacity reduces the demand that sustains it.
Integrity of the financial system	Free-zone laundering exposure in Colón; sanctions reaching commercial intermediaries in Ecuador. ^{[35][10]}	Partner financial-intelligence and customs capacity extends the reach of U.S. sanctions authorities.
Partner trust and legitimacy	Colombia and Bolivia were found to have failed demonstrably on counternarcotics in FY2027, while the Statement relies on their participation. ^{[8][1]}	Capacity-building framed as partner-owned reduces friction between assessment and cooperation.

Relationship to U.S. Policy Instruments

Instrument	Relationship	Note
National Security Strategy: migration, cooperation against cartels, secure key assets	Consistent	Sections 03, 09 and 10 address the first three aims. The fourth, access to key strategic locations, is outside this report. ^[9]
Joint Statement, Security Pillar	Complementary	The report supplies node-level implementation that the Statement leaves open and does not prejudge the Rio Treaty process. ^[1]
Joint Statement, Economic Pillar	Consistent	Nationality-neutral screening and trusted-supplier criteria follow Policy Brief 02 and Technical Paper Q3. ^{[28][30]}
Terrorist designations	Reproduced	Treated as government determinations, with no HRS position on their legal basis. The report identifies the compliance guidance that firms need. ^{[4][7]}
FY2027 Presidential Determination	Reproduced	The determination bases list placement on geographic, commercial and economic factors. The report does not assess the fairness of any finding. ^[8]
Use of military force and the operations of U.S. Southern Command	Outside scope	The civilian measures complement operations. The command's commander has described the approach as friction across the whole network. ^[16]
Participation of governments outside the signatory group	Neutral	The report describes levels of engagement and takes no position on accession. ^[23]

Two further observations apply. The nodes where criminal and strategic-asset concerns overlap are the ones that Technical Paper 03 identified for concession governance,^[30] so one investment in registers and screening serves both purposes. And a screening regime that treats every owner and counterparty the same way is easier for a partner government to defend domestically.

HRS JUDGMENT

For U.S. security, the most durable return comes from partner capacity at the nodes that every trafficking route and strategic port depends on. It keeps working when an operation ends.

SECTION 15

A 50-Year Reading Across Political Alternation

A framework that depends on one administration, in Washington or in a partner capital, lasts as long as that administration. The table lists the kinds of change the design has to survive and what each requires.

Change Over Time	What Persists	Design Response
Change of U.S. administration	Ports, finance and prisons still need records, inspection and prosecutors; partners still need continuity of support.	Multi-year programming; published indicators; transition arrangements.
Change of partner government	The nodes remain, and expertise stays with the institution if it is documented. Colombia's relationship with Washington changed within a year. ^[31]	Statutory mandates; tenure protections; procedures documented independently of any official. ^[29]
Shifts in criminal markets	Supply grows and routes move; manufacture is estimated at more than four times its 2014 level. ^[11]	Controls tied to nodes and flows, with annual review of typologies.
Technology change	Data fusion and anomaly detection become more capable; so do the means of concealment. ^[33]	Technology-neutral standards; governance of data use; repair and maintenance capacity. ^[33]
Funding cycles	Institutional pace lags when funding follows announcements. ^[27]	Protected multi-year budgets; scheduled independent review.

The country assessments apply five horizons to each case: 2027–2030, 2031–2035, 2036–2050, 2051–2065 and 2066–2076.^{[33][35]} The same sequence can be applied to the framework.

Horizon	Focus
2027–2030	Registers and published standards at priority nodes; financial-intelligence access to customs and registry data; prison-control audits; first annual indicators.
2031–2035	Institutionalize: statutory units, tenure protections, documented methods, protected multi-year funding.
2036–2050	Regionalize: standing cross-border channels; shared typologies; interoperable records across neighboring jurisdictions.
2051–2065	Renew first-generation systems before failure; update technology and standards.
2066–2076	Operate as a continuously renewing capability, reviewed against the pattern of criminal adaptation.

Fifty years is a design horizon and not a forecast. The assessments in this series are less than a year old, and the Foundation does not claim a record that long. What a fifty-year horizon does impose is a discipline: each recommendation has to make sense when its sponsors have left office.

SECTION 16

Policy Relevance and Update Protocol

This report is revised when a trigger below occurs. The case layer (Sections 03 to 05 and 07) records conditions as of 21 October 2026 and will age. The framework layer (Sections 09 to 13) is revised only if a trigger exposes a design flaw.

Watch Item	Status at Cutoff	Update Trigger
Rio Treaty Organ of Consultation	Intention declared on 22 September 2026; this report did not locate confirmation that a meeting had been convened. ^{[1][14]}	Permanent Council decision; a ministerial resolution.
Additional designations under U.S. law	The State Department's list records designations through July 2026 for Latin American and Caribbean groups. ^[4]	New designations or delistings; implementing measures by other participants.
Ecuador's legal framework for the conflict	Decree reasserted in June 2026 and challenged before the Constitutional Court, as reported. ^[33]	Court ruling.
FY2027 determination follow-up	Colombia and Bolivia found to have failed demonstrably; assistance determinations are made under U.S. law. ^[8]	Changes in assessment or in assistance.
Panama permanent port concession	Tender being prepared; interim contracts run to about August 2027. ^{[30][35]}	Tender rules or award.
PCC and Comando Vermelho in Bolivia	Territorial conflict reported in August 2026. ^[32]	Changes in the pattern of violence or in joint action.
Migration triggers in Cuba and Haiti	Flagged by the Intelligence Community and Southern Command as possible sources of migration surges. ^{[15][16]}	A sharp rise in departures or in displacement in either country.
U.S. border and overdose data	FY2026 border encounters at record lows; 2025 overdose deaths down for a third year. ^{[19][18]}	A sustained reversal in either series.

Version control: V1.0, October 2026. Scheduled review after the first Organ of Consultation decision or no later than April 2027, or earlier on any trigger above.

SECTION 17

Conclusion

The Shield of the Americas gave fifteen governments a shared list of organizations and a shared set of tools. The Foundation's assessments show where those tools meet the economy: terminals that load bananas and cocaine, a free zone that re-exports legitimate goods and hides illegitimate ones, fishing boats that carry supplies for traffickers, prisons from which orders still travel, and borders that migrants and smugglers use. The costs of failure at these points are counted in displaced families and in dependence, and they cross borders as the trade does. Control at these points has to be operated every day. It depends on registers someone keeps, inspections someone performs, reports someone reads and prosecutors someone protects.

The Interface Security Framework puts that observation into a form that any government can adopt, and that any administration can support without disavowing its predecessor's goals. It asks each partner to see what passes through its nodes, to screen on published criteria, to keep the people and processes at the node sound, to act when a flow is identified, and to make all of this survive turnover. For the United States, the same investments strengthen cooperation, protect the financial system and secure the ports and supply chains on which its own trade depends.

FINAL PROPOSITION

A coalition against organized crime should be judged by what its members can do, on an ordinary day and under any government, at the points where their economies are open to criminal use. Where those points are visible, screened, sound, acted upon and continuous, the list of named organizations matters less, because the networks have fewer places to operate.

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND LIMITATIONS

Methodology, Research Integrity and Limitations

This report is an original HRS Resilience Foundation synthesis. It draws on the Foundation's published Sector and Country Readiness Assessments, on Strategic Report 03 and Policy Brief 03, and on official United States and United Nations sources identified in the bibliography. It adds no new country-level facts beyond those sources. Figures from U.S. agencies and from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre are reproduced as published; DHS and CBP fiscal year 2026 figures are preliminary, and the Brazilian survey figures are dated. Where a claim rests on press reporting in an underlying assessment, the report attributes it to that assessment or to the reporting government, and the figures are reproduced as published.

The ratings in Section 11 are HRS qualitative judgments, and none of the measures has an impact evaluation in the sources reviewed. Statements by Brazilian officials are reported as attributed in the press and are not positions that the Foundation adopts. The report does not claim access to classified intelligence, confidential commercial information or privileged government information. Organizations are named only as they appear in government instruments, and their designation as terrorist or criminal organizations reflects the determinations of the issuing governments, not an HRS finding. The report makes no determination about any individual or any legal proceeding, and it takes no position on the merits of any government's use of designation authorities.

The country evidence covers Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile and Panama, with Guyana for maritime cooperation. It does not examine Mexico, Haiti, Central America, Brazil, Venezuela or Peru as criminal-economy cases, and the grouping of organizations by area of origin in Section 06 is an analytical convenience. The characterization of five node types and the five framework layers are the report's own synthesis. They are offered as a structured starting point and have not been tested in implementation.

The report is not a political judgment, electoral recommendation, intelligence product, procurement recommendation, legal opinion, engineering certification or investment solicitation. It does not address weapons systems, force structure or the conduct of military operations. Country conditions are analytical categories, not rankings. Recommendations are HRS analytical recommendations and do not represent the position of any government.

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Independent research for institutional readiness, continuity, and 50-year resilience planning across the Western Hemisphere. Research Outputs span Strategic Reports, Policy Briefs, Technical Papers, Sector Readiness Assessments and Country Assessments, translating public-source evidence into practical frameworks built to remain valid for governments, infrastructure operators, investors, and institutional decision-makers across changes in technology, suppliers, and political leadership.

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