
**Getting Smart and Scaling Up :
*The Impact of Organized Crime on Governance in
Developing Countries***

A Desk Study of Guyana

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ANNEX V - THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZED CRIME ON GOVERNANCE: A DESK STUDY OF GUYANA¹

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1. Ed. Camino Kavanagh (2013) *Getting Smart and Shaping Up: Responding to the Impact of Drug Trafficking in Developing Countries*, NYU Center on International Cooperation

Introduction

Guyana is located on the northeast coast of South America, with the Atlantic Ocean in the north, Venezuela and Brazil in the east and south, and Suriname in the west. It is the third smallest country in South America, with a population of approximately 755,000 and is also the third poorest in Latin America and the Caribbean.² Guyana is the only English-speaking country in South America and has a multi-racial society with citizens descending from India, Africa, Portugal, and China, and an indigenous population. An estimated 43 percent of the population is of East Indian origin, 30 percent African origin, seventeen percent mixed origin, and nine percent Amerindian.³ The Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese are the two largest populations, totaling roughly over 80 percent of the population.⁴ The two groups and their related political parties have shaped Guyanese politics since Independence.

Guyana's political system is made up of ethnic-based political parties. Support for political parties, evidenced by voting patterns, is largely based on ethnicity. Constituting roughly 43 percent of the population, the Indo-Guyanese are represented mainly through the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which has been in power for twenty years. The Afro-Guyanese party largely represented through the People's National Congress (PNC), ruled for roughly thirty years before losing power to the PPP in 1992. This history of long-standing political party entrenchment, first by the PNC, then the PPP, has encouraged a political culture of impunity in action, corruption, and lack of accountability to the polity. Furthermore, the political system has created a fractious environment, which has produced long periods of marginalization for the ethnic group not represented by the party in control. The country's ethno-political system has promoted a zero-sum approach to political contestation and has led to the use of gangs to intimidate the opposition during election cycles and at other times throughout its history.⁵ Additionally, there is a widespread lack of support for the Guyana Defense Forces and Guyana

Police Force, with both the Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese claiming they are corrupt, incompetent, and co-opted by the government or aligned with the opposition respectively.⁶ An entrenched political leadership and weak law and order has rendered Guyana's political environment is vulnerable to corruption and involvement with illicit activity.

Guyana's exclusionary political culture, geographic location, and remote and ungoverned territories make it a very attractive location for trafficking and other illicit activity. Guyana lies in close proximity to major cocaine production and consumption zones in South America, has largely uninhabited border regions coupled with limited capacity to monitor its borders. It shares a long and porous border with Brazil and with parts of Suriname. Accordingly, Guyana's vast unpopulated and unmonitored forest and savannahs areas "offer ample cover for drug traffickers and smugglers."⁷ More specifically, criminal actors and groups – particularly drug traffickers – have taken advantage of the country's location, vast unpopulated regions, weak institutions, and corruptible civil servants and political figures as a means to generate an illicit economy that is believed to represent between 40-60 percent of the formal economy.⁸

This paper is divided into four sections. Section I outlines the political and institutional context of Guyana, with special attention paid to the conditions which facilitate instability and create opportunities for organized criminal activity to flourish. These enabling conditions include a highly factionalized political system, a history of political gangs, high levels of corruption, and a largely cash-based economy. Section II examines the types of organized crime occurring in the country, with particular focus on drug trafficking. Section III addresses the impact that organized criminal activity has had on political governance, paying particular attention to the case of convicted drug trafficker Shaheed Roger Khan and his links to the security services and political officials during the early-mid 2000s. Section

2. World Bank, 2011, Guyana Country Brief, <http://go.worldbank.org/DC2PCGBIZ0>

3. United States Department of State, 2011, Background Note: Guyana, Bureau of Western Hemisphere, April 4, 2011

4. Ibid. The remaining 20 percent tend to lean towards support for the PNC.

5. Owen, Taylor, and Alexandre Grigbsy, 2012, "In Transit: Gangs and Criminal Networks in Guyana," Small Arms Survey.

6. Freedom House, 2011, Country Report: Guyana, Freedom House, 2011

7. United States Department of State, 2010, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 1, 2010

8. Freedom House, 2011, Country Report: Guyana, Freedom House, 2011; and United States Department of State, 2010, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 1, 2010.

IV highlights government responses to organized crime and the facilitating conditions, international assistance efforts, and provides some concluding remarks.

I. Political, Institutional, and Socio-Economic Dynamics in Guyana

Although it received self-governance status in 1953, Guyana gained full independence from Britain in 1966. Since the self-governance period, politics and governance have largely been shaped by an ethnically driven political party system, with the Indo- and Afro-Guyanese struggling for economic, political, and social power. During colonial rule, African and Indian indentured servants and slaves were brought to Guyana to nurture the farming economy. Traditionally, the Indo-Guyanese have dominated rural areas and have been heavily involved in the sugar and rice trade while the Afro-Guyanese have dominated urban areas and made up the bulk of the civil service and mining sectors.⁹ Afro-Guyanese filled positions such as teachers, low-level public administration, police, and military servicemen while the Indo-Guyanese accumulated significant capital through their trade, which they reinvested in educating their children in Guyana and abroad, purchasing land, establishing businesses, and entering the legal profession.¹⁰ While these roles are not universal or static, they provide an idea of the general socio-economic distinctions that have developed between the two main ethnic groups since the colonial era.

The Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese united against British colonial rule in the 1950s. Indo-Guyanese leader Cheddi Jagan and Afro-Guyanese leader Forbes Burnham formed the People's Progressive Party in 1950 and were elected to power in the first parliamentary election permitted by the British in 1953. However, fears of Jagan's Communist leanings led the British to suspend the constitution and disband the government five months after the election. The PPP won subsequent elections in 1957 and 1961.¹¹ Factionalization within the PPP, driven by Jagan's allocation of government positions to his supporters and promotion of policies benefiting the Indo-Guyanese, led to the emergence of the People's National Congress in 1957.¹² The PNC garnered the support of

9. See World Bank, 2003, *Guyana Development Policy Review: The Challenges of Governance and Growth*, Report No. 25640-GUA.

10. United Nations, "Report of the independent expert on minority issues. Addendum: Mission to Guyana (28 July to 1 August 2008)," Human Rights Council, A/HRC/10/11/Add.2, February 27, 2009, 7-8.

11. *Ibid.*, 8.

12. Owen, Taylor, and Alexandre Grigbsy, 2012, "In Transit: Gangs and Criminal Networks in Guyana," *Small Arms Survey*, 15-6.

Afro-Guyanese and mixed race populations, who felt marginalized and excluded by the PPP.¹³ As these parties split, political contestation grew increasingly violent.

In the years leading up to Independence, the PNC and PPP encouraged supporters to organize large-scale strikes and protests. These events led by politically affiliated gangs eventually escalated into larger scale violence between supporters of the two parties, including killings and displacements in Georgetown between 1962-64 and had a significant impact on the economy. Mob violence caused the uprooting of entire neighborhoods, leading to the creation of segregated communities along the coast.¹⁴ Against the backdrop of political violence and social unrest, Forbes Burnham came to power in 1964 by forming a coalition government, with the PPP. This was the last election before Independence in 1966, after which Burnham's PNC party secured and retained power for nearly three decades.

During this period the PNC allegedly resorted to vote rigging and extreme security measures, made amendments to the constitution, and passed different legislative decrees as a means to maintain power. During the period covering 1964 until his death in August 1985, Burnham used strategies used for political control, which included "constitutional engineering, executive aggrandizement, parliamentary marginalization boycotts of parliament, patrimonial resource allocation, ideological posturing, and politicization of bureaucratic appointments."¹⁵ The US Department of State cites that elections were largely perceived as fraudulent, political assassinations, and civil society and human rights groups were suppressed.¹⁶ Burnham was succeeded by Desmond Hoyte, who transitioned the economy from state-led socialism to a market economy, and lessened restrictions on the press and the right to assemble.¹⁷ Notwithstanding, over a period of 28 years both Burnham and his PNC successor Desmond Hoyte "used the full gamut of state power to consolidate their control and cement their authoritarian rule."¹⁸

13. Ibid

14. Ibid, 16.

15. World Bank, 2003.

16. US Department of State, 2011, Background Note: Guyana.

17. US Department of State, 2011, Background Note: Guyana.

18. Owen and Grigsby, 17.

The first internationally declared free and fair elections took place in 1992 ushering the PPP into power with Cheddi Jagan at the helm once again. Between 1992 and the recent 2011 election, the PPP has held a parliamentary majority and control of the executive branch. Its proportional advantage based on a 43 percent Indo-Guyanese population indicates the PPP may hold on to its control of parliament for some time. In 2011, the PPP won the most seats and its candidate, Donald Ramotar, was appointed president, but it lost its overall majority in parliament for the first time since 1992.¹⁹ The political system remains centralized and local elections have not taken place since 1994.²⁰ Overall, the political environment remains extremely divided with Afro-Guyanese claims that the PPP's policies and actions favor the Indo-Guyanese at the expense of the other ethnic groups in the country.²¹

Current Manifestation of Ethno-Political Identities

The PPP has been in power since 1992, holding the presidency and a parliamentary majority until 2012. According to the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, "[e]thnically divided political and administrative structures and failed political processes have created deep frustrations and distrust in the institution of government."²² As a racially polarized political system, elections are often perceived as zero-sum game providing parties with a license to act without consideration for the needs and interests of citizens, notwithstanding their ethnic origin. This winner-takes-all and the absence of checks and balances allow the parties to act with little transparency and accountability once in power.

Distrust of government and between the Afro-and Indo-Guyanese populations has fueled an atmosphere of rumor and conspiracy theory within which the two groups have developed "two separate and conflicting narratives and perceptions of reality."²³ The Afro-Guyanese community laments ongoing institutional discrimination within the private and public sectors where an entrenched system of

19. BBC News, 2011, "Guyana governing party's Donald Ramotar wins presidency," BBC News, December 2, 2011.

20. United States Department of State, 2012a, "Guyana: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, May 24, 2012.

21. United Nations, "Report of the independent expert on minority issues. Addendum: Mission to Guyana (28 July to 1 August 2008)," Human Rights Council, A/HRC/10/11/Add.2, February 27, 2009.

22. Ibid, 2.

23. Ibid, 2.

exclusion has resulted in increased poverty and increases in social issues such as robberies, assaults and killings, domestic violence, rape, and substance abuse within their communities.²⁴ Also, the creation of an informal system of rights and privileges in favor of the Indo-Guyanese community has bred a sense of marginalization amongst the Afro-Guyanese and other indigenous groups. Such marginalization, according to some Afro-Guyanese, has led to a 'growing resistance movement', which the Indo-Guyanese-dominated government has described as criminal.²⁵

Discriminatory employment patterns created under the PNC leadership of Burnham and Hoyte persist today, particularly within the public sectors, and there is a general perception that members of the Indo-Guyanese community are awarded most senior positions in the public institutions, including the police and the military. The UN report also noted dwindling state support for typically Afro-Guyanese industries. Particular examples of decreasing support include the increased privatization of the predominantly Afro-Guyanese bauxite industry, resulting in job losses and unemployment in Afro-Guyanese communities, and the "misappropriation" of bauxite industry pension funds, considered the "largest pool of capital owned by Africans in Guyana."²⁶

Justice and Security Sectors

Guyana's justice and security sectors face considerable resource and capacity constraints and are perceived as inefficient. For instance, the judicial system lacks adequate trained personnel and is plagued by persistent bribery, thereby resulting in lengthy delays and poor tracking of cases.²⁷ The judicial system also lacks the capacity to initiate or complete enquires, and protect victims and witnesses from retribution.²⁸ Meanwhile, the Guyanese correction system is badly in need of reform, as prisons are overcrowded and are in poor conditions.²⁹

Guyana's security forces are equally ill-equipped and under-staffed. They are also perceived to be corrupt and partisan.³⁰ The Guyanese Police Force (GPF), responsible for maintaining internal security, is severely constrained by inadequate training, lack of equipment, and a low budget.³¹ The GPF and the Guyana Defense Force (GDF), which protects borders and maintains law and order, consist of just over 5,000 officers and troops collectively. The GDF consists of approximately 2,600 troops and is led by a civilian Minister of Defense. The GPF is headed by the commissioner of police and overseen by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Guyana Coast Guard, a force within the GDF, is made up of approximately 250 members. Significantly, the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit (CANU) has only six vehicles to conduct patrols and 36 staff members, half of whom perform desk-based work.³² Self-defense and vigilante groups, formalized by the government in 1986 as Community Policing Groups (CPG) and overseen by the Minister of Home Affairs, form a major part of the Guyanese security apparatus. Indeed, the existing 272 CPGs with an estimated membership of 4,695 as of 2010 rival the size of the GPF and the GDF³³ Although CPGs are often criticized for acts of vigilantism, being a parallel force to the GPF, and for largely operating in PPP-supported areas, the PPP-led Government claims the CPGs help fight crime and support community safety.³⁴

The resource and capacity constraints the Guyanese security sector faces are compounded by its command of very little public trust and confidence. For instance, while the Indo-Guyanese believe crimes perpetrated against them by Afro-Guyanese criminals are ignored by the predominantly Afro-Guyanese GPF police, many Afro-Guyanese believe the Indo-Guyanese-dominated government manipulates the GDF for its own purposes.³⁵ Indeed, there is a great deal of suspicion and distrust and fear of government security forces within the Afro-Guyanese community and "a fairly consistent narrative of use of excessive force with impunity."³⁶ Citizens of the Afro-

24. United Nations, "Report of the independent expert on minority issues. Addendum: Mission to Guyana (28 July to 1 August 2008)," Human Rights Council, A/HRC/10/11/Add.2, February 27, 2009
25. Ibid, 13.
26. Ibid, 13-16, 20.
27. Chêne, Marie, 2010, "Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Guyana, with reference to natural resource sectors," 4.
28. UN, 2009, 17.
29. Freedom House, 2011.

30. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 36; Freedom House, 2011.
31. United States Department of State, 2012b, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 2012.
32. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 39.
33. Owen and Grigsby, 42-43.
34. Ibid, 42-3.
35. Freedom House, 2011.
36. UN, 2009, 20.

Guyanese town Buxton claimed joint security operations killed civilians during shootouts, destroyed large swathes of village farmland, and seriously damaged citizens' homes and property. More alarming is the perception that the government and law enforcement work with known criminals to "facilitate the targeting and killing of young African males known to the security services."³⁷ In this regard, it is widely believed the government employed extra-judicial paramilitary groups, called "phantom death squads," to carry out extra-judicial killings of suspected perpetrators starting from 2001.³⁸ Supporters of the covert operations claimed the GPF was unable to curb violence throughout the country, whereas others lamented the use of extra-judicial measures.³⁹ While faced with resource constraints, the use of extra-judicial measures and the employ of groups outside the security structure create the most serious concerns for security within the country.

Political Gangs

Since the late 1950s, and in order to operate and survive within the de facto zero-sum system of identity politics, the two major parties have nurtured political gangs as part of their efforts to out-manuever each other. Historically, these gangs have been most active in periods preceding elections but they have maintained a fairly consistent presence in Guyana's political landscape with each political party using gang violence as both a support network for politically motivated violence and as a basis for legitimizing the introduction of extreme security measures to assert control.

Specifically, intimidation of Indo-Guyanese businesspeople and political opponents by heavily armed Afro-Guyanese gangs was a major feature of the Burnham administration. At the same time, Burnham would exploit the existence of gang violence to justify human rights abuses, such as arbitrary detention. During this period, Afro-Guyanese-dominated police were accused of colluding with gangs not least because of their tardy response to attacks on members of the Indo-Guyanese community. When the PPP came to power in 1992 political gang violence continued.

PNC-affiliated gangs protested PPP rule and PPP-affiliated gangs responded, each targeting, intimidating, and killing supporters of the two opposing parties and setting their properties ablaze⁴⁰ The PPP-led government capitalized on the threat of Afro-Guyanese gangs to shore up support within the Indo-Guyanese electorate, thus legitimizing the application of extreme policing measures and the deployment of armed forces as policing units in the run-up to elections⁴¹

Of particular significance is the inability of the PPP government to function in the early 2000s, largely because the former ruling party had staffed the civil service, police, and defense forces with Afro-Guyanese.⁴² As the capital, Georgetown was home to a large number of PNC supporters; civil servants and members of the security apparatus loyal to the PPP could paralyze the city with boycotts and protest actions against the new government. Social unrest and violence have been characteristic of elections and election periods, often connected with the PNC alleging fraudulent elections since the PPP took power. After the 1997 election, CARICOM intervened to broker an end to violence and negotiate a term limit between the two major parties as a means to reduce instability⁴³ Despite the agreement, and as will be discussed in more detail below, unrest following the 2001 elections fuelled Guyana's most violent period, "the Troubles," which lasted between 2002-2003. The 2006 elections were marred by assassinations of political figures and members of the media, the dissolution of the National Assembly, and delays of the election caused by conflicts within the Guyana Election Committee.⁴⁴

Corruption

Corruption is endemic in Guyana. In 2010 the country received a Transparency International score of 2.7 out of 10 and was ranked 116 out of 178 countries. Despite limited data and research available on the country's state of governance and on corruption, Transparency International has noted that "all major governance indicators suggest high and deteriorating levels of perceived corruption in the country and the prevalence of both bureaucratic

37. UN, 2009, 20.

38. UN 2009, 20.

39. Korten, Tristram. 2008. "Where Phantoms Live," *Maclean's*.

40. Owen and Grigsby, 17-19.

41. Owen and Grigsby, 17-19.

42. World Bank 2003.

43. US Department of State 2001, Guyana: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

44. Freedom House, 2011.

and political forms of corruption.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators show a ten percent decline towards the 34th percentile in Guyana's ranking for control of corruption between 2000 and 2010,⁴⁶ while a more recent US Department of State report states there is a strong perception among the public that there are high levels of corruption throughout the government, including law enforcement and the judicial system.⁴⁷ Bribery is fueled by low wages for police and other public servants, and government officials are generally believed to be involved in the "misappropriation of public funds, steering of government contracts to party supporters or underground involvement with criminal groups."⁴⁸ According to a Freedom House report, the lack of campaign finance regulation has major "implications for the nature and stability of a polity where illegal entrepreneurs or the wealthy few influence electoral choice and public policy."⁴⁹ The same report suggests that candidates raise money from individuals and groups expecting favors in return, and more specifically, that drug traffickers and criminal actors have become an increasing source of funding for political parties, especially the ruling party.⁵⁰

Many laws include provisions that out-law official corruption, regulate public procurement, combat money laundering, and require financial disclosure for public officials. However, in practice, weak institutions, a lack of transparency, and inconsistency in implementation hinder the effective application of these laws.⁵¹ Institutional arrangements to support the government's anti-corruption efforts exist but are similarly plagued by a lack of resources, staffing, consistency in practice, and often, political backing. The Office of the Auditor conducts annual "audits of public accounts, entities and projects assigned by the Audit Act," submits reports to the Public Accounts Committee in parliament, and publishes the report on the Auditor General's website. The Integrity

Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, and the National Procurement and Tender Administration Board have all experienced either delays in their establishment, vacant positions, or concerns regarding independence. And while financial disclosure laws necessitate that public officials "submit information about personal assets to the Integrity Commission," compliance has been uneven, and the commission has no resources for enforcement or investigations.⁵² The Financial Intelligence Unit is able to review suspicious transactions and can impose "civil sanctions" for violations.⁵³

Corruption is perceived to be prevalent within the security services as well. In 2010, outgoing Assistant Police Commissioner Paul Slowe stated that corruption had become so pervasive in the GPF that to improve the force it would be necessary to remove corrupted members from the "top to bottom."⁵⁴ In August 2011, an official investigation began after "a senior GPF member alleged that many officers had connections to drug dealers."⁵⁵ In October 2011, the Minister for Home Affairs received the investigation report from the GPF crime chief, but had taken no action by year's end.⁵⁶

The Economy

The World Bank classifies Guyana as a lower-middle income country with a GNI per capita in 2010 of USD 2,900, significantly lower than the Latin America and Caribbean average. UNDP's 2011 Human Development Index designates Guyana as having medium-high development standards. During the first year of the economic crisis (2008-2009), Guyana's economy experienced an average growth rate of four percent. While there has been some improvement in Guyana's economic and development indicators in the recent past, approximately 33 percent of the population lives under the poverty line of less than USD 2 per day.⁵⁷ Guyana remains on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) list, designed to assist countries facing an "unsustainable debt burden."⁵⁸ Guyana's economy

45. Chêne, 2010, 1.

46. World Bank, 2012.

47. United States Department of State, 2012a, "Guyana: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, May 24, 2012

48. Chêne, 2010, 3.

49. Freedom House, 2006, "Countries at the Crossroads: Guyana."

50. Freedom House, 2006, "Countries at the Crossroads: Guyana."

51. Chêne, 2010, p 6-7. Examples of these laws include the Integrity Commission Act, the Fiscal Management and Accountability Act, the Audit Act, the Criminal Law Enforcement Act, the Public Procurement Act 2003, Money Laundering Prevention Act 2000, and the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering of Terrorism Act 2009.

52. US Department of State, 2012b.

53. Ibid, 7-8.

54. Daily Herald, 2010, "Corruption in Guyana Police Force out of control, says retiring officer."

55. US Department of State, 2012a.

56. US Department of State 2012a.

57. World Bank, 2012, World Development Indicators: Guyana,

58. See World Bank, 2012, *World Development Indicators: Guyana*; World Bank, 2011; and International Monetary Fund, 2012, "Fact Sheet: Debt Relief Under the Heavily Indebted Poor

is primarily based on exports from the agricultural and mining sectors. Its chief exports are sugar, gold, rice, and timber.⁵⁹ Guyana's key natural resources are gold, bauxite, diamonds, and timber, and its main agricultural products are sugar, rice, shrimp, fish, and fruits and vegetables.⁶⁰

Guyana's formal economy exists in parallel with a large, informal, primarily illicit economy. Guyana has a predominantly cash economy, making it easy for criminal actors to launder their money with little to no paper trail.⁶¹ According to one report, "the informal economy is driven primarily by drug proceeds" and may "be equal to between forty and sixty percent of formal economic activity."⁶² In 2006, the US Embassy in Guyana estimated that drug traffickers in Guyana earned at least USD150 million, equivalent to twenty percent or more of Guyana's gross domestic product.⁶³

Some of Guyana's major industries are prone to corruption and illicit activity. The mining industry is growing in importance as gold becomes a primary export product. However, the regulatory framework governing this highly profitable industry has not kept pace. According to a 2007 report on gold mining in Guyana, a small number of underpaid mine officers are relied on "for the inspection and administration of thousands of mining operations."⁶⁴ Chairman of the Geology and Mines Commission, Joseph Singh, stated in May 2012 that it is difficult to keep regulatory pace with the booming gold industry, as they needed to hire more "jungle mines inspectors, qualified geologists and additional staff to enforce regulations properly."⁶⁵ While the agencies remain under-staffed, investors from the US, Canada, Brazil, Australia, and South Africa are all vying for access to Guyana's gold. The same report estimated "that 30 to 80 percent of gold revenues escape the country without being taxed, largely due to underreporting of income from these small and medium scale operations."⁶⁶

Corruption is also rampant in the forestry sector where illegal logging figures as an important illicit activity. And while ample regulatory frameworks and policies exist to combat illegal logging, a lack of resources undermines effective enforcement.⁶⁷ Guyana has a vast unmonitored interior with valuable resources making it amenable to these forms of illicit activity.

67. Clarke, Gary, 2006. Law compliance and prevention and control of illegal activities in the forest sector in Guyana: preliminary report, World Bank.

Countries (HIPC) Initiative."

59. Owen and Grigsby, 2012.

60. US Department of State, 2011.

61. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 35.

62. Freedom House, 2011.

63. US Department of State, 2006, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*.

64. Chêne, 2010, 5.

65. Wilkinson, Bert, "Runaway Gold Prices Spark Major Headaches for Guyana," Inter Press Service, May 29, 2012.

66. Chêne, 2010, 5.

II. The Nature and Scope of Organized Crime in Guyana

Drug trafficking remains the primary organized criminal activity in Guyana although money laundering, arms trafficking, and human trafficking are also prevalent. Gold mining is also fostering increased criminal activity, with lax regulation blurring the lines between legitimate and illicit activity.

Drug Trafficking

The US Department of State has described Guyana as a transit country for Colombian cocaine.⁶⁸ Cocaine is trafficked from Venezuela by sea into Guyana's vast river system or by plane using unmonitored airstrips. It is trafficked onto Georgetown or Suriname where it is then repackaged and shipped to the United States, Canada, and West Africa. Cocaine is also smuggled from Brazil or Suriname into Guyana. It is shipped via commercial maritime vessels, air shipments, human couriers, or postal services.⁶⁹ The larger networks tend to use Georgetown's main port, rather than the airport, to move their product.⁷⁰ Cargo monitoring at the port is the responsibility of the Guyana Revenue Authority. The main drug enforcement agency, CANU, does not have authority to monitor the port, allowing for an easier flow of product for traffickers. According to the US Department of State, approximately 352 kg of cocaine and 393 kg of marijuana were seized in 2011 resulting in "cases pending prosecution against 16 mid-level and senior drug traffickers."⁷¹ Also during 2011, the seizure of 2,500 marijuana plants led to the arrest and pending trials of three individuals. Cocaine seizures totaled 105 kg in 2010.⁷²

Larger drug trafficking networks are said to hold significant influence over Guyana's political and judicial infrastructure, using local gangs to move contraband in urban areas.⁷³ These local gangs are typically paid in product and facilitate the local drug market or attempt to traffic using

68. US Department of State, 2012b, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid..

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid., 245.

73. US Department of State, 2012b, 244.

less sophisticated methods.⁷⁴ Large-scale criminal gangs tend to stay away from engagement with the community, preferring to focus on managing their illicit operations.⁷⁵

Arms Trafficking and Illicit Acquisition of High-Grade Surveillance Equipment

Small arms and assault weapons are trafficked through and within Guyana.⁷⁶ Small arms primarily enter Guyana from Brazil, with which Guyana shares a largely un-patrolled 1,200 km border.⁷⁷ Gangs also acquire larger weapons by attacking insecure police stations and army barracks to steal surplus weapons, such as AK-47s and shotguns.⁷⁸ Smaller arms that are not trafficked on to various Caribbean nations are sold to local gangs or business owners who use them for protective purposes.⁷⁹ This market may facilitate violent gang activity and a culture of vigilantism by providing readily available weapons.

One particular incident highlights the involvement of well-known drug trafficker Roger Khan in arms theft and the acquisition of high-grade surveillance technology. It also highlights the level of collusion of government officials in these activities. On December 4, 2002, a GDF patrol in the area of Good Hope searched a vehicle to find it contained a cache of weapons and equipment, including M-16 assault rifles with night vision devices, an Uzi sub-machine gun with silencer, Glock 9mm pistols, 12-gauge shotgun, other small caliber weapons, bullet-proof vests, helmets, a computer, cellular intercept equipment and other electronic devices with digitized electronic maps, and plans of Georgetown and certain East Coast villages.⁸⁰ Three men were arrested for possessing this equipment - Roger Khan, Haroon Yahya, and Sean Belfield, a member of the GPF at the time.⁸¹ A magistrate's court later dismissed the charges against the three.

74. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 29-30.

75. Ibid, 26.

76. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 21.

77. 61 percent of confiscated firearms in 2008 are said to have been manufactured in Brazil. Owen and Grigsby (2012)

78. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 21.

79. In 2008, a Brazilian-made Taurus handgun sold in the local market for approximately \$300-400 USD, demonstrating that the illicit arms market is well suited for profit making. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 21.

80. Stabroek News, August 20, 2009.

81. Ibid.

The electronic intelligence devices found with Khan were traced back to UK-based firm Smith Myers. In a US Court, the company's co-director, Peter Myers, testified that the cellular intercept equipment found in Khan's possession had been sold to the government of Guyana.⁸² Testimony pointed to the fact that Guyana's Minister of Health, Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, purchased the equipment on behalf of the government. Meyers identified the intercept equipment and confirmed that it was sold by the company's Florida sales office through the Fort Lauderdale-based Spy Shop to the Guyana Government. Testimony indicates that after Minister Ramsammy purchased the equipment, Carl Chapman, a representative of Smith Myers Communications, traveled to Guyana to train Khan in its use. Both the administration and Ramsammy strongly denied having any connection with the equipment and neither they nor Khan were held accountable for the matter.⁸³

Human Trafficking

Guyana is both a transit and destination area for the trafficking of men, women, and children for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor.⁸⁴ Children, mainly from poor, rural families, are at risk for forced labor exploitation within the mining, agriculture, and forestry sectors.⁸⁵ Limited government control of mining regions and the vast profits are conducive to trafficking for prostitution and labor. Guyanese citizens are also trafficked to other Caribbean nations for sexual and labor exploitation. In addition, a common Guyanese practice of sending children of poor families to live with wealthier family members or acquaintances in more populated areas is said to increase opportunities for domestic servitude.⁸⁶ While the government has made some efforts to assist victims of trafficking, no prosecutions of trafficking offenders have been registered and there has been "no reported progress on prosecutions initiated in previous reporting periods," raising serious concerns about "a lack of accountability for trafficking offenders in Guyana."⁸⁷ This situation has led to Guyana being placed

on the US Department of State's Tier 2 Watch List for a second consecutive year.⁸⁸ The Government of Guyana has also been criticized for not raising public awareness on the issue.⁸⁹

Money Laundering

As stated previously, it is believed that the illicit economy equates to roughly 40-60 percent of Guyana's gross domestic product. However, the economies mingle in a way that make it hard to separate the licit from illicit. Criminals launder money through real estate purchases, timber concessions, and mining concessions. As in the case of Jamaica, illicit activities are also used to fund the establishment of legal business ventures and social projects. The economic activities of convicted drug trafficker Shaheed Roger Khan are an illustrative case. In Guyana, Khan held significant interests in the construction and real estate sectors, and the timber industry. He also owned several small businesses such as nightclubs and carpet cleaning companies. Khan was known to be a successful contractor and is credited for designing buildings on the University of Guyana campus and several private residences. The main activities of his company Dream Works Inc. centered on building low-income housing projects and provided food and supplies to victims of the 2005 floods.⁹⁰

Over the years, Khan acquired a small island with a landing strip, a port for ocean vessels, access to Guyana's "bush roads," and a 136,000-acre timber concession. Upon his arrest, he was in negotiations to purchase a 200 square-mile ranch with a large airstrip. His timber company Aurelius Inc., was granted a "State Forest Exploratory Permit for a large tract of land in Guyana's interior" raising concerns that drug traffickers were gaining a foothold in the interior via the timber industry, possibly allowing for "autonomous outposts beyond the reach of Guyanese law enforcement."⁹¹ Guyanese bank executives confirmed that Khan did not seek bank financing to purchase his assets.⁹²

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Kaieteur News, 2009, Roger Khan Pleads Guilty to all Charges, Kaieteur News, March 17.

91. US Department of State, 2006, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*.

92. WikiLeaks, 2006, "US Diplomatic Cable: Shaheed 'Roger' Khan: Guyana's Own Escobar?" US Embassy in Georgetown, February 1, 2006, accessed December 19, 2011.

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. US Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2012.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid, 176.

While Guyana has laws against money laundering in place, there have been no prosecutions or convictions for money laundering, according to the US 2012 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report. A 2012 report from the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force found Guyana non- or partially-compliant on 16 core recommendations and 25 other recommendations. The report concludes that while Guyana has begun to comply with some recommendations, the measures have been minimal; as will be discussed in the next section, to date, no convictions have been made under this or other pieces of drug trafficking-related legislation in Guyana.⁹³

Gold Smuggling

As Guyana's gold industry grows, mining is increasingly becoming an entry point for criminal activity.⁹⁴ Governmental regulatory agencies have found themselves under-resourced to enforce regulations and monitor the industry properly. Guyanese authorities claim smuggling networks are trafficking approximately half of the 600,000 ounces of gold produced annually into Venezuela, Brazil, and primarily Suriname where tax rates are one-third those in Guyana.⁹⁵ As early as 1995, a smuggling ring was discovered which operated by traveling into the western region via aircraft to trade diamonds for US currency and shipping the gold to Miami or New York undeclared.⁹⁶ While connections between gold smuggling and drug smuggling are not well documented, the conditions for increased and inter-connected criminality in the remote, resource rich hinterlands of Guyana are evident.

93. Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, 2012. "Second Follow up Report: Guyana," May.

94. The most recent gold boom began 2008-2009 after the world financial crisis drove up the cost of gold in international market.

95. Wilkinson, May 29, 2012.

96. Inter Press Service, "Guyana: Investigation Uncovers Huge Gold-Smuggling Ring," November 9, 1995.

III. The Impact of Organized Crime on Governance and Development

Guyana continues to contend with a shaky political settlement and a governance structure underpinned by strong political-criminal ties, corruption, and rampant impunity. Failure to effectively overcome these issues since independence and bolster the legitimacy and reach of state institutions has resulted in periods of state-sponsored violence and growing mistrust of state institutions, notwithstanding the party in power.

The case of Roger Khan is illustrative of the deep linkages between the state and organized crime in Guyana and the impact these relations can have on governance. Shaheed Roger Khan was probably the most well-known career criminal in Guyana until his arrest by US officials in 2006. Roger Khan fled to Guyana from the United States in 1994 while out on bail from a firearms charge. Before his arrest in Suriname and subsequent extradition from Trinidad to the US, Khan enjoyed relatively free reign in Guyana, either working directly with the government or operating alone with the acquiescence of the government. Khan was a major exporter of Colombian cocaine to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. He was suspected of trading cocaine for arms as well as acting as a middleman in the exchange of cocaine for arms between Colombia (FARC), Suriname, and French Guyana.⁹⁷

Khan's eventual downfall began in 2005. The GDF, aided by the GPF, commenced a series of raids on properties owned by Khan after 33 AK-47s were stolen from the GDF. A US diplomatic cable obtained by WikiLeaks speculates that the raids were an attempt to pressure criminal organizations which were operating "with growing impunity" in the country.⁹⁸ It states that Khan was a known large-scale arms trafficker so it was unlikely he would need to steal from Guyanese security forces; and the forces were rather looking for anything incriminating.⁹⁹ The FBI proved instrumental in the raids that led to Khan's arrest. Khan fled to Suriname where he had good standing with President

97. WikiLeaks, 2006. http://wikileaks.org/origin/135_0.html

98. Khan was experiencing difficulty with then Commissioner of Police, Winston Felix, who had worked to disband the phantom squads and weaken Khan. See Stabroek News, August 20, 2009; WikiLeaks 2006a.

99. WikiLeaks, 2006a, "Secret Tape, Raid on Drug Lord's Assets Rocks Guyana," US Embassy in Georgetown, March 23, 2006.

Desi Bouterese, head of the main opposition party in the Suriname parliament and a formerly convicted drug trafficker himself.¹⁰⁰ He was however, arrested in Suriname and instead of being deported to Guyana, the then minister of Justice of Suriname Chan Santokhi ordered that Khan be flown to Trinidad & Tobago where Khan was sure to be extradited.¹⁰¹ Upon his arrival in Trinidad, Khan was handed over to immigration authorities who in turn handed him over to US officials.¹⁰² Khan was returned to the US to face eighteen counts of drug possession, drug trafficking and distribution, witness tampering, and gun smuggling during the period covering 2001 to 2006.¹⁰³

The Government of Guyana did not help facilitate Khan's arrest and extradition despite the mounting evidence against him. The raids that pushed him into Suriname occurred while the President and the Head of the Presidential Secretariat were out of the country. When Khan was eventually arrested, the Guyanese administration objected to the "forceful and unlawful removal of its citizen across jurisdictions"¹⁰⁴ Even when Khan's trial revealed significant information on the nature and scope of Khan's operations, the government showed little interest in establishing an official inquiry or initiating its own investigation.¹⁰⁵ Khan's associates have since splintered and now allegedly carry out smaller scale operations in the country. According to annual US International Narcotics Control Strategy Reports, Guyana has continued to be a major thoroughfare for drug trafficking in the region, even in the absence of Khan. The dynamic of gang activity and vigilante justice endemic to Guyana's political and social structures has not changed in the wake of the Troubles and Khan's arrest.¹⁰⁶ There are concerns that the growing gold mining industry may facilitate more violence and organized criminal activity, as evidenced by the up-tick in bush murders in the past year.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, while the arrest of one major kingpin was made possible, the underlying

conditions fueling and sustaining organized criminal activity and the criminal-political nexus have not been addressed.

Guyana has since signed several bilateral and multilateral conventions and agreements specifically aimed at preventing or responding to organized crime. In 2008, the country acceded to the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters. Guyana has bilateral agreements with its neighbors and with the United Kingdom regarding cooperation on drug trafficking issues. It is a member of the Organization of American States' Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (OAS/CICAD). In April 2011, the United States and Guyana signed a Letter of Agreement to cooperate in the implementation of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).¹⁰⁸ Through the CBSI, the US is providing Guyana with USD 3 million for equipment and training, as well as a juvenile offender program to reduce recidivism. The equipment provided will include patrol and interceptor boats and communications equipment.¹⁰⁹ Guyana and the United States signed a maritime counter-drug bilateral agreement in 2001, but Guyana has not yet taken the necessary domestic action to enact the agreement.¹¹⁰

The 2012 United States Narcotics Control Strategy Report highlights legislative developments intended to improve investigative capacity and prosecutorial powers to obtain convictions in drug-related cases, such as the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism Act (AMLCFTA), the Interception of Communications Bill, and the Criminal Procedure Bill. The Report notes, however, that there were no convictions in 2011 under these laws, and "there is an apparent lack of political will to investigate and prosecute drug trafficking organizations."¹¹¹ Already, the UK had terminated a major security sector reform program in 2009 because the government had not progressed "on key requirements of the plan."¹¹² Earlier in 2004, the US had planned to establish a counter-narcotics

100. See, for example, New York Times, "Returned to Power, a Leader Celebrates a Checkered Past," May 2, 2011. At <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/03/world/americas/03suriname.html>

101. Stabroek News, 2009, *Shaheed 'Roger' Khan: drugs, dirty money, and the death squad*, August 20.

102. Ibid.

103. Khan had distributed cocaine to the Queens Cartel which operates in Eastern New York, and laundered proceeds through banks in New York. Stabroek News, 2009, *Shaheed 'Roger' Khan: drugs, dirty money, and the death squad*, August 20.

104. Stabroek News, 2009, "The Roger Khan Saga," December 1.

105. Stabroek News, 2009, "The Roger Khan Saga," December 1.

106. For example, in 2008, a gang led by Ronald Rawlins, who had worked with the "Five for Freedom," carried out violent attacks on Indo-Guyanese communities and businessman from the bush over a period of six months. Korten, 2008.

107. Wilkinson, May 29, 2012.

108. Ibid.

109. Owen and Grigsby, 44.

110. US Department of State, 2012b, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*, 245.

111. US Department of State, 2012b.

112. US Department of State, 2010, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control*, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 1, 2010.

support operations in Guyana, but threats received from Khan to blow up the site of the operation and to murder the Ambassador and other US staff led to the plan's abandonment.¹¹³ Khemraj Ramjattan, leader of the political party Alliance For Change (AFC) and former PPP lawyer, referred to his time as a lawyer for the ruling PPP as defending "drug kingpins" due to "financial and family ties to the PPP."¹¹⁴

Social Cohesion

Roger Khan is believed to have been highly instrumental in the so-called 'phantom squad' paramilitary operations supported by the PPP between 2002-2003. The squad was responsible for extra-judicial operations and is believed to have been connected to security agencies and members of government. Some assert that Khan led the squad while others insist that he was responsible for employing members of the squad as his armed guards, and for paying them.¹¹⁵ A DEA informant who served as a witness at Khan's trial claimed that in order to run the phantom squad properly Khan estimated that he would have to ship 500 kilograms of cocaine to the US and Europe per year.¹¹⁶ US court documents implicated Khan in almost 200 murders in Guyana, for which he was never charged, despite the fact that the government was provided with sufficient evidence by internal and external sources.¹¹⁷

The Troubles began when a small group of Afro-Guyanese prisoners, dubbed the 'Five for Freedom,' escaped from prison in February 2002 and began a crime spree including robbery, kidnapping, and murders. They took refuge in the village of Buxton from which they linked up with other gangs and began to target individuals and state institutions from the PPP and the Indo-Guyanese business community. Some Afro-Guyanese viewed the actions of the Five for Freedom group as a legitimate response to their perceived marginalization by the Indo-Guyanese leadership and the group was quietly supported by the PNC. The response of the PPP was to establish the so-called 'phantom squads'

after which "escapees and their accomplices started turning up dead, [while] police never found witnesses or made any arrests."¹¹⁸ The Troubles period is regarded as the bloodiest phase in post-independence Guyana.¹¹⁹

Another government minister faced strong allegations related to his association with criminal gangs during the Troubles. A report by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs states that in 2004, confessed informant George Bacchus alleged that Minister of Home Affairs Ronald Gajraj operated phantom death squads that had reportedly taken the life of 400 Guyanese including Bacchus' 'brother'. Bacchus was murdered in his bed shortly before the start of an inquiry into the conduct of then-Minister Gajraj.¹²⁰ Korten states that during a commission-led inquiry phone records surfaced that proved Gajraj was in constant contact with gang member Axel Williams. Gajraj admitted to communicating with Williams "because he was so fed up with the police department's incompetence that he was forced to use an outsider to gather intelligence to use in the fight against crime."¹²¹ The commission concluded there was no evidence that Gajraj was involved in extrajudicial killings and he was reinstated to his post amid protests from Canada and the US, among others. However, in February 2004 he was reshuffled and sent to India as Ambassador.¹²²

The administration held an inquiry into the security services after The Troubles, but they did not focus on determining links between outside gangs and government officials. A commission of inquiry was established to assess the actions of the GPF, the Prison Service, the Fire Service, and the Defense Force led by prominent judges and former military officials. The Commission submitted a report to parliament with 164 recommendations in 2004, including a recommendation aimed at diversifying the ethnic composition of the forces and improving training standards. Parliament approved the report, but it took the government six years to act on the recommendations.¹²³ In 2009, the United Kingdom cancelled a large-scale security

113. WikiLeaks, 2006.

114. Hardbeat News 2006, "Guyana Elections: Ruling party opens old wounds defending drugs links allegations," Hardbeat News, via Caribbean360.com, August 9, 2006.

115. WikiLeaks, 2006.

116. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 33.

117. Kaieteur News, 2009, [Roger Khan Pleads Guilty to all Charges](#), Kaieteur News, March 17, 2009.

118. Korten, 2008.

119. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 32.

120. Lloyd, Stephanie, 2010, "[The Unpaved Road: Barriers to Guyana's Integration with South America](#)," Council on Hemispheric Affairs, 2010.

121. Korten, 2008.

122. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 41; Korten, 2008; Stabroek News, August 20, 2009.

123. Ibid, 41.

sector plan based on the government's lack of progress on key elements.¹²⁴ The government announced a security sector reform plan in 2010 but as noted, has made limited progress towards implementing the proposed reforms.

Many deaths during The Troubles had politically or criminally motivated undertones. For instance, self-confessed former member of the death squad Selwyn Vaughn testified that Khan ordered the execution of Ronald Waddell, an anti-Government talk-show host, at his home in Subryanville. Vaughn claims Khan immediately reported the incident to Dr. Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health. Other unsolved cases during that time include the execution of the deputy head of the Customs Anti-Narcotics Unit, Vibert Inniss, the attempted murder of the Director of Public Prosecution, Denis Hanoman-Singh, the kidnapping of entrepreneur Brahmanand Nandalall, and the murder of businessman and suspected drug dealer Harry Rambarran who was in the process of suing Khan for defaulting on his payment for a small island.¹²⁵

Health

Larger drug trafficking organizations fuel a local market by paying local gangs in-kind and "introduc[ing] drugs that would otherwise be more difficult to access, significantly aggravating local substance abuse problems."¹²⁶ A recent US Narcotics Report highlighted that marijuana is the main drug of choice in Guyana followed closely by cocaine, with the growing availability of crack cocaine giving rise to much concern among public health officials.¹²⁷ Ecstasy and methamphetamines (MDMA)¹²⁸ are also used, but availability remains low.¹²⁹ The small arms trade exacerbates gang violence by flooding the street market with weapons.

Drug use treatment in Guyana continues to be hindered by a lack of government funds and public awareness.¹³⁰ Guyana has two residential facilities for the treatment

of substance use: the Salvation Army and the Phoenix Recovery Center. Both receive partial funding from the government, but due to budgetary constraints they "often rely on donations from addicts' families to stay open."¹³¹ The Ministry of Health has implemented several small-scale programs, including outpatient talk-therapy treatment and demand reduction programs in schools, prisons, and through the media; however, these efforts remain ad-hoc and seriously under-funded.

The Environment

Gold and other mining activities are additionally creating social and environmental issues. Local residents complain of many environmental changes since mining grew in the region. Water contamination is a major concern as rivers experience higher levels of sediment content and mercury. Changing waterways, deforestation, soil degradation, and other environmental impacts adversely affect the local indigenous population who rely on the land and water for subsistence.¹³² According to the Head of the Amerindian People's Association, the local indigenous population has observed a major increase in "(...) pollution, the inability of Amerindians to consume fish and other marine life, and even river mouths being blocked by heavy sedimentation" provoked by gold mining.¹³³ In June 2012, Natural Resources Minister Robert Persaud halted new applications for gold mining due to complaints of pollution and other problems raised by local residents. After intimidation from the Gold and Diamond Miners Association, including threats of street protest and initiating a legal case against the measure, Persaud said the ban would only be for a brief review period.¹³⁴ With very little oversight capability for the legal mining sector, potential damages from illicit mining only compound the problem. Many unlicensed mines exist alongside the nearly 14,000 licensed artisanal miners, drawing many illegal workers from Brazil.¹³⁵ Illegal miners have even less incentive to follow poorly enforced government regulations on tracts of land largely outside government management.

124. United States Department of State, 2010, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Volume I: Drug and Chemical Control, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, March 1, 2010.

125. Ibid.

126. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 27.

127. Owen and Grigsby, 2012, 27.

128. Methylene-dioxy-meth-amphetamine

129. US Department of State, 2012b.

130. US Department of State, 2012b.

131. US Department of State, 2012b, 244-5.

132. Dillard, Keenan, "Artisanal Gold Mining Threatens Riverine Communities in Guyana," New Security Beat, Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, August 14, 2012.

133. Ibid.

134. Wilkinson, Bert, "Guyana's Gold Boom Brings Pollution and Conflict," Inter Press Service, July 19, 2012.

135. Dillard, 2012.

IV. Recommendations

Guyana is a small country with a relatively small population. Yet, as noted above, it is underpinned by a shaky political settlement and a governance structure that subsists through strong political-criminal ties, corruption, and rampant impunity. Since Independence, successive governments have failed to effectively overcome these issues and bolster the legitimacy and reach of state institutions. Mistrust of state institutions and mistrust between the two largest ethnic groups has led to periods of ethnically-motivated and state-sponsored violence, and citizens continue to hold strong to the perception that the government works in the sole interest of one ethnic group above all others. The security apparatus is complicated by a multi-layered system that in addition to the formal security institutions also includes informal paramilitary groups and gangs backed by either of the major parties. Political actors operate with limited checks and balances. Lax oversight, weak law enforcement and governance structures, and favorable geographic conditions provide an attractive operating base for organized criminals. Guyana's shaky political settlement, particularly its zero-sum identity politics, has provided excellent entry points for organized crime to shape and benefit from political decision-making. The case of Roger Khan provides insight into the reach of organized crime in Guyana. The failure, or even refusal of the government to introduce sweeping reforms and hold key officials accountable for facilitating Khan's operations, is an indicator of the complexity of the issues at stake and the degree to which all levels of government might have been penetrated. External actors such as the UK, the US and multi-lateral human rights and development actors have attempted to support governance-related reforms and efforts aimed at curbing organized crime with limited success to date.

The emergence of multi-ethnic political parties in the mid-2000s is gradually leading to the emergence of an alternative narrative to that of the main political parties. Subsequently, a major breakthrough came in the 2006 elections when the multi-racial party Alliance for Change (AFC) won six seats in parliament on a platform that espoused reconciliation, good governance, liberal

democracy, and improving the economy.¹³⁶ The AFC only managed to increase its representation by one seat in the 2011 elections however.¹³⁷ Established in 2011, the Partnership for National Unity (APNU) ran on a platform of national reconciliation, anti-corruption, increased accountability, and political reforms for a system with stronger checks and balances.¹³⁸ However, the APNU combines the PNC with several smaller groups and it is unclear how non-partisan the party will be in practice.¹³⁹ In the 2011 election it won 26 seats in parliament.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, alternatives to racially defined political parties are becoming part of the system and calls for deeper structural reforms are growing.

In Guyana, international development actors face difficult choices regarding with whom to cooperate and where best to focus assistance. This complexity grows when applied to efforts aimed at mitigating organized crime and its related impacts. Efforts that focus solely on bolstering law enforcement capacity have not been effective, not least because the ethnic divides and inequalities that underpin political governance in Guyana extend into the country's security and justice institutions. The absence of strong accountability mechanisms has only served to cement these institutional realities.

In this regard, providing direct assistance to government institutions without additional efforts to improve the government's accountability to the people will not help Guyana in its efforts to respond to organized crime and related issues. Indeed, the longstanding connections between political parties and coercive gang activity, and more recently to organized criminal activity, indicates that institution building or targeted law enforcement efforts alone cannot overcome the organized crime related challenges that Guyana is currently facing. Rather, targeted law enforcement support efforts should be implemented in tow with efforts to improve political governance as well as transparency and accountability measures.

In this regard, in addition to the *range of security reform requirements already identified by a range of actors*,

136. See the APU agenda on APU website: <http://afcguyana.com/afcnw/2011-campaign/>

137. BBC News, December 2, 2011.

138. See the APNU platform at the APNU website: <http://afcguyana.com/afcnw/>

139. BBC News, Guyana voters head to polls to choose new government, November 29, 2011.

140. BBC News, December 2, 2011.

development actors might consider a more integrated approach to programming so that efforts aimed at responding to organized crime also focus on:

- **Strengthening multi-party politics:** While providing direct political party support might be difficult, donor efforts could be enhanced to support inter- and intra-party dialogue on pressing reform issues (including political party and electoral system reforms); identifying common policy ground for responding to debate and discussing responses to the impacts of organized crime, such as drug dependency or gang violence, and strengthening the capacity of parliamentary commissions in specific subject areas.
- **Strengthening civil society and media oversight mechanisms:** Donors could also directly support civil society and media efforts aimed at enhancing accountability and transparency of government actors and institutions, particularly in the security, judicial, and resource exploitation sectors. In particular, donors could support the emergence of independent monitoring mechanisms for the sectors operating in the hinterlands.
- **Strengthening justice and security institutions:** Any effort to support reform of the justice and security institutions in Guyana should be centered on building citizen trust. In this regard, significant effort needs to be made in promoting the emergence of more professional and ethnically diverse security forces, and a national security policy that responds to citizen's needs rather than the interests of a particular ethnic group or a particular donor country could go a long way. Supporting the implementation of citizen perception surveys to inform the development of such a policy, and supporting efforts to monitor its subsequent implementation could lead to more sustainable gains in the medium- to long-term.
- **Strengthening justice and security institutions at the local level:** In addition to working at the central level, more effort should be made to support participatory mechanisms to identify entry points for working with a range of actors (police, border officials, local

government representatives, civil society organizations) at the local level to identify and respond to the effects of organized crime.

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