



H.Res. 564 - Recognizing that violence poses an increasingly serious threat to peace and stability in Central America and supporting expanded cooperation between the United States and the countries of Central America to combat crime and violence.

Floor Situation

H.Res. 564 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Eliot Engel (D-NY) on July 23, 2007, and was reported by voice vote from the Committee on Foreign Relations.

H.Res. 564 is expected to be considered on the floor on October 2, 2007.

Background

Murder rates have been increasing throughout Central America in recent years. In a May 2007 report, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) stated; “At least 1,400 drug-related murders occurred in Mexico in 2006, most along the border with the USA, with some sources placing the number as high as 2,500.”

Central American governments and U.S. officials have attributed the rise in violent crime in Central America to youth gangs, many of which have ties to the U.S. There has also been an increase of violence against women- Guatemala has seen a surge in female murders allegedly committed by drug traffickers and other organized crime groups.

The United States and the Central American Integration System (SICA), which is comprised of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama, held the first ever Dialogue on Democratic Security in Guatemala City from July 16 to 18, 2007, where they signed an agreement to improve intelligence sharing and policing and to establish dialogue on regional security.

Also at this meeting, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs announced the United States Strategy to Combat Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico and pledged \$1 million to help Central American governments draft a regional strategy to fight youth gangs and drug trafficking and \$3 million to fund rehabilitation programs for youths in gangs.

Summary

H.Res. 564 resolves that it is the sense of the House of Representatives that:

- Crime and violence pose an increasingly serious threat to peace and stability in Central America;

- Officials from Central America and the United States should be commended for holding a historic meeting to discuss regional security strategies;
- The announcement on July 18, 2007, of the United States Strategy to Combat Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico should be commended;
- The President of the United States should follow through on commitments made in the United States Strategy to Combat Criminal Gangs from Central America and Mexico with concrete actions;
- The commitment of funds by the United States to fight youth gangs in Central America is an important step forward and greater resources should be considered in the future to fight this problem due to its severity and its transnational nature; and
- Central American and United States officials should be encouraged to meet on a regular basis to further cooperation in combating crime and violence in Central America.

Cost

H.Res. 676 has not been scored by the Congressional Budget Office.

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