



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 13, 2023

Michael E. Horowitz
Inspector General
Department of Justice
Office of the Inspector General
950 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Inspector General Horowitz,

I am writing to urge your office to investigate whether the Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development and Training (OPDAT) and similar Department of Justice (DOJ) programs are supporting entities in the Dominican Republic that implement preventative detention policies resulting in U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents imprisoned in the Dominican Republic without charge.¹ As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, I am very concerned taxpayer funds are being spent effectively and not being used to unreasonably deny the due process rights of American citizens and legal residents living outside the U.S.

As you are no doubt aware, the United States provides funding, training, and technical assistance to strengthen overseas justice sector institutions. DOJ implements a number of criminal justice programs funded through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of State, such as the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) and OPDAT. Collectively, taxpayers send hundreds of millions of dollars per year abroad for these programs rather than helping citizens here at home.

Oversight of these programs has been a priority of your office for decades. In 2000, your predecessor, Glenn Fine, testified to the House Judiciary Committee, after releasing a 400-page report. In his opening statement, then-Chairman Henry Hyde (R-IL) said that DOJ officials involved with these programs had “engaged in potentially criminal misconduct and serious mismanagement, and other senior managers paid no attention to the problems,” which led to “security violations, visa fraud, financial mismanagement, abuse of the travel rules and regulations for self-aggrandizement, preselection and favoritism for some employees.”²

¹ Daily Caller, [“Biden Admin Shelling Out Millions In Aid To Foreign Gov’t That Imprisons Political Opponent,”](#) September 3, 2023.

² House Committee On the Judiciary, [“Investigation of Misconduct and Mismanagement at ICITAP, OPDAT, and Criminal Division’s Office of Administration,”](#) September 21, 2000.

The DOJ offices in question are active in the Dominican Republic. In 2015, for example, ICITAP launched a police reform and professionalization program in the Dominican Republic.³ Delivered in partnership with USAID, the program is aimed at strengthening internal and external oversight mechanisms, modernizing human resources capabilities, and improving criminal justice coordination. Through OPDAT, the United States maintains a Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) that is embedded in the Dominican Republic Attorney General's Office.

In 2012, OPDAT launched the Judicial Studies Institute in San Juan, Puerto Rico, which has trained thousands of judges across Latin America, including the DR.⁴ Yet, there remains a lack of transparency in how this money is being spent and who is receiving the taxpayer funds. The country is still viewed by many to have an inadequate criminal system that is at a "crisis" level. With the prospect that American citizens and legal permanent residents are being held in prison unjustly, it begs that question as to the accountability of these programs.

In light of these concerns, I urge you to thoroughly review these DOJ programs to determine whether taxpayer funds are supporting groups or entities that are holding American citizens and permanent residents in jail without due process. The inquiry should also look at whether taxpayer funds have been misused or inappropriately allocated in the Dominican Republic.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and I look forward to being briefed on the progress of your inquiry. Please respond by Friday, October 13.

Sincerely,



Troy E. Nehls
Member of Congress

³ U.S. Department of Justice, "[Western Hemisphere Programs](#)," November 24, 2020.

⁴ U.S. Department of Justice, "[U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor Addresses Latin American Judges at Justice Department's Judicial Studies Institute](#)," July 11, 2022.