Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Pete King (R-NY)
Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee

"Combating Gang Violence on Long Island: Shutting Down the MS-13 Pipeline"

June 20, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

MS-13 is a morally depraved transnational murderous gang terrorizing innocent people. Acts of violence connected to transnational gangs, including specifically MS-13, have drastically increased in Suffolk and Nassau County in the last several years. A tragic sample is the September 13, 2016, murders of 15 year old Nisa Mickens and 16 year old Kayla Cuevas, in Brentwood, New York. Mickens and Cuevas were Brentwood High School students who were assaulted with baseball bats and a machete by four MS-13 gang members.

Additionally, on March 2, 2017, thirteen MS-13 members were charged federally with racketeering, seven murders, narcotics violations and other offenses. Included in these charges were the murders of Mickens, Cuevas, and Jose Pena. Pena was another Brentwood High School student who was killed on June 3, 2016, but whose remains were not found until October 17, 2016. These victims, along with fourteen others dating back to January 2016, were murdered by MS-13 in Suffolk County alone. Seven of the thirteen gang members charged on March 2, 2017, entered the United States through the unaccompanied alien children services program. Just in the past six weeks, there have been major sweeps in Nassau and Suffolk Counties resulting in the arrest of more than 40 MS-13 members.

In Fiscal Year 2016 alone, 4,985 unaccompanied children were released to sponsors in the New York State through the Unaccompanied Children Service's Program, with 1,219 being relocated in Nassau County and 1,472 going to sponsors in Suffolk County.

In response to this dire situation that threatens the very lives of our children and the safety of our community, it is vital that we examine the threat posed by MS-13 and the extent to which this violent gang is able to exploit U.S. immigration programs and circumvent border security measures to gain entry into the U.S.

Today's hearing will feature testimony from the law enforcement and community stakeholders focused on the threat posed by MS-13 and efforts to combat the violent gang. The first panel will include representatives from the Suffolk Police Department, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, the Nassau Police Department, the FBI and Homeland Security Investigations. All of these agencies have participated in major investigations into MS-13 gang activity on Long Island.

Our second panel will feature the family members of two of the victims of MS-13 violence. Although their testimony today will speak to the impact this violence has on their families and their community, we will never be able to understand the depths of their loss. They are showing true courage and resilience in

sharing their stories here today. We will also receive testimony from the Superintendent of the Central Islip school district and an attorney who works with the immigrant community on Long Island.

Both of these panels reflect the broad cross section of the community required to respond to the threat posed by MS-13 and other transnational gangs on Long Island and across the nation.

This hearing marks an important step in our efforts to improve the homeland security of the United States. By examining the threats posed by MS-13 and other transnational gangs, and the ability of these violent organizations to penetrate our borders, we can begin to understand the measures we must take to ensure that border security screening programs are comprehensive, effective, and secure. These efforts must include bipartisan cooperation from Congress and support from the Administration as a unified front against the threats facing our nation.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and drawing upon their expertise, insights, and experiences to look for improvements that can be made to strengthen our programs and policies and work together as a community to combat and defeat MS-13 and other transnational gangs.

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