

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 19, 2017

The Honorable Steven T. Mnuchin  
Secretary of the Treasury  
Department of the Treasury  
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Mr. Secretary:

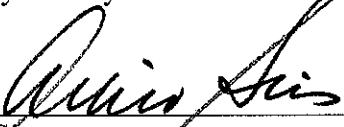
As you know, combatting crime and violence in Central America is a bipartisan priority among Members of Congress who have appropriated over \$1.4 billion for the region over the last two years. But, foreign assistance alone is not enough. As Secretary of the Treasury, you have a unique set of tools at your disposal to deny criminals access to our financial system.

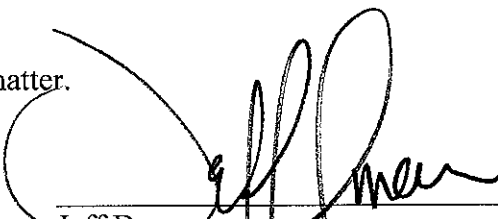
Today, we are writing to request that you use your authority under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act to investigate the U.S.-linked banking activities of Salvadoran citizen, José Luis Merino, known also by his nom de guerre Ramiro Vásquez. Mr. Merino is a senior member of El Salvador's governing party who's reported long-standing associations with transnational organized criminal networks are the subject of U.S. criminal investigations for cocaine trafficking and money laundering.

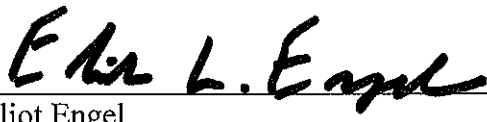
Multiple open sources reports indicate that financial structures controlled by Mr. Merino, currently the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, have acquired hundreds of millions of dollars in unexplained wealth while helping the FARC guerillas in Colombia, corrupt elements of the Venezuelan government and other criminal groups move funds to safe harbor.

Because of Mr. Merino's apparent central role in multiple criminal organizations operating across Latin America and constituting a significant threat to the United States, we believe such an investigation is in the national security interests of the United States and would help law enforcement agencies identify and shut down illegal activities carried out through the U.S. financial system.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

  
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Albio Sires  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere  
Committee on Foreign Affairs

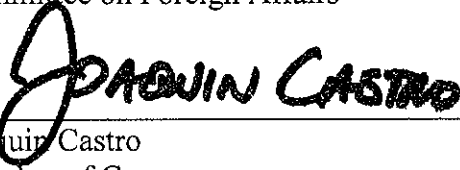
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Duncan  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere  
Committee on Foreign Affairs



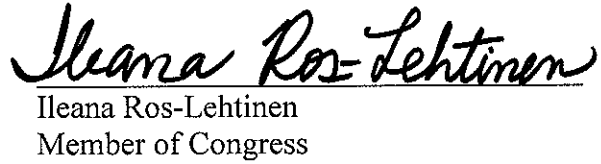
Eliot Engel  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Foreign Affairs



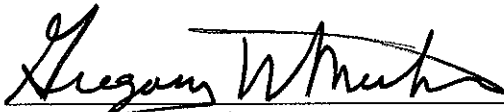
Mario Diaz-Balart  
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
Member of Congress



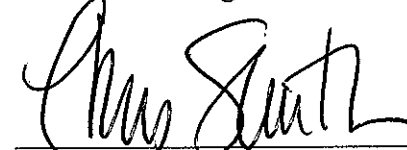
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



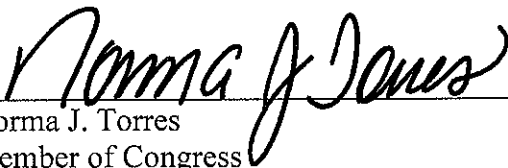
Carlos Curbelo  
Member of Congress



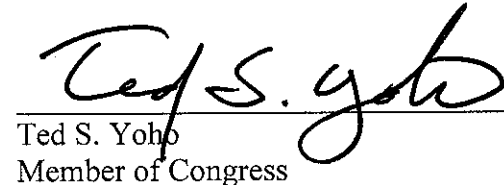
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



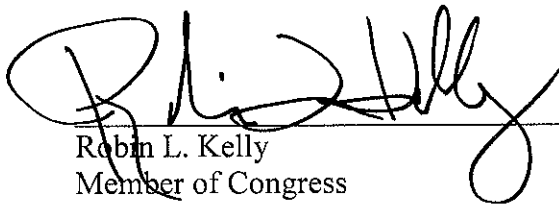
Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress




Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



Ted S. Yoho  
Member of Congress



Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



Michael T. McCaul  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson, Secretary of State