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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

November 16, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

I am writing to request information regarding the role of the Department of State in the inter-agency process related to Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti.

Established in 1990, TPS permits the United States to offer temporary humanitarian protection to foreign nationals who are unable to return to safe conditions in their homeland. Section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act authorizes the Secretary of Homeland Security to designate a foreign state for TPS after consultation with appropriate agencies of the government, which traditionally includes the Department of State.

In Honduras and El Salvador, the natural disasters that prompted TPS designations had lasting effects, and subsequently were complicated by security and economic challenges. In June of this year, Vice President Pence, at the Northern Triangle Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America, noted that, "one out of every five citizens in the region is a victim of crime every year – from theft to extortion to kidnapping to human trafficking or worse.

Since 2014, the U.S. Government has greatly expanded its engagement with Central America in order to address the underlying factors driving irregular migration. Vice President Pence, speaking at the June conference on Central America, reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to a safer and more prosperous region. Congress approved significant increases in U.S. assistance to the region in recent years, and has signaled continuing support for FY2018.

In Haiti, successive governments have made important strides towards reconstruction after the devastating 2010 earthquake. However, these efforts have faced setbacks, including the continuing cholera epidemic, a devastating hurricane in late 2016, and the two category five hurricanes – Irma and Maria – that struck in September of this year.

For all four countries, there are questions about the governments' capacity to repatriate tens of thousands of their citizens. A disorderly repatriation process could have implications for stability in each country and U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Given these complexities, I want to better understand the State Department's views and the implications for U.S. foreign policy. For that reason, I am requesting the following documents:

- the documents prepared by the Department of State and transmitted to the Department of Homeland Security regarding an assessment of country conditions in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti and the State Department's formal recommendation related to the extension or termination of TPS designations for each country; and
- the documents prepared by the U.S. embassies in El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Haiti and transmitted to the Department of State regarding each embassy's assessment of country conditions and formal recommendation related to the extension or termination of TPS designations for each country.

I want to thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Cardin", is positioned above the printed name.

Benjamin L. Cardin  
Ranking Member