Director Trevillian, Mr. Hart, Mr. Bradford, Mr. Bullard, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. It is truly my pleasure to be here, and to be able to participate in an event of such profound importance. For today is a day in which a dedicated group of professionals has taken a vital step in improving not only their law enforcement skills, but have also joined a larger team across the globe in the fight against transnational crime. I would like to begin my brief remarks by congratulating all of you on your outstanding accomplishments and invite the audience to join me in a brief round of applause.

If I could have your indulgence for just a few moments, I would like to share with you an excerpt from the United States Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime.

Transnational organized crime poses a significant and growing threat to national and international security, with dire implications for public safety, public health, democratic institutions, and economic stability across the globe. Not only are criminal networks expanding, they are also diversifying their activities, resulting in the convergence of threats that were once distinct and today have explosive and destabilizing effects.

Countries with weak rule of law can be particularly susceptible to criminal penetration. Transnational organized crime penetration of these states is deepening, leading to co-option in a few cases and further weakening of governance in many others. The apparent growing nexus in some states among transnational organized crime groups and elements of government—including intelligence services—and high-level business figures represents a significant threat to economic growth and democratic institutions. In countries with weak governance, there are corrupt officials who turn a blind eye to these activities.

Transnational organized crime networks insinuate themselves into the political process in a variety of ways. This is often accomplished through direct bribery; setting up shadow economies; infiltrating financial and security sectors through coercion or corruption; and positioning themselves as alternate providers of governance, security, services, and livelihoods.

As they expand, transnational organized crime networks threaten stability and undermine free markets as they build alliances with political leaders,
financial institutions, law enforcement, foreign intelligence, and security agencies. Transnational organized crime penetration of governments is exacerbating corruption and undermining governance, rule of law, judicial systems, free press, democratic institution-building, and transparency.

Further, as events in Somalia and other nations around the world have shown, criminal control of territory can generate significant sums of illicit revenue and promote the spread of government instability.

Today you are rejoining the fight! This is a fight that will be neither easy nor short. Transnational organized crime elements are well funded and well armed. They often wield influence at the very highest levels of government and have entrenched themselves, perhaps even in our own organizations. While our challenges are daunting, and the outlook often bleak, it is important to realize that together we can fight. Together we fight for our children’s hope and the future of our nations. We fight for the rule of law and a stable and secure tomorrow. Congratulations on taking an important step in that fight. I look forward to serving with you into the future!