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**Opening Statement**  
**Rep. Ellen O. Tauscher**  
**House Armed Services Committee**  
**Threat Panel Hearing on Latin America**  
**September 21, 2005**

I want to first commend Chairman Hunter and Ranking Member Skelton for proposing this timely and unprecedented Committee review of the threats faced by our nation and the appropriate mix of capabilities we need to meet them.

I want to thank the members of the panel for being here today.

This effort is unprecedented in its scope and its makeup.

As you know, we will conduct hearings on every region of the world starting with Latin America today and then review several thematic areas over the course of the next three weeks.

This is not meant to be a political exercise but a hard headed look at what measures, capabilities and investments are needed to improve the security of our nation over the course of the next twenty years.

I am pleased to join my good friend and colleague Mike Turner and a bipartisan group of members with strong credentials in national security in producing an analysis of threats, gaps in our capabilities and other challenges to our national security,

A set of Gap panels will later respond to each area and produce solutions and recommendations.

Congress requires that the Department of Defense conduct a Quadrennial Defense Review every four years that matches our forces with national strategy.

Like many of my colleagues I do not believe that the previous reviews were as comprehensive as necessary and the QDRs in the past have not asked hard questions or made hard choices about how to spend scarce defense dollars.

With this review and specifically with this threat panel, we have an opportunity to conduct a thorough review and ask all the right questions.

The goal of our panel is to identify a set of threats and organize them into categories.

The hearings should provide a vast amount of information about multiple and often cross-cutting challenges and threats.

It will be up to the members of the panel to make sense of and prioritize the information we hear.

For our effort to be credible and to guide the efforts of the follow-on panels it is vital that you ask tough questions and follow up on the various themes we discern.

I would like to welcome today's witnesses who will start us off with a look at Latin America.

I would like to thank my co-chair again and turn it over to the witnesses for opening statements.