

# **EXHIBIT 67**

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**(U//SBU) EL SALVADOR: TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS RECOMMENDATION****Dates:**

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 (U//SBU) E.O. 13526: N/A

SUBJECT: EL SALVADOR: TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS RECOMMENDATION

The U.S. Mission to El Salvador submits the following recommendation for the extension of the Temporary Protected Status designation.

## I. Statutory Basis for Designation

A. Armed conflict: Is the foreign state currently involved in an ongoing, internal, armed conflict? If so, would the return of nationals of the foreign state to that state (or to the part of the state) pose a serious threat to their personal safety?

(U) No

B. Environmental Disaster: Has the foreign state in question recently experienced an earthquake, flood, drought, epidemic, or other environmental disaster in the state?

(U) Yes

(SBU) El Salvador declared a drought emergency in 2016, after multiple years of low rainfall. Agriculture accounts for 10 percent of GDP but 20% of employment, mostly low-wage and subsistence earners who are otherwise likely to migrate illegally. The drought was particularly acute in the eastern region of the country, where a disproportionately large number of Salvadorans in the United States, including TPS beneficiaries, originate. The drought led to the loss of staple and export crops, and the death of thousands of cattle. The sugarcane industry suffered irreversible damage to 20 percent of

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cropland. The coffee industry lost over 40,000 jobs, equivalent to half the sector employment, as production fell by half after the coffee rust outbreak in the region. Sugar and coffee are the two largest agricultural products in the sector.

C. Is the foreign state unable, temporarily, to handle adequately the return to the state of aliens who are nationals of the state?

(U) Yes

(SBU) El Salvador continues to suffer from serious security and economic challenges, and could not adequately handle the return of an additional 195,000 TPS beneficiaries and potentially their family members, including a significant number of American citizen children. Homicide rates in 2016 were the highest in the world outside a war zone and growth the lowest in the region, creating a climate of fear and hopelessness that continues to drive migrants north. In 2016, the United States deported 21,000 Salvadorans while Mexico deported 31,000, for a total of 52,000 returned. The Government of El Salvador cannot provide basic services for the deported migrants and the economy cannot create sufficient jobs to employ them. The deportation of the TPS population to El Salvador (population 6.1 million) would result in a concentration of TPS Salvadorans seven times higher than in Haiti, and three-and-a-half-times higher than in Honduras. The return of this population would be counterproductive to U.S. national interests and is likely to accelerate illegal migration.

(SBU) Crime in El Salvador keeps the country at the top of the list of most violent nations outside war zones. The homicide rate in 2016 was 81 per 100,000, compared to 7 per 100,000 in Nicaragua. El Salvador has experienced the worst GDP growth rate in the region for 10 straight years and is only projected to reach 2.4 percent growth for 2017, which is largely due to growth in remittances from the United States and low oil prices. Without remittance growth or with higher oil costs, economic growth would have been negative. El Salvador needs to create approximately 60,000 new jobs every year to meet the needs of its current population, yet was only able to create approximately 12,000 jobs in 2016.

(SBU) According to a survey by the University of Kansas, the median age of TPS holders is 43 years and approximately 61% have no children left in Central America. These deportees would need to compete with locals to find scarce jobs in order to support themselves and their families legally. El Salvador does not have adequate social services to keep these families out of poverty. Older returnees, many of whom did not complete a primary school education, would face particular challenges in finding employment in El Salvador. The lack of legitimate employment opportunities is likely to push some repatriated TPS holders, or their younger family members, into the gangs or other illicit employment.

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D. Has the foreign state officially requested TPS for its nationals in the United States?

(U) Yes. On June 15, in a meeting with Vice President Pence at the Conference on Prosperity and Security in Central America, Salvadoran Vice President Ortiz requested an extension of TPS. Extension of TPS is the single highest foreign policy priority of the Salvadoran government.

## II. Extraordinary and Temporary Conditions

A. Has the foreign state experienced extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent aliens who are nationals of the state from returning to the state in safety?

(U) Yes

(SBU) El Salvador has experienced the highest homicide rate of any country in the world for the past two years (excluding war zones), at 81 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2016. With significant U.S. assistance, the government is working to reassert control in the highest crime municipalities. However, the government needs more time to implement its anti-gang strategies and reduce homicides to below critical levels.

(SBU) The surge in gang violence in El Salvador, and other gang-related crime, drives internal displacement and remains a major driver of immigration to the United States. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimates that nearly 220,000 Salvadorans were forced to flee violence in 2016. This puts the country second in terms of the number of new displacements relative to population size, after Syria.

(SBU) Fear of crime also keeps many immigrants from returning to El Salvador, even if they have the economic means to support themselves. Parents in many communities in El Salvador fear that boys may be targeted for gang recruitment and girls may be forced into sexual relations with gang members. Many parents in El Salvador refuse to even send their children to school out of fear of the gangs. The Salvadoran teachers union on January 13 reported that 60,000 students (or 5 percent of the student population) did not register for the 2017 school year, most likely due to fear of gang recruitment or that their children could be in danger crossing the boundaries of gang territory. U.S.-born American citizen children of TPS recipients would be particularly vulnerable to security threats, as well as challenges registering for basic services upon their return to El Salvador.

B. Would permitting nationals of the foreign state to remain temporarily in the United States be contrary to the national interest of the United States?

(U) No

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(SBU) The U.S. national interest in El Salvador continues to be fighting transnational crime and reducing illegal migration through improving security, promoting prosperity, and strengthening institutions. While those lines of efforts have begun to bear fruit, including in the falling homicide rate, an influx of 195,000 deportees and others could overwhelm our efforts and endanger those objectives. Permitting Salvadorans to remain temporarily in the United States would be in the national interest because it would give the Salvadoran government time to continue implementing security and other policies that could improve conditions on the ground.

(SBU) The Salvadoran government also cooperates with U.S. law enforcement in a variety of fields, including investigating transnational gang crime, extraditing criminals, and interdicting drugs. Information sharing on MS-13 gang activity between the two governments has led to major takedowns in the United States. In 2016, El Salvador seized 12.2 metric tons of cocaine more than five times the amount seized the previous year; El Salvador has been particularly active on maritime seizures of illegal narcotics. Much of this effort centers on the Cooperative Security Location at Comalapa Airport, where U.S. surveillance flights track movements of narcotics in the Pacific, but the lease must be renegotiated before 2020. Since 2010, extradition of criminals wanted to the United States has been another example of ongoing cooperation. More recently, the government of El Salvador opened negotiations with the United States on a detainee transfer agreement to permit the rapid movement of interdicted drug traffickers in the Pacific to U.S. custody for prosecution, a major objective of the U.S. Department of Justice. The deportation of the TPS population in the United States would create tension with the Salvadoran government, and could jeopardize cooperation in these critical areas.

### III. Discretionary Factors

What, if any, additional information relevant to this decision should be brought to the attention of the Department of Homeland Security?

(SBU) The Salvadoran government currently works closely with DHS to facilitate the deportation of Salvadorans to the United States accepting additional deportation flights and expediting the issuance of temporary travel documents to returnees. El Salvador has also demonstrated willingness to combat illegal migration through the creation of a Border Intelligence and Coordination Center, deploying Salvadoran officers to McAllen, Texas, to screen incoming migrants for gang ties and making Salvadoran arrest and investigation records available to DHS and local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States.

### IV. Recommendation

(SBU) Extending TPS for El Salvador is in the U.S. national interest. A sudden termination of TPS for El Salvador would undermine additional cooperation to tackle the root causes of illegal migration and overwhelm the country's ability to absorb returnees. The drivers

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of illegal migration remain acute, but there is a path to address them. However, the government of El Salvador needs more time with the assistance of the United States and other international partners to make sustainable gains. Further, a termination of TPS could undermine U.S.-Salvadoran efforts on a range of issues of mutual concern and fighting transnational criminal organizations, such as MS-13. Based on these factors, we recommend that TPS for El Salvador be renewed.

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