

OPENING STATEMENT OF
LUIS V. GUTIERREZ
OVERSIGHT & INVESTIGATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING
“THE HAMAS ASSET FREEZE AND OTHER GOVERNMENT
EFFORTS TO STOP TERRORIST FINANCING”
SEPTEMBER 24, 2003

Good morning. Thank you, Chairwoman Kelly, for holding this important and timely hearing.

I look forward to hearing testimony from today's witnesses on the instrumental role they play in the fight against international money laundering and terrorist financing.

We all know that terrorism is a global problem and that our fight against terrorist financing needs to be a broad-based effort that extends beyond our borders.

Enhancing international cooperation between local agencies and countries around the world is essential to eliminating terrorist networks and to winning the fight against international money laundering practices.

I hope to hear from the agencies today about their success stories, as well as the obstacles that currently hinder their ability to permanently block and break the conduits of terrorist financing around the globe, including what they are doing to enhance cooperation with countries that pose challenges to their success in tracking down and stopping terrorist funding.

I also would like to gain more information on the extent of international cooperation between their agencies and their counterparts abroad. Particularly, I'd like to hear from the witnesses regarding their problems and efforts to block Hamas assets coming from the Middle East, since an overwhelming portion of funding for Hamas comes from this region.

Finally, I would like to commend Treasury for their recently released rules on Section 326 of the Patriot Act and for their decision to keep the rules unchanged.

The rules require a financial institution to contain statutorily prescribed procedures that will further safeguard our banking system from terrorist financing and, at the same time, not hinder the ability of unbanked individuals to access our financial institutions.

Allowing financial institutions to accept the use of the Matrícula Consular represents an important step in reducing the number of unbanked individuals in our country, as well as providing security and stability to those individuals who can now put their money safely in a

traditional financial institution.

For financial institutions, acceptance of the Matrícula Consular helps tap new customers who could serve as a vital base of business growth.

Thank you again, Madame Chair, for holding this timely hearing.

I look forward to the testimonies.