

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 3131

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to establish a Maya Security and Conservation Partnership program, to authorize appropriations for that program, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 19, 2019

Mr. INHOFE (for himself, Mr. UDALL, and Mr. RISCH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

A BILL

To authorize the Secretary of the Interior to establish a Maya Security and Conservation Partnership program, to authorize appropriations for that program, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Mirador-Calakmul
5 Basin Maya Security and Conservation Partnership Act
6 of 2019”.

7 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

8 Congress finds that—

1 (1) the Mirador-Calakmul Basin (referred to in
2 this Act as the “Basin”) is recognized scientifically
3 as, and has been termed, “the Cradle of Maya Civil-
4 ization”, with over 100 ancient Maya cities dating
5 back almost 3,000 years, and includes the world’s
6 largest pyramids in volume, the tallest pyramids in
7 the Americas, the first paved ancient highway sys-
8 tems, the earliest and largest ancient Maya cities,
9 and the home of the ancient Ka’an (Kan) Kingdom,
10 which is recognized as one of the first organized po-
11 litical and economic states in the Americas;

12 (2) the Basin covers approximately 1,600,000
13 acres of pristine tropical forest within a geographi-
14 cally contained ecological system;

15 (3) the forest referred to in paragraph (2) is a
16 crucial economic resource for the people of Central
17 America and Mexico living in villages surrounding
18 the Basin;

19 (4) the Basin is a reservoir of genetic diversity
20 that can spark potential advances in medical, agri-
21 cultural, and industrial technology; and

22 (5) the Basin is centrally located within the
23 larger Selva Maya, a large block of adjacent pro-
24 tected areas within Guatemala, Mexico, and Belize,
25 within which increased crossboundary trafficking of

1 timber, gold, wildlife, and other resources is taking
2 place with little central government control or law
3 enforcement.

4 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

5 It is the policy of the United States—

6 (1) that the United States encourages the gov-
7 ernments of Mexico and Guatemala—

8 (A) to prioritize the Basin; and

9 (B) to establish a formal joint program for
10 the security and conservation of the biodiversity
11 and archeological ruins of the Basin, com-
12 prising “the Cradle of Maya Civilization”,
13 which would be the first ever binational security
14 and conservation program of its size and scale
15 in Latin America;

16 (2) to fund field-based tropical and archeo-
17 logical research, law enforcement, and sustainable
18 tourism activities within the Basin and surrounding
19 communities to support and strengthen protected
20 areas while enlisting local communities in those ac-
21 tivities; and

22 (3) that the implementation of and funding for
23 the policy described in paragraph (2) should empha-
24 size that—

1 (A) United States investment under this
2 Act shall be in addition to existing United
3 States efforts;

4 (B) the governments of Guatemala and
5 Mexico, multilateral organizations such as the
6 Central American Bank for Economic Integra-
7 tion, local communities, and private sector orga-
8 nizations should have a leading role in fostering
9 the partnership to preserve and protect the
10 Basin; and

11 (C) United States funding should leverage
12 investments by the governments of Guatemala
13 and Mexico and regional research organizations.

14 **SEC. 4. PRIORITY FOR INVESTMENTS IN THE BASIN.**

15 The Secretary of the Interior shall prioritize contin-
16 ued tropical forest and archeological scientific research,
17 law enforcement, and sustainable tourism in the scientif-
18 ically recognized Basin in northern Guatemala and south-
19 ern Mexico by establishing a collaborative heritage con-
20 servation program and sustainable tourism model in col-
21 laboration with—

22 (1) the governments of Guatemala and Mexico;
23 and

24 (2) the ongoing scientific research team of
25 United States and international universities and in-

stitutions performing tropical and archaeological work in the Basin.

SEC. 5. GRANT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Office of International Affairs of the Department of the Interior (referred to in this section as the “Secretary”), as a contribution to the scientific investigation, heritage conservation, law enforcement, and sustainable tourism of the scientifically recognized Basin in Guatemala and Mexico, shall—

(1) establish a Maya Security and Conservation Partnership program; and

(2) carry out a program to enter into cooperative agreements or provide grants, as appropriate, to support the Maya Security and Conservation Partnership program.

(b) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AND GRANTS.—A cooperative agreement or grant under subsection (a)(2) shall, in part, support demonstrably effective, ongoing, and collaborative research efforts involving a consortium of United States and local universities and research institutions working in the Basin.

(c) GOAL.—The goal of the program established under subsection (a)(1) shall be to create a sustainable tourism model designed to provide low impact, controlled

1 access to the archaeological sites of the Basin with an em-
2 phasis on providing safe and secure economic opportunity
3 for the local communities in and around the Basin.

4 (d) LIMITATION ON USE OF FUNDS.—Of the funds
5 made available to carry out this section for a fiscal year,
6 50 percent may not be used until, as determined by the
7 Secretary of State, in consultation with the Secretary, the
8 governments of Guatemala and Mexico have provided sig-
9 nificant direct investment to effectively counter illegal ac-
10 tivities within the region that encompasses the Basin, in-
11 cluding illegal logging and looting of archeological sites
12 along the Guatemala-Mexico border and within the Basin.

13 (e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
14 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry
15 out this section \$12,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2021
16 through 2026, to remain available until expended.

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