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HEARING

ON

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007

AND

OVERSIGHT OF PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED PROGRAMS

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

FULL COMMITTEE HEARINGS

ON

BUDGET REQUEST FROM THE U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

HEARING HELD
MARCH 16, 2006

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THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2006

FISCAL YEAR 2007 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT—BUDGET REQUEST FROM THE U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

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[There were no Documents submitted.]

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[There were no Questions submitted.]

FISCAL YEAR 2007 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT—BUDGET REQUEST FROM THE U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Thursday, March 16, 2006.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:03 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Duncan Hunter (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DUNCAN HUNTER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing will come to order.

Our witness today is General Bantz J. Craddock, United States Army, Commander, the United States Southern Command.

General Craddock, welcome back. Thank you for joining us this morning.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. For the last couple of years, the public's attention has been focused on the Middle East, for obvious reasons, but that should not distract us from national security issues in the rest of the world, our own hemisphere in particular.

Developments in South America and other areas of the world are as crucial to our future security as the outcome of the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan. Fortunately, you recognize the challenges in your own area of responsibility (AOR) and are working to get ahead of any threats, even as Washington sometimes focuses its attention in other places.

The U.S. Southern Command has been involved in combating narco-terrorists in Colombia for years. President Uribe, his government and the Colombian people, continue to be our allies and committed to this fight, which is a very welcome sign. We look forward to your remarks regarding this important ally and how things are progressing in Colombia.

At the same time, other countries in Latin America continue to appear to be running against the tide of history. Venezuela continues to be led by a Castro admirer and is aggressively importing weaponry out of proportion to his needs and recklessly provokes the United States. Bolivia has a new government that may be on the tipping point in regard to their relationship with the United States.

Several countries remain unstable or may become so soon, with Haiti and Cuba being of prime concern. Experts tell us we may have to send troops back to Haiti in the foreseeable future.

We are also concerned about the unconventional threats in your area, including extremist groups and supporters of Islamic terrorist groups. As we have seen, so-called "ungoverned spaces" can become safe havens for terrorists. In addition to the terrorist groups, we are also concerned about the possible shipment of weapons of mass destruction through your AOR.

We are interested to hear your thoughts on our facility in Guantanamo Bay. I visited there last year along with eight of my colleagues on the committee. I came away satisfied that the detainees are being treated humanely. I remember the comments of my colleagues as we finished touring Guantanamo. They were consistent with that. In our fiscal year 2006 defense authorization bill, we addressed concerns regarding the treatment of detainees.

Additionally, the committee would like to follow up on your appearance before the committee last summer where you discussed interrogation tactics and the investigation you authorized by Lieutenant General Schmidt and Brigadier General Furlow.

Finally, it has been brought to my attention that there are detainees being force fed at Guantanamo Bay, and we are interested to hear about the techniques being used for that procedure. I understand that that is in response to refusal to eat, hunger strikes, which if not treated will result ultimately in the death of detainees.

General, you are on the frontlines dealing with threats to our security and reversing these threats before they result in a full-fledged attack on the security of the United States.

We look forward to hearing how the United States Southern Command is addressing these challenges. We thank you for coming up. You have been before the committee many times. I just want to personally thank you for your service and hope you carry that message back to your command that this committee is very grateful for all of the men and women wearing the uniform and serving the Southern Command.

So before we go to your statement, let me turn to my partner on the committee, the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Skelton, for any remarks he would like to make.

STATEMENT OF HON. IKE SKELTON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

General Craddock, we welcome you back. It is good to see you again, sir. Thank you for your leadership. We want to express gratitude to the troops that you lead.

General, you are dealing with a very important region and many of America's critical allies are in this hemisphere, but there are many serious and emerging problems too, from terrorism, narcotics, arms trafficking, extreme states, to ungoverned spaces that leave room for instability.

The breadth of the opportunities and challenges of this region argues for comprehensive and well-coordinated American strategy. I don't believe we have adopted that strategy as yet.

One example of this that concerns me, and we discussed it last year, is the missed opportunities for military engagement in the region. Opportunities to build security relationships are seriously un-

dermined by the restriction on International Military and Education Training (IMET) and other assistance imposed on those countries that do not comply with the American Servicemembers Protection Act. I supported that piece of legislation and its protection for our forces, but this government must find ways to allow military-to-military interaction to continue because that is where friendship and trust builds.

Continuing our current policy not only weakens relationship, but its real strategic effects as well because China is filling every void we leave. General, you suggest that China is now actively pursuing stronger economic and military ties with a number of critical Latin American countries. At the same time, experts have indicated we know almost nothing about China's military and intelligence activities in the region. I hope you will elaborate on that.

Let me turn to Colombia. As you know, I remain concerned about the role of the American military in that country. American investment in Colombia has been substantial, around $3 billion in counter-narcotics and counterinsurgency since 1999. I am glad that we have been able to support President Uribe and the Colombian military against those guerrilla groups. I still question the sustainability of that effort and the strain on our forces.

General, your statement indicates that you will be seeking an extension of authority to maintain the higher troop cap levels granted by our Congress in 2004. At that time, that was not an easy decision when it was made. I remember the argument being made that the additional personnel were needed to conduct training for a demanding phase of a planned patrol area. We are now two years later, and why the higher numbers of personnel are still needed? It is difficult to understand.

Finally, I would like to mention the Southern Command's involvement in detainee operations at Guantanamo. As you know, the fiscal year 2006 defense bill included significant new legislation on the treatment and interrogation of detainees. I hope you will tell us about the impact of that legislation on the operations at Guantanamo.

It is my sincere hope that this new legislation, particularly the McCain amendment, which we discussed at length over the last days of putting the bill together, will have a beneficial effect both for us, as well as around the world. We must watch the implementation of the judicial aspects of that bill carefully.

I know, General, that there are many other important issues that we could discuss, including Venezuela's national and regional politics, recent events in Haiti, and testimony of your command before this committee that we must be prepared to deal with the possibility that weapons of mass destruction could move as cargo through the region.

So we look forward to your testimony, and most of all, General, we thank you for your service.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

General Craddock, good morning.

General CRADDOCK. Good morning, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection, your entire written statement will be taken into the record. Feel free to summarize.

STATEMENT OF GEN. BANTZ J. CRADDOCK, COMMANDER, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND, U.S. ARMY

General CRADDOCK. Thank you. I have some short opening remarks.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Skelton, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to report on the posture of the United States Southern Command, and thank you for the opportunity to submit my written statement for the record.

The men and women of the United States Southern Command are doing a superb job. In keeping with the highest priorities of the nation, the members of the command continue to ensure the forward defense of the United States, encourage regional partnerships, and enhance stability and security throughout the region.

In addition, Joint Task Force Guantanamo operations continue in support of our nation's long war against terrorism. Across the region, poverty, corruption, and inequality contribute to increased dissatisfaction with democracy and free market reforms. This has been accompanied by the growing popularity of leaders who profess to offer an alternative through anti-U.S. and anti-free-market rhetoric.

We at the United States Southern Command believe the Andean region remains the linchpin to security and stability in Latin America and the Caribbean basin. Colombia, engaged in its own long war, over four decades now, has shown tremendous successes in its efforts to increase governance and security throughout its territory. Additionally, Colombia also experienced record drug eradications and interdictions, as well as extending government presence to every municipality in every department of the country.

Continued U.S. support is essential to sustain and build on these gains, not only to achieve Colombia's ultimate victory, but also to ensure the stability of its neighboring countries.

The threats facing this region did not develop overnight, nor can they be solved overnight. Shared security problems in the hemisphere require shared solutions. Ungoverned spaces, porous borders, organized crime, and narco-terrorism pose enormous challenges to freely elected leaders and often undermine legitimate governments.

We at the United States Southern Command recognize that not all problems and solutions are military in nature. The military can often help to set the conditions to create a safe and secure environment, thus allowing the agents of reform and development, the political, the economic and the social programs, to improve the quality of life for all citizens in the region. Such an approach requires an integrated long-term effort.

We at the Southern Command fully support the American Servicemembers Protection Act, ASPA. Although well intentioned, ASPA continues to have unintended consequences. Eleven partner nations in our area of responsibility are unable to attend the United States International Military and Education Training, that is IMET, programs. This loss of engagement prevents the development of long-term relationships with future military and civilian leaders.

We thank you, this committee, for your steadfast support. Continued congressional support for our efforts will ensure that the

command is capable of more effective engagement with our regional partners.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Mr. Chairman, I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Craddock can be found in the Appendix on page 31.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General Craddock.

I think we have a lot to talk about this morning. I will ask my questions at the end of the hearing, and make sure our members get a chance to get involved in this discussion.

The gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. I will ask just one question right now and reserve my other questions for later.

General, what in the world is China doing in Latin America?

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, Congressman Skelton. They are doing quite a lot, sir. What we are seeing is an increase in military-to-military relations between the Chinese military and those of the nations in the region. We are seeing that from the Caribbean basin through South America. We are seeing less of that in Central America. I note that the Central American countries still recognize Taiwan officially.

But in South America and the Caribbean basin, we are seeing the level of military assistance increasing by a factor of three. We are seeing three times more military assistance, dollar value, mostly non-lethal, coming to those countries with very few strings over the past couple of years as in previous years. The limits are upwards of U.S. dollar equivalent $750,000, maybe $1 million average across the region, non-lethal equipment.

We are also seeing, as disturbing, maybe more so, the opportunities now for military personnel, senior leaders, officers, noncommissioned officers from the militaries of the countries of the region to go to China for education and training. This is especially concerning, and obviously ties into the IMET restrictions due to the ASPA.

So as I go about the region, more and more my counterparts tell me of their engagement with the Chinese and the opportunities that they are taking when the Chinese approach them to take advantage of the education and training in China. I am told that the training and the education is done in Spanish in China.

Mr. SKELTON. May I ask you, would you be kind enough when you get back to your headquarters to send the chairman and me, so we can share with the other members of the committee, your recommendations on changing the American Servicemembers Protection Act so that we can help alter the IMET restrictions? I think that is important for us to look at. If you would tell the chairman and me, we would appreciate it.

General CRADDOCK. I will do that, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. I want to thank him for requesting this information. I think we will act quickly to help out there.

The fine gentleman from Florida, Mr. Miller.

Mr. MILLER OF FLORIDA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Craddock good to see you again, sir.

General CRADDOCK. Good to see you, sir.

Mr. MILLER OF FLORIDA. Could you please just give us a thumbnail sketch, as has been mentioned, of Hezbollah, Hamas, and al Qaeda terrorist organizations in the region? Do we have a good handle on what is going on? Is it expanding? Bring us up to date.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, sir. It is hard to give a thumbnail. Let me try to summarize to the extent I can in open session.

We have been and continue to see Islamic extremist groups operating in the region in various enclaves throughout the region. There does not appear to be much of a spread into new areas. What appears to be happening is continued activity in terms of logistic support, fundraising, and fraudulent document productions. Also we see quite a bit of movement through these enclaves either in a transportation mode or potential safe haven, as these individuals move around the world.

What we are looking for and what we key on is change, to change the delta, if you will, between the status quo, which is significant, there are somewhere between three million and six million Muslims in Latin America, and there is a well-established community there, so what we watch is the change of new faces, new procedures, new activities. We are seeing some of that in different locations, and watching that closely.

We again do not believe that there are any operational cells in the region. We do not believe that there are any training centers or areas in the region, but we do believe the capability exists if there was a desire to do that, based on the fact there are many ungoverned spaces throughout Latin America and the Caribbean basin.

That is probably, sir, as far as I can go in open forum. I can provide you a classified response for the record if that would be helpful.

Mr. MILLER OF FLORIDA. If you would, thank you.

That is all, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Ortiz.

Mr. ORTIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, good to see you again, sir.

General CRADDOCK. Good to see you.

Mr. ORTIZ. We certainly appreciate the fine work that you and your command, what you do in that part of the world.

General, what is the impact of the traffickers in drugs and weapons and people in the countries of Central America? We do have a problem in the United States now with some of the gangs, the Mara Salvatrucha. I was just wondering the impact that it has and I know that we are deporting a bunch of them, and they go back to that area. Maybe you can make some comments on that.

General CRADDOCK. Certainly. Thank you, Congressman.

The impact of the trafficking lanes, both overland and through the maritime approaches of Central America, is a destabilizing factor to those countries. The situation is a threat to public security, period. That is an absolute known fact. If the magnitude grows, and it is uncertain in some countries just how far it has grown and how big it is, it could become and may well become a threat to the national security of those countries.

The trafficking is extensive. It goes north with the drugs. It comes south with arms. It goes north with persons. It comes south with money and contraband. We watch this. We track these interests both in the air and on the sea. It is significant. We see that the criminal elements and the gangs in Central America have traditionally provided logistic support, safe havens, security for the traffickers as they moved through the countries.

In the past, they, the traffickers, have normally paid for this in currency. Now, a troubling aspect we are seeing, the countries are reporting to us in Central America, as well as in the Caribbean, that the traffickers are now providing payment in kind. A cut of the drugs is provided to the gangs, to the criminal elements who support their trafficking lanes. The drugs then are sold in those countries, which creates a new dependence, which creates a new criminal element, and it becomes an escalating problem in public security.

So it is indeed a situation that is a concern to the countries. They are working together to establish both inside of each country a capability to respond. I think their next step, as I understand the leaders have decided, they may well have a regional response capability to work against this organized criminal aspect. We have seen significant developments in the Mosquitia coast in Honduras, in Belize and in Guatemala. It is particularly strong right now.

As our interdiction capability gets more credible in the Eastern Pacific, the traffickers will move into the Western Caribbean, along the lanes of the Central American nations. So we are working with those countries. We are partnering. We are determining what their needs are.

And essentially their public security forces have to be strengthened, have to be given increased capability. Sometimes that is police exclusively, and based upon their national authorities and laws, they may well ask the military to reinforce, which is a very sensitive issue because of historical sensitivities and problems in Central America.

We work very closely with them. We are supporting the countries to the best extent that we can for their capability to counter this trafficking element. I think it is going to be important that Colombia also reach out and provide them their lessons learned, what they have done, how they have in many cases worked through some of this trafficking in Colombia as it moves in and out of that country. They are doing that and we think that is very helpful.

Mr. ORTIZ. One more question. How will Enduring Friendship enhance the maritime security in the nations participating in this initiative, General?

General CRADDOCK. Enduring Friendship is a program that was conceived about three years ago from the office of the Secretary of Defense. The notion here is, Enduring Friendship is an opportunity for us to build the maritime capability of the countries of the Caribbean and Central America.

The concept is that right now, we, the United States, with some of our allies, the Department of Defense, Customs and Border Protection, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Dutch, the French, the Brits, fly detection and monitoring missions. We try to find these traffickers moving on the ocean, the sea or in the air.

Then when we find them, we have to have a law enforcement detachment intercept them, make the arrest, and put them into the judicial system. Enduring Friendship would like to build the capability for our partner nations to do the interdiction on the surface so that as these fast boats, these fishing trawlers, these tracks of interests that are carrying the drugs move into their waters, they are capable of receiving the information from our Joint Interagency Task Force South, and then vectoring in, they will interdict, make the arrest, and then turn the traffickers over to the judicial system so that we can process the information and continue the cycle.

It will take a few years. The countries are all supportive. They want to do this. They want to enforce their maritime sovereignty. We think over the next several years, we can build that to where they will be tied into a common maritime operating picture and have the capacity and capability to do what we call the "end game," which is the arrest.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Chairman, thank you so much.

Thank you, General.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. I thank him for his continuing interest in this very important area in the world.

The gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. Kline.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, General. Thank you for being here.

General CRADDOCK. Yes, sir.

Mr. KLINE. You look sort of lonely at that table.

General CRADDOCK. I feel lonely. [Laughter.]

Mr. KLINE. I am sure you can more than handle it.

A lot of issues that have been touched on this morning, certainly the China question and the activities of al Qaeda and other Islamist extremist organizations. But there has been much talk and concern lately over President Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, what he is doing country-to-country, his relationship with Castro, how he is involved in any terrorist or drug activity.

Can you take the three or four minutes I have here and just sort of bring us up to speed on how that is developing and what, if anything, that we, you, your command, we the United States are doing? Thank you.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, Congressman.

Indeed, it is a very cogent issue. Venezuela right now we believe has become a destabilizing factor in the region. If you look at Venezuela today, it would appear that democracy has been hijacked, that the checks and balances, the separation of powers has all now been reduced to essentially an executive lead, and the decisions are all made pretty much at one location.

Someone said the fundamental essence of a democracy is the right of the people to hire and fire the government. I would submit to you that it would be difficult to do the latter, to fire a government in Venezuela today. Now, the concern is, what does it mean to the rest of the region? Are there others that may subscribe to that philosophy or that practice, and we are concerned that it is being exported as we watch through the region.

This is a year of elections. There are going to be I think seven or eight more elections, counting Guyana, throughout the remainder of this calendar year, many of which will be influenced by that

type of a political process. So that is of concern, and we are watching that closely.

We know there is a strong bond between Cuba and Venezuela. Venezuela provides nearly 100,000 barrels of oil a day to Cuba, a lot of which is not used, but sold by Cuba on the international market. So there are many Cuban doctors throughout the region, and many in Venezuela, so we watch that also very carefully.

We traditionally have had a strong relationship with Venezuela over the years. Military-to-military has been very good. I would tell you that over the last two years, that has eroded to almost no relationship. We are unhappy about that. We would like to have a continued relationship. We continue to invite the Venezuelan military to our exercises, to our conferences, to any opportunity to continue to partner, but we have been unable to be successful in that effort.

We have had to reduce our military group, downsize it, if you will. In August of 2004, the Venezuelans told us we had to move off of a Venezuelan military installation where our military group is located. They moved into the embassy grounds. Since then, because of this lack of engagement and contact, we have reduced that group down to a very small number, and I may well reduce it further because of a lack of work, if you will. And we have plenty of work in other parts of the region.

What we are doing now is watching closely. We are talking to the neighbors in the region. We are exchanging information. We are concerned about, as was mentioned earlier, this arms procurement that appears to be far in excess of any need.

Mr. KLINE. What kind of support are you getting from the neighbors? The giant concern is that this keeps expanding outside the borders of Venezuela, and if there is not some determined resistance to that notion from the neighbors, it just looks to me like we have an explosive problem. Are you getting a cooperative kind of response from the neighbors or not?

General CRADDOCK. I think it is a mixed bag. I think there is concern, obviously. I have talked to my counterparts in Brazil. They openly, publicly have talked about the concern for these 100,000 automatic assault (AK) weapons that are being procured. There is concern from other elements about the procurement of aircraft and offensive capability-type weapons.

So the neighbors are concerned, and there is a level of angst, if you will, about where is it headed. If it is for border protection and control and security, and for enforcement against the illegal armed groups that may be moving in that area, that is one thing. We don't know that, and we have no indications right now. It is not transparent. So that is the level of concern.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Florida, Mr. Meek.

Mr. MEEK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you for being before the committee this morning.

I have a Venezuela and a Haiti question. You answered some of it in your previous question, but I want to focus on Venezuela and what is happening as it relates to oil playing a big part in gaining

partners in the Americas, and also the question on the AK–47 procurement.

Now, last year, that was brought to the committee's attention. Did they order more weapons than they actually have in their military?

And the second question, if you can open in open session here, are there any hard leads that you are following as it relates to some sort of strong-arm team in Venezuela, non-uniformed personnel that may find themselves with these AK–47s?

I do have a Haiti question on the back end of that.

General CRADDOCK. Well, let me talk about the weapons. First is the numbers. It is hard to tell right now what the size of the Venezuelan military active force is. We think it is somewhere around 80,000 total. They are buying 100,000 weapons. They already had some weapons, so obviously there is an excess there. So that is of concern. What happens to the displaced weapons and then the excess of the new weapons?

Second, is there some other force? There is a new effort in Venezuela right now to raise a national reserve, if you will. The goal is about 2 million. I don't know if you would call it a militia, a paramilitary, a reserve, but they will be armed. They will report not to the active military, but to the president of Venezuela. Interesting.

So it may well be that some of these displaced weapons or some of the additional new weapons will go to that force. That is in process right now in terms of raising the level of that force and the size.

When we look at this, and again we are watching this, it appears to follow the Iranian model of the people's reserve, if you will. So again, it is a work in progress and we don't know exactly how far or where it will go, but it is interesting in its design and execution.

Mr. MEEK. In Haiti, Mr. Miller and I traveled down there, I guess, with you, recently or late last year. As you know, the first round of elections have taken place. We are hopefully getting some level of democracy and government in place. We are concerned about the drug trade because I know that that has a lot to do with the thuggery on the streets of Haiti and is going to make it very, very difficult for that island nation to be able to pull itself up and out.

Are we seeing more activity in Haiti as it relates to drugs?

And two, and the chairman mentioned this in his opening comments, do you see us playing any military role in Haiti any time in the future? I guess basically, what do you feel that needs to happen so that the military does not have to go back on its rotation, almost, to Haiti? Because we have not only political unrest, but these drug dealers play a role in creating that environment.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you.

With regard to drug activity, I would say that as we have watched this through our Joint Interagency Task Force South, it continues at about the same level as it has over the past 12 to 18 months. It is significant. It is mostly air traffic and mostly from Venezuela, several flights a week, and they land day and night.

The information, obviously, is important to get passed to security officials in Haiti. The Haitian national police are trying to again

weed out the corrupt element. They are doing a pretty good job of that. It is hard work. There is still a lot to do. They are making some progress. So I will tell you that I think the drug trafficking through Haiti is probably about the same as it has been. I see no significant improvement, nor do I see any significant worsening.

With regard to the U.S. military role, I think if you look at Haiti today, and if you look at that election and you look at the security surrounding it, it probably was pretty good. The security throughout the country is good. There are a few enclaves, the cities, Port-au-Prince, Gonaives, potentially Jacmel, where there are some security problems because of gangs and organized crime, potentially the drug traffickers who move in and create opportunities for others, but by and large, the country is relatively secure.

I think the next step is, I don't foresee a U.S. involvement. I see a continued United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH-UN) involvement. I think that now the United Nations, working with the elected government of Haiti, will take a look at MINUSTAH and potentially re-craft it, redesign it to be relative to the situation, the existing conditions today, and maybe rearrange where some of those forces are.

At the same time, the United Nations civilian police must continue their effort to train a capable, competent Haitian national police. I think the combination of those will put the security situation in good stead.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Nevada, Mr. Gibbons.

Mr. GIBBONS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

General Craddock, thank you for your service to our country. We appreciate your testimony and your presence here today as well.

You know, as we in this committee look at the concerns in the global war on terror and looking and recognizing other hot spots around the world, what in your area of responsibility keeps you awake at night? What is your biggest concern?

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, Congressman. That is a tough question. There are a few things that keep me up at night.

First, I think, well, I will give you a couple of things that are relevant here I think in this open forum.

Continued support for Colombia. Colombia, every trend is positive: The attacks are down; demobilizations are up; kidnappings are down; murders, human rights violations and allegations of violations are down. It is a positive trend. The foreign direct investment is up. The government budget is up. The number of professional soldiers is up. The number of nonprofessional or conscripts are down, all good trends.

But as they grow, they have to balance this requirement for security against development. They have to balance their requirement to be able to demobilize and re-integrate 24,000 paramilitaries right now against a requirement to continue to be strong and convince the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army, Colombia (ELN) to come to the negotiating table and demobilize.

At the same time as they gain military and security control of these parts of the country, then they have to follow up with programs to create jobs, infrastructure, social services, so that the peo-

ple understand for the first time in many of these locations that governance is a good thing and they get more opportunity with that than they did before with the insurgent elements and the terrorist groups.

So I think that we need to stay the course for the next few years. I think Colombia will continue to do the right thing and they will generate the revenue over time to be self-sufficient. But if we pull the plug too soon, I am concerned that the balancing act will be too difficult and something will fall off the table.

The second thing that keeps me up some nights: traffickers, fast-boat, 40-foot fast-boat, four outboard motors. It can go from the north coast of Colombia to Jamaica in 16 hours nonstop with a crew of four, eight drums of fuel, and a ton-and-a-half of cocaine. It could also go with two Islamist terrorists, extremists, and a weapon of mass destruction or weapon of mass effects. Ungoverned spaces are rife and readily available in our region.

We work hard to try to find the nexus, the linkages of where this could happen most likely, but quite frankly you look at the tracks and you look at the magnitude of this trafficking problem, we don't know right now if that is happening.

Mr. GIBBONS. General, are you seeing an increase of insurgents passing through, or that pass through, say, al Qaeda-trained terrorists through your command, en route or either in a transient phase somewhere in your command, say, to the United States?

General CRADDOCK. I can't go too far here in this type of session. I can provide, if you would like, a classified response for the record. Let me just say we are seeing a continued transit through the region of AQ or AQ-affiliates, destination sometimes unknown, and we continue to see new faces and change is troublesome when you see new faces.

Mr. GIBBONS. When I look back at my experiences in that area and Ciudad del Este, the city of commerce for the Hamas, Hezbollah, the terrorist organizations, it concerns me a great deal.

Let me move from that to one just very brief question. I want you to describe for me what you see as the proper balance in U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) there between active and reserve components. What is the proper balance for completion of the mission there?

General CRADDOCK. Congressman, that is a difficult question. Let me start off first with: A lot of the troops, the forces we use, we have very few assigned forces. So we request forces or we have forces who are apportioned to us for training or operations.

With regard to special operations forces, I think there that we have to have active duty special ops forces to a greater rather than a lesser extent because they build up, one, familiarity with the region. They have language competency and they understand the lay of the land and they know the people.

So over the years we have done that. Recently, because of the global war, because of the requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan, some of our habitual special operations forces have moved to that fight and we have gotten reduced numbers or we are getting other units to come in who may not have that familiarity. So we need the dedicated regional application of special operations forces.

Now, beyond that, we really do a lot of work with exercises, humanitarian-type exercise, our New Horizons, where we draw on reserve components. We need continued access to the reserve components of all the services because we use them on their two week training. We had a couple days on the front and the back side. They go into the region. They go great work on construction projects and running medical readiness exercises, dental readiness. That is the greatest engagement tool, the hearts and minds tool that we have. So we need continued access.

Now, there has been a huge demand on reserve forces also. So the services are having to dig deeper in to find those types of skills and capabilities. We also need, then, to have that funded through the service mandate program where they pay for the reserve components. I don't have that type of money. I have transportation money to get them back and forth, but I can't pay their salaries, so that needs to continue.

Mr. GIBBONS. General, thank you for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Arkansas, Dr. Snyder.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General, for being here.

I have just two questions, General Craddock. The first one is in response, I guess it was to Mr. Gibbons, when you were talking about al Qaeda elements that you are seeing. You are saying you are seeing them pass through. Maybe this isn't the format to discuss that, but I couldn't tell if you were seeing actual members of al Qaeda.

I assume if we are seeing actual people that are members of al Qaeda working with or for al Qaeda, we are responding to that in some fashion. We are not just watching them pass through. Is that fair statement?

General CRADDOCK. Fair. In other words, when I say that, we get reports after the fact. We are tracking things. It is not like we are watching them go from somewhere into our region and then out. What we try to do is understand the movements, but it may be after the fact that we find out.

Dr. SNYDER. General Craddock, I am sure you are aware about the flurry of activity yesterday with regard to the interrogation issues at Gitmo. You were quoted in today's paper. There is a story in *The Washington Post* on page A–13 today with a heading, "Military Lawyers Say Tactics Broke Rules," and you are quoted in there.

I wanted to give you a chance to comment on the issues that came up yesterday, because they are saying that the military lawyers are conflicting with statements that you have made. Would you amplify on that or explain that please?

General CRADDOCK. I make it a habit not to read The Post, but let me just tell you what I know. All I did was talk about what Schmidt-Furlow said, the Schmidt-Furlow report, that is the investigation. Schmidt-Furlow said there was no violation of law, regulation or policy. I agreed with that assessment. So this is not my opinion. This is my affirmation of that finding and recommendation.

Dr. SNYDER. Actually, I do want to respond a little bit. I am not sure of the value of a high-ranking general officer to make it a habit not to read *The Washington Post.* You know, I read things that I don't agree with. I sometimes even read the chairman's opening statements when I get a chance, and I don't agree with everything he says. [Laughter.]

I am not sure what the point of that attitude is because it now puts us in the position, you are quoted extensively in the paper today and I hope that you will at least have people pulling articles that you think are appropriate to your area of responsibility from publications with which you disagree.

The point of it is that at some point you are quoted as saying that the techniques that were used at Gitmo were, quoting you, "creative and aggressive, however, these applications did not violate any U.S. law or policy."

And then yesterday on the Senate side in response to questions for the record, quoting The Post again, "The top lawyers for Army, Navy and Marine Corps have told Congress that a number of aggressive techniques used by the military interrogators on a detainee at the Guantanamo Bay prison were not consistent with the guidelines in the Army field manual on interrogations." That is the quote from The Post.

So I am just asking you, we have a conflict. The reason this is important to me, I think this has been aired a lot, but the reason is it important to me is because we have a confusion between you and between the highest ranking military lawyers over what is or is not good policy. Put yourself in the position of Mr. Reyes when he was in the military as a young man, as an enlisted guy.

So we are asking people to try to fight a war and do interrogation and gather intelligence at really all levels of the military, and yet according to these reports, the information gathered in the Senate, you and the military lawyers are not in agreement over what is considered good policy consistent with, or good techniques consistent with Army policy.

Has that been resolved? This was several months ago when these questions were asked. Is there still confusion between how you view interrogation techniques and how the top military lawyers view interrogation techniques? Where are we at with regard to the Army field manual? Can you give us an update on where we are at with what seems to be a fairly glaring conflict between you and the military lawyers?

General CRADDOCK. Congressman, this is the first I have heard that these military lawyers have disagreed. The last I recall, as I testified here in July, where were they then? If they disagreed, why now is there disagreement?

That report, and again what I said, and I don't know where the report came from. I will check it out. I will look. I read the op-eds, but some of these columnists, these reporters, I don't. But I take your point. I appreciate that.

But this is nothing new. This was the result of the Schmidt-Furlow report. And if one would read that report, that has been provided open-source, it would say, that report says these things. All I did was accept that recommendation, and I agreed with that finding.

It also said that it may well be that the combination of techniques and applications, you see, there is an interrogation technique authorized by 3452, and at the time that this occurred also there were additional authorizations from the office of the secretary of defense. So you have techniques, and the interrogation team takes those and develops applications under those techniques.

Now, it may well be, and the Schmidt-Furlow said this, and I agreed, that the combination of techniques and applications either taken together or taken together over time or not taken together, but administered separately over time, may result in degrading treatment or punishment. Okay, then where do you cross the line? We don't know, said Schmidt-Furlow but it is worthy of continued investigation by the office of the secretary of defense. I agree with that and I recommend that be done.

Now, with regard to the manual, Congressman, I can assure you that we are in full compliance with the Detainee Treatment Act that was passed recently with the authorization act, full compliance. I can assure you that before that act was passed, we were in full compliance with field manual 3452, that there was no cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment going on at Gitmo at the time, or for some time before that.

Let me finish, sir. I can assure you that we want the new manual and we want it to define what is degrading treatment because I do not want to put any soldier, sailor, airmen or Marine at risk of not understanding what they can do.

Dr. SNYDER. That is right, and you and I are in 100 percent agreement on that, because that is the issue as things get filtered down. I encourage you to read these articles and also get the information, the statements, the questions for the record that were answered, because the answers provided by the lawyers are in disagreement with what you just stated because they are specifically saying that a specific technique used alone, and it goes through a list of them, is in itself inconsistent with the intent and spirit of our policies. So I think that would be worthwhile straightening it out.

It does concern me that when you asked me, where were the lawyers, I hope they are working with you. I mean, part of our whole thing through all this confusion in the last three years was we were hoping that our military officers were getting the best advice that they could along the way, consistent with the desires to keep themselves safe and fight a good war and have the kind of military that they all want.

When I hear that apparently you and the lawyers are not in good communication, it is going to be difficult for things to go down the chain of command to those officers that are enlisted and doing all the work of interrogation if we don't even have consistency of communication between the top military lawyers in the Army and you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I do read your opening statements, Mr. Chairman. [Laughter.]

The CHAIRMAN. Okay, well, I thank the gentleman.

And let me just give my take on high-ranking military officers reading publications and giving us their candid assessment of the veracity of those publications.

You not only had thousands of members of the military strongly criticizing *The Washington Post* for its cartoon that depicted the U.S. Army as a double-amputee, you also had the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the chief of the Army.

I would just say to my friend from Arkansas, you ask tough, candid questions of our military leaders when they arrive here, and we don't have any ban or any reservation on any questions you can ask. If you cite a publication, that officer has the absolute right to give in his answer his feeling about the veracity or the credibility of that publication because you are citing that.

So the witness before us made a comment about *The Washington Post,* I will just tell you, his statement is not nearly as tough as the statements that I saw from the military leadership going right up to and including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs about that particular publication.

Our military leaders aren't robots, and they are not expected to not give their opinion. Dr. Snyder, when you quote a publication, every witness reserves the right to tell you their opinion of the credibility of that publication. I think the general just did that.

So as a gentleman who enjoys candor, I am going to pre-ship those opening statements to you. [Laughter.]

Dr. SNYDER. I appreciate your comments, Mr. Chairman, and I will accept them. I agree, General Craddock has every right to read or not read anything he wants to do, but I am not quite sure if that is the expectation of a lot of us here. So I do hope that he will read these articles that were in today's paper and respond to them as he deems necessary.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Sure. And I am sure those articles appeared in lots of papers.

So, General, if we catch you looking at the classified ads of *The Washington Post* now, we may get you for inconsistency. I do think they have great classified ads, for the record.

Incidentally, Dr. Snyder, I want to thank you. You are going to be going down with Dr. Schwarz to Guantanamo, I am informed. I think that is excellent, and take a look at procedures down there.

That leads me to Dr. Schwarz, the gentleman from Michigan.

General CRADDOCK. Mr. Chairman, may I just comment, if you would permit me?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes.

General CRADDOCK. I have a great staff that keeps me informed, and they are going to tell me, "Look at this." And so the fact of the matter is, when I have to do those things, I will.

But I guess the problem I have, Congressman Snyder, is the lawyers have said, well, by golly, if the lawyers said it, why didn't they pick up the phone and call Craddock and say, "We think you are wrong"? But that didn't happen and it didn't happen last July or August or September.

So when it is in the paper, you know, that is one thing. Is it in context, out of context? I know I have been taken out of context by *The Washington Post.* But I would hope that as professionals that we could make this communications work, because if somebody believes, or judges, or has the opinion, then I have to listen to it. It is important because we have to do the right thing.

Dr. SNYDER. General, I agree with that 100 percent, because what cannot happen is that in order for information, whether you are right or wrong, to get from the top-ranking lawyers in the Army to you, it cannot first go through a minority Member of Congress or *The Washington Post.* And so this route ain't working, so I suggest whoever works for you or you work for that they get this straightened out because this is not a good way to do business. I appreciate your comments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Michigan, Dr. Schwarz.

Dr. SCHWARZ. General Craddock, nice to see you again, sir.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, sir.

Dr. SCHWARZ. We were in Guantanamo in late June last year, and the chairman was on that mission, as was myself. The chairman asked me to take a look at the health care facilities at Guantanamo. I don't think that we need to try to skirt the issue here. In fact, I would be disappointed if we did.

I did, as a surgeon, a fellow of the American College of Surgeons of 35 years standing, look very carefully at the health care facilities at Guantanamo, and I judged them to be as good as those in any small town in the United States anywhere. In fact, some of the equipment I saw, I know there are small towns in the United States that would like to have that equipment.

Second, if there was a problem, it is Camp Delta, is it not, and Camp Echo is the next one? If there was a problem that they couldn't handle, you have the naval hospital two miles up the road or so. And third, my understanding is that cases requiring tertiary care and tertiary care specialists, you have had specialists flown in, naval physicians I believe, flown in from the United States to deal with those.

So the reports that health care was lacking for the detainees in Guantanamo which was circulating at that time and have actually circulated since, are inaccurate. I want that to be in the record out in the open, that I spent significant time in the health care facility at Guantanamo and found it exceptionally well equipped with a couple of very good fallback positions.

That said, how many detainees are there now at Guantanamo?

General CRADDOCK. About 485, Congressman.

Dr. SCHWARZ. How many have been released for one reason or another?

General CRADDOCK. Returned to country of origin, 265 or 267, somewhere in there.

Dr. SCHWARZ. General, how many detainees are currently hunger-striking at Guantanamo?

General CRADDOCK. Six.

Dr. SCHWARZ. And are all six being—well, "force-fed" is an awful phrase, but they are being given nourishment?

General CRADDOCK. Three are being involuntarily fed.

Dr. SCHWARZ. Three.

General CRADDOCK. Three.

Dr. SCHWARZ. Three are being involuntarily fed. Would you care to describe the procedures that are being used to feed a detainee against his will?

General CRADDOCK. Yes. The three are being involuntarily fed twice a day, about 30 minutes prior to the scheduled feeding are told they are going to be fed, and to if they need to go to the restroom prior. They are then taken into a room where there is a padded chair, ergonomically designed. This chair is used by every prison system in every state in the United States. They are put in the chair. There are restraints that restrain their arms and legs, and there are two slots for their head to fit in so their head is immobilized because this has to be a very careful procedure when the tube is put down the nose into the stomach.

I asked, what is the difficulty here, when the doctors do it? And only doctors do this. They said, we have to be very careful because they don't want the tube to go into the lungs. And they have never had one in this insertion that has been applied improperly.

Dr. SCHWARZ. They are better than I am on that, having put hundreds of naso-gastric tubes, and occasionally you get one in the trachea and you know right away and you get it out and you put it into the esophagus. So that is not a grievous error. It is one that is a little uncomfortable, but not a grievous one. You just fix it.

General CRADDOCK. Very good. They are offered a topical anesthetic if they want it. The feeding tube is lubricated. The tube goes in. They are fed for 20 to 40 minutes by a nutritional supplement. It varies. Water is also provided.

And then the tube is removed and they stay in the chair for another 60 to 90 minutes, depending upon, again, the individual and what his medical history shows, so that the nutrition is digested or assimilated into the system.

At that time, they are released and taken back to their cell.

Dr. SCHWARZ. Thank you, General.

Let the record indicate, this is precisely the way that people are tube-fed in hospitals in the United States today, have been for years, and will be for quite a few years into the future. It is the easiest way to get nutrition into someone, in this case, who doesn't want to eat, and in the case of people in hospitals in the United States who can't eat for one reason or another.

The second way to do it, of course, for people to have it done permanently is to put a permanent tube through the abdominal wall into the stomach, which is a surgical procedure which is not being done, but this naso-gastric tube feeding, let the record indicate it is a standard and very humane way to provide nutrition.

General, thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. I thank him for his expertise and also, along with Dr. Snyder, for taking the time to go down on the upcoming trip to review these procedures.

The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Reyes, proud grandfather of Julian?

Mr. REYES. Julian, that is right.

The CHAIRMAN. New grandfather.

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, welcome.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, sir.

Mr. REYES. As I was listening to our colleague describe the process, as a recent patient last Friday of a knee operation, it is more

than an annoying when you miss the esophagus and go into the trachea. I agree. It is very uncomfortable. Not that I had it done, but I can just imagine. I appreciate the fact that we have doctors here that can verify these procedures with their expertise.

I was wanting to ask the general, in your written statement, you talk about I think three different types of exercises, operational foreign military interaction, field modification instruction (FMI), and humanitarian. Can you give us maybe an example of each?

The reason I ask that, just so you will know where I am coming from, is that it has been my observation that in terms of both military assets, intelligence assets and maybe even programmatic assets, we are on the verge of dangerously ignoring our backyard, which is Latin America, Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean.

That is one thing that I have been speaking with the chairman and others about, that we need to really refocus because of the challenges, and some of which you mentioned here in your testimony today, with the affiliates from al Qaeda, some that my colleagues mentioned with Hamas and Hezbollah and others. I sit on the Intelligence Committee, so this is one of those areas that we have been, at least that I have been, very concerned about.

So if you can give us those examples, and maybe in those examples some of the limitations that you are under because of maybe lack of assets or the shortage of the ability to really do a good job in those areas.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, Congressman. I think I can do that.

First of all, the operational exercises, those are the exercises that we at U.S. Southern Command implement and do with our components. They are to ensure that our ability to execute the contingency plans and the functional plans that we have been assigned responsibility for are well understood, rehearsed, and that we are ready to do that.

For example, we may have a noncombatant evacuation responsibility for certain countries. We would craft up a command post exercise where we would, computer-assisted, develop a scenario and then our staff would work through the problem-solving and the military decision-making process and things like that. So that is to sustain our competency in our assigned tasks.

Mr. REYES. Would it involve a number of troops in the traditional sense?

General CRADDOCK. Exactly. For example, we are doing one as I speak where we have troops involved at U.S. Southern Command in Miami, and we also are at the joint warfighting center down in Suffolk, which is the Joint Forces Command's simulation center. So there are hundreds of folks there, some from my Army component out of Fort Sam Houston. They are in Virginia right now in this exercise, some from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson. So our components are all there.

I went down Tuesday to visit after testimony. It has probably got the largest interagency grouping of any exercise that Joint Forces Command has done in the last five years. So we have an enormous interagency group down there working through this scenario. It is

not a field exercise. It is a command post exercise, but at the level we operate, we have to work through our competencies.

Now, let me move to military-to-military. This is with our partner nations in the region. These we do. We have a series of these. Some are done every year, some every other year. Let me give you a couple of examples. The Tradewinds exercise is an exercise that we do with the countries of the Caribbean region. It is largely maritime in nature. It deals with security issues throughout the Caribbean region.

Now, in 2007, the Caribbean, several of them, eight different countries are going to host, each have a venue for the World Cricket Cup competition, which is huge in the world of cricket. It is like the soccer World Cup and the Super Bowl rolled into one, I think. Different islands will hold venues and they will move among all the islands. So the plan is, because there is a shortage of hotel rooms, they will use cruise ships for accommodations and the ships will move around.

We have crafted last year's and next year's Tradewinds exercise with these island nations to give them training, and as a rehearsal for the security requirements they will have for that venue, that World Cricket Cup, because there will be significant security since much of the cricket-playing world, Pakistan and other places where there is some instability. So we think that that provides an operational flavor to that exercise.

Another one is Panamax. Panamax, we do annually, and that is the defense of the Panama Canal. It started out with 3 countries and now this year I believe we will have 16 nations participating, both in the region, and Great Britain is going to participate as an observer. Practically every country that uses the canal, that has a maritime capability, want to participate in this exercise. So it is a big exercise. It will be multi-thousands of both ground and maritime and some air forces.

Now, the last category is humanitarian. I think the best example here is New Horizons, which is a humanitarian exercise. We try to do, our goal is to do six a year, six New Horizons. What does it consist of? It lasts for about three months, and it is a training event for our forces where engineers and others build construction projects. It may be they build a community center, a three-room school. They build a medical clinic somewhere in an underprivileged rural area in some country. Central America has received many of these. We are doing it in Ecuador I think this year and some other places, Guyana, Peru.

These are superb exercises. They are largely manned by reserve components who on their two week annual training event rotate through and get the opportunity to do the training. We reach out to people who need help. This is a great opportunity. We conduct inside of that exercise this medical readiness. Again, for three months, our doctors, nurses, veterinarians, dentists will rotate through. Last year, I believe we reached out in our medical readiness exercises to about 390,000 people in the region.

It is nothing fancy. They come in and they bring their children, and they get an assessment. They get some preventive medicine classes on things they can do. The kids get de-wormed and they get to take the medicine home to continue the treatments so it works

for a while. They will get vitamins. They will get a dental check. They get what they haven't been able to get because of the paucity of resources and doctors where they live. We try to combine that with host-nation doctors, either military or civilian, to make it even more beneficial, and again to show the people that their government counts for something and is trying to make their life better. So New Horizons is exceptional.

We also do another 50 or 60 medical readiness exercises and dental readiness exercises that stand alone. We just move a unit into a location, a hospital or a schoolhouse, and for two or four weeks see patients, and then we bring them back to the United States. So we depend on reserve components for most of our humanitarian exercises. That is probably the best engagement we have in terms of winning hearts and minds in the region.

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Another gentleman from Texas, Mr. Conaway.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Craddock, thank you for being here today. As a side note, I don't read *The Washington Post* either. [Laughter.]

If you covered this already before I came in, I apologize for that. If so, I will read the record. But Evo Morales, recently elected as president of Bolivia, from a public statement standpoint, does not appear to be necessarily friendly to the United States.

Can you give us some sense of what you are seeing, as well put your predictability hat on and talk to us about what impact his regime may have on the economy of Bolivia and natural gas production, and just in general where do you see Bolivia going under his leadership?

General CRADDOCK. Well, it is interesting. You know, 54 percent of the vote, which is almost unheard of, surprised everyone, so he definitely has a mandate compared to previously where there always had to be a runoff election. I would say that we are in a wait-and-see mode right now. Obviously, there was a lot of talk. Talk is cheap.

I think we ought to focus on deeds, not words, right now. Let's see where it goes. Let's see how the situation develops in terms of we know where we have been. We know the relationship and what we are doing with them, which is significant from a mil-to-mil perspective. So I think that what we have to do now is continue to proceed. If there are certain things done or acts taken, then we need to understand the impact and act accordingly.

Recently, there was a little bit of a dustup about the de-certification of a counterterrorist unit. The deal is, you don't get something for nothing. We provided some equipment. We provided training and in return, they do certain things. They decided not to do certain things and we said, sorry, we can't do this anymore. So we have agreed they are going to return the equipment. They are doing that. Once, then, we can get back together and fix the problems that caused us not to be able to continue to work with them, then we can resume that.

That is just one part of the mil-to-mil relationship. The rest of it is ongoing. I am optimistic that we can work through this. I hope that we can. I would hope that government would be able to fix

some poverty, fix some corruption, fix some inequality. My concern is that if the markets are closed down, if the foreign direct investment does not occur, then it won't be generated, the needed revenue to do that.

I have talked to our ambassador at length. We are going to continue to try and see what develops. We are not ready to make judgments yet.

Mr. CONAWAY. And just quickly, any concern on your part with the border between Mexico and Guatemala?

General CRADDOCK. Indeed, a lot of concern. About a month ago, I went to Guatemala. I went up to the Peten area, which is the area with the north-south border with Mexico. It is a large national park, Laguna del Tigre. It has been almost overtaken until recently by the traffickers. Large flatlands. What they have been doing, the traffickers, is flying airplanes in, normally at night or at dusk. Because they can't see then, they crash-land. They don't care. They shoot up the engine or they torch it after they get the drugs out. Brand-new trucks, SUVs show up, off-load the trucks, and they scoot across the border.

There are very few villages here, because it is a national park, but the villages that are there have been pretty much overrun by the traffickers. The Guatemalans, we work with them. They have moved a joint task force up there, Joint Task Force North. It is comprised of police, military, judicial persons, other interagency peoples and medical folks and others. They have built a crude installation there to operate out of. They are doing the best job they can do with what they have to do it with, so we are going to help them with some capabilities.

I was there, and they told me that since their arrival, they had not seen any aircraft come in. There were 58 days without anything landing. We had a report the other day that one landed. They couldn't get it in time, because they didn't have the communications to know about it. But they are making an honest, fruitful effort and it is an interagency effort, which is a good thing. It is not all just military or all police. The judges are up there to make sure that there are no abuses. They are working at it hard.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you, General Craddock. I appreciate your service.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General Craddock, for being here.

General, we spoke about this yesterday, but I want to go once again on the record expressing my concern about raising the troop caps in Colombia. For a lot of reasons, including what the gentleman from Texas touched on, here we have a Bolivian government, the candidate is the head of the Cocalero Party. One of the things he was talking about was de-criminalizing cocaine.

On the other side of the world, we have, for better or worse, turned a blind eye to poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. It has skyrocketed since our guys won. About the only good thing the Taliban ever did was shut down the opium trade the last year they ran it. That is one of the reasons people turned on them.

And so again, if the purpose of our involvement in Colombia is the drug trade, well, during the years of our involvement in Colombia I can tell you the drug production in my own district, the drugs there aren't coming from Colombia, they are made in South Mississippi in backyard meth labs.

I can assure you if we are going to spend $2 billion a year, or whatever we are spending, on these combined wars on drugs, as far as the effects on the lives of people in South Mississippi, that money would be better spent helping out my local sheriffs and my local police chiefs, rather than down in Colombia.

Colombia is a wealthy country. You are not going to tell me otherwise. It is not El Salvador. It is not Honduras. There is a lot of money in Colombia, and I have concerns that those guys, even though they are doing better, still don't try hard enough themselves to fight their own war.

So I am going to give you an opportunity to tell me I am all wrong, that we ought to not have a troop cap; that we ought to get further involved. We spoke yesterday that your quick reaction force is down to seven special forces. They are in Afghanistan. They are in Iraq.

So if you want to raise the troop cap, where in the heck are you going to get these guys from?

Again, this is an open forum. I respect you. I like you. But I think it is a very fair question to ask of you.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, Congressman.

Everything kind of devolves down to priorities, obviously. Let me address the troop cap first.

We asked for the troop cap to go up to 800. We got that. I think the most we have had down there over the past 2 years is 520. Today, it is a little under 400, so it ebbs and flows. It depends upon what the Colombian military is doing. They are building some new units. What we try to do is with our planning and assistance teams, to marry those up at the division level. They have built a new Joint Task Force Caribe up north, and we have some folks with them.

So we are kind of lined up with the Colombian military in terms of the planning assistance and how they are executing operations and how they are expanding to accommodate their requirements.

So I will tell you the cap gives us the flexibility if something happens and we would need to surge for some short period without having to come back. I don't think that we will come back and ask for more and I don't think at this time that there is a problem with forces available other than SOF, special operations forces. We have taken some detriments there.

In return, there is a plan to use reserve component SOF that will come out with language capability. I didn't realize that, but in talking to special operations command (SOCOM), they have some of that. So I think from a perspective, again we would appreciate the extension of the cap. We think that and the expanded authorities make sense.

Now, with regard to Colombia, they are making progress, obviously. We think they are reinvesting in the country. We think that there is a fine line, and it is a difficult chore, as you know, to bal-

ance between security and development. And that is what they are trying to do.

They are working the fumigation side of it, the eradication. Recently, because the national parks have been protected, you can't spray there to get to the coca plant. The president decided to go in and manually eradicate. They have taken several police casualties from that. They have been under attack in an area where they have never gone before. It is the heartland of the FARC as they grow this cocaine. So that has been a significant effort and change.

But it is lucrative. The business has got so much money involved with it that it is going to continue. When Colombia is successful in the end, the problem moves somewhere else in the Andean ridge, whether it is Peru or Bolivia, because it is so lucrative. The challenge is to get it to a point where it doesn't become a national security problem as it has been in Colombia, and it can be handled by public security forces. That is where the foreign terrorist organizations come from. Three of them are in Colombia. So it is more than just drugs. It is terrorist organizations as defined by the State Department.

Now, with regard to the impact we are making, Congressman, as I said yesterday, we got 252 tons last year interdicted, either got it or disrupted it and it is at the bottom of the sea. I don't know how to quantify that other than that is 252 tons not in the hands of Americans because that is where it was coming. It didn't generate the money that would have gone into the hands of the traffickers to buy the weapons or to buy more drugs or pay for other problems in the region.

So I think those are good things. I understand the priorities and I understand there are other threats with regard to drugs, synthetic drugs and others. This is one of those, but we think again, that the linchpin is Colombia for the Andean ridge, and the Andean ridge right now is the most unsettled area in this hemisphere.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Chairman, a quick unrelated follow-up.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman may go right ahead. We are at the end of the hearing, and I know this is an important subject for him.

Mr. TAYLOR. I think it is fair to say that one of the reasons we developed Manta was for the ability to do intelligence-gathering over Colombia. It is not the only reason, but it is one of them. I was one of the guys who went down looking at the potential sites when we lost Howard Air Force Base. And so I have seen what Manta looked like before we started spending money, and I know what Manta looks like now, and we have spent a lot of money there.

What troubles me is what you told me yesterday, the possibility of losing that air strip. So my question is, either if you know it now or for the record, what sort of commitments as far as a lease did we get from the Ecuadorians?

Because it is not just Ecuador. I see it in several places around the world. We go in. We build nice housing. We build a nice runway. We build nice hangars. The host country decides we should move down the street a little bit and do it again. That is not a good business decision, whether it is stateside, Germany or in Ecuador.

So I would like to know if you know how long a lease we had there. I would sure as heck hope that if we are asked to leave Manta, that it becomes a prerequisite of conditions of wherever we locate next time.

General CRADDOCK. Fair enough. The lease in Manta expires in 2009. I think it was a 10-year lease. So there is an election in Ecuador this year. We will see how that turns out, and probably, we believe in talking to the State Department among others, that sometime in 2007 we need to approach the Ecuadorian government to start the negotiations for the re-lease, the continued leasing of that facility.

And you are right, it is exclusively negotiated, the agreement between Ecuador and the United States, for counter-drug operations only. We cannot do any other operations out of there. When we went to Haiti, and we needed to move some materiel, we could not fly from Manta to Haiti. We had to stop en route because it would have been a violation of the agreement. We scrupulously adhere to those agreements, but I believe they are all 10-year leases. The first one, Manta, 2009.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, thanks again.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Missouri had a couple of follow-ups here.

Mr. SKELTON. General, would it be possible for you to follow up with us, preferably in written form, as to what you see country-by-country the involvement of China is in Latin America? I think that would be very helpful to this committee. Just what they are doing, any type of ballpark judgment on what they are spending and how they are spending it, we would certainly appreciate that. If you could get that to the committee, I think it would help.

General CRADDOCK. Yes, Congressman. Let me try to do it this way, by sub-region, Caribbean.

Mr. SKELTON. It would be better if you just furnish it to us.

General CRADDOCK. Oh, I can follow up with that easily.

Mr. SKELTON. That would be easier.

General CRADDOCK. That is fine. It is significant, there is no doubt about it. We will do that, and also give you an idea on the economic aspects that we have been tracking.

Mr. SKELTON. That would be very helpful. Thanks, General.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Just one follow-up here on the discussion. I think we have had a pretty good, wide-ranging discussion here, General Craddock.

Looking at the military posture of Venezuela, is there a marked increase in their armed forces size and equipage? Give us just an idea of what they have and where it looks like they are headed.

General CRADDOCK. With regard to the active force, it has held constant, steady, somewhere at 70,000 to 80,000 I think is the number, depending on who you talk to, but that is probably pretty close. There has been much talk about, and we have seen considerable interest in activity with regard to additional arms purchases. Land, air and sea corvettes, small ships, I think there are some others that are being talked about that I can't discuss here. Aircraft from Russia I think has been negotiated back and forth. Helicopters are soon to be delivered.

The CHAIRMAN. Do the aircraft include combat aircraft?

General CRADDOCK. Yes, indeed, fighter aircraft, high-performance. Yes.

I don't know that the deals have been consummated, but there is a lot of discussion back and forth as to what type aircraft that they might want. Also, aircraft purchases from Brazil are on the table.

So there is a lot right now of arms acquisition procurement, if you will, that is being discussed, that we see in the open press and other places.

Now, the active force, the military quite frankly in the last few years has been focused on social program support throughout the country. As we can see, it has not extensively trained in military capability. We see some indications there may be a shift in that in the near future with some exercises that have been discussed and may be on the horizon.

Now, the other part of this is the reserve component or this new element that is going to stand up, which is going to be a national reserve, a paramilitary or home force, home guard maybe would be a better term. That has started in terms of recruitment. We see a few numbers, but we don't see anything near the target of two million that we have been hearing about and watching.

There has also been a restructure in process. I don't know that it is done yet. We haven't seen it, with regard to their doctrine. Heretofore, much of the doctrine, much of the training manuals have all been U.S.-source, if you will. They kind of adhere to our doctrinal aspects and constructs for military forces. Under the current president, that has been shifted aside. They are developing a new doctrine for employment of military forces which we expect will be something more along a non-American, non-U.S. type construct, more focused on insurgent operations and defensive measures of that sort.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

It looks like we are going to take up votes here in the next 5 or 10 minutes, so this is pretty good timing here. I appreciate the review. I think we got a good broad discussion with the members, and we look forward to working with you closely.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thanks for your continued service. Please let your personnel know what we care about them and we know that their job in this very important AOR is critical to our national security.

General CRADDOCK. Thank you, sir. We thank you and the committee for your continued support. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:31 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

March 16, 2006

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 16, 2006

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

POSTURE STATEMENT OF

GENERAL BANTZ J. CRADDOCK, UNITED STATES ARMY

COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

BEFORE THE 109TH CONGRESS

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

16 MARCH 2006

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY
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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Skelton, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of Southern Command's area of responsibility (AOR) to include the challenges we face and how we are addressing them. Today, I will describe the regional conditions and threats affecting our partner nations and, thus, our own national security; how we are working with our partner nations to face these threats; and what we foresee for the region. It is primarily through nation-to-nation engagements that we establish regional partnerships to enhance hemispheric stability and security, thereby ensuring the forward defense of the United States.

On an average day, about 4,500 men and women of the United States Southern Command are serving in the headquarters and throughout the AOR. Our men and women play a vital role in carrying out the objectives of U.S. Southern Command.

COMMAND OBJECTIVES

In keeping with the highest priority of the nation, the U.S. Southern Command **ensures the forward defense of the United States**. We must protect the southern approaches to our nation with an active defense against those who seek to harm this country.

The forward defense of the U.S. can best be accomplished through broad cooperation with partner nations. This Command must strengthen existing relationships and **establish regional partnerships** necessary to provide collective security across the broad spectrum of threats facing both the United States and peaceful nations in the region.

Strong regional partnerships will enable Southern Command and our partner nations to **enhance hemispheric stability and security**. The stability and security of the U.S. and our partner nations depend upon our ability to work together in a mutual effort to confront and defeat common security challenges, such as illicit trafficking and narco-terrorism.

During the past year, I have traveled extensively throughout the region. I am impressed by the progress being made in some areas, and concerned about the progress still to be made in others. I am concerned about what appears to be a growing instability in the region that is degrading the ability of governments to sustain their democratic processes.

Since March 2005, there have been six presidential elections in this region - Honduras, Chile, Bolivia, Haiti, Costa Rica, and Suriname - and there will be seven more taking place by the end of 2006. That equates to 13 opportunities for the people of those countries to take one more step toward strengthening, or on the other hand, weakening their democratic processes. In the six elections that have taken place since my last testimony, all of the newly-elected leaders have said they will continue their cooperative relationships with the U.S.

A recent article in the *Economist* stated that democracy's defining feature is "the freedom to hire and fire your government." Elections alone are only a first step in guaranteeing secure, stable, and peaceful democracies. Democracies also rest upon a foundation of strong institutions, with checks and balances among legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, which ensure basic civil liberties and human rights. Leaders can rise to power through democratic elections and then seek to undermine these same democratic processes, which are fragile in much of the region. An election can present an opportunity for those with extremist views to exploit themes of nationalism, patriotism, and anti-elite or anti-establishment rhetoric to win popular support - especially in young and vulnerable democracies.

U.S. Southern Command's linkage to, and support for, good governance is manifested through our engagement opportunities. It is through theater security cooperation activities that Southern Command has been able to maintain positive military-to-military relations with most of the region.

These sustainable relations enable us to reinforce professional militaries that support democratic institutions. Southern Command will continue to support U.S. policy and objectives in the region by striving to maintain good relations with our military counterparts as these new Administrations take shape.

CONDITIONS AND THREATS

Today, Latin America is one of the least armed areas of the world, having no nuclear weapons, or large standing conventional forces. However, this region can hardly be considered benign. To the contrary, the insidious nature of the threats to the U.S. and our partner nations can be somewhat deceiving at first glance. The conditions of poverty, disease, corruption, social inequality, and widespread income disparity contribute to the growing dissatisfaction of a population that has been exposed to the political benefits of a democracy, but has not yet profited economically.

The lack of security, stability and in some cases, effective rule of law, further exacerbates the situation. Under-governed sovereign territory and porous borders add another dimension. All of these conditions create an environment that is conducive to the development of threats such as illicit trafficking, urban gangs, kidnapping, criminals, and narco-terrorists whose activities discourage licit commerce and undercut economic development. This, in turn, seriously affects the ability of legitimate governments to provide for their citizens.

This permissive environment existing throughout the AOR enables extremist groups to maintain a presence and operate with relative impunity. We have seen indications of Islamic Radical Group presence (such as Hizballah, HAMAS, and Egyptian Islamic Gama'at) in various locations throughout the AOR. These members and facilitators primarily provide financial and logistical support to Islamic terrorist groups from numerous cities in the region, including the tri-border area of Paraguay, Brazil, and

Argentina. Despite increased partner nation cooperation and some law enforcement action, enclaves in the region generally remain a refuge for terrorist support and fund-raising activities. History has taught us that terrorist organizations such as al-Qaida seek safe havens in the many ungoverned areas in this region. We remain concerned that members and associates in the region could move beyond logistical support and actually facilitate terrorist training camps or operations.

Historically, the AOR has been prone to trafficking. Established and elusive transit routes have brought tons of cocaine to our shores as well as facilitated movement of special interest aliens. Document forgery is now an emerging problem wherein well-established networks are capable of producing quality forgeries and, through corrupt government officials, they can acquire legitimate documents. These document forgers or smugglers could facilitate the travel of extremist operatives throughout the region and into the United States.

It is in the context of these conditions and threats that the U.S Southern Command works to ensure the forward defense of the United States in the hemisphere's four sub-regions: the Andean Ridge, Central America, the Caribbean, and the Southern Cone. A quick review of the four will reveal they all have both common and unique characteristics.

ANDEAN RIDGE

The Andean Ridge is the linchpin to regional stability. Nations within this sub-region are politically fragile, economically challenged, and in some instances, lack sufficient security forces to control their sovereign territories. Despite their vulnerabilities, these nations are dedicated to combating myriad social, political, and economic threats that transcend purely military issues.

Colombia. Our top priority in Colombia is the safe return of the three American hostages, who have now been held captive by the Revolutionary Armed

Forces of Colombia (FARC) for over three years. Our efforts remain focused on assuring the safe return of these courageous and honorable men.

The Colombian Government continues to make progress in restoring security and strengthening its democratic institutions. In 2003, the Government of Colombia implemented the Democratic Security Strategy intended to bring peace to its war-torn nation. In just under three years, that strategy has proven effective as measured by a precipitous drop in homicides to the lowest level in 18 years. Additionally, kidnappings are down 73 percent with an overall reduction in violent crime of 37 percent. The number of attacks on towns by insurgents has also seen a major reduction of 84 percent.

Plan Patriota is an integral part of the Government of Colombia's Democratic Security Strategy designed to provide safety and security for Colombia's citizens. Plan Patriota is a complex, multi-year military campaign designed to force the FARC to capitulate or enter negotiations on terms favorable to the Colombian government. As part of this campaign, the Colombian military has destroyed more than 800 FARC encampments, successfully forced the FARC into a defensive posture, denied them necessary lines of communication and logistic/resupply points, and reduced their strength by approximately 30 percent. Since 2003, Plan Patriota operations have removed approximately 20 mid-level commanders from the battlefield. In 2005, 400 FARC combatants were killed in action and 445 were captured. However, FARC senior leadership continues to elude the Colombian military's efforts.

Demobilization and reintegration of paramilitaries is progressing under Colombia's peace process with more than 16,000 Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) personnel demobilized by the end of 2005. In addition, over 8,000 members of Colombia's three most important illegal armed groups have demobilized on an individual basis since the beginning of President Uribe's administration in 2002. Approximately 9,000 FARC, AUC, and Ejército de

Liberación Nacional (ELN) members have completed the Government of Colombia's Demobilization and Reinsertion Programs.

Colombia's 2006 national budget increased by 13 percent from last year and expenditures allocated to defense increased by 15.6 percent or to about US $4.5 billion. The 2006 budget allows for an increase of up to 26,500 members for its security forces and for the purchase of additional airlift. This increased defense spending emphasizes Colombia's commitment to fighting and winning its war.

The problems affecting Colombia, like most countries in our AOR, cannot be solved solely by military means. The reduction of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism, and protection of its citizens' rights and infrastructure all require an integrated, synchronized government effort. An example of Colombia's civil-military approach to these problems has been the creation of the Center for Coordination of Integrated Action (Centro para la Coordinación de Acción Integral - CCAI). The CCAI is a cabinet level, interagency center directed by the president to establish governance in conflicted areas by developing economic and social programs, thereby complementing the Democratic Security Strategy. The key function of this interagency body is to extend government presence - governance - over national territory by planning and executing community development in the areas of security, health, documentation, food distribution, education, justice, infrastructure development, and job creation. This program is executed at national and local levels of government. Its goal is to transition short-term security gains and successes into long-term belief in, and support for, good governance. The CCAI is an innovative and new Colombian interagency initiative, which merits increased support and may well serve as a model for other nations to develop tailored approaches to better governance.

Colombia has also been successful in its efforts to increase drug eradication, seizures, and air interdiction. Aerial fumigation topped

140,000 hectares in 2005, which is higher than any previous year. Also in 2005, 223 metric tons of drugs were seized as part of a cooperative effort between Colombia and the United States. Due to an effective Airbridge Denial Program in 2005, illegal traffic over Colombia decreased by 40 percent and the illegal tracks that formerly moved all throughout Colombia have been mostly limited to the border areas.

Colombia is also continuing its focus on, and progress in, the area of human rights. Only two percent of the complaints received about human rights or international humanitarian law violations implicated members of the security forces. Though progress is being made, continuing emphasis and effort is essential.

While the Government of Colombia has made progress as a result of Plan Colombia support, its job is not over. For example, attacks against energy towers have increased over 100 percent and peace has yet to formally arrive. Continuing U.S. support is still needed to build on the gains already realized by Plan Colombia.

U.S. Public Law 108-375 currently provides expanded authority to support a unified campaign by the Government of Colombia against narcotics trafficking and against activities by organizations designated as terrorist organizations, such as the FARC, the ELN, and the AUC. This law allows us to provide military assistance to, and share information with, the Government of Colombia in its efforts against organizations whose narcotics and terrorist activities are inextricably intertwined. The continuation of this authority is not only necessary for effective support of the Government of Colombia, but it is essential for regional security, U.S. national security, and reduced drug trafficking.

In addition to the expanded authorities, the increased personnel cap that the U.S. Congress granted of 800 military and 600 civilians continues to be an important tool in our efforts to support the Colombian government.

The highest number of U.S. military personnel in-country to date (supporting Plan Colombia) has been about 520. This flexibility is essential to sustaining the necessary level of support for operations in Colombia. We appreciate continued support as we do our best to help a country that is doing so much to help itself.

Through the President's Fiscal Year 2007 authorization submission, the Command is requesting that both expanded authority and the personnel cap be extended through Fiscal Year 2008. We anticipate sending such a request to you in the near future.

Ecuador. Ecuador remains plagued by illicit trafficking and the presence of FARC members who penetrate its vulnerable northern border. We are seeing increased illicit transiting activity across this border. This includes cocaine originating in Colombia and Peru, as well as the precursor chemicals used in its production. Because the official currency in Ecuador is the U.S. dollar, it is an especially attractive location for money laundering.

Although our engagement with Ecuador is limited due to ASPA sanctions, we continue to conduct security cooperation activities within our authorities. In Fiscal Year 2005, we conducted six Medical Readiness Training Exercises (MEDRETEs) throughout Ecuador, treating almost 38,000 patients and more than 2,200 animals.

Also, the U.S. Southern Command conducted a Humanitarian Mine Action Training Mission in Ecuador this year. During this mission, Ecuadorian deminers were trained and equipped to conduct humanitarian demining in the jungle.

Peru. Peru has seen a resurgence of coca production. In 2005, there was a 38 percent increase in land under cultivation. There are indications that Sendero Luminoso, a regional terrorist organization, may be partnering with drug traffickers, complicating the security situation. The Peruvian

government is working with its security forces to counter this threat. Additionally, Peru continues to contribute quality forces to the multinational peacekeeping force in Haiti. We continue to seek opportunities to remain engaged with our Peruvian counterparts within our authorities.

Bolivia. Bolivia is the world's third largest cultivator of coca (after Colombia and Peru). We have worked closely with the Bolivian military over several years. This past year, the U.S. military group in Bolivia and the Command collaborated with the State Department to train counter-narcotics units. Today, our top priorities in Bolivia are combating drug trafficking and enhancing the Bolivian military's capability to support disaster relief and humanitarian civic action. We hope that the Government of Bolivia will continue its commitment to our mutual military engagement goals.

Venezuela. Although Southern Command continues to seek opportunities to work with the Venezuelan military, our efforts have been hindered by the Government of Venezuela. Our military-to-military relations have eroded considerably over the last 12-18 months. We will continue to seek opportunities to foster partnership and cooperation with the Venezuelan military. Additionally, we will continue to invite the Venezuelan military to participate in exercises, conferences, and training events. We believe that the politicization of the Venezuelan military is threatening our long-standing, fruitful military-to-military relationship.

Another area of concern with regard to Venezuela is the government's ongoing procurement of weapons. Their buildup of military hardware has not been a transparent process and is a destabilizing factor in a region where nations are arraying themselves to confront transnational threats, not each other. We remain unconvinced that the breadth and depth of the buildup is mandated by Venezuelan concerns for national defense.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Central American governments are increasingly working together across the spectrum of political, military, social, and economic activity. The nations within this sub-region continue to dedicate military forces and other resources to the war on terrorism, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief. Central American soldiers are also participating in seven United Nations peacekeeping operations around the globe.

Central America remains challenged in the context of crime. It is a major transshipment point for illegal trafficking, and violent, well-organized gangs are financed by extortion and drug trafficking. We are also seeing a new phenomenon in both Central America and the Caribbean with regards to drug traffickers. In the past, drug traffickers paid for logistical support, protection, et cetera in hard currency. Today, gangs and criminal elements who provide these services are receiving payment-in-kind – a cut of the drugs! Thus, drugs are now staying in-country, which is contributing to the increase of crime and violence in these sub-regions.

To counter the threats within this sub-region, these governments have formed regional partnerships and are developing appropriate initiatives. The Central American Free Trade Agreement, CAFTA-DR, will expand and diversify export markets, introduce new technology, and bring market access and capital growth to the countries of Central America and the Dominican Republic. As a result, we believe it will strengthen the democratic institutions by promoting growth and increasing economic opportunities that are key to reducing poverty and crime.

Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CFAC). We continue to strengthen our regional security cooperation efforts with this regional military organization. CFAC provides the U.S. military an opportunity to engage four Central American countries - El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras,

and Nicaragua - that are united in common efforts to address security issues shared by all nations in the region. These countries continue to work with the U.S. to form a multinational peacekeeping battalion as part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). The Presidency of CFAC rotates between the four nations every two years, with a recent transfer in December from Nicaragua to Guatemala. Reinforcing CFAC's role in peacekeeping, the Regional Training Center for Peacekeeping is being established this year in Guatemala. This center will not only train the staff of the CFAC Battalion, but also assist in training other peacekeeping units from the Central American region.

El Salvador. El Salvador is a stable, developing democracy and among our closest allies in Latin America. El Salvador has demonstrated its strong commitment to the War on Terrorism through its sixth deployment rotation of troops in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). We will continue to work closely with the Salvadoran Armed Forces. Additionally, the Salvadoran government was the first to implement the CAFTA-DR free trade agreement.

Guatemala. In 2005, the military was drawn down from 27,000 to 15,000, thus aligning the Guatemalan military with its neighboring militaries. Guatemala is one of Central America's most active participants in peacekeeping operations, with contingents currently deployed in Haiti and the Congo, as well as observers and staff members in several other peacekeeping operations.

The military leadership of Guatemala was also one of the first to embrace the U.S. Southern Command Human Rights Initiative, incorporating Human Rights doctrine, training, civilian control of the military, and effective systems for internal judicial controls as core competencies of their entire military force.

I recently visited Guatemala's national park area called Laguna del Tigre, near the Mexican border. This protected park is largely unpopulated.

The lack of government presence in this region and along the border has made it an ideal transshipment point for illicit trafficking running from south to north. The landscape of Laguna del Tigre is criss-crossed with clandestine airstrips that are used by planes transporting illicit cargo. In November 2005, the Guatemalan Government stood up an interagency task force in this National Park to counter the illicit activity in the area. In its short existence, the task force has accomplished a great deal. It has established a government presence in this remote region, established law and order for the first time, reduced illegal arms possession, destroyed clandestine airstrips, and successfully denied access to drug trafficking aircraft. This interagency approach is the first step towards effective integration of security with other components of good governance.

Current U.S. law prohibits International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Guatemala. However, Expanded-IMET for military and civilian officials is permitted. Expanded-IMET allows Guatemala to educate its leaders in human rights, broad resource management principles, principles of civilian control of the military as well as the principles of law and military justice. With Central American countries facing transnational threats such as trafficking in drugs, arms, and illegal aliens, Guatemala has worked to aggressively counter these threats. Although its Armed Forces are severely resource-constrained, they are continuing their efforts to transform and modernize. We look forward to continue working with Guatemala, the State Department, and Congress, so that when budget conditions allow, FMF and IMET can be renewed.

Nicaragua. Nicaragua is a transit point for illicit drugs, migrants, and arms. The U.S. is actively engaged with Nicaragua in conducting air and maritime counter-narcotics operations. The Nicaraguan military demonstrated its commitment to democracy during the last election in November 2002, when it successfully guarded polling locations and delivered ballots to remote

voting locations. The Nicaraguan Army has also openly stated that it wants to destroy the bulk of its man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS). The Army is currently awaiting approval from its Congress to do so.

Nicaragua, after having ably led CFAC for two years, has also volunteered to provide a company to the CFAC Peacekeeping Battalion. Through the Global Peace Operation Initiative (GPOI), we are working with Nicaragua to help them develop their company of peacekeepers.

Belize. About 37 percent of cocaine bound for the U.S. transits the land, sea, and air space of Belize. As one countermeasure, Belize inaugurated its new Coast Guard on 20 November 2005. The U.S. is contributing to this effort with funding and training for its new force. Despite success in counter-narcotics efforts and the establishment of a Coast Guard, the volume of drug trafficking continues to overwhelm Belize's limited resources.

In addition to their efforts in counter-narcotics, Belize is also posturing itself to combat other transnational threats, such as terrorism. In the next year, Belize will stand up a counter terrorism unit. The U.S. will support this effort with funding for the purchase of equipment. Additionally, as resources become available, Belize hopes to create an engineering unit that could be used to respond to natural disasters within their own country and throughout the region.

Honduras. Honduras has a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of US $1,050 and has an unemployment rate of 28 percent, the highest in the region. These high poverty and unemployment rates directly contribute to increasing criminal and gang activity, which has led to the public's primary concern of deteriorating personal security. The new government has pledged to address this problem by recruiting idle youth into the military for skills training.

Similar to Guatemala's Laguna del Tigre Park, the ungoverned region of Mosquitia in Honduras is an ideal transshipment point for illicit

trafficking. The Government of Honduras is now forming a Joint Task Force in Mocorón to counter the illicit activity in this region and U.S. Southern Command is supporting that effort through enhancements to Honduran military logistical and counter-terrorism capabilities.

Costa Rica. The U.S. and Costa Rica cooperate on a wide range of issues at a law enforcement level through an interagency effort. Some of the areas in which we are cooperating are increasing trade and investment in the Central American region, improving narcotics interdiction, and upgrading law enforcement capabilities region-wide. Costa Rica is an important partner in the counter-narcotics mission because it is in a high illicit trafficking zone.

Panama. Panama's strategic location has long defined its role in world affairs. The United States is working with the Government of Panama on a range of initiatives for secure trade and transportation, including security of the Panama Canal, maritime and air awareness, and monitoring of cargo traffic. This will aid in the interdiction of illicit cargo such as weapons of mass destruction and illegal drugs. This year, 24 countries have been invited to participate in the annual PANAMAX exercise. This exercise is focused on the maritime defense of the Panama Canal and has grown in scope and scenario complexity every year since its inception.

CARIBBEAN

The countries of the Caribbean are all democratic, with one exception. Economic deficiencies, infrastructure collapse, and illegal trafficking have challenged the ability of several of the governments in the region to effectively exercise sovereignty and maintain security, leading to considerable under-governed space. As in other sub-regions, fragile democratic institutions, government corruption, gang activity, and unequal distribution of wealth are also prevalent here and pose challenges. Regional cooperation, therefore, is essential for effective governance in

this immense maritime Caribbean Basin region, which forms the third border of the continental United States. As an example of this cooperation, several Caribbean nations are working together to prepare for the unique security challenges associated with the hosting of the World Cup of Cricket in 2007.

The Regional Security System (RSS) is a collective security organization that consists of seven Eastern Caribbean island nations. Among other things, these nations cooperate to prevent and interdict illicit trafficking, control immigration, and respond to natural and other disasters. This organization has the potential to serve as a foundation upon which to build enhanced regional security cooperation. However, with additional resources there may be opportunities for increased security cooperation.

Haiti. Haiti's geographic position, weak institutions, and extreme poverty have made it a key conduit for drug traffickers who transport cocaine from South America to the U.S. as well as Canada and Europe. Contributing factors that create this environment are approximately 1,125 miles of unprotected shoreline, numerous uncontrolled seaports, clandestine airstrips, a thriving contraband trade, weak democratic institutions, a fledging civilian police force, and a dysfunctional judiciary system. Following an initial decline of drug trafficking through small aircraft in 2004, drug trafficking has increased in 2005.

The United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is one of the best examples of security cooperation in the hemisphere where Latin American partner nations have taken the lead of the peacekeeping and security efforts. The UN force has over 9,000 troops and law enforcement personnel deployed in Haiti, commanded by a Brazilian officer and supported by over 3,500 personnel from 10 Latin American countries. Recent successes have resulted in a reduction of gang violence, though some problem areas such as Cite Soleil, an area on the northwest coast of Port-au-Prince, largely remain

under the control of various criminal elements. In addition to this ongoing work, MINUSTAH also provided a great deal of support to the successful general elections held in Haiti on 7 February.

Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic shares the strategically-located island of Hispaniola with Haiti, a key gateway for illicit trafficking. Approximately eight metric tons of cocaine from South America are estimated to have transited through the Dominican Republic to U.S. markets last year.

The Dominican Republic's Armed Forces participate fully in counter-narcotics efforts and are a future partner in the Enduring Friendship maritime security initiative. Although weak governmental institutions remain a concern, the government has increased its efforts to combat corruption in recent years. Additionally, recent initiatives to enhance border security and military training are positive indications of greater future cooperative opportunities.

Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago was the site of the only Islamic revolt in the Western Hemisphere – the failed coup by Jamaat Al-Muslimeen in 1990, led by Yasin Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr remains the leader of this radical Muslim organization, which continues to challenge the security and stability of this island nation. He is currently in prison, awaiting trial on terrorism charges.

To enhance Trinidad and Tobago's ability to deal with these terrorist threats, Southern Command sponsored the attendance of selected military officers to a counter-terrorism course in the United States this year. Trinidad and Tobago also deployed an aircraft and a maritime vessel in support of CARIB VENTURE, a joint counter-drug operation involving multiple Caribbean nations and led by the Joint Interagency Task Force-South.

Suriname and Guyana. Suriname is a former Dutch colony and Guyana is a former British Colony. Despite their differences Suriname and Guyana share

many of the same conditions that lead to illicit activities and possibly threats in their countries. Most of the populations are concentrated in a small number of urban areas on the coast. The governments of these countries have distributed their security forces accordingly, including both police and military, in the urban areas, with small detachments present along disputed borders. The majority of the land in these nations is largely ungoverned, uninhabited jungle area that is extremely vulnerable to illicit activity. Porous borders, as well as various rivers with access to the Atlantic Ocean, provide passageways for illicit trafficking.

With regard to humanitarian assistance, Southern Command broke ground on a disaster relief warehouse in Guyana in August of 2005. We built a similar warehouse in Suriname in 2002, and have since then trained disaster relief personnel on warehouse logistics and management. These warehouses will house prepositioned disaster relief material that will reduce the need for transportation of relief supplies in the event of a natural or other disaster.

SOUTHERN CONE

We continue to have good relationships with the militaries of the Southern Cone nations. We commend the regional cooperation efforts of the countries within the Southern Cone, especially in peacekeeping operations. These countries have invested national capital over many years to create and improve their training capabilities as well as enhance the professionalism of their military forces.

Chile. Chile has a major leadership role in the region. The Government of Chile is focused on strengthening its military relations with the U.S. as an element in modernizing the role of its military and establishing its proper place in Chilean society. The modernization and transformation of the military has progressed with the fielding of the F-16 fighter jets they purchased from the U.S. The Chilean military is also

reducing its footprint in the country by consolidating bases and returning key property to civilian use. We conducted sixteen security cooperation activities with Chile last year to address interoperability and anti-terrorist support team training with specific focus on force protection capabilities.

Argentina. Argentina has been a leader in the area of promoting cooperation, confidence, and security building measures. It is also the only major non-NATO ally in the region and has settled all of its boundary disputes with Chile. Argentina is currently working with Chile to stand up a combined peacekeeping brigade.

Although we have positive military-to-military relations, I am concerned that in two-and-a-half years, we have not been able to forge an agreement on privileges and immunities that would better support our military's engagement with its military by allowing U.S. forces to conduct exercises in Argentina. We will continue to seek future opportunities for engagement and hope that the Government of Argentina will work with us on this important matter.

Argentina recently signed up to the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). We encourage their full participation in this initiative that is designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems, and related materials.

Brazil. With its estimated 186 million inhabitants, Brazil has the largest population in Latin America, fifth in the world. Brazil has traditionally been a leader in the inter-American community by playing an important role in collective security efforts, as well as in economic cooperation in the Western Hemisphere. It is viewed by many as a unifier and promoter of regional stability. Brazil itself shares a border with all but two nations on the continent.

The tri-border region where Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina converge is a popular haven for drug traffickers, terrorists, and other criminals. Also, guerrilla rebels across Brazil's northwestern frontier with Colombia pose a potential threat to Brazil's control of its own territory.

Brazil has demonstrated its military leadership in the region by providing the Commander of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since the inception of this mission.

Uruguay. Uruguay is a model for peacekeeping operations, as it has the most peacekeepers per capita of any country in the world. Its peacekeepers are very effective, and we are working with them to gain lessons learned.

This past year, the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS) in cooperation with the Uruguayan Center for Strategic Studies, conducted a seminar on transnational security and governance. The Conference brought together military and civilian defense leaders from the U.S., Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay and provided a valuable forum for discussions on security issues. In addition, a Center for Civil-Military Relations team led a seminar on Civil-Military Responses to Terrorism in Uruguay to participants from South America and the Caribbean.

Paraguay. We remain concerned with the security situation in Paraguay, especially in the Tri-Border Area. The Government of Paraguay recognizes the threats posed by ungoverned spaces in this border region, and is working to secure these spaces. To aid in these efforts, U.S. special operations units have conducted joint training with the Paraguayan Counter-Terrorist units, which also increased interoperability with U.S. Counter-terrorism units.

We have also conducted numerous Medical Readiness Training Exercises (MEDRETEs) in Paraguay to help our medical troops train and to support Paraguayan medical needs.

FACING THE THREATS

Against this background, the Command strives to support our partner nations by developing within their militaries the capabilities to support security, stability, and a functioning judicial system, with an institutional respect for human rights. While anti-Americanism is rising among some nations, we enjoy strong partnerships with most nations and share a mutual understanding that we face common threats that require regional solutions. We accomplish our mission through our Theater Security Cooperation Strategy wherein we strive to build capabilities within partner nations, enabling them to protect their citizens, strengthen democracy, and ensure economic growth. Our engagements are normally through a combination of operations, exercises, and program initiatives. These activities are the keys to safeguarding our security interests in the Western Hemisphere.

OPERATIONS

Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South: Counter-illicit trafficking. JIATF-South is a model of interagency and multinational cooperation. Its staff is dedicated to protecting America's borders through around-the-clock vigilance and aggressive interdiction operations. The underlying keys to success are the collection, analysis, and dissemination of all source intelligence combined with the necessary resources to effectively operate across the vast expanses of the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific. During the past six years, JIATF-South supported increasing cocaine seizures, with 2005 being a record all time high of 251.6 metric tons in the transit zone.

The overarching impediment to increasing transit zone interdictions is the lack of resources in the area of airborne detection and monitoring. For every ten suspected tracks of illicit trafficking in the region, JIATF-South can currently only detect 4 tracks and, of those, they can only intercept 2. To improve the interdiction of illicit traffic that threatens our borders, we

must enhance our detection and monitoring capabilities and build partner nation capacity to interdict and arrest.

Working in an environment of constrained resources, the Command is working to improve its intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. We are concentrating in two areas: 1) the ability to deploy enough assets into the theater to support established requirements, and 2) incorporating the right sensors to mitigate the atmospheric and environmental features that are problematic for collection. We are also collaborating with several defense agencies, interagency, and coalition partners to address near- and long-term needs.

Joint Task Force - Guantánamo (JTF-GTMO): Detainee Operations. JTF-GTMO continues to lead the command's operational efforts in the Global War on Terrorism. Trained members of al-Qaida, the Taliban, and other individuals associated with terrorist support networks are among the nearly 500 enemy combatants currently in detention. As our military wages the long war, JTF-GTMO operations continue to provide critical information regarding terrorist structures, recruiting practices, funding, operations, and training.

We routinely support visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and value their recommendations in improving the conduct of our detention and interrogation operations.

The JTF-GTMO mission continues. We appreciate the support of the Congress for improvements in infrastructure, facility security, and the quality of life of our service members. Additionally, we are operating detention and interrogation activities in full compliance with the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005.

Joint Task Force - Bravo (JTF-B): Regional Contingency and Counter-narcotics Operations. JTF-B is a forward operating base in Honduras and supports our partner nations in a variety of missions including counter-drug, search and rescue, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance. Most

recently, JTF-B responded with both disaster relief and humanitarian assistance when Guatemala was struck by Hurricane Stan. The rapid response and immediate assistance underscored the value of forward deployed forces. JTF-B had helicopters on the ground within 24 hours of the Guatemalan request for assistance and ultimately provided over 650,000 pounds of critically needed food, water, and supplies to remote and isolated communities under harsh weather and operational conditions. The familiarity of JTF-B crews and support personnel with the topography, communications systems, and movement corridors were instrumental to mission success. This was also demonstrated when Hurricane Beta caused loss of life, damage to housing and infrastructure, flooding, and displaced persons along Caribbean coastal areas of Honduras.

EXERCISES

The Command conducts three types of exercises - operational, Foreign Military Interaction (FMI), and humanitarian. Operational exercises are typically restricted to U.S. involvement and are based on standing contingency plans. Foreign Military Interaction exercises are multinational exercises conducted with partner nations throughout the region. The scenarios for these exercises focus on peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, maritime interdiction, and security operations. Our humanitarian exercises are carried out mostly through our flagship series, NEW HORIZONS.

Foreign Military Interaction Exercises (Examples):

PANAMAX. PANAMAX remains a premier example of regional cooperation demonstrated through a multi-national exercise tailored to the defense of the Panama Canal. PANAMAX 2005 demonstrated continued growth, both in scope and participation over previous years. This year, the maritime forces of 16 nations united as the Caribbean, Pacific, and Coastal multi-national forces

led by Colombian, Peruvian, and Panamanian commanders all under the temporary operational control of a U.S. admiral for the duration of the exercise.

TRADEWINDS. TRADEWINDS is a multi-national maritime exercise designed to improve inter-operability for contingencies involving threats to the Caribbean Basin. Caribbean nations have participated in this exercise for 20 years demonstrating a long history of cooperation. In 2005, the Command converted the exercise scenarios to link it to a real world event - the 2007 World Cup of Cricket. This exercise is being used to train and prepare regional forces for a wide range of security and support operations for that event.

Humanitarian Exercise (Example):

NEW HORIZONS. Southern Command carried out four NEW HORIZONS exercises last year, one each in El Salvador, Panama, Nicaragua, and Haiti. NEW HORIZONS are joint exercises conducted by the Command that incorporate humanitarian and civic assistance programs and improve the joint training readiness of the U.S. military engineer, medical, and combat support and combat service support units. Specifically, National Guardsmen and Reservists from the following 13 states participated: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Utah, Washington, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Ohio, West Virginia, Massachusetts, Kentucky, Mississippi and the District of Colombia. In addition, Medical Readiness and Training Exercises (MEDRETEs), embedded in the NEW HORIZONS exercises, enabled the treatment of 236,000 patients in 15 countries.

NEW HORIZONS Haiti was originally planned for another location in 2005, but Tropical Storm Jean made a compelling case to shift the exercise to support the greater need in this island nation. Several U.S military units built two school houses and an auditorium, drilled three water wells, produced potable water, and provided medical and casualty evacuation support.

Collectively, the three MEDRETEs operating in conjunction with the NEW HORIZONS exercise supported 27,110 victims of Tropical Storm Jean.

PROGRAM INITIATIVES

Enduring Friendship. Enduring Friendship is an initiative that this Command is implementing to build maritime security capabilities for partner nations located in high illicit trafficking lanes. It supports the President's Western Hemisphere Strategy, the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Command Theater Security Cooperation Strategy, and the U.S./Panama Secure Trade and Transportation Initiative.

The Fiscal Year 2006 appropriation is $4 million and will be used to develop a common operational picture and interoperable command, control, communications, and intelligence (C3I) capabilities for Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Panama, and the Bahamas. Assessments of all four countries were conducted in 2005 to determine the capabilities that each would require in order to achieve a full maritime interdiction capacity. A follow-on program is planned to develop the surface interdiction capabilities of these nations and also a planned expansion of the initiative to other countries in the trafficking lanes, e.g., selected Central American nations.

The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). This initiative is currently in the planning phase for the first unit within the Southern Command AOR achieving full operational capability in Fiscal Year 2007. If executed as planned, this initiative will expand and provide new peacekeepers and peacekeeping units to global peacekeeping missions by the end of 2007. This could include an Infantry Battalion from CFAC and nine company-sized units from countries in the region ready to deploy in support of UN peacekeeping operations around the world.

U.S. Southern Command Human Rights Initiative (HRI). Our HRI fosters a culture of respect for human rights within partner nation military forces and closes the gap between the military and the citizens they protect. The HRI

effectively assists in the building of professional military forces by providing concrete standards and measures of effectiveness in the areas of doctrine, training, civilian control of the military, and effective systems for transparent internal judicial control. Eight regional nations either have implemented a human rights initiative or have committed to do so; they are Costa Rica, Bolivia, Guatemala, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, and Colombia. In 2005, CFAC signed the HRI Memorandum of Cooperation. Implementation of the Human Rights Initiative for the Caribbean and Southern Cone nations is the focus for Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007 efforts.

Although not an initiative, an area of concern is investing limited resources today to ensure the best return on that investment tomorrow. One of the most effective resources available to me is the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Program. Eleven countries remain sanctioned under the American Service-members' Protection Act (ASPA) and are, therefore, barred from receiving IMET funds. As a result, in 2005, one-third of the countries in our AOR were unable to participate in U.S.-sponsored military education. In 2003, the final year of IMET before the ASPA sanctions took effect, 25 percent (771) of the total number of students (3,128) trained from the AOR came from the countries that are now sanctioned. Providing opportunities for foreign military personnel to attend school with U.S. service members is essential to maintaining strong ties with our partner nations. Decreasing engagement opens the door for competing nations and outside political actors who may not share our democratic principles to increase interaction and influence within the region.

It is well known that the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) has a long-term goal of partnering with the countries of Latin America. The PRC requires access to raw materials, oil, minerals, new markets, and diplomatic recognition. PRC imports from Latin America grew an average of 42 percent

per year over the last four years. The PRC has been making headway into the region by using economic measures, employing diplomacy, building infrastructure, negotiating trade deals, and offering resources to cash-strapped militaries and security forces with no strings attached.

CONCLUSION

The region has tremendous potential, but no single nation can achieve it alone. In large measure, the threats are not conventional. As such, the solutions cannot be conventional. Ungoverned spaces, porous borders, corruption, organized crime, drug trafficking, and narco-terrorism are demonstrating their ability to challenge freely elected leaders and undermine legitimate governments. These threats did not develop overnight nor can they be solved overnight.

As we mentioned earlier, shared security problems in this hemisphere require shared solutions. We at U.S. Southern Command recognize that not all problems and solutions are military in nature. The military can help to set the conditions to create a safe and secure environment. The region needs other agents of reform including those with political, economic, and social programs that will improve the quality of life for all citizens in the hemisphere. An effective approach requires an integrated, long-term effort.

The men and women of U.S. Southern Command are doing a superb job. Continued Congressional support for our efforts will ensure that the Command is capable of more effective engagement and sustained support for our regional partners.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today and I look forward to your questions.

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