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**POSTURE STATEMENT OF
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COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
BEFORE THE 109TH CONGRESS**

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

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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 Mocerón 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 Columbia. 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.