

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

**POSTURE STATEMENT OF
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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hunter, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the environment in which we operate, the challenges we face, and what we are doing throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. I would like to begin by thanking the committee members, particularly those who have traveled to our region to gather first hand impressions. Most importantly, on behalf of all the members of the United States Southern Command, thank you, as a committee, for your continued support. We at Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) very much look forward to working with you and your staffs in the coming years.

Our mission is straight-forward: to promote security cooperation and conduct military operations with the 32 nations and 13 territories in the region to achieve U.S. strategic objectives. Our mission enhances security and stability in the Western Hemisphere and, in so doing, ensures the forward defense of the United States. Our ability to accomplish this mission is significantly influenced by our understanding of the diverse environment in our hemisphere and the linkages that bind the Americas together.

LINKAGES

Our shared home is the Americas. We have much in common with our partners throughout the region; we share common interests and are dependent upon each other in many ways. There are numerous and compelling geographic, cultural, economic, political, and historical linkages that tie all of the nations of the Americas together and which must be understood in order for us to achieve our mission.

Nearly half a billion people live in the SOUTHCOM region – roughly one half of this hemisphere's population. Our area of responsibility covers roughly one sixth of the earth's surface

and is bounded by large bodies of water, making the maritime environment of great importance. The people of this part of the world have diverse and rich heritages and languages. A growing part of the population has strong cultural, political and economic ties to the United States. In 2000, for example, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the number of Hispanics in America accounted for 12 percent of our population. Today the government estimates the figure as approximately 15 percent, with more than 40 million U.S. citizens of Hispanic origin. This figure is expected to grow rapidly in the coming decades, making the U.S. very soon the second most populous country of Spanish-speakers in the world. This significant cultural and human linkage between the U.S. and the region is underscored by the almost 15 million U.S. citizens who traveled to Latin America and the Caribbean in each of the past two years, with an almost equal number of our neighbors coming north.

The economic linkage between the nations of the Americas has risen dramatically over the last decade, with north-south trade comprising almost 40 percent of U.S. total global trade in 2005. Trade between the U.S. and SOUTHCOM's partner nations in Latin America and the Caribbean increased 22 percent between 2004 and 2005, with considerable repeat growth last year; and further substantial growth is predicted as a result of the Free Trade Agreements we have with a number of countries in the region. In particular, we also currently have a unique and valuable opportunity to strengthen our economic ties to Colombia, Peru, and Panama through the passage of Free Trade Agreements with these key friends to foster economic security, stability, and prosperity there.

The U.S. also imports over 50 percent of its oil from the Western Hemisphere, with 34 percent coming from Latin America and the Caribbean in 2005 – outweighing the 22 percent imported from the Middle East. An important facilitator to this critical trade throughout the Americas is the Panama Canal, which sees almost 15,000 ships transit each year, of which two thirds are going to or from one of our coasts in the U.S. The canal, in effect, is the economic heartbeat of the Americas.

Panama recently passed an important referendum to expand the canal to allow for a projected twofold increase in throughput capacity, which would certainly build upon the growing economic interdependence of this hemisphere.

Beyond the cultural and economic linkages, perhaps the most important connection we share with the region is a social and political sense that respects democracy, freedom, justice, human dignity, human rights, and human values. We share the belief that these democratic principles must be at the core of what we accomplish in the region and that free governments should be accountable to their people and govern effectively. This common belief is most evident as expressed in the first article of the Inter-American Democratic Charter: “The people of the Americas have the right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it. Democracy is essential for the social, political, and economic development of the peoples of the Americas.” The rest of this tremendous consensus document of the Americas goes on to further reinforce our shared values and our goal of strengthening representative democracy in the region. We have made great strides over the last two decades in helping democratic values spread, with all but one leader in the Americas having been democratically elected.

We are passionate about the linkages we share in this hemisphere. We at SOUTHCOM dedicate a good portion of our time to studying these connections, and we firmly believe that our region is inextricably linked to the economic, political, cultural, and security fabric of the United States. Understanding these linkages helps us make the best use of our resources in order to better secure the U.S. and to help extend peace and prosperity to the entire region.

CHALLENGES

Beyond the understanding of these critical linkages, we at SOUTHCOM also devote a considerable amount of energy to the study of the significant challenges confronting the region – challenges such as crime, gangs, and illegal drug trafficking as primary examples. These challenges

loom large for many nations in the region; they are transnational, adaptive, and insidious threats to those seeking peace and stability. By their nature, these challenges cannot be countered by one nation alone. Therefore, they require cooperative solutions involving a unified, full-spectrum governmental and international approach in order to best address them.

In many cases, the main source for these challenges stems from the underlying conditions of poverty and inequality that are prevalent in most of the area. According to 2005 United Nations statistics, about 40 percent of the region's inhabitants are living in poverty, defined as an income of less than two U.S. dollars per day. Of that number, about 16 percent are living in extreme poverty – less than one dollar per day. Couple these poverty figures with the most unequal distribution of wealth for any of the world's regions, and you have a catalyst for potential social and political insecurity and instability.

Stemming from these underlying conditions, illegal drugs and crime are the most pressing security concerns for this part of the world – and based upon the region's proximity and linkages to the U.S., a security concern here at home as well. The Andean Ridge in South America is the world's leading source of coca cultivation, and despite international efforts and record interdictions and seizures, the region still produces enough cocaine to meet demand here in the U.S. and a growing demand abroad.

A close corollary to the illegal drug trade is the alarming growth of criminal activity in the region – some of which is a byproduct of the drug trade but just as much stems from the region's extensive poverty and inequality. Violence is now among the five principal causes of death in several countries in the area. The annual homicide rate for Latin America and the Caribbean is among the highest in the world, with 25 homicides per 100,000 people compared to Africa's 22 and the U.S.'s 5.5. In Central America, Haiti, Jamaica, and major cities in Brazil, gangs and criminal violence are a security priority, with some gang population estimates reaching into the hundreds of

thousands. These gangs do not just pose a concern in Latin America. They have spread from Los Angeles and New York to around your homes in northern Virginia and my home in southern Florida. Members cross borders, moving drugs and money. This is an issue not just for our partners in the region, but for Americans on our own soil.

The costs associated with violence in the region are difficult to assess, but according to the Inter-American Development Bank, they were estimated as close to 15 percent of Gross Domestic Product across this part of the world in 2005. This inhibits efforts to alleviate the underlying conditions of poverty and inequality.

As stated earlier, we are fortunate as a hemisphere to have as neighbors democracies that virtually all share similar values with us. Unfortunately, poverty, inequality, and security challenges all contribute to a growing, frustrated expectation from the people for dramatic change. We have seen instances in some countries where “change agents” have successfully campaigned on themes of radical change, with promises of achieving sweeping results through unorthodox and unproven economic and political policies. We will closely follow any developments in the degradation or dismantling of democratic institutions in these countries and any security crisis that follows from destabilizing political and/or economic policies. In some cases, we have the complicated task of maintaining working relationships with a nation’s security forces in the face of antagonistic political leadership and attempts to spread anti-U.S. views and influence. This situation exacerbates the already difficult mission of achieving regional cooperation to address ever-changing and insidious transnational challenges.

COMMAND PRIORITIES

Within this diverse environment, with its compelling hemispheric linkages and its significant region-wide challenges, we at Southern Command have several key priority focus areas, discussed below.

First and foremost is the hostage situation in Colombia. Not a day goes by without our team focusing on the plight of Keith Stansell, Marc Gonsalves, and Thomas Howes. These three men are American hostages who have been held captive by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) for over four years, having first been taken into captivity on 13 February 2003. The safe recovery of our countrymen is our top priority. We search every day for leads that will help bring these Americans home. Finding them is of utmost importance to SOUTHCOM.

Another focus area, associated with the hostage situation, is the overall security challenge in Colombia. Over the last decade, Colombia has achieved great success in its complex struggle for peace and security. Ten years ago, the headlines coming out of Colombia resembled the worst of those to come out of any war-torn country: beheadings, kidnappings, torture, and bombings occurred essentially daily. Through its own interagency efforts and a welcomed steady stream of resources and support from the U.S., Colombia has battled from the brink of chaos to a far better situation in terms of peace and stability. Last year marked the lowest homicide rate in two decades. At great effort, the government has established security police force presence in all of its 1,098 municipalities, significantly deterring crime and terrorist incidents. This increased security presence, coupled with significant operational successes against the FARC, has contributed to the fastest sustained economic growth in a decade – over five percent annually for the past two years – and has encouraged a real sense of positive momentum for the entire country.

These hard-fought successes, however, need continued U.S. support and steadfast effort from the Colombian government in order to fully win the peace for the country. Southern Command continues to be a steady partner to our Colombian counterparts and is constantly striving to advise and assist them as they plan for the future. In addition to supporting Colombia, countering any expansion of FARC activity into neighboring countries is also part of our focus.

As in all Combatant Commands, support for the Global War on Terror is a major priority for SOUTHCOM. We remain vigilant and are constantly working with our partners in the U.S. interagency and with our partners in the region to keep our nation secure. I would characterize our region as being a highly-likely base for future terrorist threats. Members, facilitators, and sympathizers of Islamic terrorist organizations are present throughout the region. Hizballah appears to be the most prominent group active in the region, and while much of their activity is currently linked to revenue generation, there are indications of an operational presence and the potential for attacks. The Hizballah network in the region is suspected of supporting the terrorist attacks in Buenos Aires in 1992 and again in 1994. We suspect that a similar operational support network exists today and could be leveraged in the future.

We have seen successes in mitigating Islamic terrorist activity in the region. Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina have made progress in working together to address terrorism and illicit criminal activity through the Tri-border Commission's 3 +1 conference. A Regional Intelligence Center, located in Brazil and staffed by agents from all three countries, is nearly operational. Throughout 2006, countries in the region have taken action against terrorist-linked supporters and facilitators. In January 2006, Colombian authorities dismantled a complex document forgery ring with alleged ties to indigenous and Islamic terrorist organizations. Also in early 2006, Brazilian authorities arrested a suspect linked to the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's assassination. We will continue to work with our partner nations throughout the region to maximize counter-terrorist successes and ultimately deny, disrupt, dissuade, and deter terrorist and terrorist-associated activities in the area.

Southern Command's most visible assignment in the Global War on Terror is conducted at the U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo by Joint Task Force – Guantanamo. We conduct safe, humane, legal, and transparent detention operations in compliance with the laws of our nation, Common

Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, and the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005. In accordance with the Detainee Treatment Act, all interrogation operations comply with the interrogation techniques prescribed in Army Field Manual 2-22.3, Human Intelligence Collector Operations, and all detention and interrogation operations are conducted humanely. Both I and members of my staff make frequent inspection visits to our facilities at Guantanamo and we are in constant communication with the Task Force Commander.

As detailed earlier, a key challenge for the region is the spread and breadth of criminal activity and illegal drug trafficking. As a priority, we work with our counterparts throughout the region to assist them in their attempt to cope with the serious effect gangs and criminal activities have on their ability to govern. In some instances, due to a lack of enough trained law enforcement entities, countries' militaries have been asked to assist in combating these violent gangs.

The situation in Cuba and any potential repercussions from the end of Fidel Castro's rule are another set of our priorities. We are concerned that Cuba's poor socio-economic conditions and repressive regime, combined with a leadership change, could spark mass migration, and we are ready to assist the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to respond if mass migration occurs.

PROMISES

As evinced by the already strong linkages we share as a hemisphere, we believe that if we were able to overcome the region's challenges to security and prosperity, we would be able to unlock the true promise of the Americas: the promise of a secure, prosperous, and democratic hemisphere that works together to face threats to peace and stability.

The word 'promise' has two appropriate meanings for how SOUTHCOM approaches its role in the region and for our view of the future for this hemisphere. On one hand, a promise is a commitment honestly undertaken and executed by two or more parties. In this case, SOUTHCOM

is committed to lasting and beneficial partnerships with the countries in the region. Encouraging regional partnerships has been a cornerstone of our strategy for many years and a formal strategic objective for the last four years. Our "promise" entails fulfilling the commitment of being a good partner and pursuing better cooperative security arrangements in order to face together the tough challenges that confront us now and into the future.

Promise can also mean "potential" – the potential to do something vital and important; the potential to be something special and extraordinary. We believe that through lasting partnerships, we can help achieve the security conditions necessary to create the enduring basis for prosperity and healthy democratic institutions in this important region. This is the promise of a hemisphere free of gangs and drugs; free of human trafficking, money laundering, and terrorism; free of repressive regimes; it is the promise of all of us together finding cooperative solutions to demanding security challenges.

Our goal at SOUTHCOM is simple: we will work with our partners to unlock this “Promise of the Americas.” Every day we strive to be engaged in a positive way with as many of our regional partners as possible, and in doing so, enhance the security of the United States while simultaneously enhancing their own security. The U.S. Southern Command strives to fulfill the promise of this region through military-to-military engagements that build the capacity of the nations in the region to protect their own sovereign territories. Given our close linkages, this increased capacity and stability will also provide a first line of defense for the United States.

In support of our goal, we employ a theater security cooperation strategy that calls for building host nation capabilities. Over time, these capabilities will ensure our partner nations have the means to control their borders and protect their citizens, while also deepening the roots of good governance. We also envision our partners being able to work together in a collective environment to be able to counter emerging and adapting threats. To this end, most of our military-to-military

engagement is in the form of training and education programs, joint exercises, peacekeeping, and other partnership programs.

Education and Training

Education, training, and military operations provide substance to our collective security agreements and contribute directly to building capability. Education and training are prerequisites to effective operations, while operations enable partner nations to protect and control their sovereign territories. Two institutions that provide formal education to nations in the Americas are the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation and the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies.

The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) provides professional education and training – particularly in human rights – to select uniformed and civilian security forces of nations within the Western Hemisphere and operates in the context of the democratic principles set forth in the Charter of the Organization of American States. Their curriculum is designed to foster mutual knowledge, transparency, confidence, and cooperation among the participating nations, as well as to promote democratic values, respect for human rights, and knowledge and understanding of U.S. customs and traditions. The student body of Western Hemisphere civilians and police personnel receives instruction in human rights, the rule of law, due process, civilian control of the military, and the role of the military in a democratic society. Partner nations nominate students to attend this Defense Department school, and the State Department leads an interagency vetting process that examines each nominee prior to final selection.

The Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies is a regional academic forum offering strategic level defense and security cooperation, research, and dialogue for the promotion of effective security policies within the Western Hemisphere. The Center’s civilian and military graduates and partner institutions comprise communities of influence that work toward a more cooperative and

stable international security environment. The Center also facilitates NationLab Strategic Seminars at foreign national defense universities with a primary focus on national policy innovations for breaking the cycles of poverty, corruption, narco-trafficking, gangs, organized crime, and other key challenges in the region.

We have made tremendous progress in extending the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program to partner nations throughout the theater. We truly appreciate Congress's delinking IMET from the American Servicemembers' Protection Act (ASPA). IMET's overarching training program, as executed by the Department of Defense, has trained tens of thousands of Latin American officers, enlisted, and defense civilian personnel, with graduates reaching the highest level of military and civil service. IMET is a key training program that, until Congress provided relief, had been subject to the provisions of ASPA. We are working vigorously to renew training opportunities throughout the region, including partner nations like Nicaragua, where an IMET graduate recently led the interception of 871 kilograms of cocaine.

As we seek to train the future defense leaders of our partner nations, we must also continue rigorous training of our own forces. The establishment of a Combatant Commanders Exercise Engagement and Training Transformation (CE2T2) Program would consolidate all joint training initiatives and provide visibility and accountability in planning and executing our Joint exercise and engagement program. This program would make better use of existing training funds and provide the flexibility that is critical, given the complex and adaptive nature of our sustained operations in the Global War on Terrorism. CE2T2 funds are a consolidation of existing joint training resources and not a new or growth initiative.

Complementing formal education is a myriad of training exercises that improve capability and interoperability while building confidence and improving transparency. Medical readiness, disaster

relief, humanitarian assistance, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, and maritime capabilities are all developed through a family of related exercises.

Joint Exercises and Initiatives

The Humanitarian and Civic Assistance program provides training for U.S. Forces and provides tangible benefits to host nations in the form of medical clinics, schools, well drilling, and construction of rudimentary roads. As part of this program, Medical Readiness Training Exercises (MEDRETES) serve as a mutually-beneficial effort to improve medical treatment capacity of U.S. personnel while providing an invaluable service to citizens in partner nations who might otherwise never receive much needed treatment. U.S. medical personnel benefit by providing medical care in a challenging and often unique environment; local medical professionals develop closer relationships with U.S. medical personnel; and the population receives quality medical care. MEDRETES create close human linkages amongst the people of our nations and generate tremendous goodwill towards the United States. In FY06 alone, our MEDRETES treated 272,600 people and 41,000 animals and conducted 3,327 surgical procedures.

NEW HORIZONS are engineer-based humanitarian and civic assistance exercises that provide excellent training for U.S. forces and a tangible benefit to the nations in which the exercises are conducted. As an example, in 2006, a NEW HORIZONS project provided Peru with two clinics, one school, three wells and three MEDRETES. We also conducted similar exercises in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Honduras, all benefiting the local populace and strengthening the ties that connect the Americas. The demonstrated goodwill and benefit generated by these exercises is immense.

Last year, 21 nations from the Caribbean and Central America came together for the FUERZAS ALIADAS HUMANITARIAS (Humanitarian Allied Forces) exercise to focus on regional cooperation and information sharing to prepare for humanitarian and disaster relief operations.

Fourteen military, government, and non-government regional organizations participated in this exercise. Emergency operations centers from the participating countries were linked to a single Partner Nation Network – a major step toward capacity building and information sharing.

The Humanitarian Assistance Program is another element of security cooperation that provides engagement opportunities for U.S. personnel while serving the basic social needs of the residents where exercises are conducted. Over 60 training projects in 22 countries were conducted in FY06 for \$15.4 million, while another 116 projects in 26 countries are scheduled for FY07 with a budget of \$13.2 million. These projects are conducted to contribute to the sustainment of regional partnerships.

FUERZAS COMANDO (Commando Forces) is a skill competition and senior leader seminar designed to enhance cooperation and trust between international Special Operations Forces while improving their training, readiness, and interoperability. A total of 15 countries from throughout the region participated in 2006. This exercise drew anti-terrorism experts from 15 countries who exchanged information and shared tactics, techniques, and procedures for counter-terrorist operations. FUERZAS COMANDO builds regional capability and supports our War on Terror efforts.

TRADEWINDS is a phased, joint, combined exercise that occurs throughout the Caribbean and is intended to improve the readiness of the Caribbean Basin nations to respond to transnational threats and disasters. Enhancing Caribbean regional capability supports the War on Terror and provides defense-in-depth for the United States.

PANAMAX is an annual multinational exercise tailored to the defense of the Panama Canal against asymmetric threats. For last year's exercise, 17 nations from North America, South America, and Europe came together to work in unison to better prepare for today's security challenges. The objectives of the exercise included the full integration of all participants into a

multi-national staff and concentrated on the Proliferation Security Initiative. This year we expect more than 20 participants.

Another key part of our military-to-military engagement strategy is our annual Partner Nation Communication and Collaboration conference that is hosted by a different partner nation each year. In 2006, it took place in Montevideo, Uruguay. This year we will gather in the Dominican Republic. This conference focuses on strategies to improve communication in order to respond to regional crises, such as disaster relief and peacekeeping operations.

Peacekeeping and other Partnership Initiatives

Peacekeeping, like MEDRETEs, crosses the boundary between training and operations. SOUTHCOM assists in enhancing the peacekeeping capacity of partner nations through the conduct of peacekeeping activities. The Department of State-funded and Department of Defense-executed Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) is another excellent example of interagency cooperation. GPOI provides for the equipping and training of a multi-national Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) battalion of up to 650 soldiers from the Central American Armed Forces (CFAC). This battalion includes one infantry company each from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador. The GPOI program within the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility also provides for the equipping and training of two specialized companies: a Military Police company from Guatemala and an Engineer company from Paraguay. These specific capabilities were requested by the United Nations. The CFAC battalion staff will participate in this year's PANAMAX exercise as part of its operational preparation.

Yet another example of the peacekeeping operations ongoing within our region is the United Nations Stability Mission (MINUSTAH) in Haiti. Commanded by a Brazilian officer and manned by regional soldiers from many countries, MINUSTAH demonstrates the viability of our coalition approach to peacekeeping exercises and operations and the enduring value of regional cooperation.

This past year we held our first maritime Partnership of the Americas event. A portion of the GEORGE WASHINGTON Strike Group conducted unit-level training in the region where five partner nations conducted 24 community relations events in eleven countries. These countries included the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Jamaica, Honduras, and Trinidad and Tobago. We are planning a second Partnership of the Americas for 2007. In conjunction with this exercise, we will also leverage a world-wide U.S. Navy program called Project Handclasp that distributes humanitarian, educational, and goodwill materials to the needy in our partner nations. These materials are donated by the U.S. private sector and will be distributed by U.S. service members in conjunction with community service projects. This year we have received over 285,000 high-nutrition meals valued at over \$70,000 through Project Handclasp for distribution throughout the region. We are also focusing this program elsewhere in the region to add impact to our outreach efforts.

We will deploy a U.S. Navy hospital ship (USNS COMFORT) to the Caribbean, Central America, and the Andean Ridge this summer to conduct theater security cooperation and humanitarian assistance operations. Like our MEDRETE exercises, these operations serve as a mutually-beneficial effort to hone the readiness skills of medical personnel of U.S. Armed Forces while helping to improve and save lives, reduce suffering, stimulate public health, and support the command's theater security cooperation objectives. The COMFORT will visit various countries in a four-month deployment and treat as many as 70,000 patients. Non-governmental organizations, partner nation medical staff, and U.S. medical staff will work closely to aid those without access to medical service and build lasting relationships for the future.

In concert with the deployment of the COMFORT, we will deploy a U.S. Navy high-speed vessel (HSV SWIFT) to Central America and the Caribbean for six months this spring. The SWIFT would conduct training and exchanges with our partners in the region and participate in community

relations projects. The SWIFT deployment is part of a broader Global Fleet Station program designed by the Navy to provide flexible forward presence for theater security cooperation activities around the world.

The Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) is a key tool in preventing terrorist groups from using our region as a staging ground for terror attacks against the United States and Partner Nations. CTFP goals are to build capabilities and capacity to combat terrorism and to develop a global network of "combating terrorism" experts and practitioners, all sharing common values, language, and understanding of the terrorism threat. The program is conducted through education and training seminars on intelligence gathering and sharing, senior level military education for both officers and enlisted soldiers, legal aspects in combating terrorism, civil-military responses to terrorism, countering ideological support for terrorism and its financing, and various maritime security procedures.

The State Partnership Program (SPP) is another example of successful collaboration that has had dramatic growth and benefit in our region over the past few years. The SPP links 20 U.S. states to 26 partner nations using the U.S. National Guard as the executive agent. In FY06, state National Guards conducted 149 separate events with partner nations. These events develop core competencies in regional military forces, promote the concept of citizen-soldiers as public servants, and reinforce our bilateral relationships.

Enduring Friendship is a regional multi-year initiative that provides maritime security assistance to select countries in the region. Enduring Friendship will strengthen partner nations' maritime domain awareness and operational capabilities to anticipate and respond to threats, maritime emergencies, and natural disasters, and will also enhance control over illicit trafficking lanes. This program will improve partner nation maritime command, control, and communications (C3)

capability; increase interoperability; and integrate maritime operational pictures, thus laying the foundation for maritime theater-wide information sharing and coalition operations.

The first of three Enduring Friendship phases focused on the Dominican Republic, Panama, Jamaica, and the Bahamas. Phase two will include Belize, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua. The Eastern Caribbean and the Regional Security Systems (RSS) countries will be in phase three. In conjunction with other SOUTHCOM efforts, Enduring Friendship will increase Western Hemisphere collective maritime security.

Our Enduring Friendship initiative greatly benefited from the recently approved Global Train and Equip authority approved by Congress. Last year, we were able to concentrate Section 1206 funds on two of our phase one countries, significantly accelerating our timeline to reach operational capability in these countries and giving us the flexibility to build a more responsive program. We plan on using this year's funds, if approved, to jump-start our phase two countries, bringing much closer to fruition our goal of a vigilant and responsive maritime capability in this region so critical to our own security.

These Train and Equip funds have proven to be an extremely proactive tool for this and other initiatives at SOUTHCOM and have provided us with a truly responsive funding source for priority programs. As we develop our regional partnerships, it is critical to be able to dedicate resources quickly to build capability and/or capacity in response to emergent threats or during unique opportunities. The authority to train and equip ensures that we maintain this flexibility.

The ability to build the capacity of our partner nations and to respond quickly to unconventional threats would allow SOUTHCOM to better fulfill the cornerstone of our regional strategy: being steadfast, responsive, and lasting partners to help bring about the promise of the Americas. By fulfilling our promise, we will be enhancing our own security, with our capable partners in the

region responding to emergent threats and denying access and maneuver room for our nation's enemies.

Partnerships in the Region

We have many examples of successful partnering with countries in our region. Since 2000, Colombia stands out as a true reflection of what steady partnership with the U.S. can achieve. Through collaboration, partnering, education, training, and operations supported by the U.S., Colombia's military has grown by 27 percent since 2000, or 128,000 members, and by 2010 the national police are projected to increase their end strength by 25 percent, or 163,000 members. According to the Colombian National Inspector General's office, while the size of the security forces has grown in the past 10 years, the number of human rights allegations is down 67 percent thanks to an aggressive human rights program that now extends down to battalion level. Polling also indicates a high respect for the Colombian military among the populace.

Today, the Colombian military conducts sustained counter-narcoterrorism operations, developing actionable intelligence, protecting the national infrastructure, and enhancing civil-military cooperation in the context of their democratic security strategy. They do so consistent with the norms of international human rights and the rule of law. Colombia has dramatically improved security throughout its country and is poised for truly winning the peace for its democracy – among the oldest in Latin America.

Another positive example of regional partnership can be seen in Central America, where the System for Central American Integration Meeting of Heads of State met in October 2006 to identify and publish a plan of action for the Central American security priorities. The plan, published in November 2006, addresses how the region can counter organized crime, gang participation, illicit arms transfers, and porous borders.

Our emphasis within Central America is to build partner nation capacity to improve internal security, prevent illicit activity, and enhance regional stability. To do so, USSOUTHCOM leverages existing organizations such as the Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CFAC) to improve the collective response of our partners and advance our security cooperation objectives. As members of CFAC, the Central American countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua work together to respond to threats throughout Central America and mitigate the effects of ungoverned space, porous borders, corruption, and organized crime. Outside of the construct of the CFAC, El Salvador continues to be a steady partner of the U.S. and is a champion of peace and stability in Iraq. Their Cuscatlán Battalion is currently on its eighth rotation to Iraq in support of peacekeeping and stabilization operations.

In the Caribbean, the Cricket World Cup is fostering collaboration among the participating nations on matters from threat identification to threat mitigation, including maritime port security and consequence management for possible chemical, biological and radiological attacks. The Caribbean Community, with our help, is working diligently to face these and other security concerns.

OPERATIONS

Ultimately, education and training translate to operational capability and, in our region, operations are conducted not from fixed, large U.S.-run bases, but instead from a combination of flexible U.S. and partner nation facilities. With our departure from Panama at the turn of the century, there was less emphasis placed on permanent basing and more emphasis put on the use of partner nation facilities from which counter-narcotics operations could be launched. Three such facilities, known as Forward Operating Locations, are at Manta in Ecuador; Comalapa in El Salvador; and Curacao and Aruba in the Caribbean Basin. These sites, which fall under the broader category of overseas facilities known as Cooperative Security Locations, are well forward of the

United States and are unique in that they are used only for counter-narcotics operations. We also maintain a forward operating site at Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras. We currently operate out of Apiay in Colombia and are working with the Government of Colombia to increase access for counter-narcotics and other missions. These overseas cooperative locations are a cornerstone of our ability to operate in the SOUTHCOM region.

Joint Interagency Task Force South

Located in Key West, Florida, Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF South) is the nation's crown jewel in addressing the challenges posed by transnational narco-terrorism and a model for interagency and partner nation cooperation. In a combined effort with the U.S. government interagency and our partner nations, JIATF South continues to disrupt record levels of cocaine bound for the U.S. and Europe. It conducts highly effective interagency operations by coordinating, integrating, and synchronizing scarce Department of Defense, interagency, allied, and partner nation resources. Most of our partner nations do not have the resources to devote exclusively to interdiction, yet their willingness and governmental cooperation increase each year as the negative effects associated with the illegal drug trade spread and as our collective successes in attacking illicit drug trafficking increase throughout the region.

The positive effects of everyone pulling together are clearly illustrated by the great successes JIATF South has achieved over the last six years of ever increasing record disruptions. The last three years alone resulted in cocaine disruptions of 219 metric tons (MTs) in 2004, 252 MTs in 2005, and 260 MTs in 2006. These numbers represent nearly a threefold increase in disruptions since 2000, and all of this is a result of continually improving our working relationships with involved U.S. Government entities and with our partner nations. However, today's more robust intelligence picture of illicit drug movements also points to room for continued improvement. Intelligence suggests that some cocaine movements in JIATF South's operating area go undetected

each year because of a lack of an appropriate detection resource to respond to intelligence queuing, a real missed opportunity because nearly 90 percent of illicit drug movements that are successfully detected by JIATF South assets are eventually interdicted.

Joint Task Force-Bravo

Joint Task Force-Bravo (JTF-B) in Soto Cano, Honduras, represents the only permanently deployed U.S. forces in the region. JTF-B is a first responder to crises in the region and routinely conducts humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, search and rescue, personnel recovery, and non-combatant medical evacuation operations. Their most recent humanitarian operation was the deployment of three helicopters in response to flooding in Panama as part of Task Force-*Estamos Unidos*. They flew six relief sorties transporting food, water, mattresses and petroleum products to disaster stricken areas. The familiarity of JTF-B crews and support personnel with the topography, communications systems, and movement corridors were instrumental in mission success. JTF-B is also a key contributor to our counter-narcotics effort, using their assets, regional knowledge, and professional contacts to facilitate local law enforcement and interagency interdiction of illicit drug trafficking. JTF-B has a long history of answering our partner nations' calls for support during crisis – especially during hurricane season – and is a valuable asset to SOUTHCOM's partnership and cooperation plans in the region.

Joint Task Force Guantanamo

Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO) in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, provides significant support to the overall Global War on Terror and ensures enemy combatants are kept off the battlefield while garnering information of strategic value for dissemination to national security decision makers. Over the past year alone, JTF-GTMO completed over 3000 interrogations and developed over 200 Intelligence Information Reports.

Currently JTF-GTMO detains less than 400 unlawful enemy combatants, down from a total lifetime population of approximately 800, in a legal, humane, safe, and transparent manner. Over the past year, JTF-GTMO hosted over 320 individual media representatives from over 220 outlets. We also work closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross. Detainees have communication with the outside world through mail and receive medical care and food service similar to that of the U.S. military service members who guard them. The Military Commissions Act of 2006 established procedures for trying unlawful enemy combatants for violations of the laws of war. While the conduct of such commissions is not our responsibility at SOUTHCOM, we provide administrative and logistical support to the commission process as directed by the Department of Defense.

INITIATIVES

Within SOUTHCOM, we are striving to transform into a true interagency organization. To facilitate this, we recently established a new directorate for interagency partnering, with support from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of State. This directorate's goal is to develop a culture of robust partnering with the interagency, international, non-governmental, and private organizations to better integrate and focus national and international efforts to support security, stability and prosperity in the region.

Our efforts include coordination and synchronization with members of the interagency, academia, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, our senior leadership in the Department of Defense, and members of Congress and their staffs. These organizations formulate policy, allocate resources, develop strategies, and strive to ensure the U.S. Government shares a common vision and strategic objectives. It is in this arena that we seek to play a leading role in the transformation effort. The products of these key organizations shape the SOUTHCOM's theater security cooperation strategy and provide vectors for our engagement.

U.S. Southern Command is also committed to experimentation and innovation. Experimentation provides a means to increase capability, capacity, and collaboration with the interagency and coalition nations in the theater. It is an integral part of our overall theater security strategy. Latin America and the Caribbean is an excellent region for innovation – for trying new approaches, new technologies, new applications of existing technologies, and new ways to combine capabilities. We will continue to seek out opportunities to incorporate experimentation into ongoing operations and exercises to increase the nation's effective and efficient accomplishment of its objectives.

As an example of experimentation, we recently completed a Crisis Management experiment with multi-agency participation from the U.S., Argentina, and Honduras. This event provided a multi-national environment to collaborate with regional and functional experts to address three time-sensitive crisis scenarios: responses to a natural disaster, a chemical incident, and civil unrest. We will expand the experimentation audience in 2008 by combining the next crisis management experiment with a recurring exercise that trains and improves humanitarian assistance and disaster relief skills for approximately 150 personnel from 27 nations in the region.

We will also continue to bring innovative and experimental capabilities under development into Colombia, such as the ability to detect objects under dense foliage, use of unmanned systems, innovative data fusion, biometrics, and others for validation in an operational environment, as well as providing near real time support to the Colombian military from such cutting edge technologies.

CONCLUSION

We believe that the bilateral and multilateral education, training, and operations achieved through partnering with U.S. Southern Command are having a significant positive influence in the Americas. There is regional momentum to develop solutions to the challenges faced by the Americas. The Defense Ministers of thirty-four American nations met in October 2006 to examine the changing threat environment, both internal and external to the hemisphere. These Ministers

agreed that regional challenges need cooperative solutions and that the collaboration of virtually every nation is essential. They produced a consensus document that describes the region's commitment to combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and which firmly condemns all forms of terrorism, drug trafficking, and transnational crime. The document also identified the need to strengthen cooperative mechanisms to counter these threats. This event reinforced the importance of partnering and highlighted the need for cooperative solutions for problems such as poverty, gangs, money laundering, human smuggling, counter drug activities and dealing with regional violence.

I would like to thank all of the Members of the Committee and all the Members of Congress for your support of U.S. Southern Command and the important work we are doing in Latin America and the Caribbean. While the likelihood of large-scale military combat in our region remains low, the importance of sharing ideas, economic activity, cultural exchanges, and conducting military exercises is quite high. In fact it is essential to creating a mutually beneficial security environment in this hemisphere, and we ask your continued support of our initiatives throughout the region.

In this vein, we are cautiously optimistic that Colombia is on the threshold of achieving its strategic objectives, but they will be heavily reliant on U.S. support for the next two or three years. The support from Congress has been invaluable for the past six years and we strongly encourage your continued support. Our initiatives include aircrew and maintenance personnel for helicopters, a robust logistics support system supporting JTF-Omega, Plan Consolidacion, and other ongoing support. In addition, we are seeking to provide the Colombian military with an automated on-line logistics system that integrates the supply and maintenance function of the Colombian military and national police. We are also trying to support to a modest depot level repair capability, fielding "Midnight Express" boats supporting riverine interdiction for the Colombian Navy on their North and Pacific coasts, and helping to establish the 2d Riverine Brigade on their Pacific coast.

We also appreciate your past support for several of our other initiatives, including expanded authority to conduct counter-narcoterrorism operations in Colombia.

We understand and appreciate the value of congressional support and are thankful for all you have provided for the command. I want to thank you again for delinking IMET from the ASPA sanctions. Your actions will enable us to re-engage hundreds of military personnel each year who would otherwise be denied an opportunity to benefit from U.S. military education and training.

While we deeply appreciate your support in this area, there are other areas for which we also seek assistance. As you know, the command is seeking congressional support for the construction of a consolidated headquarters facility in Miami-Doral for occupancy by 2010. The headquarters is vital for effective command and control of future joint, coalition and interagency operations that we conduct in the region. Our current headquarters complex lacks adequate space, is improperly configured, does not comply with anti-terrorism and force protection standards, and has dated communications architectures and expensive annual lease costs. Your support for this project is of tremendous importance.

The command received \$110M in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for the region in FY06. FMF is a prerequisite for successfully funding many of the programs that enable military-to-military engagements that lead to long-term relationships. In addition, it enables partner nation capacity that, in turn, provides for defense-in-depth for the U.S. Partner nations prefer to buy U.S. military equipment for the quality and sustainment packages that accompany the purchases. We appreciate your continued support on this important program.

Finally, we ask your support for the proposed Center for Excellence in Human Rights. SOUTHCOM is the only Combatant Command with a dedicated Human Rights program. The authorities we would gain from this proposed language would allow SOUTHCOM to intensify our support to our partner governments in their efforts to eliminate human rights violations. The

protection of human rights is an essential step toward strengthening democracy in our neighboring countries.

As I mentioned earlier, it is in the context of geographic, social, economic, political and military linkages that we plan and execute the daily activities associated with our mission, and successful mission accomplishment for the command requires cooperation and reliable partnerships – partnerships based on commitment, based on a promise to this region of the world.

This Combatant Command is committed to being the strategic partner of choice in the region and will focus on the relationships necessary to do so. We will strive to invent new approaches in every area; from tactical execution to strategic engagement, from more efficient training methodologies to creative ways to improve resources.

I take great pride in our mission and in the exceptional men and women of the United States Southern Command. I know from first hand experience that today's men and women in uniform are patriots of extraordinary promise. They are coming of age in this new century as the War on Terror unfolds; they watched the World Trade towers fall to earth with incomprehension and anger; and then reacted with fierce determination. They have made a promise to their country that they will stand the watch and fight for us to win the battle that is unfolding today. From the dusty streets of Baghdad to the mountain passes of Afghanistan to the tropics of Colombia to the cold foothills of Korea – they are fulfilling that promise. I am proud to serve with them in U.S. Southern Command.

I thank you for your support to the finest military in the world.

I am prepared to answer your questions.