

# Background

No. 1727  
February 20, 2004



Published by The Heritage Foundation

## Strengthening America's Southern Flank Requires a Better Effort

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In the global war on terrorism, the United States is paying too little attention to its southern flank. People, goods, and services flowing within the Western Hemisphere—both legal and illicit—have become potential conduits for carrying terrorist money, agents, and weapons. Attacks on countries such as Colombia by narco-guerrillas and on the United States by Middle Eastern extremists have already had cascading affects, disrupting markets and economies. Moreover, many Latin American countries remain unable to confront terrorism and transnational criminality, constrained by scarce resources and, in some cases, lack of political will.

While these threats appear to be growing, the U.S. military component charged with protecting American interests in the region faces an uncertain future. Responsibilities for coordinating bilateral actions against emerging threats such as terrorism and international crime have fallen to agencies with little subject-matter expertise. Current U.S. laws block more effective support for training civilian law enforcement in democratically governed countries. And a Cold War-era treaty that narrowly addresses aggression by states outside the hemisphere encumbers more effective multilateral cooperation.

President George W. Bush's *National Security Strategy* acknowledges that the global war on terrorism cannot be won by the United States alone.<sup>1</sup> America's neighbors cannot meet that challenge and still confront a host of other threats.

### Talking Points

- Since the end of the Cold War, U.S.–Latin American security relations have failed to keep up with regional democratization and emerging threats.
- Security weaknesses in Latin America make the United States vulnerable to attacks on its southern flank.
- To ensure a more secure neighborhood, the United States should reorganize its security efforts in the region, shift management to expert agencies, and develop partnerships with neighboring countries to improve cooperation against terrorism and international crime.
- Amending the restrictive Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and rewriting the 1947 Rio Treaty would help to accomplish these goals.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/nationalsecurity/bg1727.qfm](http://www.heritage.org/nationalsecurity/bg1727.qfm)

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To better secure the United States and the hemisphere, the Bush Administration and Congress should review missions and responsibilities and reallocate efforts to develop a more cooperative partnership with hemispheric neighbors. Key elements of reform should be to:

- **Revitalize the U.S. Southern Command** to make it a more effective partner in promoting security in the Latin American region;
- **Shift management of security missions to agencies** with the subject-matter expertise to deal with them;
- **Develop subregional partnerships** to promote routine military-to-military, civilian agency-to-civilian agency cooperation that incorporates common standards and operating procedures;
- **Amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961** to allow more targeted and flexible support for civilian law enforcement in democratically governed countries; and
- **Promote revision of the 1947 Inter-American (Rio) Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance** to address modern security needs.

## What is at Stake

**For the United States.** In the wake of the Cold War, Latin America has been peripheral to U.S. national security concerns. Soviet support for armed insurgencies no longer exists, and with the exception of Cuba, almost all of the region's countries are at least electoral democracies as opposed to dictatorships. There are good reasons, however, why the U.S. should pay greater attention to threats from the South.

At least seven major terrorist organizations have an active presence in the region, including three with ties to transnational Islamic terrorist groups.<sup>2</sup> In 2002, the Brazilian government arrested Hesham al-Tarabili, a suspected agent of al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya, who is believed to have been involved in the 1997 attack on tourists in Luxor, Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Although Latin America has not been used to launch attacks directly at the United States, it serves as a support base for criminals, illegal armies, and terrorist groups.

According to Ambassador Cofer Black, U.S. Department of State Coordinator for Counterterrorism:

Terrorists in this hemisphere are becoming more active in illicit transnational activities, principally the drug trade, but also arms trafficking, money laundering, contraband smuggling, and document and currency fraud. Not only do these provide sources of income, but terrorists also take advantage of their well-established underground supply routes to move funds, people and arms across borders.<sup>4</sup>

Other security interests include the future peace and economic success of a region that comprises 800 million people. Mexico is America's second largest trading partner behind Canada. Although the rest of Latin America accounts for less than 6 percent of U.S. world trade, there is potential for much more. Nearly 30 percent of America's crude oil imports, more than the United States receives from the Persian Gulf, come from Latin America.<sup>5</sup>

1. The Administration's security strategy states: "While our focus is protecting America, we know that to defeat terrorism in today's globalized world we need support from our allies and friends. Wherever possible, the United States will rely on regional organizations and state powers to meet their obligations to fight terrorism. Where governments find the fight against terrorism beyond their capacities, we will match their willpower and their resources with whatever help we and our allies can provide." *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002, at [www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html).
2. The National Liberation Army (Colombia), Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, the Shining Path (Peru), HAMAS (transnational Middle East), Hezbollah (transnational Middle East), and the Egyptian Islamic Group (Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya, affiliated with Osama bin Laden). See U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism*, 2002, pp. 65–74.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
4. Ambassador Cofer Black, "Remarks to the OAS Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE)," 4th Regular Session, Montevideo, Uruguay, January 29, 2004.
5. U.S. Department of Energy, *Petroleum Supply Monthly*, December 2003.

Regrettably, however, an estimated 300 metric tons of illegal drugs also reach the United States through its southern border, contributing to about 20,000 deaths every year, not to mention an estimated \$160 billion in related costs.<sup>6</sup>

**For Latin America.** The flowering of democracy and economic growth portended peace, stability, and broad-based prosperity. Yet gains over the past 20 years are in danger of unraveling into rising unemployment and the re-emergence of autocratic regimes.<sup>7</sup>

For one thing, regional troublemakers like Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez have reportedly been fanning flames of social unrest by encouraging indigenous activists in Bolivia and Ecuador to rise up against elected leaders. Chávez's own security forces have allegedly given safe haven and material support to Colombia's FARC guerrillas, and his government is supporting the Castro regime by selling oil to Cuba at concessionary prices on generous credit terms even though Cuba has been unable to pay most of the bill. In exchange, Fidel Castro has sent more than 10,000 doctors, teachers, and intelligence specialists to Venezuela and advises Chávez on domestic and foreign policy.<sup>8</sup>

While free trade agreements have provided opportunities for growth, lagging economic reforms have blocked the rise of living standards in such countries as Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Venezuela, and even, to some degree, in Mexico.<sup>9</sup> Nearly half of the region's inhabitants live in poverty. To help support them, relatives living in the United States send back about \$32 billion in remittances each year, but that does not compensate for the absence of a broad middle class—or its

destruction, as happened in Argentina following its 2000 financial collapse. Large populations living on the margin are an inadequate tax-base to support public institutions.

As a result, poorly supported security forces such as those in Bolivia and Ecuador are unable to project state authority throughout national territory, leaving vast rural areas at the mercy of criminals, subversives, and terrorists. In some countries, security forces involved in civil wars in the 1980s have been reduced in strength and reorganized to separate the police from the military in order to follow the U.S. model; but new civilian law enforcement was not established in time to counter the spread of gangs, as well as narcotics and arms traffickers, particularly in El Salvador and Honduras.

Scant disaster preparedness and health infrastructure is another problem. A virulent, biological attack on the United States might easily work its way south, with potentially devastating consequences on countries with limited health facilities.<sup>10</sup> Drug trafficking that once was focused on the lucrative North American market is shifting south where narcotics use is now greater than in the United States. Arms smuggling and human trafficking are increasing as well. The U.S.–Mexico border is the focal point for firearms trafficking into Mexico and the smuggling of persons into the United States.

Post–September 11 measures taken by the United States have affected Latin America as well. U.S. demands for added security at overseas ports and screening of agricultural products have drawn complaints that Washington is foisting its own cost of self-protection onto governments that can ill

6. U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, *International Narcotics Control and Strategy Report*, 2002, March 2003, at [www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2002/html](http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2002/html) (January 23, 2004), and Office of National Drug Control Policy, "Drug Data Summary," fact sheet, March 2003, p. 2.
7. For an interesting analysis, see Cresencio Arcos and Caesar Sereseres, "Managing or Shaping U.S.–Latin American Relations," Colleagues for the Americas Seminar Series, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., March 28, 2003, at [www.ndu.edu/inss/Repository/INSS\\_Proceedings/Colleagues\\_of\\_the\\_Americas/CA\\_Apr03/CA\\_Report\\_Apr03.html](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Repository/INSS_Proceedings/Colleagues_of_the_Americas/CA_Apr03/CA_Report_Apr03.html) (February 12, 2004).
8. Alexei Barrionuevo and José de Córdoba, "For Aging Castro, Chavez Emerges As a Vital Crutch," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 2, 2004, p. 1.
9. Despite 10 years of economic expansion under the North American Free Trade Agreement, living standards and job growth have failed to increase without attendant reforms to curb corruption, open state monopolies to private investment, and establish the rule of law. See Stephen Johnson and Sara J. Fitzgerald, "The United States and Mexico: Partners in Reform," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 1715, December 18, 2003, at [www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/BG1715.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/BG1715.cfm).

afford the expense. Latin American leaders say the United States is making it difficult for developing countries to compete in the global economy by “pushing out” its borders with new security restrictions.

## Washington’s Eroded Security Strategy

**Military Command Quagmire.** Since 1941, what became the U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) has overseen and coordinated U.S. military operations in the Caribbean and south of Mexico to the Straits of Magellan. Formerly headquartered in Panama along with two Air Force bases and extensive army and navy facilities, it moved to Miami, Florida, with the handoff of the Panama Canal to Panama in 1999. By then, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) had turned over the bases and other military property to Panama, and the U.S. Army South (USARSO) and other components had relocated to various sites in the United States and the Caribbean. Panamanian leaders wanted the United States to pay in order to stay. Senior U.S. policymakers decided that retaining assets like Howard Air Force base, useful for launching counterdrug surveillance flights, was not worth it.

### SOUTHCOM THEN AND NOW

U.S. Southern Command has roots in protecting the Panama Canal, which began with the first Marine deployment to the isthmus in 1903. In 1941, the Caribbean Defense Command (CDC) was created and co-located with the Canal Zone U.S. troop headquarters. After World War II, it became a unified command, and in 1963, the Caribbean Command became U.S. Southern Command, responsible for U.S. military operations throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean.

SOUTHCOM’s operational theater now comprises 32 countries and 14 U.S. and European territories covering more than 14.5 million square miles. With the implementation of the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977, which turned over the canal to Panama, SOUTHCOM relocated to Miami in 1997. It now oversees 3,000 permanently assigned personnel, five components scattered throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, four joint task forces deployed in Latin America, and 26 security assistance organizations located in U.S. embassies throughout the region.

According to SOUTHCOM Commander General James T. Hill,

The war on terrorism is [SOUTHCOM’s] number one priority in the region. . . . We are increasingly engaging those who seek to exploit real and perceived weaknesses of our newest democracies. Shoring up our allies also serves to shore up our own homeland security. Given our proximity and general ease of access, Latin America is a potentially vulnerable flank of the homeland, providing many seams through which terrorists can infiltrate.<sup>1</sup>

1. General James T. Hill, “Colombia: Key to Security in the Western Hemisphere,” Heritage Foundation Lecture No. 790, June 2, 2003, p. 1, at [www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/HL790.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/HL790.cfm).

Through the 1980s, SOUTHCOM not only collaborated with DOD security assistance agencies, but also funded and coordinated military exercises, personnel exchanges, deployment of training teams, and guided military actions on the ground. Since the early 1990s, when security assistance took on a

10. Even without the application of bioweapons, pathogens could present more significant problems as the potential for diseases to spread rapidly is increasing. A number of factors are driving this trend, including the growth in global trade helping to spread diseases, growing resistance to antibiotics and other antimicrobial drugs, demographic changes, population growth and migration, and deteriorating public health infrastructure worldwide. See Executive Office of the President, Office of Science and Technology, National Science and Technology Council, *Global Microbial Threats in the 1990s*, September 13, 2000, p. 2, at [www.ostp.gov/CISSET/html/3.html](http://www.ostp.gov/CISSET/html/3.html). See also George Fidas, remarks before the International Disease Surveillance and Global Security Conference, Stanford University, Stanford, California, May 11–12, 2001, p. 8, and David F. Gordon *et al.*, *The Global Infectious Disease Threat and Its Implications for the United States* (Washington, D.C.: National Intelligence Council, 2000), *passim*.



counternarcotics character, civilian agencies like the Department of State and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency assumed some of SOUTHCOM's responsibilities. Thus, since moving to a suburban office park in Miami, it has played less of a direct role in security assistance and more of a supporting one.

Now the Pentagon is contemplating abolishing SOUTHCOM and making the entire Western Hemisphere the responsibility of a new unified command.<sup>11</sup> After the September 11 attacks on the United States, the DOD created the Northern Command (NORTHCOM) under the unified command plan (UCP), which prescribes the geographic boundaries and functions of the combatant commands charged with conducting U.S. military operations worldwide.<sup>12</sup> NORTHCOM is mostly a coordinating structure with no resources or command elements for conducting exercises, foreign liaison, international intelligence gathering, or collaborating in security assistance to foreign nations. For now, SOUTHCOM's demise would remove what focus there is for regional engagement on security matters.

**Confused Lines of Authority.** Over the past decades, judicious military engagement led by SOUTHCOM has assisted in building military capacity, but now the command lacks adequate resources to continue that function as well as prosecute the global war on terrorism. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of the interagency process, the means by which federal agencies determine how to work together, is declining. The Department of State's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Bureau (INL) has assumed greater authority over police and military assistance programs, creating an overly complicated multi-agency assistance

chain that blocks the timely delivery of support and training.

Today, counternarcotics and counterterrorism are the major security concerns in the region, and the Department of State—with a sluggish internal financial system and without the support resources, training, doctrine, standardized procedures, and evaluation mechanisms characteristic of the U.S. military—is the lead agency. Assisting either directly or through contractors is a proliferating array of government entities, including the U.S. Coast Guard, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms among others. Throughout the Andean region, contractors substituting for U.S. military and police personnel have lost crews and aircraft in accidents that could have been prevented through more unified supervision and by prioritizing safety and mission success over expediency.<sup>13</sup>

While federal and local law enforcement and military agencies have been learning to cooperate on countering terrorism in the United States since September 11, U.S. diplomats and military representatives in Latin America are still encouraging the region's new democracies to sever once-close ties between their armed forces and police. Such changes may have resulted in better civilian oversight and improved respect for human rights, but the spread of stateless criminal organizations has taxed their capabilities before new forces, procedures, and lines of communication have had time to gel. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), which used to cooperate with the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development on justice system reform and law enforcement training—critical elements in curbing

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11. James Jay Carafano, "Shaping the Future of Northern Command," Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments *Background*, April 29, 2003, p. 3, at [www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/Archive/B.20030429.NORTHCOM/B.20030429.NORTHCOM.pdf](http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/Archive/B.20030429.NORTHCOM/B.20030429.NORTHCOM.pdf).

12. W. Spencer Johnson, "New Challenges for the Unified Command Plan," *Joint Force Quarterly*, Summer 2002, p. 63.

13. Two single-engine Cessna aircraft operated by U.S. contractors gathering intelligence were lost in rugged territory in Colombia under guerrilla control on February 14 and March 25, 2003. Neither plane was suitable for combat operations in mountains. See Scott Wilson, "Three Americans Are Killed in Plane Crash in Colombia," *The Washington Post*, March 27, 2003, p. A18. On April 20, 2001, a Peruvian Air Force A-37 fighter, guided by a CIA-contracted surveillance aircraft, mistakenly shot down a light plane carrying a U.S. missionary and family members. As a result, the Peruvian air bridge denial program was shut down for more than two years. See Karen DeYoung, "Senate Committee Looking into Drug Interdiction Pact with Peru," *The Washington Post*, April 26, 2001, p. A21.

terrorism in Latin America—has refocused its foreign programs on Eastern Europe.

**Tutorial Relations.** Military-to-military relations still manifest an assistance-focused mindset—what Jay Cope, fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies, calls a “deep belief that the United States must tutor, supply, and in many ways aid, or manipulate the region’s institutions.”<sup>14</sup> This approach is a holdover from the Cold War, and even earlier, when Latin American armies were largely unprofessional and served to enforce loyalty to dictators and powerful political groups. A combination of assistance and pressure to abandon politics leveraged existing local efforts into transforming most Latin American armies into more modern public institutions at the service of elected leaders.

Nonetheless, the Pentagon still keeps Latin American militaries at arm’s length, leading mostly to one-way exchanges based on equipment donations, training exercises, personnel exchanges, and ship visits. There is little U.S. consultation with the region’s elected leaders over security matters unless it involves fighting drug trafficking—something in which the United States has been keenly interested. More comprehensive relationships between the U.S. and Latin American militaries are more the exception than the rule, depending on the U.S. ambassador in country and the U.S. Military Group commander.

U.S. development assistance is even less effective. Where used to construct infrastructure, it focuses on turnkey operations with little follow-up. U.S. aid has funded road-building in Latin America since the 1960s, but local governments often fail to maintain what has been built. This practice overlooked the region’s military engineers and medical practitioners, who share a command structure that could do these jobs and respond to threats such as terrorism and natural disasters in ways that the private sector will not and fledgling civilian bureaucracies cannot. The United States could take advantage of this synergy more effectively through the strategic use of military road-building exercises such as *Nuevos Horizontes*, yet budgets for these programs have been declining.

**Roadblocks to Productive Engagement.** Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 prohibits advising and training foreign police except as exempted by legislation—a policy based on the 1878 *Posse Comitatus* Act, which correctly sought to limit Army abuses against civilians during Reconstruction following the U.S. Civil War. Section 660 specifically addresses concerns over U.S. training given to foreign police that subsequently committed human rights abuses.

As sensible as Section 660 appeared when enacted, however, it now distorts U.S. security assistance programs. Three-quarters of SOUTHCOM’s funding is earmarked for counternarcotics use—mostly a law enforcement function—which means that SOUTHCOM cannot easily use those funds. For instance, U.S. Army units may not directly provide human rights training to foreign police units without enabling legislation. Transfer of surplus equipment from military inventories and by military means is similarly restricted, while U.S. assistance to foreign police is limited by the fact that American law enforcement is largely community-based and has no foreign operations component.

**Outdated Accord.** The 1947 Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance was meant to invoke a collective response against a threat from outside the hemisphere. That made sense when the Soviet Union was arming subversives to install communist governments in Latin America, but with the failure of such movements in the 1990s and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the threat of extra-hemispheric aggression receded.

Just prior to September 11, Mexican President Vicente Fox suggested simply scrapping the Rio Treaty. Today, an agreement to provide cooperative assistance to neighbors facing terrorism, transnational crime, or natural disasters seems more appropriate.

In the background, the Organization of American States has passed more than 90 resolutions on various aspects of security since 1995, from non-proliferation to clearing land mines; but without money to pay for specific measures and the political will to persuade voters at home to adopt them, such resolu-

14. John A. Cope, “Hemispheric Security Relations: Remodeling the U.S. Framework for the Americas,” National Defense University Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Forum*, No. 147 (September 1998), p. 2.

tions are little more than promises. A treaty requires local legislative approval and action, and thus could form the basis for common procedures and support mechanisms.

However, a NATO-like pact is unlikely in the near term. For one thing, there is the problem of asymmetry. For many Latin American leaders, the economically and militarily powerful United States seems like a gorilla in the sandbox. These leaders see U.S. attempts to forge an Inter-American security system as a precursor to violations of their sovereignty—a concept many Latin American countries are only now attempting to define.<sup>15</sup> For another, some countries are attempting to define their mutual security relations, such as Argentina with Brazil and Venezuela with Cuba.

Furthermore, broad agreement on security is lacking. Some, like Mexico, define it as defending internal order.<sup>16</sup> Others, like Argentina, view it as protecting borders. Some, like El Salvador, try to guard against a range of threats, from external aggression to natural disasters. Recently, representatives to the Organization of American States (OAS) made progress by agreeing on a declaration listing eight threats at the OAS's Special Conference on Security in Mexico City on October 27–28, 2003.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, multilateral bodies like the OAS-affiliated Inter-American Defense Board and the OAS Commission on Hemispheric Security serve mainly as forums, not action focal points. The OAS does not often coordinate with the military-dominated Defense Board, reflecting a lingering lack of trust between civilians and soldiers. Moreover, the OAS Permanent Council handles all urgent security issues.

## Toward Shared Responsibility

The United States and its hemispheric neighbors bear mutual responsibility for strengthening security without creating impediments that might strangle legitimate trade and travel. One component of this challenge is to reduce internal threats to stability. Healthy political institutions and sound economies are key to defeating such threats; hence, the United States should encourage Latin America to go beyond elections to establish deeper democratic reforms and further open semi-market economies to remove sources of discontent and social conflict. To his credit, President Bush made that point at the Special Summit of the Americas on January 12–13 in Monterrey, Mexico.<sup>18</sup>

Successfully meeting the threats of terrorism, subversion, and transnational crime depends on developing a common capacity to assert control over national territory and strengthening justice systems to prosecute perpetrators. Because terrorist groups and transnational crime organizations have characteristics of both military organizations and domestic criminals, cooperation between military and civilian law enforcement agencies at the various levels is key—as U.S. policymakers are discovering in the development of U.S. homeland security capability.

However, working with other governments in this hemisphere to improve these capabilities depends on respecting their evolving democracies and trying to work within their constraints. This means both pursuing a more collaborative approach that puts sustained cooperation on an equal footing with training and developing a more

15. Marcela Donadio, "Comentarios sobre la Conferencia Especial sobre Seguridad," *Boletín RESDAL*, Vol. 2, No. 13 (November/December 2003), p. 7.

16. At the OAS Special Conference on Hemispheric Security, October 28–29, 2003, in Mexico City, President Fox said: "Of course, our security depends on how well we tackle such scourges as drug trafficking, illegal trafficking in weapons and people, terrorism and organized transnational crime in general...but it depends, mostly, on our ability to reverse the serious inequity, poverty and underdevelopment that beset our nations. These are the main threats to stability and governance in our countries and our communities." Press release, "Mexican President Stresses Importance of 'Comprehensive Security,'" Organization of American States, Mexico City, October 29, 2003.

17. These eight threats are terrorism, conflict between states, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, transnational crime, arms trafficking, natural disasters, attacks on health, and poverty. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, "Results of the OAS Special Conference on Security," fact sheet, October 29, 2003.

18. George W. Bush, "Remarks at Summit of the Americas Ceremony," The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Monterrey, Mexico, January 12, 2004, at [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040112-9.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040112-9.html) (February 5, 2004).

organized framework to promote hemispheric security.

To this end, the Bush Administration and Congress should:

1. **Revitalize the U.S. Southern Command** to make it a more effective partner in promoting hemispheric security. NORTHCOM's primary focus is protecting the U.S. homeland and providing support to U.S. civil authorities. Eventually, that charge should be expanded to overseeing U.S. military relations with Canada and Mexico as partners in North American continental defense.

Closing down SOUTHCOM would throw U.S. military programs and goals in the region south of Mexico into disarray. SOUTHCOM could play a larger role in supporting U.S. military operations in Latin America by preparing to assume operational responsibility for military aspects of counternarcotics and counterterrorism missions. It must complement the U.S. Departments of Homeland Security and State in developing routine collaborative relations instead of relying on tutorial ties.

Congress should restore funding for engineering and medical training and assist host country armed forces in building infrastructure and health systems to fight natural disasters and guard against biological warfare. Further improvements should include:

- *Solidifying SOUTHCOM's role in the Caribbean.* While authority over parts of the Caribbean region was recently shifted to NORTHCOM, allowing it to oversee maritime security along the southern border, SOUTHCOM continues to supervise security cooperation programs, humanitarian assistance, and migration issues with the Caribbean island nations by mutual agreement. This arrangement makes sense and should remain part of the UCP.
- *Enhancing SOUTHCOM's role in drug and arms interdiction.* Commanded by SOUTHCOM, Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South includes operational and intelligence assets from the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security and other federal agencies that detect, monitor,

and interdict air and maritime smuggling activities. JIATF South is the ideal instrument for ensuring that there are no gaps between the drug interdiction efforts of NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM in the Caribbean area. JIATF South's mission should also include counterterrorism responsibilities.

- *Providing SOUTHCOM with greater flexibility in employing its resources.* Traditionally, the lion's share of funding has been for counternarcotics operations and cannot be used for other activities, including counterterrorism. SOUTHCOM should be given greater flexibility in applying its available resources so that it can address security concerns in a more holistic manner.
2. **Develop a comprehensive security relationship and shift management of security missions to experts.** While drug trafficking and now terrorism are the main U.S. security priorities in Latin America, they should not be the only dimension of U.S. security relations as was the case between America and Colombia during the Clinton Administration. Such intense focus ignores support elements vital to sustaining counternarcotics and counterterrorism missions. Accordingly, U.S. decision makers should seek comprehensive relations that liaison with all elements of military, police, and civilian law enforcement agencies, not just counternarcotics units.

Congress and the Administration should also review whether the routine management of operational assets (e.g., aircraft, troops, and trainers) deployed in Andean countries should be moved from the Department of State to military or civilian agencies that have applicable doctrine, training, and procedures for combat and law enforcement activities—while also maintaining State's role as a coordinating agency through its Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs. Even though contractors may continue to be useful in some temporary roles, security assistance to Andean nations should have added value in helping to build the local capacity of military and civilian law enforcement agencies to combat drug trafficking and terrorism. If support for counternarcotics and counterterrorism



could be funded over a longer period to avoid frequent shutdowns, reliance on contractors might not be so necessary.

3. **Improve intelligence collection.** President Bush should direct America's intelligence agencies to cast a wider net. Although collection on Middle Eastern operatives in the border region between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay has increased, U.S. agencies failed to anticipate the April 11, 2002, uprising in Venezuela and have since been blind to changes occurring within President Chávez's inner circle and armed forces. Intelligence gathering on the Castro regime has yet to provide details concerning Cuba's reported coordination of leftist movements in Latin America or the support given by Colombian proxies to violent groups in Bolivia.<sup>19</sup>
4. **Develop bilateral and subregional partnerships.** Periodic training exercises and ship visits still serve a purpose, but the United States should move beyond them to promote routine military-to-military, civilian agency-to-civilian agency cooperation that will help develop common standards and operating procedures in security matters among willing states. U.S. embassy country teams should promote security assistance/cooperation in a more holistic way, encouraging cooperation among U.S. military representatives and civilian law enforcement attachés under the rubric of homeland security instead of counternarcotics. Perhaps approaching Latin American allies through less stove-piped channels will make them more likely to share and act on common goals in securing the hemisphere, such as eliminating
- disparities in border security, legal and financial regulatory regimes, and intelligence sharing.<sup>20</sup>
5. **Amend Section 660 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961** to allow more targeted and flexible support for training and assisting the police of foreign democratic governments to ensure their inclusion in a broad range of programs from surplus equipment delivery to human rights seminars for civilian law enforcement in democratically governed countries. Current broad restrictions keep U.S. military units from providing any kind of training or assistance to foreign police units without enabling legislation, while American law enforcement, which is largely community-based, cannot deal effectively with foreign counterparts. Restrictions should be fine-tuned to permit U.S. military cooperation where useful.
6. **Promote revision of the 1947 Rio Treaty** to address modern security needs. Leader summits, defense ministerial conferences, and OAS resolutions have served to highlight security needs without requiring action to do anything about them. The Rio Treaty should be rewritten to provide a flexible framework for mutual cooperation beyond extra-hemispheric aggression to include protocols for mutual assistance on emerging threats such as terrorism, organized crime, drug and arms trafficking, and the smuggling of humans. Through its Permanent Representative and military mission to the Inter-American Defense Board, the Bush Administration can urge the OAS to take up this important work. Subsequently, those countries wishing to broaden cooperation can have their congresses ratify a new document.

19. "Police Arrest a Colombian, Four Bolivians for Alleged Subversive Plot," *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, April 13, 2003, from the Bolivian Information Ministry, April 10, 2003.

20. As a start toward that objective, at the 2002 Defense Ministerial meeting in Santiago, Chile, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld proposed an initiative to foster regional naval cooperation. The initiative would study ways to strengthen planning, upgrade command and control systems, and improve information sharing among the region's navies, coast guards, customs services, and police forces. Donald H. Rumsfeld, "Statement by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, Santiago, Chile, November 19, 2002," Office of the Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs, November 19, 2002. For more concrete recommendations on how relations can be improved, see Max G. Manwaring, Wendy Fontela, Mary Grizzard, and Dennis Rempe, "Building Regional Security Cooperation in the Western Hemisphere: Issues and Recommendations," *Special Series: Shaping the Regional Security Environment in Latin America*, U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, North-South Center, October 2003.

## Conclusion

The United States is closely tied to its hemispheric neighbors through geography, shared history, and trade. The security of the neighborhood in which America exists cannot be ignored. To defend the U.S. homeland and help hemispheric allies meet similar challenges, the United States needs a new strategy that treats nascent democracies differently from the dictatorships they once were, meets the new threats from within the region, and moves beyond current tutorial and assistance relations toward sustained collaboration.

SOUTHCOM plays an important role in securing the U.S. southern flank from a multitude of transnational threats. To address the dangers facing America in the 21st century, the command's organization and operation need to be revitalized and better integrated with other national activities. While the

United States has spent 20 years encouraging the separation of military and police functions in Latin America, it should rethink how it will work with each country's unique security architecture.

U.S. policymakers must sort out and clarify America's approach to hemispheric threats while persuading multinational forums on regional security to develop a new basis for achieving that goal. Failure to move forward on such an agenda will give terrorists and criminals the upper hand.

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