

POSTURE STATEMENT OF  
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CORPS  
COMMANDER IN CHIEF, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN  
COMMAND  
BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Committee, I welcome this opportunity to provide you my assessment of the United States Southern Command Area of Responsibility. In my last posture statement I stated that I would use the beginning of my tenure at SOUTHCOM to meet key regional military and civilian leaders, build relationships within the interagency community, and gain an in-depth personal perspective on the region. I have followed that strategic game plan. In the last 12 months I have made 33 trips to the region during which I have made 60 individual country visits. Through my travels I have gained insights and formed opinions about the challenges and opportunities that confront the United States in this part of the world. In this posture statement I will first provide my personal assessment of overall security and stability conditions in the Caribbean and Latin America. Then I will make focused comments on the progress that has been made to reestablish an effective theater architecture as we withdraw from Panama, the status of our regional engagement and counterdrug activities, and the challenges that confront us in Colombia, Haiti and other points of instability. I will conclude by presenting my vision for the future.

#### **STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT**

The importance of Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States has not diminished since my last posture

statement. Economic predictions that by 2010 U.S. trade with the region will exceed that with Europe and Japan combined persist. Our dependence on Venezuela, Trinidad and other oil producing nations of the region as our primary sources for imported fuel is not expected to change. Of every dollar Latin Americans spend on imports, 44 cents buy goods from the USA...with the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas it is likely this will increase, and more and more ours is becoming not an American culture, but a culture of the Americas. The United States is currently the fifth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. By the year 2010 Spanish speakers will comprise the largest minority in our country, and demographers tell us that by the year 2047, one hundred million United States citizens will be of Hispanic descent. For these and other reasons we must pay increased attention to our affairs and interests in this hemisphere.

Measured against the goals and aspirations of our National Security Strategy, the Southern Command AOR can be viewed as a "good news story." I can find no other developing region of the world where the twin tenets of engagement and enlargement have succeeded as widely. Over the past two decades the peoples of the Caribbean and Latin America have embraced democracy. Of the 32 nations in our theater, all but one are governed by leaders who serve at the pleasure of the people and we remain hopeful

that someday soon the people of Cuba will enjoy the personal liberties and increased economic opportunities that are the by-products of a free society and a market economy. While we are encouraged by these trends, we are mindful that many of these are fragile democracies. Through our regional engagement activities we work hard with the militaries of the region promoting their subordination to civilian leadership, urging them to respect human rights and encouraging them to become model democratic institutions. I believe that by-and-large our efforts are succeeding.

From the standpoints of security and stability, we have had our ups and downs since my last posture statement. On the positive side, the signing of the peace accords between Peru and Ecuador in October brought to an end a 140 year old dispute which threatened to flare into armed conflict as recently as last summer. Though Colombia continues to be wracked by violence, since the inauguration of President Andres Pastrana in August of last year we have seen a new national leadership team emerge; a team where there is a spirit of cooperation and a sense of common purpose between civilian and military members. In Brazil and Honduras we have witnessed the installation of civilian Ministers of Defense, bringing to 20 the number of countries that have taken this significant step in subordinating their militaries to civilian leadership. On the negative side,

the constitutional crisis in Paraguay continues with no end in sight. The legislative impasse in Haiti grinds on, obstructing economic development and placing at risk the substantial contributions the U.S. military has made, and continues to make, in support of democratic rule in the most impoverished nation in our region. Finally, we are watchful of developments in Panama as we continue to withdraw our forces pursuant to the Canal Treaties and we are monitoring closely the emergence of the new government in Venezuela. I will discuss each of these countries and issues at greater length later in this posture statement.

In a region that fears no external power, is essentially at peace with itself and on a per capita basis spends less on arms than any other part of the world, transnational threats have emerged as the greatest hazards to regional stability and democratic and economic development. There is a growing realization from the tip of the Southern Cone to the Straits of Florida that in one way or another and in varying degrees the corrupting influences of narcotics trafficking, domestic and international terrorism, illegal migration, illicit arms sales, money laundering and organized crime are undermining the foundations of democracy and impeding economic development. It is against these transnational threats that United States Southern Command has framed its regional engagement strategy.

## **THEATER ARCHITECTURE**

In previous testimony I have asserted that ours is not a theater built on treaties, alliances, standard written agreements and other formal protocols. Rather it is a region that runs on handshakes and personal relationships. For this reason, I have established creation of a viable theater architecture as the number one priority during my tenure at Southern Command. When I wrote last year's posture statement I had high confidence that we would succeed in our attempts to negotiate a post-2000 military presence in Panama. I contemplated a residual force of about 2,500 soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, who would form the core element of the United States component of the proposed Multinational Counterdrug Center (MCC) at Howard Air Force Base. I envisioned that this force would execute the majority of our detection, monitoring and tracking missions in support of counterdrug efforts in the source and transit zones. I also viewed Howard as the primary logistics support and sustainment base for the lion's share of our regional engagement activities. When MCC negotiations were terminated we were faced with the task of rapidly identifying alternative sites for key commands within the AOR, negotiating access to those sites and obtaining the funding needed to support unit relocations. At this point we

have made substantial progress, but there remain pieces of the puzzle not yet in place.

Puerto Rico will replace Panama as our main operating hub in the region. United States Army South (USARSO) is in the process of relocating its headquarters to Fort Buchanan. Once reestablished, this force of 1,382 active and reserve component soldiers and civilians will undertake the missions previously carried out by a contingent of 3,868 in Panama. To compensate for reduced manning, USARSO will rely heavily on the more than 16,000 Army and Air Force Guardsmen and Reservists on Puerto Rico. In a great many ways this is an ideal marriage. Puerto Rican guardsmen and reservists are bilingual making them equally effective whether conducting engagement activities with members of English-speaking militaries in the Eastern Caribbean, or with Spanish-speaking counterparts in Central and South America.

Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH) is our most heavily committed component. Each year the soldiers, sailors and airmen of our theater Special Operations Command conduct nearly 150 deployments into the AOR, and the command provides the quick reaction force we need to respond to crises and other fast-breaking requirements. To perform these demanding missions the troops must be close to the action and keep a sharp edge on their language and cultural skills. Congress has been notified that we intend to relocate approximately 350 members of SOCSOUTH

to Naval Air Station, Roosevelt Roads, this summer. We are also finalizing basing arrangements for selected command and control and intratheater airlift assets on Puerto Rico. Collocation of ground and air forces is imperative for precise planning and rapid execution of crucial missions.

In the form of Joint Task Force Bravo, United States Southern Command has maintained a continuous presence at the Soto Cano Airbase in Honduras since 1983. JTF Bravo is a contingent of about 500 soldiers and airmen who have for 16 years occupied temporary, expeditionary facilities on the east side of the airfield. Soto Cano has been, and will continue to be, our main hub for operations throughout Central America. To preserve adequate tactical mobility, some of the 228<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion helicopters formerly based in Panama will reinforce the limited aviation assets assigned to JTF Bravo. Honduran receptivity to these initiatives and adjustments in force structure has been largely attributable to the superior performance of JTF Bravo during the tragic early hours when Hurricane Mitch ravaged the north coast of Honduras and then the interior of the country to include its capital city, Tegucigalpa.

Heretofore, Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-SOUTH), operating from its headquarters at Howard Air Force Base has served as our primary planning and execution agent for

counterdrug operations and activities in the source zone. Under the MCC concept this Task Force would have been the element around which we organized the U.S. component. The loss of Howard has caused us to redesign our counternarcotics command and control mechanism. We will merge JIATF-South with its counterpart organization JIATF-East which superintends our counterdrug efforts in the transit zone from its headquarters at Naval Air Station, Key West. Through thoughtful integration of communications and information systems we will create a single organization capable of "seeing" from the Florida Straits into the Andean Ridge. The merged JIATF will be responsible for planning, coordinating and supervising the execution of detection, monitoring and tracking and other counterdrug missions in both the source and transit zones. To achieve a streamlined and cost-effective organization, the Southern Command Headquarters will assume responsibility for most administrative, logistical and programmatic activities previously performed by both JIATFs.

One important piece of the theater architecture is not yet in place. Howard Air Force Base has long served as the pivot point for our air operations in the transit and source zones. The 8,500' runway at Howard, its extensive taxiways, ramp space and well developed maintenance facilities have provided an ideal operating base for AWACS, P3, F-16, tracker, tanker,

intelligence collection, command and control and logistical aircraft supporting SOUTHCOM counterdrug and regional engagement activities. No other airfield in the region can provide equivalent support. The runway at Howard must close on 1 May if we are to comply with treaty provisions. To sustain counterdrug and other operations at current levels we are attempting to negotiate agreements with several nations in our area of responsibility for temporary recurring access to selected airfields. We refer to these airfields as Forward Operating Locations (FOLs). With assistance from the Department of State, we are seeking to conclude operating agreements with several countries in the region for access to airfields in this shared effort to combat drug trafficking. We will require access to three airfields, at a minimum, if we are to sustain support for counterdrug operations at current levels. I am confident that we will be up and flying from these forward operating locations on schedule.

The SOUTHCOM Headquarters has now operated in Miami for 17 months. I am convinced that we are in the right place to implement our engagement and counterdrug strategies. Miami is widely accepted by the nations of this hemisphere as the de facto capital of Latin America. With its economic, cultural, academic, transportation, and consular ties to our area of responsibility, Miami has proven to be the most credible

location in the continental United States from which we can engage the entire region. Relocating from Panama to Miami has supported our mission and, in addition, afforded us opportunities to pursue "smart business" practices in providing support services to the Southern Command military community. Consistent with my desire to nurture and fully support "smart business" and business reform efforts, I believe the United States Government will be best served by purchasing our headquarters building and land...a small parcel of real estate that does not constitute a "Fort Miami." A novice review of the development trends in this part of Miami reveals dramatic increases in the value of real property...endorsing purchase at current market prices.

The detailed treatment I have accorded the theater architecture in this posture statement is reflective of the emphasis that I place on it. To achieve the goals and objectives of our strategies for the region Southern Command must be engaged, and this engagement must have its wellspring in the region...not in the Continental United States. The attitude of our neighbors was clearly expressed by a Colombian General who, when he heard a rumor that U.S. Army South might relocate to CONUS remarked caustically, "I understand that you now intend to work in the city, but live in the suburbs." Over the past year I have discussed these issues with many members of

Congress, some of whom are members of this committee. I speak for every member of Southern Command and for scores of civilian and military leaders in our region when I thank you for your support and encouragement. In our efforts to properly posture the command for the 21<sup>st</sup> century we aren't out of the woods yet...your continued support is essential.

#### **THEATER ENGAGEMENT**

The United States Southern Command Area of Responsibility has not been designated a major theater of war; consequently we are focused not on conflict resolution but on conflict prevention. As we assess our responsibilities under the three pillars of the National Military Strategy...shape the environment, respond to crisis and prepare for an uncertain future, we are drawn to the first. We believe that if we skillfully shape the hemispheric security environment, we will not have to respond to crises, and the future will be far less uncertain. This interpretation of our role under the NMS led to the creation of five aims that provide the foundation for our regional engagement strategy:

- Sustain, strengthen and expand multilateral security cooperation with and among security forces in the region
- Assist in development of roles and missions, and appropriate modernization of regional security forces

- Assist in peaceful resolution of disputes and promote confidence and security building measures
- Promote and support democratic institutions and civilian control of military and security forces
- Promote and support respect for human rights and the environment and adherence to the rule of law

To achieve these strategic aims Southern Command uses a wide array of engagement tools. Among them are combined operations, combined exercises, combined training and education, military to military contact programs, security assistance programs and humanitarian assistance programs. While conducting these engagement activities, over the past year our service components conducted over 2,265 deployments, employing more than 48,132 personnel. These deployments ranged in size from four member mobile training teams to large deployments like UNITAS which involved 5 U.S., and 35 foreign ships from 14 countries, and more than 1,500 U.S. sailors and Marines. By every measurement ours is a total force theater. Fully 35 percent of the deploying forces were members of the Guard and Reserve. This year, as we embark on a major reconstruction effort in Central America, that percentage will be even higher. To lend form and substance to our engagement strategy it may prove helpful to cite some examples of specific activities that have been undertaken in pursuit of our strategic aims.

To sustain, strengthen and expand multilateral security cooperation with and among security forces in the region, Southern Command conducted 18 major exercises last year. In the aggregate these exercises attracted participation by 40 national contingents, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and numerous private and non-governmental organizations. In keeping with our peace preservation role, exercises focused on peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and counternarcotics cooperation. In the past, we conducted a greater number of exercises, but many of them were bilateral. Today, as a matter of policy, we conduct no bilateral exercises. Our objective is to migrate from regional, to inter-regional exercises, and ultimately to hemispheric efforts for challenges such as narcotrafficking and terrorism.

Just as United States Armed Forces have downsized since the end of the Cold War, so too have the military and security forces of Latin America and the Caribbean. Absent the external threat posed by Cuba, with the end of the civil wars that plagued Central America for decades, and with resolution of many of the border disputes that have wracked the region for centuries the need for large, expensive standing armies has evaporated. In their places many of the nations are building smaller armed forces. Some, like Argentina, have focused intently on emerging missions such as international

peacekeeping. Others, like Peru and Bolivia, have increasingly oriented their armed forces toward internal security and development tasks. Southern Command is presently assisting Colombia in its efforts to reform and restructure its Armed Forces. Recognizing the need for specially trained and equipped forces to work with the National Police in the counternarcotics struggle, the Colombian Army is developing and rapidly fielding Counterdrug Battalions. We have worked with the Army and supporting forces from the other services to determine the capabilities that will be needed by these battalions and the personnel, training and equipment required to produce those capabilities.

In the category of peaceful resolution of disputes, the negotiated settlement of the 140 year border conflict between Peru and Ecuador stands as the single most significant security enhancing achievement for the past year. Southern Command played a significant role in the peace process from the termination of the last round of open hostilities in 1995, to the signing of the peace accords in Brasilia on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October of last year. Joint Task Force Safe Border, the United States element of the four nation Military Observer Mission Ecuador and Peru (MOMEP), led the peacekeeping effort from 11 March 1995, until we relinquished the support mission to Brazil on 15 December 1997. During the summer of 1998, members of

United States Southern Command made extensive use of military-to-military contacts with members of Peruvian and Ecuadorian Armed Forces to dampen tensions and encourage separation of forces when unrest generated by negotiations threatened to reignite armed conflict and derail the peace process.

Subordination of military forces to civilian leadership, support for democratic institutions and respect for human rights are common threads that run through all of our engagement activities. We have encouraged the transition to civilian Ministers of Defense. As previously mentioned, the appointment of civilian Ministers in Brazil and Honduras brings to 20 the number of nations that have adopted this convention. In Paraguay senior members of Southern Command personally intervened with Paraguayan military leaders when it appeared that extra-constitutional measures might be invoked during last summer's electoral crisis. Again, our engagement activities, frequent country visits, and personal relationships with key military leaders created the opportunity for productive dialogue and mediation.

Human rights is a watchword within Southern Command. We have created a Staff element that is specifically invested with responsibilities to encourage and assist regional armed forces in their efforts to adhere to international norms of human rights. The Human Rights Section is also tasked to develop HR

policies and procedures and to coordinate with counterpart organizations throughout the region to maximize SOUTHCOM engagement opportunities that will promote greater respect and/or understanding of human rights. Human rights instruction is imbedded within the curriculums of all of our Mobile Training Teams and other training elements. Each and every soldier, sailor, airman or Marine deployed within the Southern Command AOR is considered to be a human rights emissary. Troops receive instruction on human rights, are taught to recognize abuses, and are instructed on how to report suspected violations. The United States Army School of the Americas (USARSA) is an indispensable element in our overall human rights training program. Human rights training is an integral component of every course taught at USARSA. I know of no other service school with a more tightly controlled or closely supervised curriculum. The school is frequently assailed by human rights activists who make much of the unsavory activities of a handful of graduates. Not mentioned are the 10 heads of state, 38 cabinet officials and more than 100 heads of armed forces or chiefs of service who have attended one or more courses at USARSA. The importance of this school is such that if it were disestablished on a Monday, we would be busily engaged in its re-creation on Tuesday.

The full value of our engagement strategy and activities have been fully demonstrated during the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations conducted in Central America in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. Categorized as the most destructive storm to hit Central America in more than 200 years, Mitch devastated large portions of Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. The statistics are grim. At this point 17,606 are dead or missing and presumed dead, more than 2.7 million are homeless, and the already fragile infrastructures of all four countries have been badly damaged. Southern Command has been continuously involved in the efforts to mitigate this disaster before, during and after the storm. Before the storm we conducted a series of disaster preparedness exercises for the nations of Central America and the Caribbean. The most recent in January and February of 1998 was held in Guatemala. Ironically, the scenario was built largely upon a hurricane that swept through Central America and the Caribbean. Applying lessons learned at the exercise, several nations significantly modified their disaster response organizations and procedures. At the recently concluded Defense Ministerial of the Americas, the Minister of Defense from Guatemala publicly announced that had his country not incorporated lessons learned from the exercise, the death toll in Guatemala would have been measured in thousands rather than hundreds. Joint Task Force Bravo at

Soto Cano rode out the storm with Honduras and initiated emergency support operations before the rains subsided. During the initial 30 day phase of what has evolved into a three part humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operation, Southern Command forces saved 1,052 lives, delivered almost 3.5 million pounds of food, distributed more than 65 tons of medical supplies and provided safe drinking water for large segments of the rural population in isolated regions. During the second phase of the operation, more than 5,300 U.S. servicemen and women deployed to Central America to make repairs to the infrastructure needed to reestablish host nation capabilities to provide for the health and basic welfare of their people. During this phase scores of bridges have been built, countless culverts have been installed, dozens of wells have been reclaimed, hundreds of kilometers of road have been repaired, destroyed clinics have been rebuilt from the ground up, and our health care professionals have made over 50,000 patient contacts. Now we are preparing to embark on the third and final phase of this massive theater engagement undertaking. With superb support from DOD and the Congress, 56 million dollars has been made available to Southern Command to expand our New Horizons Humanitarian Assistance Exercise Program. Over the next eight months we will employ more than 23,000 guardsmen and reservists, supported by small cadres of active component

personnel to build or repair approximately 12 clinics and 33 schools, drill 27 high capacity fresh water wells, repair 90 kilometers of road, construct 26 bypasses and 2 major bridges, and conduct 39 two week medical, dental and veterinary outreach programs that will benefit tens of thousands of people in the region. In addition to the basic goodness of these undertakings, the expanded New Horizons Exercise will provide unique, relevant and personally rewarding training for thousands of guard and reserve engineer and medical personnel. In a larger strategic context, this unparalleled theater engagement opportunity may stem waves of migrants who might otherwise seek to rebuild their lives in the United States or neighboring countries.

#### **COUNTERDRUG EFFORTS**

Narcotics trafficking persists as the most corrosive threat to democracy, stability and prosperity in our region. Possessing enormous resources and spurred by a powerful profit motive, drug traffickers have demonstrated both flexibility and adaptability while altering their patterns of operations in response to hemispheric interdiction and other counterdrug initiatives. The complex and pervasive nature of the threat coupled with the fact that counterdrug requirements place additional demands on already thinly stretched forces, generate optempo, and must compete for many of the same low density

assets that are in demand by other regional combatant commanders for higher priority missions, make this Southern Command's most difficult and challenging task. We are mindful that the President has declared that the actions of international narcotics syndicates constitute a "serious national security threat" and we are committed to making a strong and meaningful contribution to this struggle. Confronted with a large mission and limited resources, we have worked hard to devise creative approaches that will enable us to effectively and productively carry out our counterdrug responsibilities. The magnitude of this challenge is reflected by the fact that our detection, monitoring and tracking assets are only sufficient to cover 15 percent of the area, 15 percent of the time. In this resource-constrained environment we have devised a three-part strategy to achieve our counternarcotics goals. The components of the strategy are: (1) application of innovative tactics, techniques and procedures; (2) promoting effective regional responses and (3) pursuing better coordination and more effective employment of interagency resources.

- **Innovative Approaches:** We have learned that the traffickers study and analyze our operating patterns in much the same way we study and analyze theirs. Based on their observations they frequently revise their modus operandi to neutralize the effects of our efforts. This is most noticeable in the area of

interdiction. In an effort to put distance between ourselves and routine, patterned operations that are easily avoided by the traffickers and consume valuable flight and steaming hours, we are pursuing some different approaches. One example is the "pulse" operations we have conducted in the Caribbean. The first such operation, "Frontier Shield", was conducted to interdict the heavy flow of drugs through Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin islands in the Eastern Caribbean. Anticipating that pressure on the Eastern vector would force the traffickers to shift to maritime routes through the Central Caribbean we conducted a follow on operation, "Frontier Lance", that targeted routes to and through Hispaniola. A third operation, "Frontier Saber", has been planned that targets transit routes through the Bahamas and the Northern Caribbean. As a companion to these maritime efforts, we have initiated "Operation Central Skies." This initiative involves surge operations by U.S. aviation assets in support of Central American counterdrug forces who have mounted an aggressive regional offensive against drugs warehoused or in transit through their territories. The operations I have described concentrate our limited assets in specific locales where focused intelligence efforts tell us they will do the most good, as opposed to scattering them over and across the vast transit zone. This is merely one example of how

we are attempting to economize on forces while maximizing returns on the DOD investment in the counterdrug mission.

- **Regionalizing the Effort:** Although the threat tends to manifest itself regionally, heretofore, much of the counterdrug response has been bilateral in nature. Bilateral operations are generally resource intensive and tend to attack only a segment of the problem. Through operations like Frontier Shield, Frontier Lance and Central Skies we are moving toward multilateral and regional responses. Concurrently, we have recognized that the British, Dutch and French are all stakeholders in the problem and have meaningful roles to play in the transit zone interdiction effort. Through the Southern Command sponsored Caribbean Island Nations Security Conference (CINSEC), and other forums, we are tightening our relationships with European forces in the region and have made substantial progress in coordinating and harmonizing both our operations and regional counterdrug training efforts. By shifting emphasis from bilateral to regional and international operations we are achieving greater operational efficiency and are transferring some of the burden.

- **Interagency Involvement:** In much the same way that we have sought better and more complete coordination and cooperation with our European allies, we are pursuing a better integrated counterdrug effort with appropriate agencies from the

Departments of State, Justice and Transportation. A Coast Guard Rear Admiral commands the merged Joint Interagency Task Force in Key West and we have instituted quarterly coordination meetings between counterdrug resource sponsors from State, Defense and ONDCP. In combination, these initiatives are generating a better-managed and more fully coordinated counterdrug effort.

While I generally subscribe to the notion that there is no "silver bullet" for the counterdrug struggle, in the eradication efforts in Peru and Bolivia we may have found a "match conditioned round". For the second consecutive year we have observed significant reductions in coca cultivation, leaf production and base production in both countries. As a result of forced and voluntary eradication, cultivation is down 26 percent in Peru and 17 percent in Bolivia, while leaf and base production has been reduced by roughly 25 percent in both countries. Though these gains have been partially offset by increases in all categories in Colombia, my observations of eradication efforts in Peru and Bolivia lead me to the conclusion that they are cutting steady and significant inroads into cocaine production at the source. At Southern Command we are assessing equipment and infrastructure development options that will enable us to assist Peru and Bolivia to not just sustain but accelerate the progress they are making.

In my earlier discussion of the innovative approaches that we are taking to wrest control of the action-reaction-counteraction cycle from the narcotraffickers, I focused almost exclusively on the transit zone. Similar actions and activities are underway in the source zone. Though the number of aircraft shot down along the airbridge between Peru and Colombia declined significantly over the past year, it appears that this important route remains essentially closed. This has resulted in a predictable increase in the movement of drugs and precursor chemicals on the extensive river systems that traverse the region. Anticipating this, we have embarked on an ambitious five-year program to enhance the riverine interdiction capabilities of Peru and Colombia. A regional riverine training center has been established at Iquitos, Peru. Indigenous support craft have either been launched or are under construction and a fully funded training and provisioning program is underway that will ultimately result in the fielding of 12 operational riverine interdiction units. We are optimistic that this initiative will enable Peru and Colombia to exert far greater control over their inland waterways, and are considering extending the program to other Andean nations.

While much has been done and is being done in the struggle against drugs, victory is not yet in sight. We are encouraged by the policy decisions recently announced by Brazil, by the

increase in bilateral maritime agreements, and by growing acknowledgments on the parts of nations throughout the region that the drug problem is truly one of hemispheric dimensions. However, none of this alters the fact that the quantities of illegal drugs reaching our shores are still sufficient to satisfy the national appetite, and the corrupting influence of the drug industry remains a millstone around the neck of democratic development in the Americas.

#### **POINTS OF INSTABILITY**

Though peace and stability are the norms for this region, there are points of instability. The multi-faceted crisis in Colombia, the political impasse in Haiti, uncertainty about the new government in Venezuela, implementation of the Carter-Torrijos Treaties in Panama and the continuing challenges to democracy in Paraguay all have security implications for our Area of Responsibility and are being closely monitored by Southern Command.

- Colombia: Though Colombia remains the most violence plagued nation in the AOR, I believe there is reason for cautious optimism that a long-term solution to its internal security problems may be at hand. The reason for this cautious optimism is the turnabout in governmental leadership that has occurred over the past six months. At the top, President Pastrana is pursuing his commitment to the peace process, but at

the same time he is moving deliberately to strengthen the capabilities of Colombia's security forces. He has chosen his military leaders wisely; they are dedicated, competent professionals, who despite private reservations publicly support the national security agenda. For the first time in years, I am confident that Colombia's military leadership is equal to the task at hand. That said, the task is a daunting one. The security forces confront a triangle of violence with themselves on one point, two well entrenched insurgent groups who exercise de facto control over at least 40 percent of the countryside on another, and brutal paramilitary organizations on the third. The current crop of military leaders must also overcome the pessimism that has emerged over the past year as the insurgents, most notably the FARC, have handed the Colombian Army and National Police one tactical defeat after another. Insurgent tactics have been monotonously predictable. They have massed their forces at times and places of their choosing, attacking only when they have enjoyed overwhelming superiority, and have capitalized on the military's penchant for static defenses.

The nation's new defense leaders, led by the very capable Minister of Defense Rodrigo Lloredo, are rapidly initiating the right kinds of reforms to alter this strategic imbalance. The Army, for example, is replacing more than 20,000 privileged soldiers, who enjoy immunity from combat because of their

education level and contacts, with professionals. In simple terms they are building combat power where it is needed, on the battlefield, not in Bogota. To transition the Army from its defensive mindset and to forge a better union with the National Police, General Mora Rangel is in the process of standing up the first of the new Counternarcotics Battalions. These highly mobile formations will be designed from the ground floor up to work with the Colombian National Police and take the fight to traffickers in the safe havens where cocaine production takes place. We at Southern Command are working closely with the Colombian Armed Forces and assisting them in every appropriate and permissible way as they develop these new and very relevant capabilities. Colombia's situation is especially difficult because the sophisticated international criminal organizations there cooperate with a mature insurgency and also deal in complex ways with an illegal counter guerrilla, or paramilitary, movement. Together, these agents of instability and violence threaten not only the democratic and economic security of Colombia, but neighboring countries as well. Operating from safe havens in eastern and southern Colombia they have enlarged their domains into Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Panama, murdering, kidnapping, moving drugs, arms and other contraband, and spreading the stain of lawlessness and instability. We have long recognized that this problem is international in its

dimensions. The events of this past year have brought that point home to all of the countries I have mentioned. We are working with all of the affected nations to encourage unity of effort against a threat they are individually incapable of defeating.

Over time, human rights violations have emerged as Colombia's international Achilles heel. The new leadership appears genuinely committed to eliminating this blemish. While Colombian security forces have been credibly accused of no serious human rights violations since President Pastrana took office, the most recent report by the Department of State reveals that nearly 70 percent of abuses have been blamed on the paramilitary organizations. This is a liability, especially for the military, who are frequently accused of either sponsoring or condoning paramilitary atrocities. I am personally convinced that there are no institutional linkages between the paramilitaries and the Army, but I cannot rule out local collusion. The Minister of Defense and Chief of the Armed Forces fully understand the deleterious effects of these charges on the image of the Army. They have stressed to me their determination to aggressively seek out paramilitary sponsorship within the military, to fully cooperate with civilian prosecutors in punishing offenders, and they have taken action to make certain that leaders at all levels understand complicity

will not be tolerated. I believe them. During my last visit to Colombia the Chief of the Armed Forces provided me the names of more than 100 paramilitary members who the security forces have arrested and turned over to civilian prosecutors. At Southern Command we continue to work closely with the Colombian military, not just to improve their human rights organizations, but to improve the human rights performance of their troops in the field. We have placed a high priority on assisting them in overhauling their system of military justice with the objective of making it a key block in their foundation of ethical and disciplined military behavior.

- Haiti. As our continuous military presence in Haiti moves into its fifth year we see little progress toward creation of a permanently stable internal security environment. In fact, with the recent expiration of Parliament and imposition of rule by Presidential Decree we have seen some backsliding. Though our military mission in Haiti was accomplished in 1994, we have sustained a presence that on any given day during 1998 averaged about 496 military personnel. I would categorize our presence as being a benevolent one. Through a variety of humanitarian assistance and other local outreach programs, our troops have undertaken infrastructure development projects and provided urgently needed medical and dental care for the impoverished Haitian population. These contributions have been made at a

cost to the Department of Defense. Our Humanitarian Assistance projects are conducted as deployments for training. As such, they are funded from the service operations and maintenance accounts. By our calculations, our military presence in Haiti carried a price tag of \$20,085,000 for 1998. However, at this point, I am more concerned about force protection than cash outlays. The unrest generated by political instability requires us to constantly reassess the safety and security environment in which our troops are living and working. I have recommended that we terminate our permanent military presence in Haiti, and conduct routine periodic engagement activities. In the interim, we will continue to make force protection job one for our deployed forces...we will not let our guard down.

- Panama. I have commented elsewhere in this posture statement on the loss of our bases in Panama as we implement the Canal Treaties, and the impacts of those losses on our theater engagement and counterdrug activities. As our forces withdraw, I have additional concerns about the ability of local security forces to deal with the security challenges that confront Panama. The Panamanian Public Forces are neither organized nor equipped to deal with incursions by Colombian insurgents into the southern Darien Province. The Maritime Service has already expressed reservations about their capabilities to provide for canal security requirements, and we have detected recent

indications of an upsurge in drug trafficking in and around Panama. It will be necessary to completely reassess our security relationship with Panama as our forces depart. We have voiced strong support for increased security assistance funding for Panama to enable the maritime service to strengthen its capabilities, and we are prepared to intensify our engagement with the PPF to assist them in meeting other emerging security challenges.

- Venezuela. We have adopted a wait and see posture in the aftermath of former coup plotter Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chavez' landslide victory in Venezuela's December presidential elections. In the context of regional security, Venezuela is an important player from the standpoints of both narcotrafficking and the Colombia situation. Of all Colombia's neighbors, Venezuela has been most proactive in resisting insurgent cross-border activities. More than 10,000 troops have been posted along the frontier and there has been considerable cooperation and coordination between Venezuelan and Colombian forces at the tactical level. We hope this cooperation will continue under the new administration. In terms of military leadership, the Chavez broom has swept clean. We must rebuild our military-to-military relationships with the new team from the top down. We have been heartened by President Chavez' declaration that he desires closer and broader cooperation with the United States on

counternarcotics matters, and we are encouraged by the appointment of General Raul Salazar as Minister of Defense. Southern Command has had extensive dealings with General Salazar. We know him to be a straight-talking military professional, impeccably honest, and a staunch supporter of democracy and the proper role of the military in a democratic society. I will visit Venezuela in March to begin the process of building new defense relationships.

- Paraguay. While the ongoing leadership crisis in Paraguay has its roots in the constitution, and the primary dispute is between the executive and judicial branches of the government, we watch the situation closely because we believe the military may ultimately be the trump card. As previously mentioned we used our military-to-military contacts to urge the Paraguayan armed forces to avoid engaging in or supporting extra-constitutional activities during last year's presidential elections. Since then, armed forces leadership has changed and the military is now guided by officers loyal to retired General, coup leader and presidential aspirant Lino Oviedo. During the first week of March I will visit Paraguay and attempt to build a meaningful and constructive relationship with the new military leaders. We rank Paraguay just above Haiti in terms of its democratic fragility.

## CONCLUSION

My vision of the future for this region is succinctly stated in our recently published unclassified Theater Strategy..."A community of democratic, stable and prosperous nations successfully countering illicit drug activities and other transnational threats; served by professional, modernized, interoperable security forces that embrace democratic principles, respect human rights, are subordinate to civil authority, and are capable and supportive of multilateral responses to challenges." Printed in Spanish and English the document containing this statement has been delivered to every military leader in our area of responsibility. I consider this vision to be realistic, achievable and affordable. In Southern Command we do not need armor divisions, carrier battle groups, fighter wings or Marine Expeditionary Forces. We need modest numbers of the right kinds of people, with the right skills, doing the right things at the right times and places. I have stated before and will state again that this is an economy of force theater and I have every intention of keeping it that way. However, cheap does not mean free. Our modest requirements for forces and resources must be met and the unique needs of this region must be considered. I have mentioned several areas where levels of support have receded unacceptably placing the mission at risk. These shortfalls must be addressed and our forces must

be positioned where they will do the most good. Our interests in the Caribbean and South America cannot be entirely superintended from North America. Recalling the statement of my Colombian colleague, we cannot work in the city and live in the suburbs, we must live and work in the region. To that end, I request your continued support of Southern Command and especially our efforts to create an efficient and effective theater architecture for the next century.