

STATEMENT OF
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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Murtha, Congressman Young, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the United States Southern Command's programs for Fiscal Year 2009 and its work in Latin America and the Caribbean. I would also like to thank all the Committee members for your support over the past year and for your continuing support as we face the challenges and opportunities of coming years.

U.S. Southern Command's missions are to promote security cooperation and conduct military operations in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America in order to achieve U.S. strategic objectives. Successfully accomplishing these missions serves to enhance security and stability in the Western Hemisphere and ensure the forward defense of the United States.

I would like to take this opportunity to give you an update on this region, briefly discuss the challenges we face and report on our key initiatives.

Economic Momentum. According to the United Nation's Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean, this past year was an encouraging one for the region in terms of economic growth, with all of Latin America and the Caribbean benefiting from five consecutive years of positive economic performance. From a historical point of view, the region has not seen an equivalent sustained economic performance in over three decades.

In terms of trade, the rest of the Americas continue to be a major trading partner with the United States, with almost 40 percent of total U.S. trade – imports and exports – flowing north and south in the hemisphere. From important sources for oil, metals, and other commodities, to key destinations for our exports such as machinery parts and other technical equipment, the nations of the Americas are increasingly interdependent and important to the United States. In

fact, we are either the primary or the secondary trading partner with almost every nation in the Americas.

The Free Trade Agreements we have with our partners in the region help facilitate this beneficial exchange and contribute to the demonstrated growth of all of our economies, thus contributing to security and stability. I would like to thank the Congress for its support of the Peru Trade Promotion Agreement late last year – this is extremely important for security in the region. Additionally, we currently have a unique opportunity to strengthen our economic ties to two key friends and allies – Colombia and Panama – by passing Free Trade Agreements that could help bolster their economic security, and in the case of Colombia, help solidify the significant gains it has made towards achieving peace and stability for its citizens. Both agreements would help the overall level of security in the region.

Dynamic Cultures. The Americas are an interacting system – a diverse, yet interconnected community, which in every sense of the word is our *home*. We have tremendous geopolitical, economic and social linkages that make up the foundation of this home, and Latin America and the Caribbean are integral parts of its structure. The Americas are a home we share together.

This past year, the United States probably became the second largest nation of Spanish-speakers in the world – behind only Mexico, but ahead of Argentina, Colombia, and Spain. Four of the top 15 surnames in the United States are now of Latino origin, and as the U.S. Census Bureau statistics illustrate, seven of the top ten largest cities in the United States are now arrayed in states along our southern border – San Jose, Los Angeles, San Diego, Phoenix, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. This represents a huge population density shift from 100 years ago, when all ten major cities were in the Northeastern part of the United States.

What does this great mixing of cultures in our country mean? For starters, it represents a U.S. population interested in and connected to Latin America and the Caribbean. It represents a linkage to the hemisphere that we should leverage along with our various other natural alignments. We should couple this human connection with our country's natural generosity and ability for innovation and ultimately apply them to solve our shared challenges.

CHALLENGES

With regard to security challenges, we do not see any conventional military threats to the United States developing in the region. Neither do we foresee any major military conflict between nations in Latin America or the Caribbean. Rather, it is the public security threats – such as crime, gangs, and drug trafficking and use – that pose the principal near-term security challenges to the region.

Poverty and inequality. Underlying conditions of poverty and inequality too frequently provide fertile soil for these principal security challenges. Although recent positive economic growth has begun to make a dent in poverty rates, about 35 percent of Latin Americans still live in dire poverty – subsisting on less than two U.S. dollars per day. Poverty and inequality – although not uniform across the region – render whole populations susceptible to the lure of such illicit activity as the drug trade, crime, gangs, or illegal immigration. This also provides a basis for terrorists seeking to exploit such conditions.

Drugs. The global business of illegal drug production, distribution and consumption is devastating societies in Latin America and the Caribbean. Narcotraffickers continuously adapt their operations to increased or revised law enforcement efforts by developing new trafficking

routes and consumer markets. Consequently, nations that were once isolated from the illicit drug trade now experience its corrosive effects. Most nations in the hemisphere now struggle to counteract the drug trade's destabilizing and corrupting influence.

Each nation affected by the drug trade must increase its cooperative counterdrug efforts and dedicate more resources to combat this growing and adapting threat. Drug traffickers are innovative, adaptive and organized. For example, as we interdict their shipments along coastal routes, they re-route west of the Galapagos Islands to avoid detection. And as we stop them on the high seas, they build and operate self-propelled semi-submersibles that skim along the water line to avoid visual and radar detection. Through international and interagency efforts, we have interdicted several such semi-submersible vessels, which show improved capability and technology. Last year, a "ship building" site was discovered in the Colombian jungle where five semi-submersibles were under construction – each with a capacity to bring several tons of cocaine into the United States.

U.S. Southern Command's unique counter-narcotics task force located in Key West, Florida, is a role model for the kind of innovative cooperation and fusion of capabilities we need to counter this dynamic and pernicious threat. This Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) combines the efforts of international partners, the U.S. armed services, and numerous U.S. and international departments and agencies, interdicting large quantities of narcotics each year. Every effort devoted to solving the drug abuse epidemic in this country and preventing the flow of illicit drugs is an effort well spent in directly saving the lives of U.S. citizens, enhancing our national security, and stabilizing fragile democracies in our hemisphere.

Violence and crime. Violence and crime are now a major threat to the security of many nations in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, murder is one of the five main causes of death in

several Latin American countries. The annual homicide rate for Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the highest in the world at 27.5 murders per 100,000 people. This murder rate stands in stark contrast to 5.5 in the U.S. and 1 in Western Europe. Recent surveys in Central America report that two-thirds of the respondents cite crime as the number-one problem facing their countries – six times the number of respondents choosing poverty.

These crime rate trends are exacerbated by the growing influence of gangs and are severely challenging security and civil society throughout Latin America, with some gang population estimates reaching over one hundred thousand in Central America alone. These gangs do not just pose a concern in Latin America. Central American gangs routinely cross borders and operate inside the United States.

Colombia. Colombia is a focus nation and partner of the U.S. Southern Command as well as a strategic and important country for the future stability and security of this hemisphere. It remains the source of most of the world's cocaine. However, Colombia continues to progress in its complex struggle for peace and security. A building momentum for real peace permeates the country. In addition, its economic growth and progress has been admirable. I encourage Members to visit Colombia and experience the sense of accomplishment most Colombians feel today. Malls and restaurants are packed, new construction is booming and ordinary people feel the increasing safety and security of their country.

With U.S. support, Colombia is on the brink of achieving internal peace and making its gains against terrorism and disorder irreversible. Colombia's main narcoterrorist group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), has been reduced to 9,000 fighters from 17,000 in 2002. Terrorist attacks and kidnappings have decreased significantly due to the establishment of security and governance throughout the sovereign country. In 2010, the

Colombian government will see the benefits of what they call a “Patrimony” tax, as the Colombian government assumes responsibility for and funding of the majority of current programs through the resources raised by its tax system – specifically \$3.7 billion that Colombians have agreed to generate between 2007 and 2010 to increase their defense budget by 12 percent.

Continued U.S. support at current levels for the next three years is critical, through their “nationalization” period, and we believe it will enable Colombia to achieve irreversible gains as it moves into the consolidation phase of its peace plan. Paramount to this support will be training, mobility, and sustainment of key infrastructure programs to provide long-term self-sufficiency. We thank Congress for supporting our efforts in Colombia, especially at this crucial phase of the program.

U.S. Hostages. A top priority at U.S. Southern Command is the safe return of the three U.S. citizens held hostage by the FARC since 2003 – Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell, and Thomas Howes. For five years, we have continuously pursued their safe recovery, maintaining tens of thousands of hours of intelligence and surveillance activities in concert with the government of Colombia. We dedicate numerous personnel and assets to this end and are expanding coordination, cooperation and integration with our interagency and international partners in order to achieve their repatriation to the U.S. Last fall, a videotape seized from FARC operatives by Colombian authorities showed our three U.S. hostages alive. We are hopeful that our efforts and those of Colombia and the international community will soon see Marc, Keith, and Tom safely returned to U.S. soil.

Terrorism. Since 9/11, the potential for terrorist activity in the region is a growing concern. We consider Latin America and the Caribbean to be potential bases for future terrorist threats to

the United States and others in the Americas. The conditions in parts of the region – easily skirted borders, black market economies, corruption, poverty, established illicit trafficking routes – all could provide maneuvering room for any form of terrorism to exploit, to include Islamic radical groups. We believe members, facilitators, and sympathizers of Islamic terrorist organizations are indeed present in our hemisphere.

As with all of the Department of Defense, U.S. Southern Command dedicates significant effort to remaining vigilant of terrorism. We have a unique regional plan to combat this threat through multiple avenues – including shaping the strategic environment through humanitarian operations that deter radical organizations from gaining a foothold in the region, and building partner nation capacity to detect and defeat threats in a cooperative environment. These efforts will help ensure the forward defense of the United States and increased security of our partners. We thank the Committee for providing us the resources dedicated to this mission. We appreciate any effort that will provide flexible funding sources, such as those requested in the Administration's Building Global Partnerships Act, to help us rapidly address emerging capability gaps of our partners as the strategic situation develops.

INITIATIVES

USNS COMFORT. A very visible and successful recent initiative was the deployment of the hospital ship *COMFORT* to the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. For four months last summer, this unique ship – with its specially tailored joint, interagency, international, and private sector crew – traveled to twelve countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to bring modern medical care to almost 100,000 men, women, and children through

nearly 400,000 patient encounters. This symbol of goodwill brought renewed hope to those who might have given up on a healthy future *and* to those who might have previously been sympathetic to anti-U.S. rhetoric. This one deployment alone directly changed the lives of many and indirectly touched the lives of several hundred thousand throughout the region.

Certainly, there are many lessons learned from this first-ever deployment to Latin America and the Caribbean – and we will incorporate them into any future deployments – but the integrated and cooperative nature of this mission really serves as a model for the future of engagement and training: *Joint ...Interagency ...International ...Public-Private*. We plan to conduct similar missions on a regular basis.

Partnership of the Americas 2007. For the second year in a row, U.S. Southern Command conducted a maritime Partnership of the Americas (POA) event in our region. Evolving from the initial one-month event in 2006, POA '07 involved a six-month Navy and Marine Corps mission throughout Latin America and the Caribbean that focused on enhancing relationships with regional partners and improving operational readiness and interoperability. During the deployment, a four-ship multinational task force circumnavigated South America, participated in several multinational exercises sponsored by U.S. Southern Command, and conducted theater security cooperation and community relations events on shore.

Operation Enduring Freedom-Caribbean and Central America (OEF-CCA). This year, U.S. Southern Command began OEF-CCA as a key initiative to address potential terrorist threats in the region. Within a cooperative regional environment, OEF-CCA seeks to improve the capabilities of Caribbean and Central American partners to interdict and disrupt terrorists who might leverage illicit transnational routes and uncontrolled areas to threaten the United States

and/or our neighbors. OEF-CCA is a long-term endeavor and will create a multi-layered counter-terrorism posture of mutual benefit to the United States and regional partners.

Exercises. U.S. Southern Command sponsors numerous military and security forces training exercises throughout the region. For example, one of the Department of Defense's largest exercises is Allied Force PANAMAX, which last year included 17 nations, representatives from the United Nations and Organization of American States, 30 ships, numerous aircraft and several brigades of simulated ground forces under the command and control of a multi-national staff.

Another exercise is TRADEWINDS, which focuses on transnational threats in the Caribbean. TRADEWINDS brings together security forces and interagency personnel from 18 Caribbean nations to practice coordinated first-responder, fire, police, and military responses to security threats. The exercise focuses on basic security operations, counter-drug activities, and disaster preparedness.

Peace Keeping Operations Exercises (PKO NORTH and PKO SOUTH) improve partner nation capability to plan and conduct peacekeeping operations in the region. These exercises emphasize command and control and interoperability with regional armed forces assigned to UN missions and involved the integration of non-governmental agencies and international organizations.

UNITAS, the multi-national maritime exercise program conducted on both the Atlantic and Pacific sides of South America is now in its fifth year. This program sponsors multinational maritime forces to enhance security cooperation and improve coalition operations. Last year's exercises were conducted as part of our Partnership of the Americas event and trained each participant in a variety of maritime scenarios designed to practice operations within a multinational force.

Building Partnership Capacity. The U.S. Southern Command conducts a comprehensive Theater Security Cooperation Program to develop the capability and capacity of our partners to the south to respond to security threats. Our Regional Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program sponsors seminars, symposiums, and tactical and operational training designed to build the counter-terrorism capability of participating nations. The training involves information collection and sharing, professional development, port security procedures, quick-reaction force actions, explosive device response, and civil-military responses to terrorism.

Another of our partnership capacity building programs is ENDURING FRIENDSHIP (EF) – a multi-year maritime security assistance program that enhances the capability of select Central American and Caribbean partner nations to patrol their sovereign waters and share information. EF provides interceptor boats, operation and maintenance training, command and control systems, and a common operating picture to improve maritime domain awareness and interoperability.

To build understanding, U.S. Southern Command conducts or facilitates military and defense exchanges, numerous defense seminars, and mobile training teams throughout the region. We also facilitate International Military Education and Training (IMET), which invests in the professional development of key military officers and senior enlisted leaders of our partners. IMET improves the professionalism and interoperability of partner military and defense forces and builds a sense of mutual understanding between the United States armed forces and our partner nation counterparts. This will have an enduring and positive effect on building long-lasting partnerships.

The State Partnership Program (SPP) is another example of successful partnership building that has had a tremendous benefit and return on investment. The SPP links 26 partner nations to

18 U.S. states using the U.S. National Guard as the executive agent. Last year, state National Guards conducted 113 separate training events that developed core competencies in regional military forces, promoted the concept of citizen-soldiers as public servants, and reinforced our bilateral relationships.

A significant tool for building capacity is the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program. FMF represents a powerful method of supporting military relationships, ensuring interoperability of equipment in coalition operations, regional cooperation, and developing partner nations' response capability to mutual threats and challenges. Although U.S. Southern Command's focus region covers one-sixth of the globe and represents a region with significant linkages and shared challenges with the United States, FMF to this region in 2007 amounted to a slight fraction of the worldwide total. The FMF we did receive was spent on critical capacity building programs with our partners.

Global Fleet Station. Last summer, the High Speed Vessel (HSV) *SWIFT* conducted a seven-month tour of the Caribbean Basin with visits to seven countries. The focus of the *HSV SWIFT* deployment was to train local security units on port security operations, small boat operations and repair, and small unit tactics. This floating theater security cooperation platform hosted more than 1,000 military and civilian personnel and involved a joint, multinational, and interagency approach at each training site. *HSV SWIFT* also conducted community relations projects in each port to refurbish local schools and community centers and to deliver tons of donated goodwill materials. As with *USNS COMFORT*, this deployment represents the future of engagement – visible, persistent, scalable, and cooperative engagement that trains our personnel and demonstrates the goodwill of the United States while building partner nation security capabilities.

The return on investment of the *HSV SWIFT* is very high. It is relatively inexpensive to operate; it can maneuver into very shallow ports; and it supports modular, tailored security cooperation missions. Providing more of this type of capability to U.S. Southern Command would greatly facilitate the achievement of our mission.

LOOKING AHEAD

Interagency. The 21st Century security environment presents us with some significant new challenges, these global conditions and the already described realities in this region all require an interagency-focused approach. With the approval of the Secretary of Defense, we are initiating action toward reorganizing the command along more interagency lines – with interagency, multinational and even limited private sector partnering as core organizing concepts.

This is a critical and logical step towards better accomplishing our mission. Our plan involves establishing an integrated interagency team with senior representatives from key departments and agencies assigned throughout the command. This new organization will have functional divisions that reflect the types of missions we face in the 21st century. We will focus on teaming with the U.S. State Department and will seek new and expanded partnering arrangements with the nations and territories in the region. Despite its new integrated structure, however, U.S. Southern Command will always retain a principal competency to conduct military operations, with an unbroken and capable military chain-of-command and authority.

U.S. Southern Command needs the physical and virtual capability to fuse information from diverse entities and to operate from a location that facilitates idea exchange and integrated planning. Our new headquarters facility and the information systems scheduled for installation

will serve to meet this requirement. We thank the Congress for its support in authorizing and appropriating funds for the new construction of our command building, which we are scheduled to occupy in 2010. The new building, when complete, should greatly enhance our effectiveness.

Persistent engagement. As discussed above, the capability to forge willing and capable partnerships throughout the region and to create a sense of goodwill towards the United States are essential to achieving our mission. In order to do this, we need persistent engagement. We plan to conduct deployments similar to the *USNS COMFORT* and *HSV SWIFT* on a regular basis. We need military and civilian, public and private exercises and initiatives throughout the region, with more microbursts of assistance, as well as long-term initiatives integrated across the federal government. In short, we need coordinated, whole-of-government, persistent efforts that meld with the efforts of the international community and the private sector.

Capable partners. Continued globalization and the diffusion of high technology have made it certain that the United States cannot ensure its forward defense alone. We also need to identify capability shortfalls with our partners and flexibly expend resources to build overall regional security capability and capacity. Just as important, we need to be able to rapidly address capability shortfalls with key partners to meet emerging transnational threats. We need them to be able to deny transnational threats from using their sovereign territory. We need them to be able to “see” these threats, whether on land, in the air, on the sea, or in cyberspace. This involves the appropriate awareness systems – coastal radars and air surveillance radars, for example – as well as physical assets such as patrol boats and aircraft with crew trained and proficient to operate and maintain them. It will also require the ability to share information with the United States and with adjacent neighbors in order to build a common operating picture in a regional sense.

Flexible access. The use of the sea affords us tremendous flexibility for maritime partnering with the nations in the region. But in order to maintain persistent engagement and more fully cooperate with our partners, we are looking for more flexible land and aviation access agreements under the Secretary of Defense's Global Defense Posture. Our current access agreements limit us to aerial counternarcotics detection and monitoring missions from existing cooperative security locations and to a single, more flexible agreement at the forward operating site of our Joint Task Force-Bravo. We are looking to establish improved regional access that supports broad-spectrum operations and that is mutually beneficial to the host partner nations and the United States.

CONCLUSION

I take great pride in our exciting and important mission and in the tremendous efforts of the men and women of U.S. Southern Command. I believe we have made good progress over the last year; and that this year and those to come promise to see solid return on Congress's investment in the region. I would like to thank all of the Members of the Committee and indeed all the Members of Congress for your support of U.S. Southern Command and the hard work we are doing for our country in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thanks to the support of Congress, this year is already on track to be another good year for U.S. Southern Command and the pursuit of our mission in the region. We will be planning and executing numerous multinational exercises, exchanges, and humanitarian events.

Although the likelihood of large-scale military combat in our region remains very low, this region continues to play a critical role in the security and prosperity of the United States.

Despite some challenges, I believe that through the sharing of ideas, economic interdependence, cultural understanding and an integrated approach to partnering, the United States will continue to be a welcomed partner of choice in this hemisphere. At U.S. Southern Command, we will work hard to help make this vision a reality. We are committed to being the military partner of choice and will continue to harness innovation and to develop the relationships necessary to accomplish our mission.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the superb Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen— active, reserve, and guard —, as well as their civilian counterparts, who serve in the region. They are volunteers and patriots, and I am proud and fortunate to serve with them everyday. Our greatest strength is our people, and I ask continued support for the programs that support them and their families.

Again, thank you for your support and I am prepared to answer your questions.