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HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION

STATEMENT OF

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COMMANDER

U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND
RELATED AGENCIES

ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION IN U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND

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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the United States Southern Command's MILCON programs for Fiscal Year 2009 and their importance for our activities 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 in our Area of Focus.

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. For example, we face a persistent threat from the flow of cocaine and other drugs from the region to the United States, which can be directly linked to the deaths of thousands of American citizens every year. As all the nations in this region face transnational challenges, I believe the United States will continue to be a welcomed partner of choice in this hemisphere because of the economic interdependence of the region, our strong cultural linkages, and our open sharing of ideas and integrated approach to partnering. At U.S. Southern Command, we will continue to 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.

U.S. Southern Command's missions are to promote security cooperation and conduct military operations in Latin America and the Caribbean 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 briefly discuss our key MILCON needs and initiatives, which are critical to the accomplishment of our mission. Specifically, I ask you to support our \$163 million FY09 funding request – \$82 million is for the new U.S. Southern Command Headquarters Complex FY09 funding increment submitted by the U.S. Army; and \$81 million for four construction projects at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba submitted by the U.S. Navy. These initiatives provide critical operational, safety, health, and quality of life support to our service members serving in U.S. Southern Command's area of focus and support our Continental United States and Overseas Master Plan.

Additionally, I support the Department's Fiscal Year 2009 proposal to raise Unspecified Minor Military Construction limits for Operations and Maintenance funding to \$3 million.

NEW HEADQUARTERS COMPLEX FUNDING INCREMENT INITIATIVE

At U.S. Southern Command, at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, we are seeking to transform to become a more interagency organization, while maintaining our principal focus on the ability to execute Title 10 warfighting missions when needed in defense of U.S. interests. A key element of this transformation is the building of a new consolidated Headquarters Complex designed to enable effective command and control of future military operations and to better support the synchronization and coordination of military operations with interagency activities. To facilitate this, we recently established a new Directorate for Interagency Partnering, with support from the Office of the Secretary of Defense. This directorate's mission is to develop a culture of coordination with interagency, international, non-governmental, and private organizations to better harmonize our activities with ongoing national and international efforts to support security, stability and prosperity in the region.

In addition to improving interagency fusion efforts, this new Headquarters Complex will better the quality of life for those currently serving at U.S. Southern Command as well as the large number of retired military personnel and their families living in the South Florida area. The Complex will include a small child development center, fitness facility, clinic, commissary, exchange store, and conference center.

Accordingly, I ask for your continued support of our request for \$82 million for the new U.S. Southern Command Headquarters Complex FY09 funding increment.

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR MEN AND WOMEN

The quality of life of our deployed men and women is of the utmost importance to the command. A significant number of our service members, in particular those service members deployed to Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, live and work in inadequate quarters and facilities. The FY09 MILCON request submitted by the U.S. Navy includes \$81 million for four construction projects at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. One of the four projects is for a Consolidated Fitness Complex. This project will provide adequate fitness and wellness facilities to support the military population and other assigned personnel at the Naval Station. The majority of the existing fitness facilities at the installation are older wood structure buildings and have been poorly modified to support physical fitness activities as an interim fix. Many need repair and are scattered across the base, making it very time consuming and difficult for the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen to maintain adequate physical training regimens. This consolidated fitness complex project consists of the construction of an addition to the existing primary fitness center, a concessions/restroom facility with gear issue and scorer loft, a covered pavilion addition to an existing maintenance structure, and various miscellaneous

upgrades. The project will demolish older workout centers and will fully conform to Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection standards.

The remaining three projects are to replace military family housing units at U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The projects consist of replacing Granadillo Circle Housing, Granadillo Point Housing, and West & Center Bargo Housing. These projects will provide adequate family housing needed for married personnel and their families and other assigned personnel at the Naval Station. The current housing was constructed in the mid 1950s and has been in continual service for more than fifty years. They were built to 1950s standards and using space criteria, meaning some units have only one bathroom and most units have very little storage space. These housing units are inadequate in design and construction to accommodate today's requirements. The existing buildings would require major and expensive structural modifications to achieve the new space and privacy criteria for current military family housing standards. Many of the housing units have reached the end of their useful lives and new housing is needed to fulfill our long term requirements at Guantanamo, the only U.S. military port and airfield facility in the Caribbean.

CONCLUSION

I take great pride in our 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 the Members of the Committee and indeed all the Members of Congress for your support to 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.

I would like to close by saying a word about the superb Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, and civilians – active, reserve, and guard – who serve in the region. They are volunteers and patriots, and I am proud and fortunate to serve with them every day. 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.