



Jim Stavridis  
Admiral, US Navy  
Commander



# U.S. Southern Command 2008 Posture Statement

United States

Southern  
Command

Partnership for the Americas



CARIBBEAN

- Antigua and Barbuda
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- Dominica
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ANDEAN RIDGE

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## US Southern Command BIOGRAPHY

Admiral James Stavridis assumed command of the United States Southern Command on October 19, 2006. Admiral Stavridis is a 1976 distinguished graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and a native of South Florida.

A Surface Warfare Officer, Adm. Stavridis commanded Destroyer USS Barry (DDG-52) from 1993-1995, completing deployments to Haiti, Bosnia, and the Arabian Gulf. Barry won the Battenberg Cup as the top ship in the Atlantic Fleet under his command.

In 1998, he commanded Destroyer Squadron 21 and deployed to the Arabian Gulf, winning the Navy League's John Paul Jones Award for Inspirational Leadership.

From 2002-2004, Adm. Stavridis commanded Enterprise Carrier Strike Group, conducting combat operations in the Arabian Gulf in support of both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Ashore, the admiral has served as a strategic and long range planner on the staffs of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. At the start of the Global War on Terror, he was selected as the Director of the Navy Operations Group, DEEP BLUE. He has also served as the executive assistant to the Secretary of the Navy and the Senior Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense.

Adm. Stavridis earned a PhD and MALD from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in International Relations in 1984, where he won the Gullion Prize as outstanding student. He is also a 1992 distinguished graduate of the National War College.

He holds various decorations and awards, including the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal and five awards of the Legion of Merit. He is co-author of four books on naval shiphandling and leadership, including *Command at Sea* and *Destroyer Captain*.





HOUSE AND SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEES

THE POSTURE STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL JAMES G. STAVRIDIS, UNITED STATES NAVY

COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

BEFORE THE 110<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS

2008





## INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the United States Southern Command and our work in Latin America and the Caribbean. I would like to thank all the Committee members for your support over the past year and for your continued support as we face the challenges and opportunities of this promising, yet complex 21st Century.

U.S. Southern Command is charged with promoting security cooperation and conducting military operations in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America in order to achieve U.S. strategic objectives. Successfully accomplishing this mission enhances the security and stability in the Western Hemisphere and ensures the forward defense of the United States.

Our efforts are significantly influenced by our understanding of the complexities of the hemisphere and our ability to foster cooperation with — and among — willing and capable partners. As globalization trends continue, we are certain that our security will involve deeper cooperation with multinational, interagency, and public-private partners.

2007 was an important year for U.S. Southern Command. We celebrated our headquarters' 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Miami, conducted numerous bilateral and multilateral exercises, responded to several natural disasters, built new relationships and strengthened existing ones, launched a series of valuable medical missions, and put the command on track for a reorganization to meet the security challenges of the new millennium. With the ongoing support of the Congress, we hope to continue our progress.

Today in the Americas, from northern Canada to the tip of South America, 45 nations, territories, and protectorates are interdependent in many ways. While each of us celebrates our uniqueness and diversity across the hemisphere, we also share tremendous linkages and natural alignments that bring us closer together with each year that passes. As our hemisphere “virtually” shrinks, each of our nations — working together — becomes more important in facing the challenges posed by this new century.

Last year, in my first posture statement, I reported on the status of the diverse region we are assigned. I discussed the tremendous linkages that we share with Latin America and the Caribbean — important geographic, cultural, economic, and geopolitical linkages. I outlined some difficult underlying conditions faced by the region — led by poverty and unequal wealth distribution — and how they contribute to specific challenges such as crime, violence, and illicit trafficking of drugs, people, and weapons.

This year, I would like to give you an update on our region, discuss the challenges we still face, report on U.S. Southern Command's key initiatives, and detail our efforts to modify our organization to meet current and future security demands.

## ECONOMICS AND CULTURE

*Economic momentum.* According to the United Nations' 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. The year 2007 ended with an average overall economic growth rate of 5.6 percent, with some individual economies growing as much as eight percent. From a historical point of view, the region has not seen an equivalent sustained economic performance in over three decades.

A key contributor to this growth was the increase in formal employment, with an overall reduction in the unemployment rate to eight percent and an increase in real wages of about 1.5 percent — all leading to a rise in household consumption and a slight decrease in poverty levels. These positive economic indicators, coupled with expanding credit and rising commodity prices, stimulated the region's demand-driven economic performance.

"Ours is a region of cruel contrasts," wrote one of the current Presidents in the region. Despite its economic growth, great wealth, abundance of natural resources, and the vast potential of its creative people, Latin America and the Caribbean still suffer from widespread poverty, unequal wealth distribution, and social exclusion. The level of these social ills does vary, however, by region, country, and the economic policies and practices of each government. But, as a developing region,

notwithstanding its recent year-on-year growth, Latin America and the Caribbean are still lagging behind other developing areas.

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. This continuous two-way flow of materiel, ideas, and people is reshaping the hemisphere. In essence, our economic exchange is the lifeblood of the hemisphere, sustaining our economies and ultimately providing security and prosperity for our people.

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

*“For this new world of ours is not merely an accident of geography. Our continents are bound together by a common history - the endless exploration of new frontiers. Our nations are the product of a common struggle - the revolt from colonial rule. And our people share a common heritage - the quest for the dignity and the freedom of man.” — President John F. Kennedy*

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 an integral part of its structure. Frequently, this important region is offhandedly referred to as the “backyard” of the United States — an image that is inaccurate and inappropriate — especially since it is vitally important to our hemisphere and to the future of the United States. It is not our “backyard,” nor our “front porch.” The Americas are a home we share together. A clear indication of this is the mixing and merging of cultures we see in the region, with a significant amount occurring here in the United States.

To see some of the linkages, all you have to do is turn on the television or walk down the street. Fifteen percent of our population traces its heritage to Latino origin. Almost 50 million people, who as a popular commercial once said, “*live* in English, but *feel* in Spanish.” By the middle of this century, almost 30 percent of the U.S. population will be of Latino descent.

In fact, the Latino advertisement sector is booming and seeks to attract this growing Latino population — a population with a combined economic power of nearly \$1 trillion. Steadily, more channels and broader programming are available in Spanish, with viewers concerned about issues affecting their population and that of their countries of origin.

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 10 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 10 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

When it comes to security challenges, fortunately, we do not see any conventional military threats to the United States developing in the region, nor do we foresee any major military conflict between nations in Latin America or the Caribbean. Although some historical competition and occasional tension between neighbors do exist, we are confident that any disagreements will be resolved through dialogue — a strength in the region — and not through state-on-state violence. However, public security threats — such as crime, gangs, and drug trafficking and use — pose the principal near-term security challenges to the region.

Given the depth of our linkages in the Americas, these ills pose a threat to the United States as well. For example, the

*"Nations, like men, do not have wings; they make the journeys on foot, step by step."  
— Juan Bautista Alberdi, 19th Century Argentine constitutionist*

U.S. Department of Justice's National Drug Intelligence Center reports that there were an estimated 5,500 U.S. deaths that listed cocaine poisoning as a factor in 2004 — a 43 percent increase from 1999. If this statistical trend continues at the same rate, and considering all cocaine-related deaths — such as accidents and homicides — it can be assumed that several thousand more people will die in the United States this year related to cocaine, most of which comes from Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia in the Andean Ridge of South America.

***Poverty and inequality.*** In many cases, the underlying conditions of poverty and inequality provide fertile soil for the principal security challenges in the region. Although recent positive economic growth



has begun to make a dent in poverty rates, still about 35 percent of Latin Americans are living in poverty — subsisting on less than two U.S. dollars per day.

Moreover, about 13 percent of the people in the region live in extreme poverty — less than one U.S. dollar daily — and nearly 80 percent of

the entire region lives on less than \$10 per day. When you add these poverty figures — which represent millions of people trying to provide for their families — to the world's most unequal distribution of wealth and a high level of corruption, you have a strong catalyst for insecurity and instability. Poverty and inequality — although not uniform across the region — make whole populations susceptible to the lure of illicit activity — such as an involvement with the drug trade, crime, gangs, or illegal immigration.

It also creates a large constituency predisposed to vote for any demagogue espousing political or economic changes that might improve their financial circumstances, regardless of the ultimate consequences. This also provides a basis for terrorists seeking to exploit such conditions.



**Drugs.** Drug trafficking is one of the greatest threats to public order in our hemisphere. The Andean Ridge in South America is the world's only significant source of coca cultivation. Cocaine is the fuel that feeds many public security ills in Latin America and the Caribbean — from criminal violence, to corruption, to political instability. But the drug trade's toxic effects are not isolated to our south. As mentioned earlier, we estimate that several thousand people will die in the United States this year due to cocaine-related events that can be traced to illicit drugs from this region.

The global business of illegal drug production, distribution, and consumption is devastating societies in Latin America and the Caribbean. Narcotraffickers continuously adjust their operations to adapt to law enforcement efforts by developing new trafficking routes and consumer markets. Consequently, nations that were once isolated from the illicit drug trade are now experiencing its corrosive effects. Most nations in the hemisphere are now struggling to counteract the drug trade's destabilizing and corrupting influence.

Each nation that finds itself affected by the drug trade will need to increase cooperation 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 are showing improved capability and technology. Last year, a “ship building” site was discovered in the Colombian jungle where five semi-submersibles were being built — each with a capacity to bring several tons of cocaine into the United States. To put this threat into perspective, each load aboard one of these vessels is the rough equivalent of one cocaine hit for each U.S. high school student — all 18 million of them.

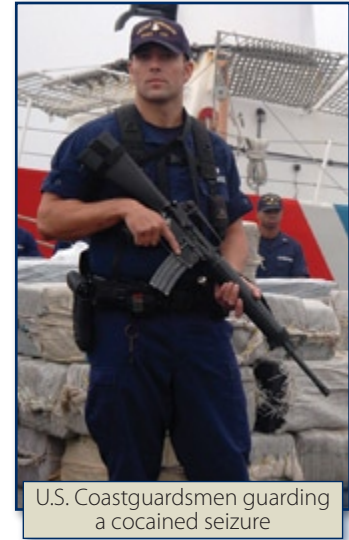
*“Drugs are the fuel in the ‘car of misery’ in this region.” --- ADM Jim Stavridis, Commander, U.S. Southern Command*

Fortunately, we are making progress in Colombia — the major global source of cocaine. Colombian efforts have significantly eliminated key leaders involved in the drug trade. In September 2007, Colombian authorities captured Diego Leon Montoya Sanchez, one of the world’s most dangerous drug traffickers responsible for nearly two-thirds of the hundreds of tons of cocaine exported from Colombia each year. Experts attribute nearly 1,500 murders to this ruthless criminal. Through fear and corruption, Montoya, like Pablo Escobar before him, played a huge, destabilizing role throughout Latin America. His arrest marks a major milestone for Colombia — a nation that has labored for years to build a foundation for legitimate governance and rule of law.

Here in the United States, illegal drug use continues to be a serious challenge that needs to remain a high priority on the national agenda. There are legitimate needs on the “demand side” as well as on the “interdiction and supply” side. 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 national security, and stabilizing fragile democracies in our hemisphere.

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, including *Panama Express*, an interagency Strike Force of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) supported by the Department of Justice dedicated to maritime interdiction originating in Colombia and related investigations. Thanks to this cooperative and effective arrangement, large quantities of narcotics moving through the region are interdicted each year. Last year this task force stopped approximately 210 metric tons of cocaine from entering the United States and facilitated the capture by law enforcement or partner nations of hundreds of drug traffickers. These efforts prevented the equivalent of roughly one billion cocaine hits from reaching our streets. More must be done, however. Drug traffickers respond to pressure by changing their tactics, as well as by diversifying their markets, such as in Europe and beyond, thereby compounding the global drug problem. JIATF-S has an outreach plan that includes interaction with European law enforcement agencies and liaison with most of the U.S. geographic combatant commands.



U.S. Coastguardmen guarding a cocaine seizure

Our task force uses a multinational and interagency approach that bridges the gap between the military’s role of detection and monitoring and law enforcement’s role of interdiction and apprehension. We will continue to address this problem with all available resources.

***Violence and crime.*** Violence and crime have become 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 100,000 in Central America alone. Primarily, these are urban gangs comprised of disenfranchised youth, thus creating a challenging long-term and generational aspect to this threat. Central American street gangs — maras — are known for their brutal initiations and their extortion of “protection” money

— or “War Taxes” as the locals call it. These gangs do not just pose a concern in Latin America. Central American gangs routinely cross borders and operate inside the United States.

The size and reach of these gangs severely stress regional law enforcement capabilities. Partner nation law enforcement units are often out-gunned, out-manned, and overwhelmed when attempting to counter these criminal enterprises. As a result, partner nation military forces are often called in to support their law enforcement counterparts. These militaries then turn to the U.S. seeking assistance and advice, yet U.S. military forces are legally prohibited in our ability to provide such support. Support in these areas often resides in Department of Justice, Department of State, or U.S. Agency for International Development programs, underscoring the fact that coordinated interagency solutions will be required to confront these threats.

In recognition of these dynamics and the need for broader interagency involvement on crime and gang issues in the region, U.S. Southern Command has worked with counterparts in the intelligence community, in federal development agencies, and in domestic U.S. law enforcement organizations to improve mutual understanding of these complex social issues. Gang challenges and the need to address broad rule of law issues regionally have also led, in part, to expanded personnel representation at U.S. Southern Command by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the State Department, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

In September 2007, we hosted a major Interagency Coordination Group conference on gangs in

Latin America and the Caribbean. This conference underscored the pivotal role U.S. law enforcement and development agencies play in countering the regional criminal threat, linked disparate U.S. agency and law enforcement representatives, facilitated information exchange, and reinforced understanding of why U.S. military involvement in such efforts remains appropriately constrained.

**Colombia.** Colombia continues to be a focus nation and valued partner for U.S. Southern Command. Colombia is a strategic ally, an important friend, and a crucial country for the future stability and security of this hemisphere. Colombia has access to the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans, shares a border with Panama that forms a natural land bridge to the United States, and is the second oldest democracy in the hemisphere. Yet Colombia continues to face challenges: it has been waging an internal struggle for peace for over four decades, and it remains the source for most of the world's cocaine.

Overall, Colombia continues to make great progress in its complex struggle for peace and security. There is a building momentum for real peace in this long-troubled country. I encourage the members of the Committee to visit Colombia to experience first hand the sense of accomplishment and hope most Colombians feel today. A tour of Bogota — recently named by the New York Times as one of “The 53 Places to Go in 2008” — will quickly highlight the economic growth and progress the country has made. Cartagena is an international tourist destination and a UN World Heritage City on the Caribbean coast. New construction is booming, citizens flock to the malls, restaurants are packed, and ordinary people routinely drive across the country in relative safety — all activities unheard of a decade ago.



With the steady support of the United States, Colombia is on the brink of winning its peace and making its successful gains against terrorism and social disorder irreversible. Desertions by members of the various subversive armed groups continue to rise. For example, Colombia's main narcoterrorist group - the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) — has been reduced to an estimated 9,000 fighters today — a significant decrease from the 17,500 fighters in 2002. The Colombian armed forces have had numerous operational successes against the FARC with the clearing of former FARC strongholds and the removal or bringing to justice of numerous high-ranking FARC leaders, such as Negro Acacio and Martin Caballero. Over the course of the last five years, homicides have decreased by 40 percent, kidnappings for ransom decreased by 76 percent, and terror attacks against civilians decreased by 61 percent — due in large part to the current Colombian administration's strategy of establishing security and governance throughout its sovereign territory.

Colombia has made these difficult gains within an increasingly open and transparent political and judicial system. The press in Colombia has free reign to investigate and publish on any subject that it wishes. Just as in the United States, as illegal activity becomes known, accusations are made public and trials take place in an open legal system. Like many nations fighting for peace against capable and well-resourced foes, Colombia has uncovered some excesses and abuses linked to corruption and human rights violations. To Colombia's credit, regardless of the level of implication, they are attempting to prosecute these cases in a transparent and public manner.

*"In the past, Latin American countries being overrun by guerrilla movements and drug cartels have reacted with dictatorships, martial law, and cancelled elections. Remarkably, Colombia's turnaround has been accomplished while remaining true to democratic principles." --- Carlos M. Gutierrez, U.S. Secretary of Commerce*

All of these and many other hard-fought successes are the result of dedicated efforts by the Colombian government with the assistance of the United States. Continued U.S. support at current levels for the next three

years is critical, and we believe it will enable Colombia to achieve irreversible gains as it moves into the consolidation phase of its peace plan. During this important phase, as the Colombian government extends effective government services and security presence throughout its territory, we predict this key strategically will benefit from progress toward peace, while the ability of narcoterrorists to grow, process, and ship illicit drugs will be significantly reduced — ultimately saving U.S. lives and resources.

Over the next three years, support for the Colombian armed forces' campaign to defeat the FARC and for their

*"Weapons have given you independence. Laws will give you freedom." --- Francisco Paula de Santander, late 19th century Colombian independence leader*

interagency efforts to bring governance and economic opportunity to areas recaptured from the FARC is essential. Paramount to this support will be training, mobility, and sustainment of key infrastructure programs to provide long-term self-sufficiency. Our continued support over the next three years will be critical through the "nationalization" period, as the Colombian government assumes responsibility 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.

**U.S. Hostages.** For five years, U.S. citizens Marc Gonsalves, Keith Stansell, and Thomas



Marc Gonsalves

Howes have been held hostage by the FARC in Colombia. Their safe return to the United States is a top priority for U.S. Southern Command. Unfortunately, the FARC are extremely capable and experienced at holding and hiding hostages in the dense Colombian triple-canopy jungles. We are hopeful that our efforts and those

of Colombia and the international community will soon see Marc, Keith, and Tom returned to U.S. soil alive and well. Last fall, a videotape seized from FARC operatives by Colombian authorities showed our three U.S. hostages alive. Since their capture in February 2003, we have maintained vigorous 24/7 activities in pursuit of their



Keith Stansell

recovery, including tens of thousands of hours of surveillance and intelligence gathering in concert with our Colombian partners. We dedicate numerous personnel to this end, and have recently conducted a review of all activities and procedures to expand coordination, integration, and cooperation with our interagency partners and international efforts to achieve their repatriation.



Thomas Howes

**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.

The alleged plot to bomb the gas lines leading to John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York and the leading suspects' roots in the Caribbean raise the specter of Islamic terrorist activity gaining traction. 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. U.S. Southern Command will continue to work with our interagency and regional partners to ensure our nation and those of our friends remain secure.

***Guantanamo Bay.*** We conduct safe, humane, legal, and transparent care and custody of the less than 280 detainees currently at the facility. More than 500 detainees have left Guantanamo, and all activities there occur under close supervision and in full compliance with U.S. laws, Common Article

Three of the Geneva Convention, the Army Field Manual, and the Detainee Treatment Act. Hundreds of reporters and legislators have visited the facility and observed the operations there first hand.

Of particular note, the task force and the detainee camps exist on the grounds of U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo. Whatever the future holds for the detainee facility, the U.S. Naval Station, which reports through the U.S. Navy chain and not to U.S. Southern Command, will continue to be an important strategic location with both port and airfield facilities for the United States in the Caribbean.

***International Competition and Cooperation.*** There is much debate over where Latin America and



BBC NEWS PHOTO

the Caribbean are heading in a geopolitical sense. Some argue that there are “two Americas” with various distinctions between the two — left or right, pro-U.S. or not, market friendly or protectionist. Our job at U.S. Southern Command is simply to build cooperative security relationships and to promote U.S. interests in the region. Unfortunately, some trends in a

few countries impede security cooperation as their governments espouse vocal anti-U.S. messages and undertake policies that portend a less stable and secure hemisphere.

Additionally, there are other international actors — notably Iran — who are establishing political and economic inroads in the Americas. Unfortunately, they often espouse anti-U.S. messages, and, in the case of Iran, bring the potential for radical Islamic activity into this hemisphere.



In order to counter these trends, we need to continue to engage proactively in the region and to counter anti-U.S. messaging with persistent demonstrations of our goodwill. The U.S., in general, needs to be capable of assisting our partners in addressing underlying conditions of poverty and inequality, while U.S. Southern Command needs to build relationships and create innovative security initiatives with cooperative partners to confront transnational security threats.



**Cuba.** Cuba continues as a vestigial colony of the failed communist system. It literally and figuratively stands as an island of oppression and tyranny amidst the democratic nations of the Americas. Over a year-and-a-half ago, Fidel Castro's failing health sparked renewed hope that Cuba might soon join the community of democracies. Despite Fidel Castro's recent comments indicating he will not serve as the President, Cuba appears to remain entrenched in its repressive past. To the detriment of its people, the Cuban regime continues to embrace totalitarian control and the



subjugation of its citizens. Consequently, we saw the highest levels of migration activity from Cuba last year since the 1994 migrant crisis, and we are prepared to support interagency efforts, if necessary, to respond to a mass migration emergency.

## INITIATIVES

Throughout the year ahead, U.S. Southern Command is committed to executing innovative initiatives to build capacity and capability to counter security challenges, enhance our own readiness, and increase linkages with our neighbors.

**USNS COMFORT.** A very visible and successful recent

*“Not only with the military help that the United States has been offering, but the humanitarian assistance helps to reaffirm the special bond between the American and Colombian people.” ---Juan Manuel Santos Calderon, Minister of Defense, Colombia, on the USNS COMFORT*

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 12 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



Hospital ship *COMFORT* near Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Sept. 2, 2007

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.



A Canadian dental technician attends a patient aboard the hospital ship *COMFORT*

More than just a medical mission, *USNS COMFORT* provided dental care to about 25,000 patients, conducted medical training for almost 30,000 host nation students and medical providers, and sponsored over 20 construction and restoration projects at local schools and health care facilities. *USNS COMFORT* also extended veterinarian services throughout its journey, treating and vaccinating thousands of animals, which constitute the livelihood of many families.

*"This type of diplomacy really touched the heart and soul of the country and the region and is the most effective way to counter the false perception of what Cuban medical teams are doing in the region." --- Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez, President of El Salvador, on the USNS COMFORT*

It is difficult to assess precisely the overall impact of a training mission with humanitarian benefits of this scale. But based upon the positive local and international press, the number of national leadership visits, and the vast number of people touched by the *USNS COMFORT* mission, we believe it was a significant success. 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.

**Disaster Relief.** Also demonstrating U.S. goodwill, last year, U.S. Southern Command directed military forces to provide disaster relief to six of our partner nations in times of dire need. These disaster relief operations, which were integrated with USAID-led efforts and those of the international community, helped

alleviate the suffering of many and assisted affected regions in their recovery. Specifically, we provided much needed flood relief to Bolivia in March, and quickly provided relief to Peru following an earthquake in August. Also in August, we assisted Belize after the passage of Hurricane Dean. We were critical first-responders



Disaster relief to Nicaragua after Hurricane Felix



Joint Task Force-Bravo medical support to Peru after an 8.0 magnitude earthquake

to a Nicaraguan request for relief following Hurricane Felix in September, arranged the procurement of firefighting equipment for Paraguay during a widespread wildfire also in September, and assisted the Dominican Republic after Tropical Storm Noel ravaged the island nation in October.

In almost every case, our Joint Task Force — Bravo (JTF-B), located in Soto Cano, Honduras, was a major contributor to the success of these disaster relief operations. Essentially a small, joint air wing comprised of 18 helicopters, JTF-B is our only permanently-deployed contingency force in the region. JTF-B responds to crises as a first-responder and routinely participates in humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, search and rescue, personnel recovery, and non-combatant medical evacuations. JTF-B has a long history of answering the call for assistance and is a tremendously valuable asset to U.S. Southern Command's partnership and goodwill efforts in the region.



U.S. Air Force medical personnel from Joint Task Force-Bravo treat a patient during humanitarian relief efforts

**Humanitarian Assistance.** Throughout the year, U.S. Southern Command's Humanitarian Assistance Program augments traditional military-to-civilian engagement activities in order to increase our partner nations' ability to respond independently to natural and man-made disasters. Our program helps local populations who could benefit from completed projects such as schools, clinics, community centers, orphanages, emergency operations centers, disaster response warehouses, wells, and potable water systems. Last year we completed 49 construction projects and provided critical training programs for first responders, disaster managers, firefighters, and disaster warehouse managers.



U.S. Army Soldiers construct a school in Nicaragua during a New Horizons exercise

A close corollary to the Humanitarian Assistance Program is the New Horizons series of joint and combined humanitarian assistance exercises that U.S. Southern Command conducts with Latin American and Caribbean nations. These exercises not only provide readiness training for U.S. Engineer, Medical, and Combat Service Support units, but also provide great benefits to the host nation. Each New Horizon exercise lasts several months and usually takes place in remote areas. U.S. Southern Command strives to combine these efforts with those of host nation doctors and civic personnel. In 2007, we conducted these exercises with four nations — Belize, Guatemala, Panama, and Nicaragua.



Along with the New Horizons exercises, U.S. Southern Command also conducts medical readiness training exercises to bring medical aid to needy rural, isolated populations and to provide valuable training for our medical units — primarily from our Air Force and Army component commands. These demonstrations of goodwill reached over 200,000 patients in 13 countries. Complemented by our coastal *USNS COMFORT* mission, these unique training exercises had tremendous humanitarian impact inland across the region at 63 separate locations — changing lives, influencing opinions, and spreading goodwill through quality donated medical assistance.

***Global Fleet Station — Pilot Deployment.*** Last summer, U.S. Southern Command sponsored the pilot deployment of a new U.S. Navy program called Global Fleet Station. The new concept provides a modular platform for sustained engagement tailored to each unique region. U.S. Southern Command quickly realized the great benefit for this program, given that all but two of our partner nations have direct access to the sea. 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



*HSV SWIFT* personnel coordinate delivery of donated medical supplies in Guatemala

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 would greatly facilitate the achievement of U.S. Southern Command's mission.

***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



Multinational ships from the 2007 Partnership of the Americas event

shore. Our POA events serve as visible symbols of U.S. commitment to bilateral and multilateral military cooperation and have evolved into comprehensive engagement missions that maximize exposure to international partners and local communities.

***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.*** In 2007, U.S. Southern Command sponsored numerous military and security force training exercises throughout the region. Our largest exercise, Fuerzas Aliadas (Allied Force) PANAMAX, brought together 19 nations from three continents, all operating in a combined task force to simulate the defense of the Panama Canal and surrounding region from traditional and non-traditional threats. PANAMAX also involved representatives from the United Nations and the Organization of American States. As one of the Department of Defense's largest exercises, PANAMAX '07 was a resounding success. The exercise placed 30 ships, numerous aircraft, and several brigades of simulated ground forces under the control of multinational staffs, and all participants left with an improved understanding and capability for multinational cooperation.

We also conducted a multinational exercise — TRADEWINDS — that focused on transnational threats in the Caribbean Basin. This successful exercise brought together security forces and interagency personnel from 18 nations to practice coordinated first-responder, fire, police, and military responses to security threats. The exercise scenario emphasized basic security operations, counter-drug activities, and disaster preparedness in a field environment with a focus on regional cooperation.



U.S. Marines train with Caribbean security forces during TRADEWINDS exercise

We conducted two multinational peacekeeping exercises (PKO NORTH and PKO SOUTH) designed to improve the capability of partner nations to plan and conduct peacekeeping operations. The emphasis of this exercise series was operational planning, command and control, and interoperability with regional armed forces assigned to UN missions and involved the integration of non-governmental agencies and international organizations.

Another of our exercises is FUERZAS COMANDO (Commando Forces), a skills competition and senior leadership seminar designed to enhance cooperation and trust between international Special Operations Forces while improving their training, readiness, and interoperability. Eighteen countries from throughout the region participated in this U.S. Southern Command-sponsored exercise in 2007. Each year, this exercise assembles anti-terrorism experts to exchange information and share tactics, techniques, and procedures for counter-terrorism operations.

Another significant exercise is our UNITAS maritime exercise program that we conduct on both the Atlantic and Pacific sides of South America. These two exercises sponsor multinational maritime forces to enhance security cooperation and improve coalition operations. UNITAS is our longest running exercise program and is coming up on its 49th year. 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.



Pacific phase of UNITAS maritime exercise



Painting presented for display at U.S. Southern Command headquarters by the Commander of the Brazilian Army depicting the Brazilian Expeditionary Force in Italy, 1944

***Building Partnership Capacity.*** Throughout U.S history, our nation has depended upon external partners to help maintain our own security and to spread the benefits of security and stability to ensure a cooperative worldwide economic system. This is true now more than ever, as today's transnational security threats cross borders, use distributed networks, and leverage information technology to threaten peace-seeking nations worldwide.

In addition to conducting exercises that build understanding and multinational cooperation, U.S. Southern Command conducts a comprehensive Theater Security Cooperation program to develop



U.S. Air Force trains with Peruvian Air Force

the capability and capacity of our partners to respond to mutual security threats — either independently or with regional partners.



Colombian military support in Korea, 1951

U.S. Southern Command

participates in the Regional Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program that sponsors seminars, symposiums, and tactical and operational training designed to build the counter-terrorism capability of participating nations. Our 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. This key program shares U.S. information on illicit traffickers and builds or improves partner nations' ability to detect and interdict illicit trafficking along their shores.

Besides our peace operations exercises, we also assist with the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), which is a Department of State-funded and Department of Defense-executed program. The intent of GPOI in our region is to train a multinational peacekeeping battalion from the Conference of American Armed Forces (Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) and two multi-role engineer companies from Paraguay to prepare them for deployment on UN peacekeeping missions. Through GPOI, U.S. Southern Command assisted in the establishment of a regional training center located in Coban, Guatemala, which became operational in 2007 and is the primary location for peacekeeping training, unit qualifications, and exercises. This important training center will also receive instructor and curriculum support from Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay — who already have their own well-established peacekeeping training centers.

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.

In order 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 the partner nation armed services. Training at our security institutions continues to be very popular and beneficial to our partners in the region, and access to funded billets at U.S. schools significantly diminishes the draw of extra-hemispheric military influence.

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.

A number of nations from this region were previously subject to sanctions under the American Servicemembers Protection Act. I would like to thank the Congress for the recent lifting of the sanctions on those nations. This will have an enduring and positive effect on building long-lasting partnerships.

***Human Rights Initiative.*** All of our exercises, training evolutions, and partnership building activities are done within a framework of respect for human rights. U.S. Southern Command has a unique and dedicated group of experts that assist the region's militaries and security forces in the human rights

arena. Several nations in Latin America are still dealing with a not-so-distant history darkened by abuses committed by uniformed militaries, militias, and guerrilla groups. We sponsor a Human Rights Initiative in a unique public-private partnership with a Costa Rica-based human rights organization. This initiative has created a consensus document on human rights through which the militaries and security forces of nine nations and a multinational organization have committed to advance an institutional respect for human rights and promote a zero-tolerance environment for violations. We support development of doctrine, education and training programs, internal control systems, and civil-military outreach efforts by military and security forces of the region.





## AN INTERAGENCY APPROACH

The 21st Century security environment presents us with some significant new challenges, both globally and regionally, such as the global reach of radical organizations, nation states fighting in unconventional settings with unfamiliar tool sets, and growing environmental security concerns to name a few.

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

*"...this country must ... create the capability to integrate and apply all of the elements of national power to problems and challenges abroad. New institutions are needed for the 21st century, new organizations with a 21st century mind-set." --- Dr. Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense*

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 goal is to establish an integrated interagency team with senior representatives from key departments and agencies assigned throughout the command. Toward that end, we are coordinating closely with those other departments and agencies in ensuring that our goal can be met in a manner that is consonant with their core mission interests and resources. 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.

Fortunately, we already have significant interagency integration at U.S. Southern Command. Over the last year, we created a directorate designed to foster collaboration with interagency partners. We have exchanges, liaisons, and/or representatives from 17 federal agencies and departments that participate in our planning efforts and help coordinate command activities. We have hosted extremely successful interagency conferences, exercises, and coordination group meetings on a number of strategic topics related to our assigned region. Each of these events, from the tactical worker level to senior interagency leadership, gave all participants an improved understanding of complex issues and a baseline for future cooperation.



Donated ambulance loaded aboard USS PEARL HARBOR for delivery to Argentina

In addition to our interagency integration efforts, we have also created a staff section dedicated to understanding and developing public-private cooperation. This unique group reaches out to the private sector and finds where we can legally build synergy in our efforts to engage in the region. To date, we have coordinated the delivery of tons of donated goodwill material to the needy of the region and have facilitated the delivery of higher-end needs such

as donated ambulances and operating room equipment. This effort, which truly has the potential to harness the good nature and resources of the U.S. private sector, will add depth and breadth to our interaction with our partners in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Together with our partners in the U.S. government, private sector, and international community, we should be able to better defend the United States and to enable a secure, stable, and prosperous hemisphere of cooperating and democratic nations.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Looking forward, we have identified critical capability requirements that will allow us to confront the challenges we see in the region today and the security trends noted for the future.

***Fusion.*** In order to coordinate joint, multinational, interagency, and even limited public-private efforts in our region, 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. This location will allow our diverse partners to integrate into our organization in a transparent manner, allowing them to participate in daily activities while building mutual trust and cooperation. Our new headquarters building and the information systems scheduled for installation will serve to meet this requirement. We thank the Committee for its support in authorizing the new construction of our headquarters, which we are scheduled to occupy in 2010. The construction timeline should greatly enhance our effectiveness once complete.

***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.

In order to strengthen and/or gain partners, first we need to earn and maintain their trust. This will require a unified approach with consistent, effective, and flexible engagement. It will require cohesive strategic messaging and innovative and earnest information sharing across the board. It will require innovative ways to make our various exercises, programs, and partnerships more inclusive and more effective in reinforcing our connection to the peoples of the region.

Along with this engagement, we need to ensure our message gets out effectively and that we understand the impact of our efforts. Over the past year, U.S. Southern Command has refocused efforts on strategic communication, making it a priority at all levels of the command.

***Capable partners.*** Continued globalization and the diffusion of high technology have made it certain that the United States cannot ensure its forward defense alone. Working alone, we cannot stop drug traffickers from penetrating our borders; nor can we locate and neutralize terrorist threats abroad without capable partners willing to cooperate with us. Persistent engagement will go a long way toward building willingness, but we also need to identify capability shortfalls



with these 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.



***Sovereignty and peacekeeping.*** As our partners build capability and capacity, 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.

We also need these partners to be able to conduct peacekeeping operations. Already, we see many nations in the region contributing to international peacekeeping in places such as Haiti. By developing a regional capability, we will reduce the demand for U.S. forces to perform peacekeeping missions, while also increasing the legitimacy of peacekeeping forces by diversifying international representation.

***Interagency core.*** Besides the ability to fuse information and efforts across the command, we also need to create an environment where the various U.S. government agency representatives are willing and authorized to integrate into our efforts. We need to create a whole-of-government program where integrated planning and career exchanges are the norm. It should be a positive career step for someone from the military to fill an exchange in one of the other federal agencies, and the converse should be equally true. By working together and building a regional focus point for policy implementation, we should be able to reduce redundancy, gain resource efficiencies, and ultimately better ensure our security and that of our partners.

***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.

***Understanding.*** The last of our required priority capabilities is probably the most important — the ability to understand the region, know what transpires, and how to act or interact with our partners.

Modern information systems, extensive language capability, and cultural training and study are the tools necessary for this command to achieve this understanding. The importance of Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States cannot be overstated. It merits frequent high-level visits to see first hand the tremendous linkages and challenges we share and to demonstrate U.S. interest and commitment to our partners in Latin America and the Caribbean.





## COMMAND HEADING

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. We are building on lessons learned from last year and are further integrating joint, multinational, interagency, and public-private efforts into as many of our actions as possible.

Soon the aircraft carrier *USS GEORGE WASHINGTON* will be sailing around the region as the centerpiece of our Partnership of the Americas event. As we did last year, this deployment will encompass much more than just traveling around the region; it will encompass our major maritime exercises and other smaller exercises. We have the perfectly named ship for this event, *USS GEORGE WASHINGTON*. Washington was an early idol of Simon Bolivar, who was the father of liberty in South America and an iconic “American” in the broadest sense of the term.

We also are revamping our land engagements this year, with the beginning of a program called “Beyond the Horizon.” This program will maximize the impact of our land events by increasing the number of “microburst” engagements — engineer construction, small unit familiarization, subject matter exchanges, medical readiness training exercises — as well as establishing longer-term programs that integrate the efforts of other U.S. federal agencies, host nations, and the private sector.

Also this year, we will be conducting CONTINUING PROMISE, a multi-month training mission with the *USS KEARSARGE* — a large deck amphibious ship — which will continue the successful mission of the hospital ship *USNS COMFORT* from last year. This deployment will highlight persistent engagement with innovative interagency, multinational, and public-private cooperation.

We will continue our Regional AirSpace Integration (RASI) initiative with a focus on improving Central American capability to detect and monitor aircraft in their predominantly unmonitored airspace. This initiative involves integrating the civil, military, and security air domain in the region, modernizing air traffic management, and building a multinational common operating picture through a regional surveillance center and new surveillance radars. A complementary program to RASI is our Regional Aircraft Modernization Program (RAMP), which conducts surveys to identify gaps in the aviation capability of our partners to respond to transnational threats. Ultimately, RAMP aims to promote regional air sovereignty through increased cooperation, interoperability, and modernization of regional air security assets, with cooperating nations better prepared to perform humanitarian and air sovereignty missions.

We have numerous other programs and initiatives coming on line — all working to advance our mission in the region. We are progressing steadily on our reorganization efforts and have received significant support from our sister agencies on this effort. We continue to track along our command heading: understanding the linkages the United States shares with the region; working together with partners to overcome shared challenges; and fulfilling the promise of a secure, cooperating, and prospering hemisphere through innovative and effective strategic initiatives.

## 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.

Although the likelihood of large-scale military combat in our region remains very low, this region continues to play a critical role to the continued 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, Coastguardsmen, and civilians — active, reserve, and guard — who serve in the region. They are volunteers and patriots, and I am proud and lucky 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.

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











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