

# “Mission Creep” in Latin America— U.S. Southern Command’s New Security Strategy

By Tom Barry | July 2005

U.S. security strategy in the Western Hemisphere has had, except in rare occasions, little or nothing to do with protecting national security and the U.S. homeland. Since the early 19th century, the pursuit of U.S. national security in Latin America and the Caribbean has largely been grounded in the pursuit of U.S. interests.

Latin American and Caribbean societies commonly accept this fact of life in a hemisphere dominated for the past couple of centuries by the United States. Few would expect the U.S. government to pursue policies that run counter to the prevailing consensus in Washington about what constitute U.S. national interests.

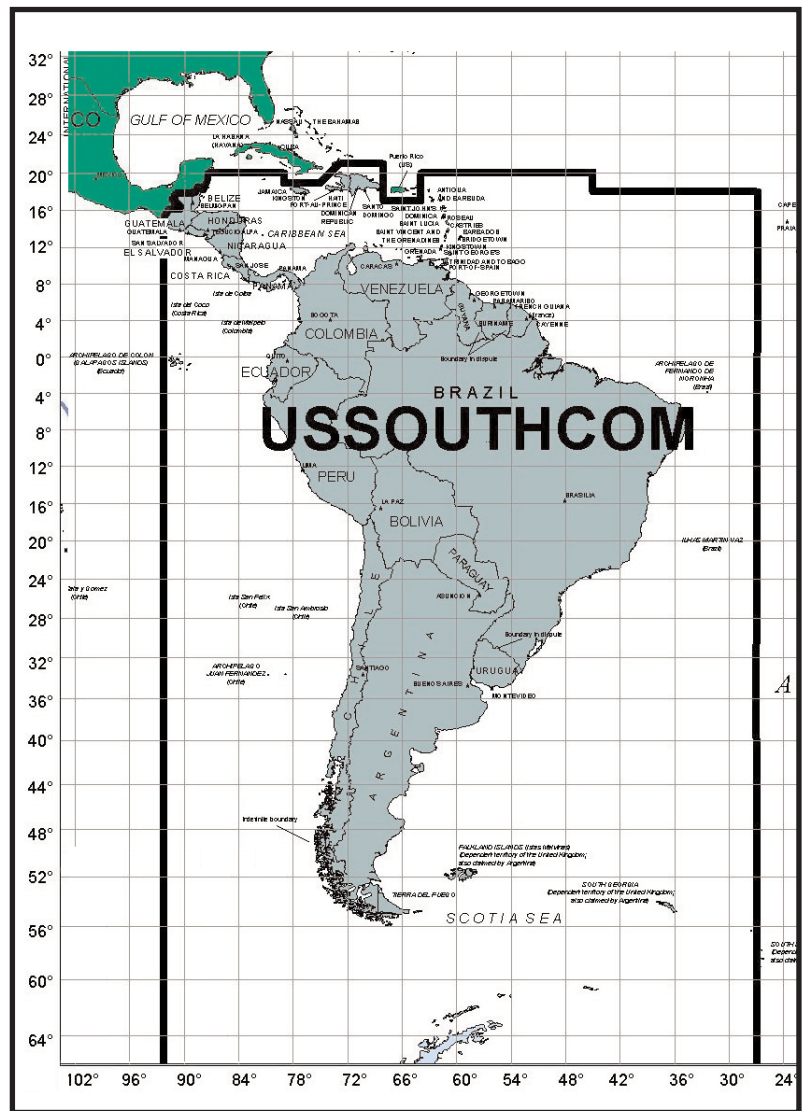
When projected abroad, the interests of great powers such as the United States are variously described as being colonial, mercantilist, imperial, or hegemonic. The latter term—hegemonic—can encompass any of the previous three. A further distinction often made by scholars of international relations is that some hegemonies are benevolent—meaning that they exercise their hegemony with a view to the mutual well-being of their own populations and those of the countries under their sway.

Great powers commonly describe themselves as benevolent, employing terms such as “Pax Britannica,” to British imperialism, and Pax Americana, or its later version, the “American Century,” to U.S. hegemony. It is rare, however, that a dominated country conceives of foreign hegemony as “benevolent.”

## Hegemony a Product of National Interests

Whether benevolent or not, what drives hegemony is not some basic instinct to exercise control but a combination of three types of interests of the hegemonic power: security, economic, and domestic political interests.<sup>1</sup> These interests are “national interests” as defined by the government that may or may not reflect the real majority interests of the citizenry.

The interests of society and what economic and political elites define as the “national interests” don’t necessarily coincide with and rarely complement each other.



Source: [http://www.southcom.mil/scen\\_PortalAccess/scen05loww1\\_006.htm](http://www.southcom.mil/scen_PortalAccess/scen05loww1_006.htm)



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More often what the elites define as the national interests run counter to and contradict the interests of the entire society.

This disjuncture between citizens' interests and the prevailing definition of national interests is especially striking in Latin America and the Caribbean. In the case of security issues, the government claims that it is in the U.S. national interest to deploy the U.S. military and deplete the national treasury in counterinsurgency operations in Colombia.

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**If regional stagnation, instability, and growing contradictions between the United States and Latin America are the result of years of hegemony, then it is past time to find a new approach.**

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With respect to economic interests, the U.S. government contends that more trade agreements on the NAFTA model will further U.S. economic interests. But there are sharp divides in the Washington policy community about whether such security and economic policies further U.S. national interests, and it is safe to say that the U.S. public would be hard put if asked to describe why spending billions of dollars on counterinsurgency in Colombia or facilitating corporate trade and investment is in the “national interest.”

A hegemonic foreign policy is more than the sum of security and economic interests. It is a product also of domestic political forces that have certain ideological, religious, cultural, or country-specific agendas. Backed by money or powerful sectors, these lobbies often have specific agendas that do not correspond to national interests as the majority of the population would define them. What the Cuban American lobby advocates as a Cuba policy serves its own narrow interests but U.S. citizens, if asked, may very well say that constructive engagement is a better policy than internal meddling and economic blockades.

The United States is the great power that has come closest to being a global “hegemon.” Like most hegemons, the United States of America began building its hegemonic reach in its “backyard” or what, in the more elevated parlance of foreign policy journals, is known as the “near abroad.” One might expect that U.S. hegemony would be strongest in Latin America and the Caribbean. But U.S. control is disintegrating in its own hemisphere at the very time when the Bush administration has embarked on global crusades to crush anti-U.S. regimes, combat anti-U.S. terrorism, and bolster alliances among free-market democracies around the globe. Pax Americana in the Americas—a declared foreign policy objective since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823—is no longer a sure bet.

Throughout the region, grassroots movements, opposition leaders, and governments themselves are rejecting U.S. leadership. There’s an emerging consensus that U.S. hegemony is not benevolent but rather malevolent.

The U.S. Southern Command (Southcom), which defines Latin America and the Caribbean as its Area of Responsibility (AOR), is clearly worried. With a more extensive presence in the region than any other part of the U.S. government, the U.S. military has been the first to identify in any integrated way the rising threats to U.S. hegemony.

Rather than questioning the wisdom of current U.S. foreign and military policy, the Pentagon and Southcom have resurrected traditional strategies and launched new initiatives. However, because these responses run counter to the real security needs and national interests of both the United States and the nations within its AOR, these responses serve only to fuel counter-hegemonic forces.

Washington is losing control of its backyard. If the U.S. government “stays the course” with its current foreign and military policy, as President Bush has repeatedly asserted is what’s needed to keep the country strong, the United States is on a collision course with Latin America and the Caribbean.

U.S. national security policy has evolved in recent years through a combination of “mission creep” that encompasses expanding definitions of national security, and more overt hegemonic aspirations. Leading strategists and ideologues of the Bush administration believe openly that U.S. global domination is the best and in any case inevitable form of world governance.

But at the same time this expanding scope of national security and hegemony confronts a counter-hegemonic

backlash. There is a new spirit of resistance, reformism, and self-determination in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Neither Washington nor the governments of the region have yet come to grips with the interplay of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic trends. As the statements of U.S. military officials and strategy documents reveal, the Pentagon and Southcom are increasingly preoccupied by the new social and political forces emerging in the hemisphere. But equally clear is that the Pentagon and Southcom are increasingly delusional about what's going on in the United States' backyard.

## The Price of Security

Since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 the United States has regarded the Western Hemisphere as its own domain. The intent of this foreign policy doctrine was to prevent foreign powers—European colonizers, mercantilists, and financiers in the 1800s—from exercising influence that challenged the U.S. stake in Latin America and the Caribbean. The policy undermined economic development and political progress in the region for over a century. However, the precepts of the Monroe Doctrine have ensured that the Western Hemisphere remains a region that harbors no military threats to U.S. national security, albeit at great cost.

This is no small accomplishment. At least part of America's superpower status today stems from its own geographical security—its isolation from other great powers, the absence of weapons of mass destruction in the “near abroad,” and its effective hegemony over its own hemisphere.

But this hegemony has come with a high price, predictably for the subjects of the hegemon. Even a quick glance at the political and economic conditions of some the United States' closest neighbors—Haiti, the border cities of Mexico, Central American nations—belies the benefits of U.S. “benevolent hegemony.” In these countries, clearly geographical and political proximity to the world's greatest power failed to yield even a minimal standard of progress.

In the name of security—both U.S. national security and the security of nations within U.S. hegemonic reach—the United States has repeatedly obstructed political and economic progress in Latin America and the Caribbean. Nearly two centuries of U.S. hemispheric hegemony has left a blood-stained legacy—one

### Leading Trends in U.S.-Latin America and

### Caribbean Security Relations

#### Trends in U.S. Policy:

- *Refocusing security programs into prism of war on terrorism, despite the absence of international terrorist networks in the hemisphere or states that sponsor such networks.*
- *Deepening U.S. military involvement in the civil war in Colombia.*
- *Continued encouragement and support for regional military forces to involve themselves in law enforcement tasks that are customarily handled by public safety officials and police.*
- *Description of multiple issues—human and drug smuggling, drug production, document forging, money laundering, militant popular activism, immigration flows, left-center governments and political movements, and guerrilla movements—as components of the regional terrorist threat.*
- *Sidelining or outright dismissal of human rights concerns in U.S. foreign and military policy and in police/military aid and training programs.*
- *The centrality of national security strategy and military actors in shaping U.S. foreign and military policy, thereby marginalizing attention by nonmilitary actors to deepening impoverishment, landlessness, hunger, and unemployment.*
- *Southcom, like military commands in other regions, has become the principal interlocutor in the region, as the presence of other U.S. agencies declines, such as U.S. Agency for International Development, and U.S. Agriculture Department, and as its mission expands to cover responding to “nontraditional threats,” purported manifestations of international terrorism, and internal security issues.*
- *Rising U.S. concern that its historical hegemony in the hemisphere is at risk as governments and societies reject or sideline U.S. trade, security, financial, and political proposals.*

#### Trends in Latin America:

- *Increasing autonomy of regional armed forces from the Pentagon paralleling the increasing break by governments, political parties, and popular movements with U.S. hegemonic policies with respect to trade, drug control, and national economic development strategies.*
- *New military involvement in “internal security” issues, including drug control, human trafficking, crime control, and especially anti-gang operations.*
- *Resistance to Pentagon initiatives to form regional army and naval coalitions under U.S. direction.*
- *Increasing intra-regional military alliances, mainly in South America, that stand outside Southcom's hemispheric security strategy.*
- *Rising popular militancy directed against traditional political parties and elites, foreign oil and gas corporations, and elected governments in the face of deteriorating socioeconomic conditions, corruption, and increasing economic polarization—resulting in deadly clashes between protestors and security forces.*

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marked by a tragic history of gunboat diplomacy, military occupations, counterinsurgency campaigns, economic exploitation by companies like United Fruit and Anaconda, and support for dictators and military regimes.

If regional stagnation, instability, and growing contradictions between the United States and Latin America are the result of years of hegemony, then it is past time to find a new approach. In the search for less ideological and more effective security policies, it is worth recalling U.S. policies that offered more positive elements for a new model of constructive hemispheric relations. One such model was Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy of the 1930s, and more recently certain aspects of constructive engagement by the Clinton administration.<sup>2</sup>

## **Bush's "War on Terrorism" as the New Security Paradigm**

**In the post-Cold War years before the Sept. 11 attacks, militarists and ideologues sought new justifications for maintaining a military-industrial complex despite the implosion of the enemy empire. The purported threat of "rogue countries" such as Iraq, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Cuba, and Iran became the prevailing rationale for proposals for missile defense systems, global military presence, and high-tech "military transformation."**



The U.S. military commands were steadily increasing their overseas roles in training foreign militaries, engaging in nation-building and humanitarian interventions, and assuming the lead position in the drug war and counterterrorism.



In the Western Hemisphere, where Cuba provided a patently weak excuse for military build-up, the Pentagon security chiefs eventually embraced the "drug war" as part of a national security doctrine. The armed forces

themselves initially resisted adopting new and nontraditional missions such as the drug war and humanitarian intervention. But U.S. Southern Command was by the early 1990s largely on board with the drug war agenda promoted by influential social conservatives, military strategists, and right-wing ideologues.

After Sept. 11 there was a major paradigm shift in national security throughout all the Pentagon's area commands. The counterterrorism agenda soon dominated even in regions like Latin America and the Caribbean where there is no evidence (or even serious allegations) that the region is a base for either state-sponsored or nonstate international terrorism. The Bush administration has reconfigured U.S. national security policy in the region as part of its "global war on terrorism." For its part, Southcom has readily adopted this new security framework, extending it to include not only the drug war but also such issues as human trafficking and gang proliferation.

The U.S. government's new hemispheric security strategy will neither improve the security of the U.S. homeland nor contribute to the peace and security of Latin American and Caribbean nations. The attempt to shoe-horn a wide range of conflicts and deep-rooted problems into the "war on terrorism" paradigm leads to ineffectiveness against the real challenges and undermines U.S. national security. Issues from migration to indigenous militancy to the explosion of gang violence have varied causes and require targeted local, national, and regional strategies.

***The threats to U.S. security resulting from the current approach to U.S.-Latin America security relations are the following:***

- By encouraging an expanded mission for the region's armed forces, the United States is once again contributing to the creation of national security states in which the lines between public security and national security are diffused.
- In its search for a match between counterterrorism and regional issues, the U.S. military is losing sight of the real threats to U.S. national security in other parts of the world—posed mainly by the proliferation (and lack of control) of weapons of mass destruction and by international terrorist networks that regard the United States as an enemy.
- Whereas traditional security threats to U.S. national security are virtually nonexistent in the Western Hemisphere, there is an emerging array of

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nontraditional menaces that demand U.S. and regional responses. But these threats are best addressed not by the armed forces but by civilian law enforcement and public safety agencies both at national and multi-lateral levels. Regarding nontraditional threats—such as public health crises, international crime syndicates, and human smuggling—as military targets has proved ineffective and counterproductive, as well illustrated by the “drug war.”

*The main problems for Latin America and the Caribbean resulting from the overarching U.S. approach to national security are the following:*

- By imposing its own security strategy on the region, the U.S. government has historically fostered the militarization of Latin American and Caribbean nations that face no existing or potential national security threats. The existence of overdeveloped military institutions has hampered the political and economic development of these nations.
- Historically, the U.S. security umbrella provides little shelter for nations living under it, and in fact has proved to be among the worst threats to their security. Although the region as a whole moved from authoritarian regimes to democracies, this was largely in spite of, rather than due to, U.S. hegemony. Today the prospects for the countries of the Caribbean, Mesoamerica, and South America are not encouraging. The economic stability of many nations depends on remittances from its emigrants; crime waves are sweeping the cities and entire subregions such as Central America; the political stability of several countries is tenuous, notably Bolivia, Ecuador, and Haiti; foreign and domestic investment in productive enterprises is stagnant; and the number of poor, landless, and unemployed in an already badly impoverished region is steadily expanding even in countries with moderate or relatively high growth rates.
- The emphasis on national and cross-border security issues as defined by the U.S. military has fed anti-U.S. sentiment and is undermining U.S. security in the region. Meanwhile, other great powers—European Union, Japan, and China especially—are consolidating political ties, military links, commercial deals, and trade agreements with the region. A new spate of intra-regional accords and successful resistance to neoliberal restructuring and IMF debt rescheduling proposals by several nations further weaken Washington’s hegemony in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **Washington Struggles to Define Its Western Hemisphere Security Goals**

In his testimony to Congress on March 2, 2005, Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega stated: “We cannot strengthen democratic institutions, promote a prosperous hemisphere, and invest in people without bolstering security.”<sup>3</sup>

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While there are many similarities to U.S. Cold War and counterterrorism war policies in Latin America, there are also major differences.

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What seems a reasonable assessment—one which the Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations readily accepted—rests on three questionable assumptions that underline U.S. policy in the region:

- 1) U.S. security concerns are coincident with the security concerns of our Latin American and Caribbean neighbors;
- 2) Armed forces, both those of the United States and its “partner nations,” are the primary instruments for addressing security concerns;
- 3) The United States has the right and responsibility to involve itself in the internal safety and security issues of other nations.

Linking these assumptions together is an expansive definition of U.S. national security, not just in terms of its extensive geographical reach but also in terms of the “threats” that now come under the cover of security.

Since the George H.W. Bush administration (1989-93), U.S. national security strategy with respect to Latin America and the Caribbean has gone through multiple transitions. During the Cold War, evaluations of U.S. national security in the Western Hemisphere were almost exclusively linked to assessments of the advance of leftist political movements, popular organizations, and guerrilla forces. In the 1990s the U.S. Southern Command gradually began redefining its mission to include defense

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against what were described as “emerging” and “nontraditional” security threats, mainly drug trafficking. The 1989 Defense Authorization Act stated that the U.S. Defense Department should begin to play a major role in narcotics interdiction.

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Whereas the geographical focus of Southcom and U.S. military strategy in general in the 1980s was Central America and to a lesser degree the Caribbean, by the late 1990s the Andean nations, particularly Colombia, had become the priority. At first, increased economic and military aid, logistical support for the armed forces, and the direct involvement of U.S. military, CIA, private contractors, the FBI, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was predicated on a strictly defined mission to stop the production of illegal drugs at their source.

As drug policy moved to a central place in security policy, foreign economic policy seemed to overtake diplomacy and traditional foreign policy. In the 1990s, it was widely observed that the U.S. agencies responsible for international economic policy, such as the U.S. Trade Representative Office and the Commerce and Treasury Departments, would become the prime actors in U.S. foreign policy. In the interim decade—between the end of the Cold War and the onset of the war on terrorism—foreign policy increasingly became foreign economic policy.

Because trade and investment seemed the only path forward toward political and economic progress in the age of economic globalization, the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development were cut back, and the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) dismantled. At the same time, however, the U.S. military commands were steadily increasing their overseas roles in training foreign militaries, engaging in nation-building and humanitarian interventions, and assuming the lead position in the drug war and counterterrorism.<sup>4</sup>

With the State Department fading, the new directions in U.S. foreign and military policy during the 1990s set up the twin pillars of economic policy and military presence as the foundations of policy for the region. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the U.S. military became the primary face of U.S. foreign policy. With a team of more than 1100 officials in the region, Southcom became the main interlocutor of U.S. foreign and military policy in Latin America and the Caribbean, dwarfing the regional presence of the U.S. Commerce, Treasury, Agriculture, and State Department representatives.

By the latter half of President Clinton’s second term, the Pentagon and the executive branch began justifying the U.S. military mission in Latin America in more traditional terms, arguing that increased military aid and U.S. military presence in the region were needed not only as part of the drug war but also to support counterinsurgency programs against the “narcoguerrillas.”

In 2002 Congress approved a “mission expansion” for the U.S. Southern Command operations in Colombia. Aid and training formerly limited to counternarcotics operations could henceforth be used to combat “terrorism” in Colombia. Southcom officers and congressional budget requests now frame military aid as part of the war on terrorism, which in this hemisphere is largely waged against what U.S. military strategists call “narcoterrorists.”

As the guerrilla organizations in Colombia gained renewed momentum and public outcries about the U.S. drug problem continued to mount, Clinton put his weight behind a U.S. version of the Colombia-initiated Plan Colombia that prioritized counternarcotics aid to the country’s military and police. Proposed as a five-year plan that would wipe out the narcotics industry in Colombia—the main supplier of cocaine and heroin to U.S. consumers—the reworked Plan Colombia was launched in 2000 and has now come to the end of scheduled life.

But there’s little to show for it other than \$3.8 billion in aid—80 percent which has been channeled to the military and police. After five years, Washington’s version of Plan Colombia cannot demonstrate any measurable progress in reducing supplies, raising prices, lowering the purity of illegal drugs that originate in Colombia, or even reducing coca production in this “source country.”

No matter. The Bush administration and the U.S. Southern Command have reaffirmed the war against “narcoterrorists.” In 2003 Southcom described its new priority as “to successfully prosecute the war on

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terrorism in its Area of Responsibility.” Reflecting the expansive definition of the Bush administration’s “global war on terrorism,” Southcom says it “combats terrorism primarily by supporting a determined Colombian government in their fight against narcoterrorist groups.”<sup>5</sup>

## **What’s New, What’s Different**

**The war on terrorism has replaced the Cold War as the U.S. government’s overarching framework for its foreign, economic, and military policy. While there are many similarities to U.S. Cold War and counterterrorism war policies in Latin America, there are also major differences.**

Although the Cold War prism did distort U.S. relations with the region, it did not mean that U.S. foreign policy was exclusively focused on military and security matters. Especially following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, Washington recognized that U.S. economic and security interests in the region were not always best served by close ties with oligarchs and dictators.

In the 1960s the Alliance for Progress was, in essence, a counterinsurgency, counterrevolutionary program that included police and military training but that also initiated development programs that focused on alleviating social problems considered the breeding grounds for communism. During the Cold War in the Western Hemisphere, the Soviet Union or socialism weren’t regarded as the primary national security threats but rather endogenous political movements and popular organizations that were regarded as threats to U.S. hegemony and client regimes—no matter their legitimacy, democratic credentials, or level of grassroots support.

Yet in sharp contrast to current U.S. policy in Latin America, the Alliance for Progress realized that the challenge to U.S. hegemony was primarily political, not military. So, the U.S. government sought to have it both ways. At the same time it was maintaining its alliances with the military, political, and economic elites, the U.S. government was also fostering alliances with workers and peasants as part of a ham-handed attempt to address structural causes.

A priority for the Alliance for Progress was addressing the plight of poor rural producers on a continent that was still largely rural four decades ago. Through its land reform initiatives and support for peasant cooperatives, the Alliance for Progress did succeed in winning hearts and minds and unwittingly contributed to popular movements that contested state power.

By the late 1960s the U.S. government had mostly backed away from supporting reformism in Latin America and instead directly or indirectly supported “dirty wars” by military regimes threatened by the rise of socialist, social democratic, and popular movements, including leftist guerrilla forces. In South America, the armed forces were able to crush these movements—including the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile—without overt U.S. intervention. By the mid-1970s, and especially during the Carter administration (1977-81), concerns about the human rights violations by U.S. supported police and military sparked a spate of new restrictions on U.S. support to the region’s security forces and military regimes.

The pendulum swung back to more hard-line policies after 1979 when the leftist Sandinista coalition deposed U.S. ally Anastasio Somoza and guerrilla forces surged in Guatemala and El Salvador. Covert counterinsurgency and counterrevolutionary aid was supplemented by large flows of U.S. military and economic aid, as well as military training and intelligence and logistical support. While winning hearts and minds through food aid, pacification programs, and agrarian reform were still part of U.S. strategy, they were too closely linked to military efforts to be effective as pacification programs or to have any reformist impact.

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During the Cold War, U.S. economic aid to the region substantially outpaced military aid flows. Today, however, U.S. economic aid and military aid are running about equal, as economic aid flows decline and military aid increases. No longer does U.S. economic aid support structural reforms (as it did in the 1960s) that favor the disadvantaged. To the contrary, only if recipient nations

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agree to structural reforms that benefit the capitalist sectors, particularly those in export businesses, are aid and trade agreements signed.

Another major difference is the new focus on regional cooperation and the interoperability of the region's armed forces, whereas U.S. military aid was previously focused almost exclusively on bilateral collaboration. Although this new emphasis on U.S.-led cooperation stresses the central role of civilian and democratic political leadership, the various forms of this military-to-military cooperation—drug and migrant interdiction, counterterrorism, anti-gang campaigns, and forming strategies to meet common internal challenges to political stability—contribute to the reinforcement of the armed forces as the most powerful institutions in many Latin American countries.

The recent efforts to foster regional cooperation under military auspices not only builds ties among U.S. and regional military leaders but also brings nonmilitary sectors, such as public safety officials and police, into collaborative relations with the armed forces. This represents a reversal of national and international efforts over the past 15 years to remove law enforcement agencies from military control.

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Another salient feature of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America that results from the primacy of the U.S. military role is its failure to prioritize human rights concerns—despite the fact that rhetoric about human rights and democracy is now a standard feature of Southcom declarations. Fortunately, Congress has resisted Bush

administration attempts to remove all human rights conditionality on U.S. military programs in Latin America and elsewhere.

The administration has aimed to sideline human rights concerns in its defense authorization bills by specifying that the defense secretary may override human rights and other considerations if necessary to meeting security objectives. What's more, the administration has dramatically cut the reporting requirements that formerly obligated the State Department and the Pentagon to ensure Congress that its human rights provisions were respected in practice.<sup>6</sup>

Similar to the security doctrine that guided the Cold War era in the region, Southcom points to a vague external threat to the national security of all nations. During the Cold War, the purported objective of the Soviet Union was to force or persuade countries to become part of the evil empire as colonies or satellites. Yet there was no evidence that the Soviet Union (or any other communist nations) had territorial ambitions beyond its near abroad or that its foreign policy was shaped by a strategy to gain global hegemony and militarily defeat capitalist powers.

Today, the external threat as described by Southcom is international terrorism. To a certain extent, the Latin American and Caribbean nations have accepted that international terrorism represents a threat to both their national and collective security. Immediately after Sept. 11, the Organization of American States (OAS) expressed its solidarity with the United States with a statement that committed member states to "deny terrorist groups the capacity to operate in this hemisphere." At least in that instance, the OAS declared: "This American family stands united."

In addition to positing a common external threat, the Pentagon—both during the Cold War and since September 11th—has argued that the security forces of Latin America must also confront internal threats that are closely allied with the external ones. These range from narcoterrorists to criminal gangs to radical populists.

In Southcom's view, terrorists are not just international terrorists that attack other nations and peoples but an array of internal actors as well that represent no discernible threat to the U.S. homeland. Painting a region-wide proliferation of terrorist threats, Southcom's former commander Gen. James Hill declared: "Terrorists throughout the Southern Command's area of responsibility bomb, murder, kidnap, traffic drugs, transfer arms, launder money, and smuggle human beings."

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## New Views from Southcom

**There's no choice but to take seriously the national security perspective of those in charge, despite the delusional and deceptive characterization of our hemisphere's "security."**

The "posture statements" of two Southcom commanders to the House Armed Services Committee in 2004 and 2005 are aptly named, as they seem to be little more than posturing by generals fighting imaginary wars in unknown territories. That such statements are taken seriously by congressional representatives in charge of the military budget is another sign that the U.S. national security has strayed dangerously far from reality in its assessments of the region.

A revealing look at how Southcom perceives security issues in Latin America and the Caribbean was provided by Gen. James Hill, Southcom's former commander, in his "posture report" to Congress in March 2004.<sup>7</sup> Hill alerted the House Armed Services Committee that in addition to the terrorist threats in the region, the security climate was also threatened by widening political and social instability.

According to Hill, the United States is facing two types of threats in the region: traditional and emerging. Leading the traditional threats are the "narcoterrorists and their ilk" followed by "a growing threat to law and order in partner nations from urban gangs and other illegal armed groups."<sup>8</sup>

The central emerging threat, according to Hill, is "radical populism in which the democratic process is undermined to decrease rather than protect individual rights." He claims that radical populists are emerging throughout the hemisphere and gaining in force by "tapping into deep-seated frustrations of the failure of democratic reforms to deliver expected goods and services. By tapping into these frustrations, which run concurrently with frustrations caused by social and economic inequality, the leaders are able to reinforce radical positions by inflaming anti-U.S. sentiment."

Current Southcom commander Lieutenant General Bantz J. Craddock blames the usual suspects—"anti-U.S., anti-globalization, and anti-free trade demagogues"—for political instability in the region. In the context of addressing regional security threats, Craddock said that these sectors that are "unwilling to shoulder the burden of participating in the democratic process and too impatient to undertake legitimate political action," thus decide

to "incite violence against their own governments and their own people."

The solution, according to Craddock, is "building capabilities of the security forces of our region ... because a secure environment is a non-negotiable foundation for a functioning civil society." Asking for increased congressional budgetary support for Southcom in March 2005, Craddock warned: "We cannot afford to let Latin America and the Caribbean become a backwater of violent, inward-looking states that are cut off from the world around them by populist, authoritarian governments."<sup>9</sup>

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What was especially striking—and alarming—about Southcom's description of emerging populism was that it was described not just as a new political phenomenon but as a U.S. national security threat. A similar description of populism by the U.S. Agency for International Development, Commerce Department, State Department, or Office of the U.S. Trade Representative might even be considered a positive sign that U.S. government was finally reflecting on the failure of its economic and political agendas in Latin America and the Caribbean. Instead, rising popular protest is being used to justify increasing levels of U.S. military and police aid to the region as well as to bolster the already considerable presence of the U.S. military.

Few would disagree with Southcom's description of Latin American and the Caribbean as a region that is "generally marked by weak institutions and struggling economies," and that "the resulting frailty of state control can lead to ungoverned or ill-governed spaces and people." But there is good reason to question his conclusion

that the U.S. Southern Command merits increased budgetary support to respond to traditional and emerging threats. According to Southcom, it is essential that the United States deepen “military to military contacts as a means of irrevocably institutionalizing the professional nature of those militaries with which we have worked so closely over the past several decades.”

General Craddock is not as outspoken as his predecessor but does have equally imaginative descriptions of national security threats emanating from Latin America. General Craddock told the Senate Armed Services Committee that his highest priority will be to “prosecute the war on terrorism in the Southcom’s Area of Responsibility.” Other priorities he listed in his July 2004 testimony included the need to “enhance regional security cooperation to counter transnational threats,” and to “closely coordinate in assisting partner nations’ efforts to address the threats they face in maintaining effective democracies.”

With regard to Colombia, and the neighboring “spill-over” countries of Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, the new Southcom commander told Congress that the terms “insurgents” and “guerrillas” are less applicable than they were a few years ago. He said he believes the “term narcoterrorists is more appropriate” given “the incredible financial support they get from illicit drug trafficking.”<sup>10</sup>

Never, however, does the Southcom leadership provide evidence for its claims that the two major guerrilla groups in Colombia are either international terrorists that threaten U.S. national security, or that they are involved in the “entire process of growing, processing, and trafficking illegal drugs.” Although there is no doubt that the guerrilla organizations do benefit from the illegal drug production, mainly from taxing the production and domestic transport of illicit drugs, there is little evidence that their activities have been absorbed by the major cartels involved in the transit and sale of cocaine on the international market.

Clearly, some Latin American guerrilla groups, including the ELN and FARC in Colombia, have committed terrorist acts. However, neither Southcom nor the U.S. government itself has made the case that they are international terrorists that threaten U.S. national security and the U.S. homeland.

## Southcom’s “Theater Command Support” Strategy

*The U.S. Southern Command’s stated objectives extend far beyond supporting the hemisphere’s governments in combating what it calls “narcoterrorists.” A partially declassified Southcom document lists seven objectives for U.S. national security strategy in Latin America and the Caribbean: 1*

- 1) *Regional energy supplies will flow freely into international markets and will not be targets of aggression.*
- 2) *Countries will exercise sovereignty over their territory.*
- 3) *Regional partners will have both the capabilities and willingness to conduct limited maritime interception operations and other combined operations, particularly in the areas of counter-terrorism, peace operations, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance, with minimal U.S. support.*
- 4) *Not releasable*
- 5) *Not releasable*
- 6) *Prevent rogue states from supporting terrorist organizations.*
- 7) *Strengthen and maintain stable, democratically elected governments throughout the AOR [area of responsibility].*

*Each objective, including the “not releasable” ones, is followed by several sub-objectives. Of the 29 sub-objectives, eight are classified as nonreleasable. Together, the declassified objectives and sub-objectives reveal Southcom’s increasingly broad interpretation of its mandate to protect U.S. national security in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

*Included under ensuring the free flow of energy supplies—the first objective listed—is the creation of an “architecture to monitor and maintain sea lines of communication against terrorism and illicit trafficking.” Southcom also aims to improve the ability of “Partner Nation (PN) security forces to protect critical infrastructure” of the energy industry in the region.*

*In the last few years, the U.S. Southern Command and the Pentagon have launched a campaign to increase hemispheric security cooperation both to compensate for the U.S. military’s overextended forces and to increase U.S. influence over the region’s armies and governments. The Department of Defense (DOD) and Southcom believe that regional military cooperation is also needed to control “ungoverned spaces” along borders and in remote areas of the hemisphere.*

*Under its new “Effective Sovereignty” security doctrine, the Southern Command aims to exercise control over “ungoverned spaces” and “spill-over” areas through joint military and intelligence operations with its partner nations. In his March 2003 remarks at the North-South Center, Southcom’s Gen. James Hill postulated that the terrorist threat “is a weed that is planted in the fertile ground of ungoverned spaces such as coastlines, rivers, and unpopulated border areas.” According to Hill, “this threat is watered with money from drugs, illegal arms sales, and human trafficking” and “respects neither geographical boundaries nor moral boundaries.”<sup>2</sup>*

*Although two sub-objectives under the category of sovereignty support remain classified, the other four amply illustrate the Pentagon’s highly intrusive form of guaranteeing the sovereignty of the region’s nations. Southcom will support “Andean Ridge nations in their efforts to establish dominion over ungoverned spaces,” will assist “PNs’ bordering countries in crisis to prevent ‘spill-over’ effects,” will “help Peru ensure that Sendero Luminoso does not reestablish itself,” and will “assist PNs who are suffering critical internal instability.”*

*--continued--*

### **Southcom's "Theater Command Support" Strategy (continued)**

*The Southern Command's goal of supporting combined operations covers nine sub-objectives, the first of which is enabling "PN capabilities to interdict illegal migrants." This commitment to hemispheric security cooperation includes a determination to develop or improve regional information-sharing forums and capabilities, including the Cooperative Nations Information Exchange System, the Partner Nation Network, the Inter-American Naval Telecommunications Network, and the Combined Regional Information Exchange System, among others. Southcom also aims to promote "interoperability" among security forces in "unilateral/multilateral operations against terrorist organizations and other contingencies." Military officials cite the special urgency of establishing interoperability among the armed forces of "Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay."*

*The hemispheric cooperation objective also includes working with regional disaster relief organizations. Promoting "de-mining, environmental, and healthcare activities," according to Southcom, supports "PN security forces efforts to promote an image of social responsibility."*

*However, the deep structural problems that obstruct the hemisphere's political, social, and economic progress are largely ignored. Both the Southern Command and the region's militaries participate in nonmilitary missions to provide disaster assistance, humanitarian aid, and even some environmental protection programs, but the explicit objective of such programs has little to do with addressing structural issues or solving problems. Rather, as stated in the sub-objectives, the aim is to "improve the image" of Latin America's armed forces.*

*Under the two main strategy objectives that are classified, Southcom does include the unclassified sub-objectives of promoting the "regionalization of the security of the Panama Canal" and supporting Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay "in disrupting and destroying elicited [sic] terrorist networks that operate from the Tri-border Region."*

*In Southcom's view, the hemisphere includes rogue states. Its strategy to counter these unnamed rogue states includes two unclassified objectives: "Prevent the influence of countries that threaten U.S. and PN security interests" and "Pressure rogue states into abstaining from sponsoring and harboring terrorist fugitives."*

*As part of its strategy to "maintain stable, democratically elected governments," the U.S. Southern Command states that it will "assist PNs in establishing a National Military Strategy (NMS) and a National Security Strategy, which define security concerns that threatened stability and democracy." Southcom also acknowledges its responsibility—as mandated by various congressional amendments to the DOD's annual defense authorization bills—to encourage respect among Latin America's security forces in order to enhance democratic governance and human rights. Other objectives include fostering cooperation among armed forces through the development of regional "security institutions and events" and working with PNs to promote collaborative responses to "common challenges."*

1 USSOUTHCOM Theater Security Command Strategy, August 13, 2004.

2 Remarks by James Hill, Commander of the U.S. Southern Command, North-South Center, March 3, 2003, at:

<<http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2003/03/sec-030312-usia03.htm>>.

Southcom has proved adept at integrating such issues as the interdiction of drugs and migrants into its defense mission, although oftentimes the military language to describe these "threats" is stretched beyond the limits of credibility. In the new context of the war on terrorism, Southcom's Brigadier Gen. Benjamin Mixon told Congress: "We at the U.S. Southern Command view drugs and their movement into the United States as a weapon of mass destruction."<sup>11</sup> Given that illegal drugs are not just a source of social problems but more importantly a direct threat to U.S. national security in Southcom's view—linked as they are the "narcoterrorists" populating the region and constituting a "weapon of mass destruction"—the U.S. military has become the lead actor in drug law enforcement throughout the region. What's more they have encouraged and financed their military partners to embrace this mission proliferation.

But given the lack of extraterritorial security threats to the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean and the absence of national security threats to the United States coming from the region, it would be more appropriate to call for downsizing rather than expanding Southcom operations.

There is little doubt that political stability and personal security in the region is threatened by the rise of criminal gangs and international criminal syndicates. Although counterterrorism offers a politically appealing framework for increased U.S. aid and presence in the region, the U.S. government is wrong to conflate crime prevention with the war on terrorism. Moreover, neither the armed forces of the United States nor those of the Latin American nations are the most appropriate institutions to address what are public safety, not national security, issues. By contributing to the expansion of the mission of Latin American armed forces, the U.S. government is helping to ensure that the military remains a dangerously powerful institution in virtually all the nations of Latin America.

In his "posture statement" of April 2005, Craddock told the Armed Services Committee that Southcom aims to be "the recognized partner of choice and center of excellence for regional security affairs within a hemisphere of escalating importance; organized to defend the homeland and deter, dissuade, and defeat transnational threats;

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focused on achieving regional partnerships with nations to promote commitment to democratic values for human rights, territorial security and sovereignty, and collective regional security.”

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His posture statement described the region seething with threats to U.S. national security, listing for the lawmakers the following “threats:” “transnational terrorism, narcoterrorism, illicit trafficking, forgery and money laundering, kidnapping, urban gangs, radical movements, natural disasters, and mass migration.” For each of these threats, Southcom has charted out a response as part of its “mission and vision” for its area of responsibility.

In his congressional testimony, Craddock asserted—and the committee apparently accepted—his assessment that “to understand the sources of instability and insecurity, it is helpful to categorize them as threats, which U.S. and partner nation security forces must actively combat in order to protect citizens and property” and as “challenges which complicate our cooperative security effort, and the underlying conditions of poverty, corruption, and inequality.” In his vision of a “cooperative security effort,” Craddock did not raise the possibility that U.S. “partner nation security forces” should also be involved in addressing similar “threats” with the United States.

Although threats and challenges to security abound, Craddock, as did his predecessor, to the House Armed Services Committee painted a glowing picture of the progress Southcom was making “to achieve U.S. strategic objectives,” glossing over facts familiar to even the most casual observer of Latin American and Caribbean affairs. The self-deception, delusion, and deceit of Southcom’s description of U.S.-Latin American security relations pervaded the posture statement. A few examples:

### **Terrorism**

Southcom is supporting “Colombia’s successful prosecution” of its wars against terrorist organizations.

“Many of our partner nations ... are threatened by regional terrorist organizations that are supported by and funded by illegal drug trafficking and other forms of criminal activities.”

“We have detected a number of Islamic Radical Group facilitators that continue to participate in fundraising and logistical support activities such as money laundering, document forgery, and illicit trafficking.”

“In performing our intelligence mission, we continue to emphasize the U.S. government’s commitment to treating detainees [at Guantanamo] humanely, and to the extent appropriate and consistent with military necessity, in a manner consistent with the principles of Geneva.”

**Reality Check:** There’s no evidence of “regional terrorist groups” with the exception of those in Colombia and they don’t threaten neighboring countries or the United States. Violent attacks, repression, and human rights abuses continue unabated in Colombia, and there is no sign that the joint U.S.-Colombian counterinsurgency operation is close to ending the decades-long civil war. Despite intense investigation, focused on the tri-border region where Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil come together, there is no evidence that “Islamic Radical Groups” operate in the region. The human rights abuses and violation of international law at Guantanamo have been so outrageous that even congressional supporters of the war in Iraq are calling for the military to close down this international embarrassment.

### **Democracy**

Southcom is committed to “a broad-based interagency approach to dealing with Venezuela in order to encourage functioning democratic institutions.” It is working to “preserve gains in professionalizing and democratizing Latin American and Caribbean militaries.”

Southcom “has played a key role over the past 25 years” in fostering democratic transitions throughout the region.

**Reality Check:** Over the past quarter century, Southcom has forged close relations with death squads, authoritarian and military regimes, and armed forces implicated in consistent patterns of

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gross abuses of human rights, and has sided with elites against popular and democratic forces.

### **Drug War**

Southcom “directly contributed to the seizure of 222 metric tons of cocaine.” Southcom has “made significant gains in attacking the illicit narcotics industry that provides nearly all of the world’s supply of cocaine and about half of the U.S. supply of heroin.”

“The eradication program in Colombia has had another record year.”

**Reality Check:** Despite six years of a multi-billion dollar drug war in the Andes, the region continues to supply the United States with a bounty of illegal drugs. The quality of drugs from this region remains high, and prices on the U.S. market have not increased—indicating a complete failure of the source-country strategy of decreasing illegal drug use in the United States. While drug eradication programs increase the number of acres of coca production destroyed, coca production in the region has not diminished.

### **Peacekeeping**

“The rapid reaction of our troops and those of our partner nations saved the lives of innocent Haitians, prevented mass migration during a time of rough seas, and fostered regional and international cooperation to assist a nation in need.”

**Reality Check:** It is commonly accepted by both supporters and critics of U.S. policy in Haiti that the United States didn’t react quickly to the rise of political violence in Haiti. Instead, Washington aided the rebels by its refusal to support the Aristide government, and the subsequent and ongoing peacekeeping operations have failed to stop the political, economic, and social disintegration in Haiti.

### **National Security**

“Southcom is providing substantial resources to this military campaign,” which has “been vital to the success of Colombian Plan Patriota efforts to date and will continue to be needed into the future.”

“The first combatants to demobilize are currently in the sunset phase of their demobilization and reintegration process and are ready to reintegrate themselves into Colombian society.”

The U.S.-supported Colombian Civil Affairs Program is “to develop policies and plans to ensure a coordinated

and expeditious response that will reestablish government presence and services in territory reclaimed from narcoterrorists.”

**Reality Check:** The Plan Patriota campaign has stalled and has been discredited by a pattern of human rights abuses and the continued cooperation between the military and paramilitary units. The demobilization of the right-wing paramilitary armies has not been accompanied by a government commitment to try and prosecute those guilty of gross human rights abuses. The Colombian government has never had a presence in large parts of rural Colombia, and the new control has been accomplished by force and repression, setting the stage for yet another phase in the civil war.

## **Rumsfeld’s Latin America Security Agenda**

**The Pentagon and Southcom have adopted new language that is designed to construct a strategic bridge between the war on terrorism and its other security concerns in the region. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Southcom officials are spinning out a new logic for U.S. interventionism in the region that rationalizes a new role for the U.S. military and the armed forces of partner nations in asserting “effective sovereignty” over “ungoverned territories” through U.S.-led joint operations.**

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Explaining the current mission of Southcom, Craddock said that the U.S. military is working to “enhance nation capabilities to control borders, eliminate safe havens, and project government presence.”

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During the November 2004 meeting of hemispheric defense ministers in Quito, Secretary Rumsfeld sketched out the distinguishing features of Washington’s revised “national security state” doctrine for Latin America. Although U.S. military aid and intervention in Latin America has long been criticized for associated human

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rights abuses, including massacres, death squads, and systematic torture by aid recipients, Rumsfeld spoke not a word about the need to respect human rights. Indeed, the U.S. delegation opposed, unsuccessfully as it turned out, a Canadian proposal to include a resolution supporting human rights law in the final declaration by the defense ministers.

Rumsfeld also sought to break down the independence of the region's police from the military, by insisting that the military had an important role to play in law enforcement. Referring to the U.S. experience as a model, Rumsfeld told the defense ministers that since Sept. 11 "we have had to conduct an essential reexamination of the relationships between our military and our law enforcement responsibilities in the United States." According to the U.S. defense chief, "The complex challenges of this new era and the asymmetric threats we face require that all elements of the state and society work together."

Where do these asymmetric threats come from, and who are the "enemies" of our states and societies? Among the ones listed by Rumsfeld were "terrorists, drug traffickers, hostage takers, and criminal gangs." Together these groups "form an anti-social combination that increasingly seeks to destabilize civil societies," he said, advocating that the regional armed forces join forces to combat these multiple security threats.

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What's really at risk, argued Rumsfeld, is "national sovereignty" itself. In no case is this threat an extraterritorial threat by another state but rather, as Rumsfeld described it, a threat from transnational nonstate actors interacting with domestic ones. "Strengthening sovereignty and ensuring effective sovereignty over national territories must be a fundamental goal," he told the defense ministers.<sup>12</sup>

To bolster his arguments for increased attention by armed forces to such issues as crime and political instability, Rumsfeld distributed a Pentagon-commissioned report written by the New York-based Council of the Americas.<sup>13</sup> Based on a survey of the corporations that form its membership, the council concluded that Latin America is considered one of the world's riskiest places to invest because of the costs of providing security.

The report, titled "Fostering Regional Development by Securing the Hemispheric Investment Climate" urged, among other things, the "consolidation of national security analysis" to facilitate "cross-border coordination." As is, the Council of the Americas said Latin American and Caribbean governments "are simply unprepared to deal with existing security threats in addition to the emerging threats that include global reach terror and gang-inspired criminal activities." Although, unlike Rumsfeld, the corporate council recommended an independent role for the police in law enforcement, it reinforced his message that new mechanisms of cross-border "intelligence gathering" and "national threats assessments"—presumably coordinated by the Pentagon—were urgently needed.<sup>14</sup>

Southcom chief Craddock echoes his predecessor General Hill and Rumsfeld in their concern that U.S. national security is threatened by a wide range of nontraditional threats that threaten the stability and control of Latin American states. Arguing for stronger military-to-military relations and expanded internal missions for the region's armed forces, Craddock said: "Illicit activities, facilitated by the AOR's permissive environment, are the backbone for criminal entities like urban gangs, narcoterrorists, Islamic terrorists, and worldwide organized crime." Explaining the current mission of Southcom, Craddock said that the U.S. military is working to "enhance nation capabilities to control borders, eliminate safe havens, and project government presence." In concrete, this means direct support for the Colombian military's Plan Patriota counterinsurgency campaign.

## **Not All Joining Pentagon's Coalition of the Willing**

**The Bush administration is finding that its "coalition of the willing" national security strategy is falling apart in its own hemisphere. Although it can point to numerous successes in rallying the region behind its new national security strategy, lately there are at least as many dissenters as close allies.**

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Initially, the region united behind Washington in the “global war on terror,” with the OAS quickly unifying behind the new war on terror. Cuba, too, expressed its solidarity with the U.S. people and expressed grave concern about the growth of international terrorism—at least in part because it too has been a victim of such terrorism.

According to the State Department’s Counterterrorism Office, the OAS’ Committee Against Terrorism “continues to set the standard among regional organizations through its effort to institutionalize the long-term international campaign against terrorism.”<sup>15</sup> Another indicator of success has been the adoption by the region’s armed forces of much of the counterterrorism rhetoric emanating from Washington.

From the first year of the administration’s aggressive national security strategy, however, Latin America has been a center of dissent. Despite intense U.S. pressure, Security Council members Mexico and Chile stood up to the United States and declined to support the U.S. and British resolution to approve the invasion. The Bush administration showed that there is a price to pay for not falling into marching order with the United States. The trade pact with Chile was delayed, and Mexico got the cold shoulder until Fox started making amends by joining the United States in its criticisms of the Castro regime.

Only a few countries (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, and Honduras) joined Bush’s “Coalition of the Willing” with small deployments of troops in Iraq, while the rest of the region resisted U.S. entreaties, and Honduras ended its commitment in mid-2004. El Salvador is the only country with troops still stationed in Iraq. The Bush administration singled out El Salvador for special treatment by backing ex-president Francisco Flores as its first unsuccessful candidate for the OAS presidency and by proposing a major increase in foreign military aid for 2006.

It has been the unwillingness of the region’s governments to support the Iraq war more than the willingness of a few countries to join the “coalition” that signaled which way the political winds are blowing. In another sign of Latin American and Caribbean resistance to adopt wholesale U.S. foreign and military policy, many governments refused to sign an agreement (known as “Article 98”) that pledged that they would not seek or support the prosecution of U.S. troops in the International Criminal Court.

Some countries such as Dominica—which eventually agreed to the Article 98 agreement—found that their

opposition cost them U.S. support for its coast guard and other military aid. However, since the sanctions for not signing Article 98 did not include the termination of counternarcotics aid, most dissident nations did face dramatic drops in military aid.<sup>16</sup>

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Southcom is finding that the Bush administration’s own policies are pulling apart the seams in the region’s collective security agreements. While the State Department under the leadership of Undersecretary of State for Arms Control John Bolton was busily implementing the American Servicemembers’ Protection Act that prohibited countries that refused to sign Article 98 agreements from receiving U.S. military aid and training, Southcom began to fret that the policy had unintended consequences.

Apparently, Latin American and Caribbean nations didn’t take well to such bullying any longer. Of the 22 countries sanctioned by Washington for their unequivocal support of the ICC, eleven are in Southcom’s AOR. According to Southcom’s Craddock, the sanctions are “restricting our access and interaction” thereby “hampering the engagement and professional contact that is an essential element of our regional security cooperation strategy.” What’s more, according to Craddock, “extra-hemispheric actors are filling the void,” and the United States risks “losing contact and interoperability with a generation of military classmates.”

Latin American and Caribbean armed forces cooperate in varying degrees with the U.S. military. But there is much skepticism about Washington’s attempt to fit diverse regional problems into the framework of the war on terrorism. Gen. Rene Vargas, former chief of Ecuador’s military, observed: “In Latin America, there are

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no terrorists—only hunger and unemployment and delinquents who turn to crime. What are they going to do, hit you with a banana?”<sup>17</sup>

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The third side of the elite debate about the definition of national security in the Western hemisphere comes from those who are promoting a new definition of national security that departs from the narrow definition of security as being solely military security, and gives security a broader, "multidimensional" meaning.

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Many Latin American defense delegations were skeptical of Rumsfeld's claim at the 2004 hemispheric security ministerial that al-Qaida terrorists are moving into the region, and military officials from Brazil, Argentina, and Chile said that international terrorism should be addressed by multilateral governance organizations like the United Nations. What's more, the ministers rejected Rumsfeld's proposal at the conference for the creation of a multinational rapid response force capable of intervening anywhere in the region to confront traditional and nontraditional security threats he said were putting the region's security at risk.

Defense chief Rumsfeld argued that the "new threats of the 21st century recognize no borders," but the Latin American and Caribbean defense ministers declined to support his proposals for coordinated cross-border responses and for turning the Inter-American Defense Board into a joint military command. "In our countries," said Chilean Defense Minister Michelle Bachelet, "the armed forces are not the first front in the fight against terrorism, but they can play a supporting role."<sup>18</sup> José Alencar, Brazil's acting defense minister, said that the IADB should remain an OAS advisory board, adding that each state should "maintain the sovereign right to identify its own national security and defense priorities."

The United States and Colombia also were rebuffed when the other defense ministers dismissed President Alvaro Uribe's appeal for regional participation in his country's civil war. "You cannot fight terrorism with terrorism," said Captain Jorge Gross, spokesperson for Ecuador's defense ministry. "Colombia's problem is the Colombian people's problem."<sup>19</sup> Commenting on Rumsfeld's failure to gain support for his proposals, a senior DOD official commented: "Solidarity is a problem."<sup>20</sup>

## **What's Security, and Who Can Provide It?**

**Swirling around the security debate in the Western Hemisphere are issues about how narrowly or widely security threats should be defined. The debate breaks into three directions.**

Southcom and the Pentagon advocate that in the context of the global war on terrorism, security has to be defined to include a variety of transborder phenomena that form a breeding ground for terrorism, including drug production and trafficking, document forging, human smuggling, money laundering, and gang activity. Although such criminal activities have traditionally fallen within the purview of the police and other public safety agencies, the U.S. military argues for heightened involvement—if not control—by the armed forces both at home and in Southcom's region.

After the experiences of the "dirty wars" of the Cold War era, Latin American defense officials, both civilian and military, are even more cautious about embracing a concept of security that involves the armed forces with the United States in clandestine operations and public safety issues. While they are generally comfortable with such "nation-building" activities as improving rural transportation infrastructure, coordinating emergency responses, and providing humanitarian assistance (see Southcom sidebar), Latin American militaries view skeptically if not hostilely attempts to define security so broadly as to include such terms as food security, human security, and economic security.

The third side of the elite debate about the definition of national security in the Western hemisphere comes from those who are promoting a new definition of national security that departs from the narrow definition of security as being solely military security, and gives security a broader, "multidimensional" meaning. One of the first high officials to promote a concept of national and

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collective security that reaches beyond military threats was Mexico's President Vicente Fox, who in a speech at the headquarters of the Organization of American States in early September 2001, argued that a new hemispheric security architecture should primarily address such "common adversaries" as environmental destruction and extreme poverty.

At its September 2003 Special Conference on Security, the OAS did adopt a new concept of hemispheric security in its Declaration on Security in the Americas that incorporated not only the traditional definition of security as an external armed threat but also new and nontraditional threats that include economic, health, social, political, and environmental issues.<sup>21</sup>

Many human rights and social activists as well as many liberal academics in Latin America have applauded the multidimensional security framework that considers socioeconomic and democratic governance weaknesses as security threats under the rubric of constituting threats to "human security," or lumping them together with other "nontraditional threats."<sup>22</sup> Others, however, warn of the dangers of defining security so broadly that the term both loses its meaning, or worse that it justifies the militarization of an array of domestic and foreign policy issues that would be better managed by nonmilitary actors.<sup>23</sup>

## **Is U.S. Regional Hegemony Growing Stronger or Weaker?**

**If it is to be measured by the Monroe Doctrine standard of hegemony, then U.S. national security strategy in the Western Hemisphere has been largely successful. Except for the small and isolated colonial presence of Europe (mostly in the Caribbean Basin, with the exception of the Falkland Islands), the Western Hemisphere has been the "near abroad" or "backyard" of the United States.**

But at the same time that the Pentagon and Southcom are redefining the traditional benchmarks of security, Washington is facing weakening of its hegemonic control—both from internal actors and foreign ones. Southcom's new posture statements and increased attention to South America by Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Rice, and the president himself point to this.

Under a section on "Threats" in Southcom's annual posture statement, Commander Craddock warned Congress that the "increasing presence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the region is an emerging

dynamic that must not be ignored." According to Craddock, China's "growing dependence on the global economy and the necessity of protecting access to food, energy, raw materials, and export markets has forced a shift in their military strategy." This new military strategy, said Craddock, "departs from the past and promotes a power-projection military, capable of securing shipping lanes and protecting economic interests abroad."

As evidence of this new military strategy, the Southcom commander pointed to twenty visits by "national defense officials" to the region in 2004, while "Ministers and Chiefs of Defense from nine countries in our AOR visited the PRC." Craddock noted that China's growing economic interests in Latin America and the Caribbean don't by themselves constitute a threat, "but they are clearly components of a condition we should recognize and consider carefully as we form our own objectives, policies, and engagement in the region."

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All of Southcom's plans for "collective security agreements" and "regional security organizations" are being thrown in disarray as the region begins to chart out autonomous security plans. Most disconcerting is the defensive posture taken by Venezuela with respect to the United States. Instead of being the guarantor of security and democracy, as it claims to be, the U.S. government is being painted as the main threat to the region's security and democratic processes by the Hugo Chávez government. More than just a battle of words, the U.S.-Venezuela stand-off is quickly changing the entire picture of U.S.-Latin America military relations.

Southcom has tried to maintain a foothold in Venezuela. Prepping the population for another U.S.-instigated coup or even an invasion, Chávez in mid-April 2005 announced a new defense doctrine and began

## Policy Recommendations

- *International terrorist networks exist and they do threaten U.S. national security and the U.S. homeland. To be successful in preventing future terrorist attacks and capturing or eliminating anti-U.S. international terrorists, the U.S. government needs a more focused counterterrorism agenda. Just as the invasion of Iraq diverted attention away from the campaign against the al-Qaida terrorists, so too does the overly broad counterterrorism strategy of the U.S. Southern Command that merges three different issues: the threat of vigilante and guerrilla groups in Colombia, the problem of illegal drug consumption and trafficking, and international terrorism.*
- *Southcom should not frame all operations in Latin America and the Caribbean as campaigns against terrorism and narcoterrorism. The U.S. government does need to establish improved intelligence and security relations with Latin American governments to prevent international terrorists from using the region as a base to raise funds and organize operations against the United States. But any cooperative regional intelligence gathering should focus only on international terrorist networks, not on criminals, illegal immigrants, “radical populists,” or political dissidents.*
- *Southcom’s commitment to fighting the “war on terrorism” should not extend to combating domestic insurgency and terrorism that does not represent a threat to U.S. national security. Aid and strategies to ensure the political and economic stability of the countries of the region should be coordinated regionally, not through Southcom, but through the Organization of American States and the United Nations—multilateral forums that are responsible for collective security.*
- *The U.S. Southern Command should stop programs that aim to build and foster close “military-to-military contacts” with each country of the region. Instead of attempting to improve the image of the region’s armed forces and increase U.S. support, the U.S. government should encourage a demilitarization of Latin America and the Caribbean. At a time when Southcom itself points to the increasing frailty of many Latin American states, encouraging the armed forces to take on new missions and responsibilities risks the return of military rule in the region, either directly through military regimes or through the election of military officers.*
- *Southcom rightly regards populist backlash as an emerging trend in Latin America and the Caribbean. But this should not be regarded as a U.S. national security threat. Rather the United States needs to rectify any U.S. policies—such as support for neoliberal reforms, privatization programs that lead to widespread job losses, trade agreements, and austerity programs—that contribute to social, political, and economic disintegration.*
- *Congress should not renew Plan Colombia in 2005, and should instead end all military and police aid to Colombia, direct all economic and humanitarian aid to nongovernmental development and relief organizations, and encourage neighboring nations to spearhead new peace negotiations involving the Colombian government, insurgent forces, and civil society. Similarly, the United States should support negotiations that resolve the border disputes and other lingering political/military tensions that keep neighboring countries at odds.*
- *The Pentagon, Southcom, and regional militaries should adopt a very restrictive view of national security in the region rather than expand their missions either to incorporate nontraditional threats or to address the region’s socioeconomic needs.*
- *Congress should stipulate that no military aid or training be provided that would be used to launch new military operations—including infrastructure construction, drug and migrant interdiction, crime control, and internal intelligence programs—that give Latin American and Caribbean armed forces new missions and expanded power.*

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mobilizing a national military reserve that the government says will eventually include millions of members. At the same time, Venezuela cut military relations with the United States. While the Pentagon is hawking a proposal to create regional defense commands, South American nations are forging their own subregional defense systems. The air forces of Brazil and Argentina have, for example, forged an alliance to “form a common front against an invasion” against either country.<sup>24</sup>

There is still an attempt to write off the regional trends as part of marginalized forces, not connecting the dots between the popular protests in the Andean nations of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru to the broader political trends in the region, most noticeably in Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, and Uruguay.

Although the Bush administration says that its foreign policy promotes the “forward march of freedom” and “global democratic revolution,” the administration’s misguided notions of national security goals check its democratic ones. Repeatedly Bush administration officials have intervened in domestic political affairs to ensure that politicians and parties it backs win elections or otherwise gain control of governments.

Most visibly in Venezuela and Haiti, the Bush administration sidelined its stated commitments to the rule of law and democracy in favor of interventionist policies that aligned the U.S. government with anti-democratic and vigilante forces. Throughout the region—notably in Argentina, Nicaragua, Bolivia, El Salvador, and Brazil—the Bush administration has given a free hand to its diplomatic corps and Republican Party leaders to make public statements criticizing left-center parties and politicians, underscoring a deepening sentiment in the region that the United States considers Latin America and the Caribbean part of its hegemonic patrimony.

## Military-Civilian Interface

What were formerly and properly the responsibilities of customs officials, immigration agencies, coast guards, public safety officials, and civilian law enforcement agencies have slid over to the U.S. military and regional militaries. This is the result of the alarming mission creep of the post-9/11 Pentagon's wide-open definition of the global war on terrorism.

This mission creep is pushed by the speed and aggressiveness with which the Pentagon is expanding its view of its own defense mandate and is encouraging regional security forces to do the same.

As part of the democratic transitions in Latin America over the past 25 years, newly democratic countries have attempted with varying success to remove the police from military control. However, the U.S. government is now encouraging increased involvement by Latin American armed forces in police functions, such as immigration and drug control.<sup>25</sup> Although the State Department is technically responsible for setting the policy directions that govern foreign military and economic aid, the Pentagon and Southcom are increasingly controlling U.S. military aid and training flows to the region as well as establishing the U.S. government's policy priorities for the region.

As a joint report by the Latin American Working Group, Center for International Policy, and the Washington Office on Latin America concluded:

Traditional civilian-military roles are being blurred not only overseas, through programs for Latin American militaries, but here at home, in the formation of foreign policy. Resources and responsibilities are shifting from the State Department to the Pentagon, and the clout and profile of the U.S. Southern Command are increasing as a result.<sup>26</sup>

Congress and the State Department have steadily yielded their control over foreign assistance to the Pentagon during the first Bush administration. There have been feeble

### Policy Recommendations (Continued)

- *The U.S. government should end the failed "drug war" and instead focus on care, treatment, and education, along with policies that begin a process of regulating and legalizing the sale of narcotic and hallucinogenic substances.*
- *Rather than bolstering the region's armed forces, the U.S. government should, in concert with other nations, encourage the demilitarization of Latin America and the Caribbean given the absence of external military threats to the region's security.*
- *Reinstate the ban on U.S. military aid and training programs with Guatemala, which has not complied with its obligations under the Guatemala Peace Accords of 1996.*
- *Instead of increasing Foreign Military Financing (FMF), as the Pentagon and White House propose, the FMF for Latin American and Caribbean countries should be immediately downsized and then eliminated in the short term.*
- *The United States should stop attempting to manipulate countries into signing "Article 98 agreements" that stipulate they will not condone any prosecution of U.S. troops before the International Criminal Court. This U.S. pressure not only intentionally undermines the ICC but also contributes to the culture of military and police impunity in the region.*
- *End the trade embargo and the regime-change measures against Cuba, which represents no threat to United States but rather an opportunity for the political, cultural, and economic benefits of a constructive engagement policy.*
- *Washington should exercise diplomatic leadership to support a negotiated settlement to the decades-old armed conflict, as it finally did fifteen years ago in Central America after more than a decade of military intervention. Congress should insist that the Bush administration fully support the implementation of the recommendations of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia and halt the delivery of any further U.S. aid until these conditions are met. Similarly, Congress should earmark funds to support this invaluable UN office in Colombia.*
- *End counterterrorism support for Latin American and Caribbean armed forces and police in such countries as Bolivia and the Dominican Republic. No country in the region faces a threat of international terrorism, and Colombia is the only country that is confronted with a domestic terrorist threat—one that doesn't put U.S. national security at risk.*
- *Delink immigration policy from security policy, given that illegal immigrants represent no security threat to the United States.*
- *Shut down the Guantanamo Bay military base and its infamous detention center, given that it does not serve any identifiable national security objective and has, like the Abu Ghraib detention center in Iraq, badly besmirched U.S. credibility for respecting human rights and the Geneva Conventions.*
- *Immediately stop the quickly advancing mission creep of Southcom and the Pentagon by refocusing U.S. military on homeland defense, ending all operations that task U.S. forces to involve themselves in campaigns against immigrant flows; drug use and trafficking; coca, poppy, and marijuana production; and gang activity—activities that represent no threat to U.S. national security and are best addressed by nonmilitary programs and policies.*
- *Neither the armed forces of the United States nor those of the Latin American nations are the most appropriate institutions to address what are public safety, not national security, issues.*

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attempts, mostly by congressional Democrats, to maintain human rights conditionality on military and economic aid programs in the region.

But these initiatives—such as requiring the State Department to certify that Colombia is committed to protecting human rights, cutting ties with paramilitary units, and ensuring that drug eradication programs don't degrade the environment or human health—are not being enforced by the administration. Another sign of congressional concern with the military-related human rights abuses in Colombia was a Senate letter sponsored by Senators Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Christopher Dodd (D-CT) that expressed the grave concerns of 23 senators about the threats to the lives of human rights advocates and union leaders.<sup>27</sup>

The U.S. military has moved into the forefront of overseas customs, border control, and immigrant interdiction programs that were launched by the Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) in the 1990s. Subsumed into the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the INS no longer exists and its functions have been dispersed within the bureaucratic maze of DHS and in some cases taken over by the military.

Clearly, the U.S. government needs improved customs and immigration control processes to ensure that U.S. immigration laws are enforced and that potential terrorists are detected before entering the United States. But this new attention to homeland security has led the U.S. military to conflate such unrelated issues as immigrant flows, drug smuggling, organized crime, gang violence, and international terrorism targeting the United States.

Encouraged by the U.S. military, the region's armed forces are taking the leading role in addressing not only internal political instability but also public safety. The U.S. government is financing a regional security cooperation strategy involving at least five Central American nations to create a regional rapid response force that will mount coordinated strikes against terrorists, narcotraffickers, and youth gangs (*maras*).

What's the U.S. security logic that justifies a lead U.S. role in creating a Central American rapid response force? According to U.S. military officials, it's likely that anti-U.S. extremists will work with drug smugglers and criminal gangs to plan attacks against the United States.<sup>28</sup>

Initially, traditionalists within the military expressed their reluctance to involve U.S. forces in operations that address what in the 1990s became known as nontraditional threats, including international crime, illegal

immigration flows, drug production and trafficking, and gang violence. It was argued that these were properly issues for civilian public security officials, not the military.

However, buoyed by new sources of congressional funding for addressing nontraditional threats and in the absence of other compelling missions in the post-Cold War era, the U.S. armed forces soon became enthusiastic partners in the new missions as defined by the civilian Pentagon leadership. Once the Pentagon and Southcom decided that U.S. national security in the hemisphere dictates a strategy that reaches beyond conventional defense to nontraditional threats, there now seem to be no limits to what is considered legitimate national security concerns.

The problem with such open-ended conception of national security is not just that it badly blurs the line between military and civilian functions and responsibility in the United States. It also has the same pernicious impact in Latin America and the Caribbean—a region with a long history of military dominance over all forms of governance.

Most alarming is the return to the Cold War strategy of encouraging the formation of “national security states” in which the armed forces once again are tasked with ensuring domestic political and economic stability. The U.S. government itself has not, at least publicly, advocated support for authoritarian states that guarantee internal stability and cooperate with Washington to crush dissidents that oppose U.S. regional hegemony and U.S.-Latin American military alliances, as it did in the 1947-1989 period.

But it is certainly moving closer to that approach to protecting U.S. national security in the hemisphere—although employing new terminology and rationales. As Latin American governments and societies start to redefine the social, economic, trade, and political conditions needed for a Paz de las Americas, Southcom may find that its purported Area of Responsibility is no longer in its control.

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## APPENDIX:

### U.S. Southern Command Overview

The Pentagon covers the globe with its various geographical commands. The U.S. Southern Command (Southcom) describes itself as a “model unified command,” asserting in 2002 that the restructuring and expansion of its “strategic architecture ... will allow us to prosecute the War on Terrorism in a more effective manner.” Southcom’s “area of responsibility” encompasses 30 countries beyond its home base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In 1997 this area of responsibility expanded to include the “Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and a portion of the Atlantic Ocean,” all of which had previously been the responsibility of the U.S. Atlantic Command.

According to its 2005 “posture statement” to Congress, Southcom has five “overarching strategic requirements:”

- 1) An improved ability to detect and support interdiction of illegal trafficking into the United States.
- 2) Continued detainee operations at Guantanamo.
- 3) Continued ability to provide partner nation security forces with equipment and training.
- 4) Improved interoperability between our Armed Forces and those of our partner nations.
- 5) Improved operational reach to rapidly respond to crises in the region.

The U.S. Southern Command traces its origins to the arrival of Marines in Panama in 1903, and it maintained headquarters in the Canal Zone until the implementation of the Panama Canal Treaties of 1977. Portions of the Canal Zone were gradually relinquished to Panama between 1979 and 1999,<sup>A-1</sup> and Southcom relocated its headquarters to Miami in 1997, when the U.S. government turned over control of the canal to Panama. Through its Theater Support Command Strategy, Southcom seeks to “build and/or improve defense relationships and partner-nation capabilities, including interoperability, and promote regional cooperation to meet the variety of transnational challenges that confront the region.”

#### Joint Military Exercises and Peacekeeping

Southcom is involved in “security cooperation” activities designed to “expand U.S. influence, assure friends, and dissuade political adversaries.” These security operations range from joint military exercises to disaster relief

and civic action programs. Some 20 nations participate, for example, in the annual Fuerzas Aliadas military/civic action drills aimed at instructing area armed forces how to respond to disasters. In 2004, Southcom conducted 16 joint military/naval exercises, involving 5,675 U.S. troops and 10,320 “partner nation troops.”

Seeking broader proficiency, Southcom’s New Horizons exercises “hone U.S. forces’ engineering and medical skills in challenging environments nearly impossible to replicate in the United States.” In 2003, New Horizons included 31 engineering projects and 70 medical deployments of U.S. troops in the hemisphere. Joint military activities include several naval operations hosted by Uruguay and Peru. Southcom also sponsors a few annual trainings and joint lessons in peacekeeping intended “to strengthen the peacekeeping skills, cooperation, and capabilities” of the region’s military forces.

As part of its commitment “to meet the challenge of eliminating transnational terrorism,” the U.S. Southern Command hopes to launch “Operation Enduring Friendship,” which aims to create a “Maritime Force of the Americas.” Once fully operational, this U.S.-led hemispheric crew, according to Southcom, will “be instrumental in fostering regional maritime cooperation between hemispheric navies, coast guards, customs, and police forces.”<sup>A-2</sup> According to a January 2002 planning document, Enduring Friendship and its ambitions for an “Armada de las Americas” will enable the United States, working with “partner nation” armed forces, to provide a “range of response and preemptive options” to address such problems as humanitarian disasters, environmental mishaps, “hazards to navigation, narcotrafficking, terrorism, piracy, uncontrolled migration, and illegal arms shipments.” Along with support from the Department of Defense (DOD), the Enduring Friendship plan is counting on the cooperation of other U.S. agencies and departments. In the 2006 budget request, the president included \$5 million for foreign military financing to be channeled through the State Department and Operation Enduring Friendship to “enhance homeland security in the Caribbean and improve regional capabilities to fight transnational crime, trafficking in aliens, narcotics, arms, and other contraband.”

As a precursor to Operation Enduring Friendship, Southcom initiated the annual Panamax naval exercise in 2003 to train Latin American navies in defending the canal. In 2005, Southcom said that 15 participating nations will participate in the Panamax joint naval operations.

Since 1996, the Southern Command has incorporated into its “strategic architecture” the mission of teaching Latin American and Caribbean security forces to respect human rights. According to Southcom’s annual report to Congress, “The Human Rights Initiative is a major strategic enabler tool and is a key component of the Command’s Theater Security Cooperation Plan.” Southcom claims that all units receiving U.S. security assistance are “vetted for human rights violations.” Such statements are welcomed by human rights advocates, but the Pentagon provides no documentation about this vetting process nor does Congress question the ability and integrity of the U.S. military to evaluate human rights compliance.

The credibility of the U.S. Southern Command as a model for human rights has long been questioned by critics of U.S. military intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean. Recent military human rights violations both in Iraq and Afghanistan and at the Guantanamo naval base detention center—supervised by Southcom—have raised new questions concerning the Pentagon’s commitment to human rights in the context of the global war on terrorism.

All things considered, joint military/civic exercises are of questionable value. A joint report published in 2003 by the Center for International Policy, the Latin America Working Group, and the Washington Office on Latin America concluded, “Humanitarian and Civic Assistance programs send an inappropriate message that turning to the military is the best way to ‘get things done’ in your community.”

### **U.S. Bases and Operations:**

The Southern Command has about 3,000 permanently assigned military and civilian personnel and operates 25 Security Assistance Organizations (SAOs) subdivided into Military Groups, Military Liaison Offices, Offices of Defense Representatives, Offices of Defense Cooperation, Offices of Defense Assistance, and Military Assistance Advisory Groups.<sup>A-3</sup> Among other functions, the SAOs promote the sale of U.S.-produced defense items, coordinate security assistance surveys to assess perceived needs, and occasionally help develop procurement plans.<sup>A-4</sup>

- Seven radar sites, mainly in Colombia and Peru
- Four Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs) in Manta, Ecuador; Aruba; Curacao; and Comalapa, El Salvador (Formerly calling them Forward Operating Locations, the Pentagon recently renamed these leased facilities

to reflect what it says is the “cooperative” aspect of the bases.)

- U.S. military bases in Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, Cuba, and Soto Cano (Palmerola), Honduras.

## **U.S. Military in Latin America & Caribbean**

### **U.S. Troop Levels:**

There are 8,500-10,500 U.S. troops stationed at U.S. bases and CSLs in Latin America. This does not include the U.S. troops training Colombian units, which, until the 2005 defense bill, had been capped at 400 military personnel and 400 private contractors. In October 2004, Congress approved the administration’s request to increase the caps to 800 troops and 600 contractors.

### **U.S. Military Training of Regional Police and Military:**

The U.S. Southern Command provides training, both in the United States and in many countries of origin, to soldiers and officers from 32 nations throughout the hemisphere. In the 1999-2003 period, the U.S. military trained 72,495 members of the Latin American and Caribbean armed forces and police. The number of trainees jumped from 13,785 in 1999 to 22,855 in 2003. Latin America accounts for 40% of U.S.-funded military trainees in the world, an increasing number of whom are police.

In 2003, Colombian soldiers and police trainees numbered 12,947—more than any other nation in the world. The only other country in the region with more than 1,000 trainees in 2003 was Bolivia with 2,045. Intent on maintaining what Southcom calls “military-to-military relations” throughout the hemisphere, the Southern Command trains selected troops and police even in the smallest nations such as Dominica and Antigua. Military instruction is provided to Mexico, all the nations of Central America (including Belize), and all South American nations except French Guiana.

Until 1991 Congress prohibited the Department of Defense (DOD) from funding foreign military training, and all foreign military and police training was financed through the State Department. This restriction enabled Congress to exercise some oversight of the instruction and subsequent human rights practices of trainees. Since 1989, when Congress ceded to the Pentagon primary responsibility for detecting and monitoring illegal drug flows into the United States and two years later allowed the DOD to finance hemispheric counterdrug efforts, Defense Department funding for foreign military training

programs has increased to two-thirds of all regional military preparation. As a result of this transfer of fiscal responsibility, congressionally imposed human rights and democracy conditions associated with foreign aid law no longer apply to the Pentagon's education programs, which are now funded through the defense appropriations bill.

## U.S. Security Assistance to Latin America

- 1996: \$161 million
- 2004: \$867 million (estimated)
- 2005: \$860 million (requested)

U.S. security assistance to Latin America has increased rapidly since the mid-1990s, nearly tripling between 1997 and 2004. Economic and development aid, some of which is directly connected to U.S. counternarcotics strategy, has also increased but at a slower pace. Today, levels of security assistance and economic aid are nearly the same—in contrast to most of the 1990s, when U.S. military aid was routinely less than half of U.S. economic and humanitarian aid to the region.

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