



National Defense University

Institute for National Strategic Studies

COLLEAGUES FOR THE AMERICAS SEMINAR SERIES

“Conversation with the Commander”

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Featured Speaker: **General John Craddock**, U.S. Army, Commander, United States Southern Command.

General Craddock assumed command of United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) on November 9, 2004. For a year, he has overseen the conduct of military operations and security cooperation activities in Latin America (except Mexico) and the Caribbean to promote U.S. national security and defense interests. One of his Command’s primary aims is to help militaries provide security to their own citizens, so that they all can benefit from democratic and economic reforms.

General Craddock spoke to a crowded audience at the National Defense University, and via VTC to audiences at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), Fort Benning, GA, and Headquarters, Southern Command, Miami, FL. He divided his remarks into three parts: investment and returns, the security environment, and a strategic inflection point. A summary of the seminar follows.

INVESTMENT AND RETURNS

United States Southern Command’s security cooperation investment in Latin America and the Caribbean takes many forms. Among the programs are security assistance, military-to-military contact, combined education, training and tactical exercises, and support for counter-narcotics and counter-terrorist operations. Another initiative, information sharing, provides an excellent way to improve understanding, transparency and trust among neighboring countries through unfettered communication. Some programs are more easily used than others. Security assistance, for example, is an important resource for military education. It enhances a nation’s ability to help itself. This valuable program, unfortunately, has a cumbersome and inflexible bureaucratic process that should be streamlined so that our assistance and support to the region is more timely and supportive.

The nature of the returns on the investment of these security cooperation resources varies. Positive returns are reflected in multilateral problem solving and cooperation, interoperability among neighbors and with the U.S., and improvements in military professionalism and human rights awareness. Just as any good business must assess returns on its investment and, if the findings are disappointing, either reinvest or readjust, the benefits of security cooperation resources must be assessed and readjusted for optimal benefit. Similarly, as hemispheric needs change we must also assess and adjust security cooperation to those needs.

Hurricane Stan, October 4, 2005, Guatemala

In Guatemala’s recent natural disaster, we can see an example of a positive return on U.S. investment in humanitarian assistance programs and disaster relief training. The Guatemalan

government was prepared: it had processes for coordination and capabilities for immediate response. The rapid response capability and immediate assistance provided by Joint Task Force Bravo (JTF-B) demonstrated the value of forward deployed forces. JTF-B personnel and pilots were familiar with Guatemala's topography, mountainous and tropical environments, communication systems, and movement corridors. The integration of government operations and U.S. support was seamless. SOUTHCOM provided search and rescue capabilities followed by humanitarian relief that included food, water, medicines, and shelter.

Central American Case

The governments of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, with support from SOUTHCOM and USAID, have come together to organize for natural disasters and stockpile relief supplies. Their military institutions, through the Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CFAC), have earmarked military units, coordinated communications, and developed plans for integrated disaster relief operations. The U.S. role is collaborative not directive. A particularly beneficial U.S. investment is the State Partnership Program in which different U.S. state-level agencies share experiences with counterparts in a Latin American or Caribbean country. Arkansas, for example, has worked closely with Guatemala. A new CFAC initiative, an integrated battalion for UN peace operations, also is being developed with U.S. support.

THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The security environment breaks down into three parts: threats, conditions and challenges. In addition to natural disasters, countries face a range of sophisticated, multidimensional threats. A partial list includes transnational terrorism, logistical support and fundraising for Islamic Radical Groups, illicit trafficking, forgery, money laundering, kidnapping, radical populism, crime, and urban gangs. Smuggling networks create opportunities for drugs, people, money, arms, weapons, and special interest aliens to enter the United States. Illegal groups migrate into ungoverned areas, profit from these safe havens, and flourish.

Poverty, inequality and corruption are three persistent conditions in which the threats take root. Today, in spite recent economic growth trends, conditions in a number of Latin American and Caribbean countries are deteriorating: poverty and social inequality have worsened; the disenfranchised members of societies are demanding political inclusion; and corruption is generally expected and accepted. In many countries these conditions have led to a wide-spread distrust of democratic governments and political parties.

In addition to threats and conditions, SOUTHCOM faces several serious challenges that operate on two fronts: in the hemisphere, and in Washington. In the hemisphere, the Command first confronts a resurgent feeling of anti-Americanism that characterizes the United States as an imperial economic power. This view tends to be strongest in countries where weak governments, a second challenge, are unable to meet expectations of citizens, control events within national territory, or take decisive action on security issues. In the United States, the Command faces the challenge of acquiring sufficient resources to pursue U.S. security interests in the region. Projected funding is below the amount needed for mission-critical operations. One such under-funded critical mission is the ongoing, and multifaceted effort to counter drug trafficking. In addition, implementation of the recent American Servicemembers Protection Act (ASPA) has limited military cooperation with eleven countries.

The American Servicemembers Protection Act (ASPA)

The Treaty of Rome that established the International Criminal Court (ICC) provides for, under Article 98, a bi-lateral arrangement to waive use of the ICC to prosecute individuals accused of crimes. In an effort to protect U.S. servicemembers, Congress passed the ASPA, which stipulated that any country that did not agree to waiver under Article 98 of the Rome Accord would lose all military assistance, including International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds. The Command has advocated disassociating IMET from ASPA in order to continue funding education and training for foreign military and civilian officials, thereby increasing their understanding of the United States. Without these programs, we will lose contact with a generation of future leaders. Just as in business, when a company cannot provide a product (U.S. military assistance and training) to its customers, they will logically seek that assistance elsewhere.

STRATEGIC INFLECTION POINT

A different regional context can be seen taking shape in the Western Hemisphere in several ways.

- Latin American and Caribbean states are cooperating on a sub-regional level
- There is a small likelihood of state-to-state violence
- This is the least militarized region in the world
- Colombia is winning its war, which could be crucial for the Andean region
- There are ratified free trade agreements, most recently CAFTA-DR
- The UN stability operation in Haiti, MINUSTAH, is primarily a Latin American mission
- Ten elections scheduled for the next year will indicate where the region is headed

Each country in the Americas, including the United States, must decide, given national interests and current conditions, where to reinforce and where to adapt. In Washington, this requires an interagency assessment. How should the United States engage the region to have an impact on public opinion? Are diplomatic and security programs developed for the Cold War era, such as Security Assistance, suitable for the new context? Could the United States and its neighbors reappraise policies together to find a better fit for the 21st century?

Shared security problems in this hemisphere require shared solutions, and the solutions are not uniquely military. What ails Latin America cannot be solved by the armed forces. They only help to shape the playing field by creating conditions of security and stability. In this setting, other agents of reform and modernization – the political, economic, trade, infrastructure, and law and order elements – must generate revenues, reinvest them, and create opportunities.