

## **A Brief Wrap Up of the 2010 Western Hemisphere Security Colloquium Miami, Florida – May 25-26, 2010**

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The 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Western Hemisphere Security Colloquium, held at the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables, Florida on May 25-26, 2010, examined regional realities and dynamics shaping insecurity and risk in the Americas. Entitled “A New Chapter in Trans-American Engagement,” presenters explored a range of strategic issues which the U.S. defense actors must consider in order to recompose security relations and engage effectively but differentially Canada, Mexico, Central American, Caribbean, and South American countries.

The Colloquium’s structure of panels and high-level U.S. speakers and its substantive scope achieved the organizing team’s six objectives. These included:

- Improving participant understanding of the Obama administration’s goal of achieving regional relationships based on mutual respect and co-responsibility. Efforts to realize this objective pervaded the event.
- Highlighting General Fraser’s assessment of the challenges and opportunities in Central and South America and the Caribbean by devoting several panels to explore his strategic approach to main issues, including the U.S. – UN response to Haiti’s earthquake.
- Engaging foreign scholars and practitioners (military and civilian) from the Americas to help U.S. attendees better understand other perspectives on security and defense issues and to discuss their ideas about how to move forward together. In different ways, every panel achieved this objective.
- Discussing current strategic conundrums in search of solutions. While the program was not all inclusive, there was wide-ranging coverage of dominant issues.
- Improving general understanding of the security challenges facing U.S. Northern Command and how the headquarters works with neighbors to address them. A Canadian panelist added depth, and there were members of the Canadian Armed Forces in the audience. Representation from Mexico, however, was missing.
- And finally, furthering the Defense Department’s efforts to build stronger trust and mutual understanding in the security/defense sector.

Presentations and follow-on discussions were informative, provocative, and not shy about addressing today’s problems. Many also were useful as speakers responded to General Fraser’s challenge to introduce practical ideas that may help U.S. Southern Command. Overall, the Colloquium introduced a number of rich ideas for further consider or action now. A selection of eight brief “take-aways” follows. A more detailed report will be available later this summer.

1. Ultimately, there is power in bilateral and multilateral partnerships. It takes time, however, to work out the kinks in the relationship in order to build trust, foster mutual confidence, and develop standard operating procedures. On a political level, there also is a need for initiatives to nurture and manage the partnership.
2. American governments need to consider, debate and develop new ways of looking at several traditional issues: (a) sovereignty in an era of necessary cooperation among nations; (b) military missions and functions at a time of reduced public security and increased transnational threats like crime and terrorist violence; and (c) military relationships on domestic issues (including understanding different country models for military support for civilian institutions such as police, but not limited to police – one presenter referred to this as “rules of engagement”).
3. The region needs more opportunities to increase contacts among and the combined training of civilian, police, and military officials on the requirements for human rights, intelligence sharing, frontier control, and the respective domestic roles of prevention and repression.
4. Today, a country’s response to transnational challenges is not transnational. It is still very much state-to-state interaction governed by sovereign concerns. Latin American and Caribbean nations must take up the reins and be proactive domestically and internationally in providing for their own security.
5. The United States should do more than focus on building a partner’s capacity. This security assistance approach is no longer adequate. In addition, there is a need to transfer knowledge and training to maximize the effectiveness of national capabilities in areas such as fusing information into actionable intelligence and making the best use (operationalizing) of law enforcement and military capabilities.
6. Washington’s four subregional counternarcotics plans are unconnected. They should be integrated if they are to be effective and avoid the “balloon” or “cockroach” effect. In this regard, there is a need to reevaluate the metrics of success. It is not just statistics on eradication, metric tons of drugs seized, and domestic consumption. Today, it must also be about attacking the management of the drug industry.
7. Contemporary security challenges require whole-of-society solutions. Governments must engage the private sector, civil society organizations and follow commonalities of interest to gather volunteers and resources. In sum, the state must make society a stakeholder in its own security. This is a key part of Colombia’s success during the Uribe administration.
8. Disaster response and relief using military capacities should build relationships that look beyond traditional command and control of forces. The stress should be on coordination, collaboration, and communication. This is part of the essence of partnership.