



A Framework for Cooperative Security in the Greater Caribbean: Her Excellency Serena Joseph-Harris at INSS Round Table

Senior Fellow Jay Cope hosted a roundtable discussion with Her Excellency Serena Joseph-Harris, High-Commissioner-Designate of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, on 7 May at INSS. She discussed her interest in reinvigorating regional cooperation to address deteriorating security by focusing on her limited edition book, *The Alpha Barrier of the North South Dialogue* (2009), which is to be published for a wider audience in the United States and the Caribbean.

Ms Joseph-Harris is an attorney and specialist in counternarcotics, counterterrorism and anti-money laundering programs with over 15 years of experience. She also is her country's principal expert on the OAS Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). She fears Caribbean states are rapidly approaching a "chaos point" at which, in systems theory, there is either a breakdown or a breakthrough. In her view, there is a collective CARICOM failure to take crime and security as serious issues, notwithstanding various declarations of intent.

Her geostrategic analysis sees little progress with security since the attack on the United States in 2001. Prior to 9/11, aggressive implementation of Washington-driven counterdrug policies dominated Caribbean actions. After the attack and the shift of U.S. attention to priorities elsewhere, a political vacuum appeared. This led to fewer commitments to cooperate among neighboring states and the opening of operational gaps in maritime and air capabilities. International criminal networks are exploiting vulnerabilities. Where governments have failed to act, domestic and regional security has deteriorated. In 2009, President Obama's discussion of drugs, crime and a new U.S. partnership with the Caribbean at the Summit of the Americas marked an encouraging new beginning, but in her view U.S. outreach should not be seen as a regional panacea.

Ms Joseph-Harris recommends countering international organized crime by making cooperative security a reality. Her approach adopts an idea from Foreign Policy's Moises Naim: bring to the table the smallest number of countries needed to have the largest possible impact in solving this problem. She begins with minilateral rather than multilateral collaboration and advocates building on the success of the small group by accepting more countries, including Canada and European states. A second aspect is the importance of consensual decision making. In today's geopolitical environment, Caribbean states cannot permit one country to dominate. In her view, the forthcoming Caribbean Basin Security Initiative is a positive example, but she argues that even with the CBSI neighboring states must be more proactive.

An operational third element, long advocated by Senior Fellow Cope, envisions an integrated, layered defense of sovereignty among Caribbean states, connecting maritime and air assets as well as sharing intelligence. Ms Joseph-Harris envisions the creation of a functional “firewall” in the region. To make this firewall effective against the narcotics industry, she believes neighboring states from Cuba to Venezuela and Colombia must participate. Ideological differences must be minimized. All of these countries face the same challenges from organized crime, drug-related violence, and corruption.

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The Center for Strategic Research Western Hemisphere team includes Senior Fellow Jay Cope, Adjunct Fellow Ambassador Luigi Einaudi, Research Assistant Eva Silkwood, and Interns Karina Van der Plas and Luis Contreras. The views expressed are their own and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.