Marine and Sri Lankan UN peacekeeper provide security at food distribution point in Carrefour, Haiti

U.S. Navy (Spike Call)

Regional Threats

By CURTIS A. WARD

SECURITY CAPACITY IMPERATIVES IN THE CARIBBEAN

There is often a tendency to ignore festering problems until they evolve into historic or catastrophic events. Geopolitical and national interests determine whether many such problems become priority issues for proactive responses by policymakers in the United States and other developed countries. Delaying appropriate action, or ignoring these issues for too long, often results in unmanageable crises, significant loss of lives, and waste of vast amounts of financial assets. Such resources might otherwise be deployed to enhance economic and social development to ameliorate the conditions that give rise to such situations. As is often the case, however, U.S. willingness to respond, or to lead a global response, to festering problems frequently is linked to its own national interests and security imperatives.

Unfortunately, but for the lack of political will and timely application of appropriate resources, many crises or potential crises in regions and subregions of the world could be prevented. While the dangers for some subregions have reached crisis levels, others are not yet irreversible or are yet to reach catastrophic stages. Hence, proactive measures can avert further deterioration that could create future security dangers. Negative security trends now evident in the Caribbean, for instance, fueled primarily by transnational crimes, can be reversed. The security challenges that flow from sophisticated and well-financed transnational criminal enterprises must be addressed as a matter of priority in affected countries and regions. The imperative is for security capacity-building geared to meeting such challenges. Proactively addressing the lack of security capacity to counter international crimes will prevent those conditions from developing into cataclysmic security events.

The Caribbean region—in particular, the English-speaking Caribbean Community (CARICOM) island states and the Dominican Republic[1]—is different in many ways from other regions facing serious security threats.

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Though significant in terms of potential risks to the United States, the conditions that give rise to threats posed by deficiencies in the security capacity of the Caribbean region have not reached irreversible or catastrophic stages. Moreover, the region's nexus to the United States uniquely positions it in the proximate U.S. geopolitical and strategic sphere. Thus, there is an incentive, if not an urgency, for the United States to proactively pursue security capacity-building measures in the Caribbean region. This article frames this relationship in the context of U.S. national security interests and Caribbean security and development imperatives.

The Third Border

Because the Caribbean has been recognized since April 2001 as America's "third border,"[2] the U.S.-proposed Third Border Initiative (TBI) was intended originally as a U.S.-led partnership with its Caribbean neighbors that would facilitate and strengthen those nations' institutional capacities to deal with social and economic problems; to combat transnational crime, particularly illegal drug trafficking and illicit arms trade; and to promote regional security. In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the TBI vision was broadened to include enhancement of the region's capacity for U.S.-Caribbean cooperation in dealing with potential terrorist threats.

A joint statement issued by the governments of the United States, the CARICOM states, and the Dominican Republic emphasized the issue of security in U.S.-Caribbean relations. The statement was quite specific in this regard:

We are further bound by a determination to protect our region from terrorists and criminals who would destroy our way of life and by a belief that terrorist acts, such as the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, represent a serious threat to international peace and our hemispheric security and require our governments to continue our efforts to prevent, combat, and eliminate terrorism.

We recognize our interdependence and the importance of close cooperation to combat new and emerging transnational threats that endanger the very fabric of our societies. By virtue of their small size and geographic configuration and lack of technical and financial resources, Caribbean States are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to these risks and threats, especially those posed by illicit trafficking in persons, drugs, and firearms, terrorism, and other transnational crimes.[3]

More than 6 years after this declaration, the problems of security in the Caribbean have increased considerably, and the threats have become more complex and therefore require far more superior responses. Caribbean states remain "vulnerable and susceptible" to the same risks identified at the 2004 Americas Summit in Monterrey, Mexico. They still lack "technical and financial resources," and the risks associated with the region still exist despite significant efforts by a number of Caribbean countries to improve security infrastructure and security expertise. However, with limited resources and insufficient technical and financial support from the United States and other international partners, such as Canada and the European Union, the security situation in the Caribbean should continue to be a cause of great concern to the United States in the same way it was 6 years ago in Monterrey.

The expectations that followed the Monterrey pronouncement have not been met. Except for its support for drug interdiction in the Caribbean, the United States has not kept pace with the security and development imperatives of the region. During this period, there has been little U.S. assistance to prevent the trafficking in illegal arms (automatic weapons and other small arms) to the Caribbean. By failing to staunch its own flow of guns, the United States itself has not matched the level of cooperation it has demanded of Caribbean countries in dealing with illegal drug trafficking through and from the region to the United States.

U.S. Navy (Ed Early)

Sailors and Coastguardsmen transport bales of cocaine seized from go-fast small boat on Caribbean Sea

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Furthermore, most of the security imperatives imposed on the region are direct results of bilateral pressure from the U.S. Government, including through requirements of legislation such as the Maritime Transportation Security Act to protect the homeland, the international supply chain, and particularly U.S. trade.[4] Added to U.S.-imposed requirements are new security standards and best practices developed in international forums to deal with the threat of international terrorism and maritime and aviation security, often at the urging and leadership of the United States in the post-9/11 era.

U.S. Marine Corps (Alex C. Sauceda)

USNS *Lewis and Clark* transits Caribbean Sea at sunrise

The Security-Development Nexus

While Caribbean states remain relatively safe destinations for American visitors, there are significant security problems that threaten the future political stability and fragile economies of these states. Highlighting these problems is not intended to create any form of hysteria or to raise the threat level on Caribbean travel but to ensure that negative trends in the region are arrested before the problems become uncontrollable and irreversible. Preventative action, now rather than later, serves both the national security interests of the United States and the security and economic development interests of the region.

Caribbean security problems are not insurmountable, but they are beyond the technical and financial resource capacities of Caribbean countries to fix. Without significant input from the United States and other partner countries, the problems will only get worse and will pose significant threats to the U.S. homeland and the region in the future.

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The countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, despite their fragile economies, begin with clear advantages over most countries in other regions and subregions, including Central and South America. The English-speaking Caribbean countries have strong democratic underpinnings, adhere to the rule of law, and have in place well-defined, though significantly underresourced, institutional mechanisms.[5] These distinctions provide a platform for institutional and operational capacity-building and security enhancement.

The security problems, while varied from country to country, have some common threads. These include substantial gaps in border management and control capacities—in particular, customs administration and control, port facilities security, and maritime border control. There is significant lack of capacity to prevent contraband from entering the international supply chain and the domestic environment. This capacity gap considerably increases the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their precursors entering the international supply chain from or transiting marginally secured port facilities destined for the United States. The wide gaps in the capacities of the island states to patrol and secure their territorial sea and coastlines increase the likelihood of terrorists and international criminals gaining access to U.S. commercial shipping and cruise ship assets.

The Caribbean region's vulnerability has been exacerbated by the severe economic hardships they have experienced as a result of the recent global recession. The devastating January 2010 earthquake in Haiti has added new challenges that must be factored into the region's security dilemma. However, even before this tragic event, with considerably reduced available resources, an overwhelming majority of the countries in the region could not afford the high cost of security-related technology, of desperately needed security infrastructure development, and of training, equipping, and maintaining security personnel, and there is no prospect that these countries will be able to afford them any time in the near future.

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For Caribbean states, the nexus between security and development is obvious. Economic development of the region depends on the security architecture of the region, and security depends on each country's level of development and ability to afford it. Which comes first?

U.S. Interests

Protecting the homeland also means protecting Caribbean island states. This charge should be seen not as U.S. aid but as an investment in U.S. national security. There should be no doubt in the minds of policymakers that the United States has a national security interest in ensuring that its third border is secure, thereby reducing its vulnerability to possible threats from terrorism, drug trafficking, illegal migration, human trafficking, and the smuggling of contraband and of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear materials. Any security breach in the regional

supply chain could have dire implications for U.S. homeland security. Despite this possibility, U.S. policymakers have given negligible attention to Caribbean security capacity and have done little to stem the flow of illegal weapons into the region.

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In addition to U.S. national security interests, which alone should be reason enough for a significant American response to the security capacity needs of the Caribbean region, there are also important economic interests that need to be protected. The most critical among these are:

■ The over 15,000,000 containers that are offloaded and transited through the region each year to the United States and elsewhere. The Caribbean is not only providing major containerized transshipment ports for U.S. exports and imports, but also sitting astride the shipping lanes from South America and providing through-passage for ships navigating the Panama Canal toward North America, Europe, and other northern destinations. As the volume of maritime traffic continues to increase each year, the Caribbean has become a soft target for transnational crime. Securing the supply chain from possible contamination is of great concern to both the United States and the Caribbean.

■ The millions of American citizens who travel on business and leisure to the Caribbean each year. Hundreds of U.S.-based cruise ships, each carrying thousands of U.S. citizens, berth at several Caribbean ports throughout the year. There are also thousands of flights of U.S. commercial aircraft to and from the region annually. Security standards vary from seaport to seaport and many Caribbean countries, without the use of latest available technology, struggle to maintain a minimum level of security at their international airports and have marginal security in their seaports.

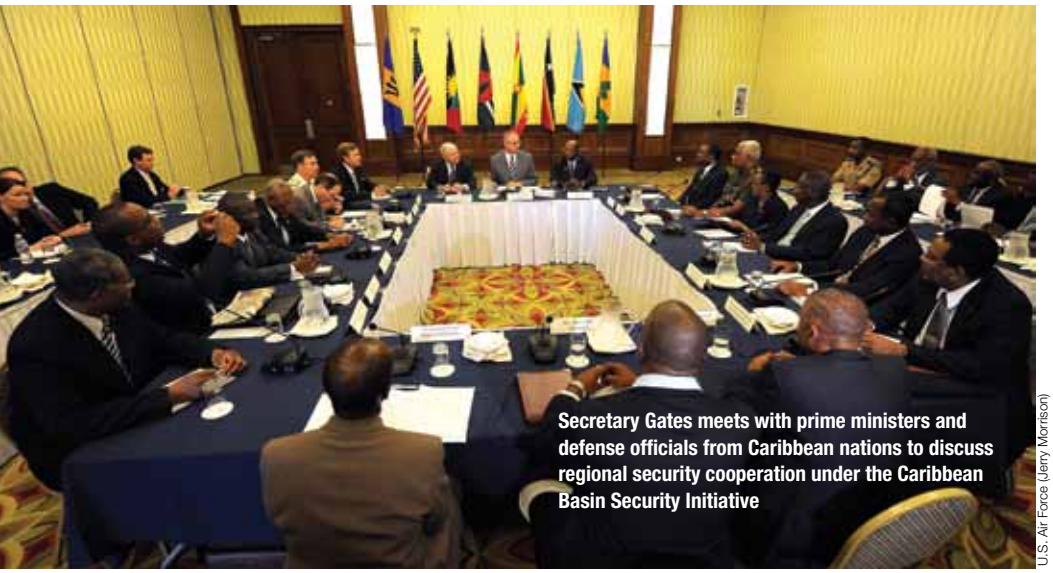
■ The billions of dollars of U.S. direct investment in the Caribbean in the tourism, mineral, and energy industries. The United States relies heavily on the region for minerals and energy supply, in particular bauxite/alumina, and oil and gas, with Trinidad and Tobago being the largest supplier to, and a most reliable source of natural gas for, the United States.

Drug traffickers have successfully evaded the security mechanisms in place, including the joint U.S.-Caribbean drug interdiction efforts in the past. They will continue to do so, unless significantly more resources are made available than the United States has provided so far and has earmarked for this purpose in the future.[6] A recent statement attributed to a Jamaican government official

Jamaican defense forces board High Speed Vessel *Swift 2* to participate in subject matter exchanges at Port Antonio, Jamaica, during Southern Partnership Station 2010

U.S. Navy (Kim Williams)

estimated that it would take in excess of $500 million to put in place the security equipment and infrastructure needed in the Jamaican ports serving international shipping and cruise lines. While there was no indication as to how this figure was arrived at, inasmuch as Jamaica has one of the largest container ports in the region and hundreds of thousands of cruise passengers visit Jamaican ports each year, this amount could well be underestimated. When we add to this the infrastructure requirements of the other countries in the region, this figure is nowhere near what is required region-wide.



Secretary Gates meets with prime ministers and defense officials from Caribbean nations to discuss regional security cooperation under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative

U.S. Air Force (Jerry Morrison)

The $45 million budgeted in fiscal year (FY) 2010 by the United States for the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), which was announced by President Barack Obama during the Summit of the Americas in April 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago, and the additional $70 million Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently said would be sought in the FY11 budget for the CBSI, is a mere fraction of what is needed.[7] These financial commitments under the CBSI and the summit with Caribbean government and defense leaders, according to Secretary Gates, are strong signals that the United States is reengaging with the region after having begun to draw down its presence after 9/11.[8] However, this expenditure, like most of the funds spent by the U.S. Government in the past, will be applied mostly to fund operational exercises, such as maritime patrols in regional territorial waters in maritime drug interdiction programs, and to provide additional joint training and exercises.[9] Although some of these funds may be applied to the procurement of additional small patrol boats, this level of funding will do little to adequately address the security capacity deficiencies in the security infrastructure of the region. To address these deficiencies, the regional security architecture must be reevaluated, assessed, and modernized to meet current threats.

For example, an initial investment of $60 million was made by the government of Jamaica in 2004 for "modern" X-ray and gamma-ray equipment.[10] That equipment is now outdated in light of the more efficient and advanced technology since developed. From the outset, the equipment put in place some 6 years ago was incapable of screening most of the large volume of container traffic passing through the Kingston port. Much of the scanning capacity targeted outgoing container traffic. Hence, scanning of incoming container traffic for contraband and illegal firearms is only marginally effected. Furthermore, that expenditure was considered at the time to be a mere down payment on what was needed for security equipment and did not include the high costs of maintaining ongoing port facilities security and personnel training required under international standards established by the International Maritime Organization's International Ship and Port Facilities Security Code and by U.S. legislation, such as the Maritime Transportation Security Act.

Then–Prime Minister Percival James Patterson of Jamaica, while commissioning the equipment at the Kingston Container Terminal, stated that by establishing proper security measures at the ports, the government was protecting Jamaica's ability to participate in international trade, particularly with its major trading partners—the United States, Canada, and Europe. He also noted that Jamaica's trading relationships could be seriously jeopardized should the government lack the capacity to ensure that the shipping and trade sector was not used as a vehicle to carry out terrorist acts against another country. He pointed to the fact that "no port is immune from such negative and destructive forces as the international drug trade, the smuggling of small arms and contraband, including the movement of nuclear, radiological, chemical, biological and other deadly materials."[11] Mr. Patterson's observations reflected the past and present reality for all Caribbean states and the region as a whole.

It is imperative, therefore, that significantly more security-related expenditure is made in the medium to long term to create additional security layers and to keep updating and maintaining security equipment. The high cost of modern security-related technology is prohibitive for most Caribbean states and is a considerable financial burden for all. The security infrastructure requirements can only be met through significant U.S. technical and financial programs.

In general, Caribbean states recognize the security threat to their development prospects and the obvious deficiencies in their overall security infrastructures—national and regional. However, Caribbean states are constrained by lack of financial, human, and technological resources to put in place the requisite security measures. A 2007 World Bank/United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime joint report underscores the negative impact of crime and violence on development of Caribbean countries, due in part to a lack of adequate security, and noted that crime and violence present one of the paramount challenges to development in the Caribbean.

Caribbean states are constrained by lack of financial, human, and technological resources to put in place the requisite security measures

The insecurity that the report refers to is directly linked to drug trafficking and illicit arms trade plaguing the region. Most important, the report stated emphatically that Caribbean states cannot solve the problems of crime

and security on their own because of the vast amount of technical and financial resources required. It concluded in part that CARICOM states require significant support from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries to do so.[12] It is safe to conclude further that security capacity-building support must be holistic in its approach and comprehensive in its application recognizing its relationship to development.

As noted above, the Caribbean is astride the major shipping lanes from South America to North America and Europe. Though one of the Caribbean region's greatest assets, the region's geographic position and construct increase its vulnerability and pose even greater security challenges. Drug traffickers moving cocaine from South America—especially from Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, the world's largest cocaine producers—have taken advantage of the ease of transit through the region and the porous, unprotected borders of the islands. Illicit arms trafficking and money laundering, which support the drug trade, have contributed significantly to increased crime and violence and raised the security risks and threat levels in a number of Caribbean societies.

These and other emerging security risks have increased pressure on a global scale for each country to meet new and constantly evolving international standards of security primarily associated with combating international terrorism and transnational crime. Traditional security measures no longer suffice, and greater efforts are needed to keep pace with shifting security threats. The new security standards in particular disproportionately affect small states in which small economic returns from security investments hardly justify the large expenditures. In the ever-changing global security environment, threats from increasingly sophisticated transnational organized crime and terrorism are forcing Caribbean countries to adjust their priorities. However, without the resources to do so, they fall behind constantly.

The problem cannot be ignored indefinitely or until a catastrophic event either occurs in the Caribbean, or is planned and initiated in the Caribbean and carried out on U.S. territory. There are a number of likely scenarios that should raise deep concern among U.S. policymakers. These include a bomb or WMD placed on a U.S.-bound vessel in the Caribbean timed to go off or to release deadly pathogens when the vessel reaches a U.S. port.

How the United States responds to Caribbean security threats and the deficiencies in current security capacities of countries in the region will determine the region's future prospects for economic growth and development, as well as ensuring democracy, good governance, and the rule of law. These are the underpinnings of stability and security in the region. It is a matter of U.S. national security to ensure and guarantee the security of its third border. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] The CARICOM member states are Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. (Montserrat is an associate member.)

[2] President George W. Bush, at the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Canada, in April 2001, designated the Caribbean as America's "third border."

[3] U.S. Department of State, "Joint Statement by the United States of America, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Dominican Republic on the Third Border Initiative," press statement, January 13, 2004, available at <www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2004/28136.htm>.

[4] Maritime Transportation Security Act, Public Law 107–295, November 25, 2002, available at <www.tsa.gov/assets/pdf/MTSA.pdf>.

[5] This applies to all of the English-speaking Caribbean countries and the Dominican Republic. Haiti has been an exception, and the January 2010 earthquake not only will set back the progress made there in recent years but also has the potential to increase the security threats throughout the region.

[6] President Obama requested $45 million from Congress in 2009 as a "contribution towards a multiyear, multi-faceted Caribbean Basin Security Initiative." Announcement available at <www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/05/123543.htm>.

[7] Joint press conference, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and Barbados Prime Minister David Thompson, available at <www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4608>.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] See "PM unveils new security system at port," *Jamaica Gleaner* (Internet Edition), March 3, 2004.

[11] Ibid.

[12] "Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs, and Policy Options in the Caribbean," Joint Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Latin America and the Caribbean Region of the World Bank, March 2007, available at <http://web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=146736&theSitePK=258554&contentMDK=21320843&noSURL=Y>.

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Strategic Forum 256

Prioritizing Strategic Interests in South Asia

Robert B. Oakley and T.X. Hammes contend that the focus on the war in Afghanistan has prevented the United States from developing a South Asia strategy rooted in the relative strategic importance of the nations in the region. India, a stable democracy enjoying rapid growth, clearly has the most potential as a strategic partner. Pakistan, as the home of al Qaeda leadership and over 60 nuclear weapons, is the greatest threat to regional stability and growth. Yet Afghanistan absorbs the vast majority of U.S. effort in the region. Thus, the United States needs to develop a genuine regional strategy. The authors argue that making the economic growth and social reform essential to the stability of Pakistan a higher priority than the conflict in Afghanistan would be a core requirement of such a strategy.

Strategic Forum 255

Africa's Irregular Security Threats: Challenges for U.S. Engagement

The United States has a growing strategic interest in Africa at a time when the security landscape there is dominated by a wide range of irregular, nonstate threats. Andre Le Sage shows how these various threats create a vicious circle, whereby even more terrorists and criminals can operate. Engaging African states as reliable partners to confront irregular security challenges will thus require a complex, three-pronged strategy. First, there must be substantial, continent-wide investment in capacity-building in the security sectors of African countries. Second, until such African capabilities come online, the United States and other partners will need to deploy more of their own personnel to Africa. Third, further efforts are required to harden the political will of African leaders to actually deploy their maturing capabilities aggressively but within the rule of law.

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