

Trafficking

Illicit drugs are a great enemy of the environment and also fuel terrorism. While Colombia fights to destroy harvests of illegal substances, other countries must address the role demand plays in the illegal drug trade. Indeed, whoever bought illicit drugs encouraged a child to become a part of the distribution system, helped to set off a car bomb in Colombia and encouraged the destruction of another tree in the rainforest. . . . We need help from the entire world, to be able to fight drug trafficking, which is finally the enemy of freedom.

—Alvaro Uribe

Colombian President

Address to 63^d United Nations General Assembly

New York, September 24, 2008

Throughout my travels during my tenure at U.S. Southern Command, at meetings, conferences, and press events, people often asked me what I worried about as commander. Narcotics and other illegal trafficking impacts our national security immensely by presenting the following dilemma: how best do we remain a free and open society—a land of opportunity and a partner of choice for our neighbor countries—especially during a post-9/11 era in which criminals and terrorists seeking to do harm continuously exploit our borders on land, in the air, and at sea?

The enduring and vital national interests of the United States are best preserved by a hemisphere of sovereign democratic nations with capable, competent, and effective governments, free societies, and economies based on free and open-market principles. Such nations foster conditions favorable to increased development, improved standards of living, expanded opportunities, and stable and secure environments for their people. However, our interests are increasingly threatened by illicit trafficking which, among other things, can undermine democratic institutions and the rule of law throughout our shared home.

Yes, I worry about the trade in illegal narcotics; but I am also deeply concerned about the illicit trafficking of counterfeit items, dangerous

goods, natural resources, money, cultural property, and even people by shrewd, well-resourced, and nefarious adversaries. Historically, within the U.S. Southern Command area of focus, the spotlight has been mainly on the transshipment of illegal drugs such as cocaine. However, illicit traffickers may also exploit their sophisticated transportation modes and networks to move weapons, people, money, and other contraband. Left unchecked, illicit trafficking poses a significant threat to the security, stability, and ultimately, the sovereignty and prosperity of nations throughout the Americas.

Two important events occurred in 2007 that received very little fanfare. In March, the U.S. Coast Guard, working with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Panamanian authorities, seized the merchant freighter *Gatun*, carrying over 20 metric tons of cocaine—approximately 43,000 pounds, the equivalent of 10 Volkswagen Beetles—bound for Mexico. It was the largest maritime interdiction of drugs ever made in the Americas, and it denied drug lords over \$300 million in revenue. Twenty metric tons would be enough cocaine for every single one of the more than 17 million U.S. high school students to take eight hits of 100 percent cocaine.¹

Then, in September 2007, Colombian authorities captured Diego León Montoya Sánchez, one of the world's most dangerous drug traffickers and responsible for nearly two-thirds of the hundreds of tons of cocaine exported from Colombia each year. At the time, because of the nearly 1,500 murders attributed to this ruthless criminal, Montoya was near the top on the FBI's Top Ten Most Wanted list, behind Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Through fear and corruption, Montoya, like Pablo Escobar before him, played a huge, destabilizing role throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. His arrest marked a major milestone for Colombia—a nation that has labored for years to build a foundation for legitimate governance and rule of law.

Both events represented victories; but neither received significant notice. Twenty years ago, drugs were a leading concern in this nation and solving the drug issue was a point of routine debate and near the top of every political candidate's agenda. Newspapers featured daily "drug bust" stories on the front pages. Every television station carried stories about the latest efforts in what was termed the "War on Drugs," which in my view is the wrong expression. Congress passed the National Drug Control Act in 1992, creating the Office of National Drug Control Policy headed by what was then a Cabinet-level official reporting directly to the White House. Presidential candidates debated the best approach to take in solving the drug problem. As

recently as the year 2000, the movie *Traffic* was a box office and critical success, nominated for five Academy Awards and winning four.

Today, however, little is heard about the war on drugs—and, incidentally, this was the wrong metaphor all along. Articles dedicated to the issue are relegated to the back pages of the papers, or several clicks away from their home page online. Yet, illegal narcotics and the associated illicit trafficking remain a national threat of significant proportion. What is missing is not only social consciousness, but political conviction.

Drugs kill tens of thousands of U.S. citizens annually. They undermine fragile democracies throughout the Americas, with enormous negative consequences in our nation. Drug trading and its associated astronomical profits fuel the vehicle of nascent narcoterrorism and misery throughout the region. The distortions and costs to the U.S. economy—and to those of the entire hemisphere—are enormous.

Here is a hypothesis: *Illegal drug use and illicit trafficking are huge national challenges that should return to the national spotlight and re-enter the national (and international) dialogue.* Every bit of effort devoted toward solving the crisis of drug abuse in this country on the demand side, and preventing the flow of illicit drugs on the supply side, is effort well-spent toward establishing control at our borders, stabilizing fragile democracies in our hemisphere, directly saving the lives of U.S. citizens, and enhancing our national security.

Furthermore, the impact is not restricted to just the United States; the costs of illicit trafficking in narcotics reach far beyond our borders. Nations who formerly saw themselves as largely immune to drug problems are experiencing the damaging effects of drugs first-hand, and are struggling to address them. For example, in less than two decades, Brazil has become the number-two consumer nation of cocaine in the world, second only to the United States in total consumption per year. Sadly, the region to the south of us no longer consists only of source countries, but now contains user countries, as well. In the source and transit zone countries, well-organized and increasingly violent drug traffickers are undermining democracy, the rule of law, and public institutions using extortion, bribery, and payment-in-kind as they advance their agendas for securing vast power and almost incomprehensible amounts of money. Internal and cross-border—via air, land, and/or sea—trafficking in drugs, weapons, human beings, money, and terrorists poses a threat to every nation's security and stability. Revenue from illicit trafficking has weakened state structures throughout the region, adulterated (and in some cases completely subverted) the rule of law, and ripped apart the fabric of social

order. In extreme cases, illicit trafficking can overwhelm a state's ability to govern itself, thereby violating its sovereignty.

The confluence of money, power, and the ability to breach the integrity of national borders makes the illicit trafficking problem a significant security challenge for nations throughout the Americas. Border insecurity, rising health care costs, increased crime, public insecurity, corruption, weakening support for democratic institutions, and heavily burdened local, county, and state agencies are the byproducts of this illegitimate and criminal activity. It is estimated that illicit trafficking costs legitimate economies more than \$245 billion annually. The illicit trafficking trade has devastating impacts on effective governance and economic growth, and it knows no boundaries. Simply put, illicit drug activity and its trafficking have a tremendously destabilizing effect on the people and partner nations throughout the Americas, our shared home.

The Challenges of Illegal Drugs in the United States

Here in the United States, drug abuse and related criminal activity have killed approximately 120,000 citizens since 2001. That is 40 times the number of deaths attributed to al Qaeda from the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing, the 2000 bombing of the USS *Cole*, and the 2001 September 11 attacks combined.² Nearly 20,000 people die from drug abuse-related causes in the United States each year, perhaps half of them from cocaine harvested from the jungles of Colombia.³

The drug challenge is enormous, and the underlying threat is real. Why? One simple truth: no business in the United States is more profitable or detrimental than the illicit drug trade. What is the largest cash crop in the USA? Wheat? Corn? Soybeans? Wrong. It is marijuana. In fact, the total illicit drug trade equates to a \$65 billion per year industry in the USA. When you add the resources we use to address health and crime consequences—as well as the loss of productivity suffered from disability, death, and withdrawal from the legitimate workforce—the total societal impact and cost to our economy probably exceed \$240 billion annually, growing at the rate of 5 percent per year.

Moreover, the negative effects of the drug trade reach far beyond sale and use of drugs in the United States. Throughout the Americas, illegal narcotics threaten delicate democracies. Today, 14 of the 20 leading source nations for drug shipments to the United States are located in the Americas. In source and transit zone countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, violent, well-organized drug-traffickers use threat of force, blackmail, bribery, and other alternative methods of influence to fan the

flames of corruption and violence. Their actions constantly destabilize the still-settling foundation upon which the pillars of democratic principles are based, undermining governance in our neighboring nations.

In years past, governments sponsored and funded terrorism; however, international pressure following the September 2001 attacks has forced terrorists to rely on other activities such as arms trafficking, money laundering, extortion, kidnap-for-ransom, and drug-trafficking as their funding sources. The reasons for this strong link between terrorism and the drug trade are certainly not difficult to ascertain. Today, enormous profit margins and growing global demand for illegal drugs such as cocaine and heroin generate huge amounts of revenue to finance crimes against our society. This money assists rogue states and international terrorist organizations who are determined to build and use weapons of mass destruction. This all connects to national security by providing one set of reasons to traffic illicit cargo and violate our borders, while also being able to expand an extremely lucrative industry.

The stakes involved are huge. According to the 2007 United Nations World Drug Report, virtually all of the world's cocaine comes from coca leaf cultivated in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. Cocaine production estimates from these countries reached 984 metric tons in 2006. Worth nearly \$21 billion wholesale, that amount of cocaine could retail on the streets in the United States for over \$105 billion. The circulation of massive amounts of drug money on this scale would have a murderous effect on weak or small economies in the Americas, wreaking havoc particularly in those nations seeking to break free of the choking grip of corruption, greed, and violence. In the hands of terrorists, cocaine profits can easily fund thousands of attacks similar to the low-cost 9/11 plot.

On the human level, the illegal narcotics industry leaves tragedy and a trail of blood in its wake. Humanitarian crisis follows the drug supply throughout Latin America and the Caribbean region. Drug kingpins are notorious for their horrendous record of abuses, including frequent kidnappings, brutal tortures and murders, recruitment and use of child soldiers, and use of antipersonnel landmines. Widespread massacres, merciless killings, extortion, and forced seizure of land from civilians are also common.

Cocaine trafficking from source countries in Latin America through the Caribbean to destinations in Europe and the United States remains the leading cause of most of the violent crime throughout our region. The current murder rate in the region of 30 people per 100,000 inhabitants per year rivals even the most troubled areas of southern and western Africa. Largely due to successful interdiction at sea and in the air, land routes

through Mexico have become the primary route for South American cocaine into the United States. As a result, Mexico now finds itself in the middle of an all-out war between competing drug lords. In northern Mexico, drug cartels seeking control of the lucrative drug trade murdered over 5,000 people in 2008 alone.

In addition to the cocaine industry, there has been an increase in the value and production of “precursor chemicals,” compounds that may not be controlled substances in their own right, but are key ingredients in the manufacture of other highly addictive and destructive drugs. For example, Argentina has emerged as a leading provider of ephedrine, a stimulant used in over-the-counter medicines as well as a key ingredient for the production of methamphetamine—“meth,” “crystal meth,” or “speed.” As ephedrine has become increasingly controlled and expensive, Mexican cartels who smuggle meth into the United States have turned to Argentina, where ephedrine is cheap and readily available. Mexican cartels have also begun using Argentina not only as a source for raw materials, but increasingly as a full-fledged producer country of designer drugs destined for Mexico, the United States, and Europe.

Humans are not the only species afflicted with the death and destruction of the illegal narcotics trade—there is also the ecological impact. Just over 2.2 million hectares of the Colombian Amazon forest have been slashed and burned to grow illegal coca in the last 20 years. To put this into perspective, 2.2 million hectares equates to just under 8,500 square miles, roughly equivalent to the size of the state of New Jersey—destroyed. Experts estimate that it will take between 100 and 600 years for each hectare to recover. Because cleared jungle land is not ideal for agriculture, coca growers use ten times more agrochemicals than growers of legal crops. Cocaine also needs to be produced near water sources, where waste such as ammonia, sulphuric acid, and gasoline is dumped. This is devastating to the fragile ecosystem that shelters the many endangered species of wildlife, including 13 percent of the world’s amphibians and more than 6,000 unique plant species, found only in Colombia.

The illicit drug trade is the energy that feeds many public security ills in Latin America and the Caribbean—from criminal violence, to corruption, to political instability—but its toxic effects are not isolated to our south. West Africa is fast becoming a transshipment hub for metric-ton quantities of cocaine being transported to Europe by South American drug trade organizations. Andean Ridge traffickers are entrenched in West Africa and have cultivated long-standing relationships with African criminal networks to facilitate their activities in the region. Criminal groups take

advantage of Africa's porous borders, poorly equipped and undertrained law enforcement agencies, and corrupt government officials to facilitate their trafficking operations. The Iberian Peninsula is Europe's main entry point for most drugs trafficked across the continent, according to a report published in July 2008 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, with Spain recently passing the United States as having the highest per capita cocaine consumption in the world. Cocaine is becoming increasingly entrenched in European society.

"War on Drugs": What's in a Name?

The term and concept first came into being almost four decades ago, when President Richard Nixon officially declared a "war on drugs" and identified drug abuse as Public Enemy #1 in 1971, 2 years after calling for the creation of a national drug policy. In a special message to Congress, he labeled drug abuse as a "serious national threat," citing a dramatic jump in drug-related juvenile arrests and street crime between 1960 and 1967. As part of his call for a unified national, state, and local antidrug strategy, President Nixon created the Drug Enforcement Administration in 1973 to coordinate the efforts of all other participating and responsible agencies.

At roughly the same time, at the heart of the drug darkness in Colombia, police seized 600 kilograms of cocaine—the largest recorded seizure to date—from a small plane in 1975. Drug traffickers responded with a brutality reminiscent of the Chicago gang wars of the late 1920s. In one weekend, 40 people were assassinated in what is now known as the "Medellin Massacre." The event signaled the new power of Colombia's cocaine industry, headquartered in Medellin. In 1981, the Medellin Cartel rose to power and the alliance included the Ochoa family, Pablo Escobar, Carlos Lehder, and Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha. These drug kingpins worked together to manufacture, transport, and market cocaine. As a result of these and other actions, the United States and Colombia ratified a bilateral extradition treaty.

In 1984, First Lady Nancy Reagan launched her "Just Say No" campaign, which included the *This Is Your Brain on Drugs* series of commercials as part of its aggressive ad campaign. Two years later, President Ronald Reagan signed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, appropriating \$1.7 billion. The act also created mandatory minimum penalties for drug offenses, which became increasingly criticized for promoting significant ethnic and social disparities in the prison population because of the differences in sentencing for crack versus powder cocaine. Possession of crack, which is cheaper to obtain than the powder form, results in harsher sentences; thus, the majority of crack users come from the lower income segment of society

and were perceived to be punished with greater severity because they could not afford the “higher status” form of the narcotic.

Compounding this situation is the fact that drugs have thrived in our social fabric for many decades. As previously mentioned, the movie *Traffic* was a cinematic tour de force in 2000, winning four Oscars. *Traffic* was directed by Steven Soderbergh and explores the intricacies of the illegal drug trade from a number of different perspectives: a user, an enforcer, a politician, and a trafficker, whose lives affect each other though they never actually meet. The film is an adaptation of the British Channel 4 television series and even spawned a mini-series on the USA Network, also called *Traffic*. Hollywood produced additional blockbuster movies showcasing the use of narcotics and the vast amounts of money associated with the drug industry as *Blow* followed in 2001, *Cocaine Cowboys* in 2006, and *American Gangster* in 2007, all with Oscar winners or nominees as headliners and cast members. Drugs are very popular in this medium, and thus in our culture. Even if a movie is not specifically about trafficking, as these four are, drugs often figure prominently in the story line. In fact, from 2000 to 2007, no fewer than 150 feature films have featured the use of cocaine or other illicit drugs by a lead or supporting cast member.

General Barry McCaffrey, during his Senate confirmation hearing before becoming the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy under President Bill Clinton, stated, “The metaphor ‘War on Drugs’ is inadequate to describe this terrible menace facing the American people.” He went on to comment, “Wars are relatively straightforward. You identify the enemy, select a general, assign him a mission and resources, and let him get the job done. In this struggle against drug abuse, there is no silver bullet, no quick way to reduce drug use or the damage it causes.” During his tenure, General McCaffrey stressed the importance of understanding that there can be no total victory in this contest, and thus a military campaign is the wrong path to follow. Ultimately, particularly on the demand side of the equation, most of the people involved in drugs are not the enemy—they are the victims. His efforts led to a growing understanding of the requirements for and benefits of national drug treatment programs, healing the addicts to reduce the appetite for drugs that fuels the industry.

Experts estimate that people in the United States consume over 350 metric tons of cocaine each year.⁴ As indicated above, the numbers of deaths and the profits being generated are staggering. Understandably, our neighbors in the Caribbean and Latin America often ask why we in the United States do not do more to curb the demand. In fact, the United States does attack the challenges on the demand side. Overall, in 2007, the

U.S. Federal Government spent over \$13 billion combating drugs, and more was done by state and municipal governments. Over one-third of that money went toward programs to stop drug use before it starts and to intervene and heal habitual drug users.⁵ Drying up the demand is, ultimately, the best way to finally stop the flow of illicit drugs and help us secure our borders.

In addition to attacking the demand side of the drug problem, significant effort is being expended on the production side of the equation in the source countries. Programs for eradication, alternative development, macroeconomic growth, judicial and police training, and human rights education all play a part in reducing illicit production of coca leaf.

Both demand and production efforts are vital and must continue; however, neither the demand side nor the supply side was in my area of professional concern at U.S. Southern Command. Instead, the primary role of the command in this mission area was and continues to be supporting *interdiction* by law enforcement via monitoring and detection, doing our best to prevent drugs from entering the United States. Interdiction efforts focus on stopping drugs and illicit trafficking through the transit zone between the producing countries and the market in the United States, Europe, and other areas. While actual arrests are made by law enforcement authorities like the Coast Guard and DEA, there is a significant support role for the U.S. military involving intelligence, communication, logistics, sensor operations, patrol, and force protection for law enforcement authorities engaged in interdiction activities. Again, Southern Command's roles in this mission are detection and monitoring in the transit zone and supporting our partners in law enforcement. It is a crucial mission—one that receives significant attention from all levels of the command.

A Vital Mission

As previously described, our area of focus at U.S. Southern Command is vast, including 41 nations, territories, and protectorates of Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, and covering over 16 million square miles—one-sixth of the Earth's surface. It is a region that is home to approximately 460 million people with a variety of cultures, languages, and histories. From the headquarters in Miami, over 1,500 people make plans and lead the military activities of roughly 7,000 military and civilians who fall under one-star to three-star component commanders from each of the Armed Services and the U.S. Special Operations Command. On any given day, thousands of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coastguardsmen, and DOD civilians are deployed in many countries throughout the

region. In addition, hundreds more are routinely deployed in our Navy and Coast Guard ships throughout the maritime domain. Southern Command is committed to working closely with the entire interagency community to develop strategically important partnerships throughout the region for counterdrug programs.

Each year, the President develops the National Drug Control Strategy, which is the Nation's plan for combating the use and availability of illicit drugs. The National Drug Control Strategy has three key elements: (1) stopping use before it starts; (2) intervening and healing drug users; and (3) disrupting the market. The FY 2008 Drug Budget totaled nearly \$13 billion, with about \$940 million—7 percent of the overall budget—under the auspices of the Department of Defense for counterdrug operations.

The U.S. military's role in the drug control program was first mandated by legislation in the 1989 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which directed the Department of Defense to assume the role as the lead agency for "detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs to the United States." In addition to passive detection and monitoring of potential drug smuggling activities, we *support* lead Federal and other partner agencies (like DEA and Coast Guard) in the active element of interception of suspect craft to the full extent permitted by U.S. law and Defense Department policy. While providing this support, we must still observe the restraints of the Posse Comitatus Act, which specifically prohibits the military from acts of apprehension or arrest except in narrowly defined circumstances. This level of teamwork requires a close working relationship, one characterized by close coordination and trust, using a whole-of-government approach and leveraging the strengths and capabilities of our international partners. These efforts only constitute roughly 10 percent of the President's overall budget to address the drug problem, but I would argue they are a vital part of the overall endeavor.

The monitoring and interdiction process is incredibly complex because it requires a mix of sophisticated technologies and capabilities. It is sensitive because of the connections that must be established for varied organizations and nations to work together as a team without a comfortable margin of error. Interdiction also has to be dynamic because it deals with a highly capable foe with the capital to buy virtually whatever it needs to adapt to changing circumstances.

A primary operations center for all of this is what I referred to in a previous chapter as "the crown jewel of Southern Command," the Joint Interagency Task Force–South, or JIATF–South, located in Key West, Florida. Its focus is both air and maritime smuggling through a 6-million-square-mile area called

U.S. Navy Photo (Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ron Kuzlik)



Mexican ship ARM *Mina* sails in formation with other participants in the 50th iteration of UNITAS Gold, the longest-running multinational maritime exercise in the world. U.S. Navy ships trained off the coast of Florida with maritime forces from Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Germany, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay to promote security in the Americas (2009).

U.S. Southern Command (Jose Ruiz)



In a realistic training scenario, a drone missile is shot from the deck of USNS *Hunter* in the live-fire portion of UNITAS Gold, a maritime exercise conducted with the naval forces of several nations (2009).

the “transit zone.” With the help of 11 partner nations, JIATF–South has evolved into *the* model of interagency and multinational cooperation, achieving record-setting cocaine seizures every year from 2000 to 2006. From 2007 to 2008, JIATF–South was responsible, with international and interagency partners, for seizing more than 475 metric tons of cocaine in the transit zone. Put in a different context, that equates to over 190 hits of cocaine for the 17 million sons and daughters in high school here in the United States. In 2008, for the first time in a decade, we began to see a rise in the street price of cocaine and attendant scarcity in a variety of large U.S. urban markets. Working together with demand and production side solution sets, it seems that interdiction may indeed be having an effect on the market. At a minimum, we know that 475 *fewer* metric tons of cocaine are on our streets or in the hands of our children, families, and coworkers than would otherwise be the case over the past 2 years. Clearly, that’s a staggering amount, but stopping even that much is not enough to solve the problem. We need to try to do more.

Innovation . . . Not Just a One-way Street

Each year, in spite of our efforts, illicit traffickers continue to prove they are ruthless, resourceful, and highly intelligent people who possess uncanny creative adaptability in the face of our countermeasures. The windfall profits they receive from their business model drive their innovation, making our job of trying to get and stay a step ahead of them very challenging. Utilizing both legitimate and illegitimate air, land, and sea methods of conveyance, traffickers have established an agile and viable infrastructure for transporting illicit cargo like narcotics to the United States and the global market. Just as legitimate governments and businesses have embraced the advances of globalization, so too have illicit traffickers harnessed the benefits of globalization to press forward their illicit activities. In the end, there seems to be no shortage of people willing to subject themselves to mortal danger or incarceration for the sake of the money drug trafficking can offer. There also seems to be no shortage of people willing to supply drugs. Finally, there seems to be no shortage of routes or efforts traffickers will take to get their drugs into the United States.

We see feats of innovation month after month. For example, there are people acting as drug “mules” on commercial airplanes, ingesting up to 90 sealed pellets of cocaine or heroin. A typical “mule” can carry about 1.5 kilograms, enough to bring in over \$150,000 in retail sales. In addition, there has been an increase in the large-scale employment of semi-submersible watercraft, built to avoid detection from air and sea. A

typical semi-submersible can carry between 1 and 10 metric tons of drugs or other illicit cargo. We will go into greater detail on this specific conveyance method later. Moreover, there are creative ways to hide drugs which are being transported. Just a few examples include:

- hidden within toys
- deeply buried in iron ore loads
- stitched into live puppies and exotic animals
- encapsulated in the buttons of clothing
- mixed with coffee
- sealed in fruit juices and purees
- hidden in cargo holds of frozen or rotten fish
- dissolved in diesel fuel
- transformed into odorless plastic sheets, undetectable through chemical testing
- hidden inside the shafts of golf clubs.

It is a boundless problem set. We must respond with innovation. This is classic 21st-century activity—brain-on-brain combat competition. We need to embrace innovation in the way we think, organize, plan, and operate. We need to welcome innovation in the way we adapt new technology to ever-changing challenges. In addition, we need to demand innovation in the way we communicate, including how we describe and frame our challenges—both with our partners and with the public in general.

Clearly, in a resource-constrained world, in an era in which the budget is tight and resource stewardship is constantly a matter of close scrutiny, we do not have the luxury to haphazardly throw away resources based on half-concocted notions; nevertheless, we must find ways to embrace change when it makes sense, as well as have the courage to experiment. As John Paul Jones once remarked, “He who will not risk, cannot win.” Like our opponents, we must constantly try new things. Now, more than ever, creative solutions are paramount.

To be more effective—and, in turn, more efficient—we have to use innovative, nontraditional approaches to help forge a cooperative security in the region. This occurs largely by working with our regional partners abroad and our interagency community partners at home. We must strive to take advantage of every available opportunity to build cooperative partnerships within our area of focus. We have a duty to be agile, aggressive,

and resourceful in our efforts to thwart this continuously morphing challenge and threat.

Flexible, scalable, and persistent maritime engagement capabilities are a welcomed and essential part of how the United States approaches its neighbors in the region and around the globe, and how it views itself as a contributor to—not the sole provider of—security and access to the maritime commons. Even with all the assets our nation might be able to muster, ensuring freedom of navigation and access in the waterways of our shared home requires more capacity than we individually have the ability to deliver. Designing a regional network of maritime nations voluntarily committed to building and maintaining cooperative security and responding to threats against mutual interests is the genesis of Southern Command's Partnership for the Americas. The natural outcome would be a combination of our own fleet working on an equal basis with partners and friends throughout this region, charting a course together toward a stable and prosperous future.

One manner in which we have begun to provide the basic building blocks of the partnership is through years of multilateral fleet and field exercises. For instance, UNITAS—a South American naval exercise with 16 partners, originating in 1959—has been instrumental in establishing enduring working relationships among U.S. and Latin American naval, coast guard, and marine forces. The friendship, professionalism, and understanding promoted among participants provide fertile ground to promote interoperability, develop a common framework for information exchange, and establish the command and control protocols we will need to achieve what might be called a Global Maritime Coalition.

In May 2009, we celebrated UNITAS Gold, the 50th Anniversary of this hemispheric maritime training exercise. This was the first event held in the waters off the northeast coast of Florida and the U.S. Fourth Fleet served as host, welcoming a record 12 nations, including more than 25 ships, 70 aircraft, and 7,000 sea-going professionals—an all-time record for participation. For nearly five decades, the participating nations have come together to exchange ideas, to understand each other, and to build mutual trust through a commitment to partnership and freedom. Sailors and marines—*mariners*—from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Germany, Mexico, Peru, the United States, and Uruguay came together to, as the Commander of the Fourth Fleet, Rear Admiral Joe Kernan, put it, “renew the bonds of the sea in a spirit of cooperation and friendship.”⁶ The focus areas of the training and exercises were key topics for the regional and international maritime security participants, including:

disaster relief, peacekeeping, medical activities, humanitarian support, mutual professional training, and counternarcotics cooperation. By openly sharing information at sea through exercises such as UNITAS, and by cooperating at the individual level, we forge stronger relationships and build our collective capacity based on the foundations of transparency, trust, friendship, and cooperation.

Additionally, U.S. Southern Command was fortunate enough to be chosen as the test bed for a concept identified as a critical enabler for this coalition, the high-speed vessel (HSV) *Swift*. The *Swift* embarked on its first 4-month deployment in our region in the fall of 2007 for training and exchanges with our partner nations, and completed its 5-month deployment in the spring of 2009. These deployments, during which the *Swift* visited 10 different countries and made 29 port calls, provided valuable lessons-learned to help the U.S. Navy institutionalize the Global Fleet Station program; this program will result in flexible forward presence options to conduct theater security cooperation activities. These deployments were also part of Southern Command's Southern Partnership Program, an annual deployment of various specialty platforms whose primary goal is information sharing via training and exercises with navies, coast guards, and civilian services throughout the region. Although the *Swift* is not a combatant in the traditional sense, its capacity, shallow draft, and incredible speed give this ship unlimited potential.

Originally designed as a high-speed car ferry, the *Swift* is a 321-foot catamaran that can perform reconnaissance, countermining warfare, maritime interdiction, transport, and humanitarian assistance. It travels at well over 40 knots and has a maximum draft of only 11 feet when fully loaded with over 600 tons of cargo. The *Swift* is relatively inexpensive by modern standards—less than \$60 million per copy for a fully militarized version—but it is optimized for exactly the kinds of missions we do in this region: training, disaster relief, emergency command and control, exercises, medical treatment, humanitarian assistance, and increasingly, counternarcotics. For example, with *Swift's* speed and endurance, it can easily cover a lot of area in a short amount of time; even the fastest drug-running boats cannot outpace it for very long. Further, because of its unique flexibility and because it is so new, the complete mission set for the *Swift* is still evolving and expanding. Only through continued experimentation and deployment will we really be able to appreciate the incredible potential of this type of ship for use in maritime awareness and drug interdiction.

Another promising development in our arsenal against the flow of illicit narcotics and other cargo in this region is Project *Stiletto*. The *Stiletto* vessel can improve our counterdrug operations by offering



U.S. Southern Command (Jose Ruiz)

Experimental vessel *Stiletto*, manned by a crew of Army and Navy mariners and U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Officers, trains for counter-illicit trafficking deployment to the Caribbean. An example of innovative design and construction, the *Stiletto* is lightweight, able to operate in shallow waters, easy to maintain, and fast (up to 50 knots in calm seas).

affordable cutting edge technology and mission flexibility with the additional advantage of being manned by a combined joint, inter-agency, and partner-nation crew. The current composition includes an Army mariner crew, a U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment, a Navy technical representative, partner nation riders, and other inter-agency community representatives. Capable of 40- to 50-knot speed, the *Stiletto* can outrun most of the vessels typically used to support illicit trafficking in the Southern Command area of focus. Its shallow 2.5-foot draft allows the ship access to near-shore and riverine type areas often used by illicit traffickers as a sanctuary. Finally, the *Stiletto* uses a “plug and play” architecture and an electronic keel suited toward rapid installation and evaluation of new concepts and technologies used to stop illicit trafficking. Perhaps most impressive on the list of the *Stiletto*’s features is the price tag—it is built for approximately \$6 million and can be fully outfitted for an additional \$4 million.

But the *Swift* and *Stiletto* are just two vessels, part of a finite number of resources available to cover a vast amount of sea space. Even leveraging

the numbers and capacity of our partners in the region, we cannot be everywhere at once. Each day, traffickers use more sophisticated communication, computer, and encryption technology to conceal their operations. Moving resources at every sniff of a threat is not feasible; we need fast, flexible, and properly vetted information that then becomes actionable intelligence and helps us pinpoint the locations where our forces and resources can do the most good—and with sufficient time to get them there. To coin a phrase, we seek “precision-guided intelligence.”

Data we use to gain intelligence about drug trafficking can come from many different sources, including radar, infrared, and visual reconnaissance assets, as well as human intelligence and databases compiled by law enforcement and customs services. In essence, we need more relevant fusion technologies that allow all-source synthesis, distributed dissemination, collaborative planning, and multiple-node sensor resource management. Combine all-source data fusion with inexpensive, reliable sensors, and you have the basis for true “technological innovation” in counterdrug efforts. Here, we are looking to industry for smart solutions.

At U.S. Southern Command, we established a small innovation cell on the staff to research, explore, and test emerging technologies available commercially or through Federal research centers. In particular, the innovation cell works closely with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) because of its specific role in managing and directing selected basic and applied research and development projects for the Defense Department. Through this unique partnership, they pursue exploration and technology where risk and payoff are both very high, and where success may provide dramatic advances for the counterdrug mission. Examples include:

- unmanned aerial craft, especially those with the legs to have good transit and loiter capability
- remote laser infrared detection and ranging for foliage penetration
- high-speed, unmanned surface vessels for detection and identification to support maritime domain awareness
- commercial satellite sensors with the ability to detect “go-fast” boats
- next generation “over the horizon” (OTH) radars
- novel applications of existing technology.

This sample of initiatives represents a continuing effort to leverage innovative business solutions and technology to address the challenges

posed by narcotics and illicit trafficking. This effort will require a long-term commitment of resources and collective will, but the security and sovereignty of both the United States and our partner nations demand it. But science is not enough—we need to advance and innovate philosophically, as well. We need to transform our way of thinking and operating from a “need to know” mindset to one of “need to share.” In so doing, we will enable and start exercising our “push” mentality and muscles, in addition to our already well-developed “pull” ones. Meaningful partnerships are based on commitment according to fundamental notions of reciprocity, understanding, and cooperation. The security cooperation partnerships we seek to build require connectivity, interoperability, and a baseline for communicating mutual understanding. The key is to work toward significantly broader mechanisms of mutual trust with our partner nations. To do so, we need to be able to shed the veil of secrecy, on demand, and to share technology with our partners.

Today, no single arm of the U.S. Government has the ability or authority to coordinate the multiple entities required to execute an effective international antidrug campaign. But with imagination, one can envision an operational fusion of the best capabilities provided by joint, combined, interagency community, international, and public-private organizations in a way that coordinates efforts to tackle drugs and trafficking at every stage from source point to the streets. With such a capability at hand, real pressure could be brought to bear on the supply side. I have already described in great detail the ways in which JIATF–South sets the standard in this regard. However, we can and must continue to push the envelope further, finding new ways to draw from and bring together the immense talents and strengths of all the varied players in this mission area. Internally, at Southern Command, we conducted a headquarters staff reorganization in order to accomplish this vision, which involved restructuring the large staff to optimize our interagency community approach. The results include many new liaisons and personnel exchanges, as well as building directorates with interagency partner linkages.

Externally, an example of this approach is our partnering with the DEA to leverage the technology, infrastructure, and legal domains required for real-time leads to support drug trafficking interdiction and arrests. Our law enforcement agencies, including DEA, rely on sophisticated tools to stop major drug trafficking organizations. DEA has also developed advanced methods to compile investigative information, which ensures that all leads are properly followed and coordinated through their Special Operations Division (SOD). This mechanism allows all DEA field divisions and foreign offices to capitalize on investigative information from various sources on the

spot, as cases are developed. Numerous major Federal law enforcement cases have already been developed with the assistance of the SOD, which is increasingly a central player in cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin investigations. Through an innovative partnership with DEA—and with other interagency partners—we hope to reap similar benefit in the drug-interdiction realm.

The essence of interdicting drugs and other illicit cargo is communicating fused intelligence where and when it is needed. The time is right to expand our technology base for building partnerships—to build upon a long history of friendship and cooperation—especially in a region where our position is largely won by words and trust, not bullets or missiles. At Southern Command, we started this process by providing a common communication system called Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange System (CENTRIXS) to many of our partner nations. Each CENTRIXS node is part of a secure computer network that enhances operational situational awareness for everyone who is part of the link. It is connected with another innovative counternarcotic communication system known as Counter-narcotic Information Exchange System (CNIES).

Southern Command also trains, equips, and helps to sustain partner nation forces through a variety of Engagement and Integration (E&I) programs. One example is Panamax, a month-long, 20-nation, multi-phase exercise. In 2008, participants included 31 ships and over 7,000 personnel, receiving training during the exercise to expand our partner nations' knowledge, capabilities, and confidence to conduct interdiction activities. Additionally, the State Department–led Merida Initiative assists Mexico and Central America by improving maritime and air capabilities to better counter illicit trafficking. Congress has been an integral member in these efforts, authorizing NDAA Section 1206 funds to provide our partner nations the tools to effectively conduct counterterrorism operations within their respective borders and counter the threat to the U.S. homeland created by illicit activities and the trafficking routes that are readily available for exploitation.

Air and maritime sovereignty programs are extremely important for the improvement of our collective ability to ensure that exploitable space is minimized while encouraging the flow of this traffic. An example of the application of such funds is the program Enduring Friendship, a multiyear maritime security assistance program that strengthens our Caribbean partners' maritime domain awareness and operational capabilities to anticipate and respond to threats. This program provides computers, interceptor boats, and the means to communicate with each other for mutual

maritime security, thereby enhancing control over illicit trafficking lanes. It also enables information-sharing about possible threats affecting the region and our partners' ability to patrol their own sovereign waters.

Finally, Southern Command seeks not only to build partner capacity, but also the *relationships* with our partners in this region. Using the exercises and deployments previously mentioned as primary vehicles, we seek to develop these relationships in a way that encourages regional, multilateral cooperation among neighboring countries to address transnational challenges and confront serious transnational threats. This is a vital element of our strategic approach to counter illicit drugs and trafficking, and we are continually exploring innovative communication strategies to ensure this message reaches the residents and resonates in the halls of our shared home.

I have presented a few examples of innovation in the U.S. Southern Command area of focus: operational innovation like the *Swift* and *Stiletto*; technological innovation in terms of precision-guided intelligence, and federally-funded and commercial off-the-shelf solutions; organizational innovation to create change that better incorporates interagency, international, and private partnerships in the struggle against drugs and illicit trafficking; and finally, coalition innovation brought about through sharing information with our reliable partners in the region. With these types of inventive, forward-leaning, and adaptive approaches and ways of thinking, our efforts against drug suppliers and runners will no doubt improve; but innovation is never a one-way street—the enemy *does* get a vote and *does* have a say in the final outcome. With every positive step forward, it is only a matter of time before the very resourced, very intelligent drug traffickers respond with innovations of their own. Such a diminished effectiveness of each innovative leap over time is the exact reason why, at Southern Command, we must constantly strive for ways to do our job better.

A New Vehicle in Traffic

So often, we think of the Western Hemisphere as a place of relative peace, a part of the world without extreme threats approaching our shores directly—all true. However, as we have seen, trafficking and the narcotics trade in particular benefit immensely from determined, creative, and innovative criminals driven by profit through distributing poisons and their accompanying misery and death on the streets of our cities and neighborhoods. The criminals' hallmark is creativity and they exhibit physical and mental agility as they adjust methods of transportation, communication, and trade routes in response to (often in advance of) pressure from law enforcement. Maritime traffickers

have a knack for discovering and exploiting vulnerabilities in counterdrug operations. Their use of the sea and rivers is not novel, but their methods are.

Despite efforts and cooperation that led to international and inter-agency partners stopping approximately 475 metric tons of cocaine at sea between 2007 and 2008, traffickers still managed to deliver an estimated *four times* that amount to global markets during that same timeframe. In 2007, for example, according to the Consolidated Counterdrug Database, more than 1,400 metric tons of cocaine departed South America for destinations worldwide, and at least 1,100 metric tons got through unscathed. This \$240 billion-a-year business causes thousands of deaths in the United States, creates significant economic distortions, and threatens fragile democracies in the region to the south of us. Most of this business travels at least a major part of its long journey by sea. In fact, approximately 80 percent of the cocaine that departs South America travels by sea in the Eastern Pacific and Western Caribbean.⁷

Over the years, traffickers have created intricate methods involving multiple at-sea transfers between commercial fishing vessels, complex logistics chains along circuitous routes, hiding large shipments of drugs in commercial maritime cargo and fishing vessels, and extensive use of decoy vessels to confuse interdiction forces. When law enforcement placed a squeeze on those modes, via improved vessel registration and tracking systems, traffickers simply shifted to hundreds of “go-fast” boats to support movement of their valuable cargo—often successfully intermingling with local traffic during peak recreational boating times.

While it has been a highly effective tactic, cooperative strategies are in place to defeat go-fast trafficking, forcing traffickers to seek new forms of smuggling. As a result, unfortunately, this beautiful and diverse home we share together is now the world’s vanguard in producing a new and dangerous threat technology: self-propelled semi-submersible (SPSS) vessels that can carry drugs—in addition to other illegal and deadly cargo such as terrorists or weapons of mass destruction—almost unobserved to our shores. These new vehicles’ ability to deny detection, their capacity to carry tons of numerous types of illicit cargo thousands of miles, and their proximity to the United States combine to pose an ever-increasing grave threat to our national and regional security.

These stealthy, pod-like vessels first appeared in the mid-1990s. Early versions were little more than crude modifications of existing go-fast or Boston Whaler hulls. Later, as traffickers evolved, learning from what worked best, they began to build semi-submersibles designed from the keel up for optimal stealth. Current variants depart their expeditionary shipyards in the



U.S. Southern Command

Self-propelled, semi-submersible (SPSS) vessels show the growing sophistication and innovation of drug traffickers in adapting to U.S. and regional counterdrug capabilities. Designed to smuggle large quantities of cocaine over long distances, SPSS vessels have a low profile, are hard to see from a distance, leave little wake, and produce a small radar signature.

dense jungles and estuaries of the Andes region of Latin America as low profile, relatively small (60–80 feet), semi-submerged “submarines” that skim just below the surface. They are carefully ballasted and well camouflaged, and they ride so low in the water that they are nearly impossible to detect visually or by radar at any range greater than 2,000 yards. Loaded to a capacity of up to 15 metric tons of drugs (thus far), they plod steadily and generally unobserved at less than 10 knots toward designated drop-off points, depositing their payloads of misery and death for further transit to global consumer markets.

These vessels possess a range of approximately 1,500 miles and come equipped with GPS, allowing them to navigate independently without need for external communication. In short, the SPSS vessel offers drug producers and traffickers a sizeable advantage and innovative leap ahead from the previous conveyance methods of fishing vessels and go-fasts, while also adding a new dimension to the illicit narcotics struggle. The SPSS is harder to detect, has a longer range, carries larger and more profitable payloads, and launches

and navigates in secrecy, depriving authorities of the actionable intelligence so necessary in aiding interdiction efforts.

As previously mentioned, JIATF–South supported record-setting cocaine seizures from 2000 through 2006. Then in 2007, maritime interdictions fell by 37 percent. Analysts explain the drop as a result of three significant narcotrafficking changes: (1) a shift away from more vulnerable, bulk shipments toward smaller, more distributed loads; (2) increased use of the littorals crossing multiple territorial boundaries—a technique that stretches the capabilities of coordination and interdiction response; and (3) a dramatic rise in the use of SPSS vessels to transport drugs.⁸

According to the Consolidated Counterdrug Database, SPSS vessels accounted for just over 1 percent of all maritime cocaine flow departing South America in 2006.⁹ One year later, the SPSS share jumped to 16 percent. Between 2000 and 2007, drug traffickers launched only 23 total SPSS vessels. In the first 6 months of FY 2008, more than 45 SPSS vessels departed Colombia—with over 80 by the end of the year. So far, in total, less than 10 percent of known or suspected SPSS underway transits have been intercepted. Until authorities can disrupt significantly more of these deployments, the SPSS will remain a profitable and desirable link in the narcotics logistics chain and a serious threat.¹⁰

Experts estimate that SPSS vessels now account for over 30 percent of all cocaine traffic that occurs on the waterways of the Americas from South America to consumer markets; this percentage is likely to increase as the high return on a relatively low investment continues to grow. Recent captures demonstrate that many of the essential elements of successful detection, tracking, and eventual interdiction already exist to counter this latest wave of innovation. Indeed, every bit of success thus far can be attributed to the absolute cohesiveness and unity of effort of all players involved—joint, combined, interagency, and international. In addition, the U.S. Congress has been a crucial member in this endeavor as it signed into law the Drug Trafficking Vessel Interdiction Act of 2008, criminalizing the use of unregistered, unflagged submersible or semi-submersible vessels in international waters. Nevertheless, severe intelligence, detection, and interdiction gaps remain. Without doubt, the SPSS challenge demands a multifaceted systemic approach that includes increased international cooperation and interagency coordination, persistent presence and engagement in the transit and source zones, active and targeted information-gathering and -sharing, and effective legislation to ease the burden of prosecution. However, the transit side of the equation is of concern *not simply for the cocaine problem*. There is more to fear: the obvious nexus between drugs, crime, and terrorism.

Gangs and smugglers use their enormous profits to secure and preserve positions of power by whatever means necessary, resulting in mass homicides, corruption, and subversion of rule of law. We also know that drug traffickers use illegal drug money to assist rogue states and international terrorist organizations that are determined to build and use weapons of mass destruction, such as the FARC narcoterrorists in Colombia. In this sense, growing global demand for drugs such as cocaine and heroin directly links the world drug trade to international terrorism.

Semi-submersible, low-profile vessels transport drugs for profit, and they do so effectively. It does not take visiting the Oracle at Delphi to foresee what danger awaits us if drug traffickers choose to link trafficking routes and methods with another, perhaps even more profitable, payload. In simple terms, if drug cartels can ship up to 15 metric tons of cocaine in a semi-submersible, they can potentially ship or “rent space” to a terrorist organization for a weapon of mass destruction or a high-profile terrorist.

Illicit trafficking in weapons poses a similarly significant threat to national security. This trafficking includes illegal sales to insurgent groups and criminal organizations, illegal diversion of legitimate sales or transfers, and black market sales, all of which contravene national or international laws. The re-circulation of small arms and light weapons from one conflict to another, and illegal domestic manufacturing of these items, are also considered elements of illicit weapons trafficking. Another increasingly dangerous threat posed by illicit weapons trafficking involves the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their component materials and/or delivery systems, and the potential to transport them using existing trafficking routes.

Illicit trafficking in human beings is also a multidimensional threat. The impact of human trafficking goes beyond individual victims, as it undermines the health, safety, and security of all the nations it touches by fueling the growth of organized crime. By issuing Executive Order 13257 in February of 2002, the U.S. Government characterized trafficking in persons as a contemporary manifestation of slavery and passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Several of the central aims of U.S. foreign policy—promoting democracy, respecting human rights, and just governance—depend on successfully addressing this challenge.

Finally, terrorism and illicit trafficking share many ties. Traffickers benefit from terrorists’ military skills, weapons supply, and access to clandestine organizations. Terrorists gain a source of revenue and expertise in illicit transfer and laundering of money for their operations. Like traffickers and other organized crime groups, terrorists exploit countries and

jurisdictions where state governance is weak. The September 11 attacks demonstrated the great danger that can emerge from territories where both terrorists and traffickers operate with impunity.

Given the emergence of this new threat technology and ability to transport multiple types of deadly cargo, we need to develop more effective counters. These will include long-dwell sensors capable of “seeing” such craft, better intelligence that provides cueing, maritime domain awareness that links systems together, more seamless interagency and international cooperation, and perhaps some new technologies that are on the fringes and outer limits of our visual acuity at this moment, but still must be explored.

Sometimes we cannot foresee the immediate payoff of investment in technological innovation and dedicated detection and interdiction assets. Criminals are never going to wait for law enforcement to catch up. They are always extending the boundaries of imagination; likewise, we must strive to push forward technology and invest in systems designed specifically to counter the semi-submersible. We need to be able to rapidly detect and interdict this new type of threat, both for its current effects via the drug trade, and—more troublingly—for its potential as a weapon in the hands of terrorists.

A fundamental principle of American society is that the law must provide equal protection to all. Yet drug abuse and trafficking are having a disproportionate effect on our poor, our minorities, and our cities. . . . We must reduce the harm inflicted on those sectors of our society. There can be no safe havens for drug traffickers and no tolerance for those who would employ children. We cannot tolerate open air drug markets in our cities, markets fueled by suburban money and which exacerbate the drug crisis.

—General Barry R. McCaffrey
Director Designee

Office of National Drug Control Policy¹¹

A Look to the Future

As globalization deepens and threats to this intertwined regional and global system emerge and evolve, security organizations—from the United States as well as from our neighbors on *all* points of the compass—must continue fostering and building relationships that enhance our collective

ability to face and thwart transnational challenges manifesting themselves ashore, at sea, in the air, and even in cyberspace.

Recognizing that no one nation can assure total security in a region as large and diverse as the Americas, in striving to develop and foster cooperative security, we place heavy emphasis on the word “cooperative.” Working together and leveraging each other’s strengths is a must. Our strategic approach in this regard rightly acknowledges that the vital interests of the United States—the safety of our citizens and that of our neighbors, our economic well-being, our territorial integrity and sovereignty, our regional security, and our assured access to the global commons and markets—are inextricably linked to the interests of other nations in the region and beyond.

The nexus between monetarily motivated and ideologically driven criminal and terrorist activity in the region is an area of increasing concern. The persistent presence of maritime partners throughout the region is vital to disrupting this potentially dreadful union. We must remain vigilant and work together throughout the Americas to stop transnational security threats of extreme consequence before they materialize.

To that end, U.S. Southern Command has worked to build strategically important cooperative security relationships and promote U.S. military-to-military partnerships throughout the region for source-country drug control programs and interdiction of traffickers. The primary aim of these efforts has been to limit the availability of illicit drugs like cocaine and marijuana—in order to drive up prices and discourage use—as well as seriously impede and disrupt their flow from source to market. This is vitally important work. Through innovative approaches such as the Global Fleet Station, Southern Partnership Station, Operation *Continuing Promise*, Partnership of the Americas, and the humanitarian deployments of USNS *Comfort*, USS *Boxer*, and USS *Kearsarge*, as well as multinational training and exercises like UNITAS and Panamax, we show our level of commitment and speak with a voice of goodwill, competence, and professionalism. We speak with a voice of *amistad y cooperación*—friendship and cooperation.

Clearly, the drug threat to the United States is of significant size and importance. It needs to be treated as such through a variety of solutions. Much of the work to be done is on the demand side, and there is a wide variety of policy ideas in place to address demand. On the supply side, there is much that can be done with producing nations to discourage growth and processing. Our focus in the military on detection and monitoring is likewise part of the solution set. We should devote more resources to this problem in every dimension: demand, supply, *and* interdiction.

U.S. Southern Command will build on the efforts and activities mentioned above by pursuing a strategy of trans-American cooperative security. The “lines of operation” of this strategy are: 1) supporting lead Federal agencies’ counter-illicit narcotics and trafficking efforts; 2) synchronizing Southern Command efforts internally with its component commands and military groups, and externally with interagency and international partners, as well as members from the private sector; 3) strengthening partner nation capacity through training and materiel assistance; and 4) encouraging regional cooperative approaches to transnational security challenges. The tools we will use to execute this strategy will include innovative concepts and technological capabilities, mutually beneficial partnerships, prioritized resource expenditures that maximize return on investment, and effective strategic communications that match the right words with the right actions.

Key internal and external audiences need to be more fully engaged through overlapping, mutually supportive methods and synchronized activities to ensure intended audiences understand and support our counter-illicit trafficking approach and operations. Additionally, communication efforts need to highlight the continued impact of illicit trafficking on hemispheric security and stability in all available and appropriate venues. Frankness and transparency need to be cornerstones of our approach if we as a nation are to succeed in expanding the long history of friendship and cooperation we share with partner nations. In a region where both words and deeds matter greatly in terms of relationship-building and -strengthening, we must not fail in this regard.

U.S. Southern Command is working toward a safe and secure region that is free from the destabilizing and debilitating effects of illicit trafficking in all forms and all types of cargo. The illicit trafficking trade has escalated into a security challenge that requires the strongest commitment to regional cooperation. We live in a world where the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the producers and smugglers represent a real, and dangerous, toolkit for those who seek to do us harm.

By building upon our longstanding relationships in the region and by fully integrating the efforts across the services with those of our interagency, international, and public-private partners, we’ve mitigated human suffering, enhanced security cooperation, and made the region safer for those seeking to preserve the peace while simultaneously making it more challenging for those seeking to fracture it. But so much more needs to be done.

U.S. Southern Command’s counter-illicit trafficking strategy represents a dialogue with a common goal of ensuring security, enhancing

stability, and protecting sovereignty throughout our shared home, the Americas. The envisioned endstate is clear: illicit trafficking is sufficiently reduced to a point where it can be effectively controlled by domestic law enforcement agencies and no longer poses a security threat to the United States and the region. In so doing, we need to remember that our first, last, and constant emphasis should be on innovation: we innovate in what we do and how we spread the word; we need to avoid failures of the imagination and seek to leverage technology early and often, literally and figuratively; and we need to remember that human interests are at the heart of everything we do, and therefore continue to seek new and adaptive relationships based on common beliefs and trust.

With a land and air border that extends over 7,500 miles, a maritime exclusive economic zone encompassing 3.4 million square miles, greater than 500 million people admitted into the United States every year, more than 11 million trucks and 2 million rail cars crossing our borders, and 7,500 foreign-flag ships making 51,000 calls in U.S. ports every year, it is incredibly easy to be overwhelmed by the vast magnitude and scope of the drug challenge. That is, we can be overwhelmed only if we think sequentially and in isolation. But together, we can think, act, and work in parallel to solve the dilemma: by building partnerships that keep our borders open to legitimate trade and travel and reducing the threat of drugs throughout our society and our shared home in the Americas.

Notes

¹ It is estimated that users expend 180–400 milligrams per dose. See Peter Cohen, “Cocaine use in Amsterdam in non-deviant subcultures,” in *Drugs as a social construct* (Amsterdam: Dissertation at Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1990), 82–100. According to the *Digest of Education Statistics*, 17.6 million students were enrolled in grades 9–12 in the United States in 2008.

² A total of 2,997 deaths resulted from: 9/11 attacks—2,974; 1993 World Trade Center Bombing—6; and the USS *Cole* bombing—17 Sailors.

³ In 2003, a total of 2,448,288 deaths occurred in the United States. Of them, 28,723 persons died of drug-induced causes, and 19,543 were traced to causes related to drug abuse. Similar percentages occurred in 2004 and 2005. Source: *National Vital Statistics Reports* 54, no. 13 (April 19, 2006).

⁴ Source: National Drug Intelligence Center, *National Drug Threat Assessment 2007*. Indicators of domestic cocaine demand show that the demand for cocaine in the United States is relatively stable. According to National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) data, past year cocaine use (in any form) by individuals 12 and older has not increased or decreased significantly since 2002 (the last time the estimate of 350 metric tons was given). Also, according to the July 2006 interagency assessment of cocaine movement, between 517 and 732 metric tons of cocaine depart South America for the United States annually, feeding addiction, fueling crime, and damaging the economic and social health of the United States. See *National Drug Control Strategy* (The White House, February 2007).

⁵ Office of National Drug Control Policy, *National Drug Control Strategy FY2008 Budget Summary*, February 2007. Total 2007 estimate: \$13.128 billion.

⁶ Rear Admiral Joe Kernan, Commander, U.S. Fourth Fleet, “Opening Remarks, UNITAS Gold,” May 2009.

⁷ For cocaine flow trends updated for 2007, see Consolidated Counterdrug Database (CCDB), February 15, 2008.

⁸ Wade F. Wilkenson, “A New Underwater Threat,” *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute* (October 2008), 35.

⁹ The Consolidated Counterdrug Database (CCDB) is a comprehensive data collection effort that captures the details surrounding every drug-related event submitted by U.S. and foreign counterdrug agencies. International and interagency partners gather quarterly to review all reported interdiction cases and vet the information for input into the database. They also revise, de-conflict, and validate data on overall counterdrug performance, trafficking trends, and regional cocaine flow. The information processed provides timely feedback for each participating agency to modify interdiction strategies and manage resources.

¹⁰ Wilkenson, 35.

¹¹ General Barry R. McCaffrey, *Opening Statement*, Confirmation Hearing on the Nomination to be Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Washington DC, February 27, 1996.