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POSTURE STATEMENT OF
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COMMANDER, UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
BEFORE THE 109TH CONGRESS
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

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Mr. Chairman, Representative Skelton and distinguished Members of this Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to report to you on the posture of United States Southern Command and our efforts to combat terrorism, strengthen regional stability, and protect U.S. security interests in Latin America and the Caribbean. I would also like to thank the Members of this Committee and the Congress for your continued outstanding support to the military and civilian personnel serving in this theater.

Since assuming command on November 9, 2004, I have traveled to 12 of the 30 countries in my assigned area of responsibility (AOR), visiting Andean Ridge nations four times. This year, the men and women of this Command supported operations at the Guantánamo Detention Facility, supported Colombia's successful prosecution of its war against three U.S. Government-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO), and deployed to lead a multinational force that included Canada, Chile, and France to reestablish security in Haiti. SOUTHCOM, through its joint interagency task force (JIATF-South), in conjunction with multinational and interagency efforts, directly contributed to the seizure of over 222 metric tons of cocaine. SOUTHCOM units and components conducted hundreds of security cooperation activities in the United States and with partner nations abroad.

Mission and Vision. U.S. Southern Command's mission is to conduct military operations and promote security cooperation to achieve US strategic objectives. Our vision is that SOUTHCOM be the recognized partner of choice and center of excellence for regional security affairs within a hemisphere of escalating importance; organized to defend the homeland and deter, dissuade, and defeat transnational threats; focused on achieving regional partnerships with nations to promote commitment to democratic

values, respect for human rights, territorial security and sovereignty, and collective regional security.

Command Priorities. To accomplish our mission, our activities are prioritized as follows: First, prosecution of the War on Terrorism (WOT), to prevent terrorist groups from using the region as a sanctuary to prepare, stage, or conduct terrorist operations against the United States or our vital interests in the region. The fight against narco-terrorism, the epicenter of which is in the Republic of Colombia, has been a significant focus of our efforts related to the War on Terror. SOUTHCOM directly supports the WOT by conducting detainee operations at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. We commit significant time and resources to prepare for both natural and man-made contingencies. An important focus of our interaction with partner nations is to encourage a cooperative approach to regional problems. We are engaged in a process of transformation to allow us to respond to those missions more rapidly and efficiently. To maintain mission effectiveness, we work to ensure that our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coastguardsmen and civilians in Miami and in our missions abroad have the best quality of life that we can provide.

Sources of instability and insecurity in the U.S. Southern Command AOR.

Although Latin America and the Caribbean is generally free of the prospect of cross-border conventional military attacks between nations, it is the world's most violent region, with 27.5 homicides per 100,000 people. This lack of security is a major impediment to the foreign investment needed to strengthen Latin American and Caribbean economies to pull more of the population above the poverty line. To understand the sources of instability and insecurity, it is helpful to categorize them as threats; which US and partner nation security forces must actively combat in order to

protect citizens and property, challenges; which complicate our cooperative security efforts, and the underlying conditions of poverty, corruption, and inequality.

Threats. The stability and prosperity of the SOUTHCOM AOR are threatened by transnational terrorism, narcoterrorism, illicit trafficking, forgery and money laundering, kidnapping, urban gangs, radical movements, natural disasters and mass migration.

At this time, we have not detected Islamic terrorist cells in the SOUTHCOM AOR that are preparing to conduct attacks against the US, although Islamic Radicals in the region have proven their operational capability in the past. We have, however detected a number of Islamic Radical Group facilitators that continue to participate in fundraising and logistical support activities such as money laundering, document forgery, and illicit trafficking. Proceeds from these activities are supporting worldwide terrorist activities. Not only do these activities serve to support Islamic terrorist groups in the Middle East, these same activities performed by other groups make up the greater criminal network so prominent in the AOR. Illicit activities, facilitated by the AOR's permissive environment, are the backbone for criminal entities like urban gangs, narco-terrorists, Islamic terrorists, and worldwide organized crime.

Many of our partner nations in Latin America, and specifically the Andean Ridge, are threatened by regional terrorist organizations that are supported and funded by illegal drug trafficking and other forms of criminal activities. Ninety percent of the cocaine and 47% of the heroin that reaches the United States emanates from or passes through Colombia. The consumption of illicit drugs kills over 21,000 Americans annually and results in over \$160 billion worth of lost revenue. Colombia's three U.S. Government-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations: the Revolutionary Armed Forces of

Colombia, or FARC; the National Liberation Army, or ELN; and the United Self-Defense Forces, or AUC, are Department of State-designated foreign terrorist organizations.

Although the Colombian government has made tremendous progress against these groups over the past two years, the narco-terrorist groups still exercise some level of control over 40% of the country.

Kidnapping, a problem that has reached epidemic proportions in Latin America and the Caribbean, is used by criminal and narco-terrorist organizations to raise money and fund other illicit or terrorist activities. A Council of the Americas study from 2004 ranks the top ten countries with regard to kidnapping rate. The top five are all Latin American countries. One recently published study claims that Latin America and the Caribbean account for 75% of all kidnappings worldwide, a staggering figure when one considers that the region has less than 10% of the world's population.

Especially troublesome is the growth of gangs and drug related crime across Central America, portions of the Caribbean, and in some cities in Brazil. Unemployment and poverty make Central America a spawning ground for gangs. There are estimated to be at least 70,000 gang members stretched across Central America. The level of sophistication and brutality of these gangs is without precedent. One gang in Guatemala requires the murder of a teenage girl as an initiation rite. Surges in gang violence sometimes overwhelm local law enforcement capabilities. As directed by their civilian leadership, military forces are assisting police to check this growing tide of gang violence and insecurity in Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. The tragic bus massacre that took place last December in Honduras claimed the lives of 28 men, women and children. This incident made international news, yet we hear little about the steady increase in

daily murders that have brought Honduras' homicide rate (45.7 per 100,000 persons) nearly to Colombia's level (47 per 100,000 persons).

There is also mounting evidence that many of those gang members have close connections with gangs in the United States, either from drug distribution networks or from immigration and deportation to their home countries. On January 14, 2005, police in Miami-Dade County, Florida arrested nine members of one of Central America's most violent gangs: Mara Salvatrucha. All of these individuals had outstanding arrest warrants for crimes ranging from larceny to murder. These arrests are just one recent example of the growing link of Central American gangs to their United States counterparts.

Challenges. While the American Servicemembers' Protection Act (ASPA) provides welcome support in our efforts to seek safeguards for our service-members from prosecution under the International Criminal Court, in my judgment, it has the unintended consequence of restricting our access to and interaction with many important partner nations. Sanctions enclosed in the ASPA statute prohibit International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds from going to certain countries that are parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Of the 22 nations worldwide affected by these sanctions, 11 of them are in Latin America, hampering the engagement and professional contact that is an essential element of our regional security cooperation strategy. The IMET program provides partner nation students with the opportunity to attend U.S. military training, get a first-hand view of life in the U.S., and develop long-lasting friendships with U.S. military and other partner nation classmates. Extra-hemispheric actors are filling the void left by restricted US military engagement with

partner nations. We now risk losing contact and interoperability with a generation of military classmates in many nations of the region, including several leading countries.

I am also concerned with Venezuela's influence in the AOR. The capture of senior FARC member Rodrigo Granda in Venezuela, carrying a valid Venezuelan passport and his possible connection to the kidnapping and killing of the daughter of Paraguay's former president is of concern. Granda's capture caused a significant diplomatic impasse, which was later mended by Presidents Uribe and Chavez meeting face-to-face.

SOUTHCOM supports the joint staff position to maintain military-to-military contact with the Venezuelan military in support of long-term interests in Venezuela and the region. I believe we need a broad based interagency approach to dealing with Venezuela in order to encourage functioning democratic institutions.

An increasing presence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the region is an emerging dynamic that must not be ignored. According to the PRC publication "People's Daily" in the period of January 2004 through November 2004, the PRC invested \$898M USD in Latin America, or 49.3 percent of their overseas investment. The PRC's growing dependence on the global economy and the necessity of protecting access to food, energy, raw materials and export markets has forced a shift in their military strategy. The PRC's 2004 Defense Strategy White Paper departs from the past and promotes a power-projection military, capable of securing strategic shipping lanes and protecting its growing economic interests abroad. In 2004, national level defense officials from the PRC made 20 visits to Latin American and Caribbean nations, while Ministers and Chiefs of Defense from nine countries in our AOR visited the PRC. Growing economic interests, presence and influence in the region are not a threat, but

they are clearly components of a condition we should recognize and consider carefully as we form our own objectives, policies and engagement in the region.

Another challenge in this AOR is the perennial problem of weak governmental institutions. Unanswered grievances and unfulfilled promises to the indigenous and marginalized segments of society have resulted in deep-rooted dissatisfaction with most partner nation governments. In Bolivia, the violent unrest that led to the resignation of President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada in 2003 still simmers below the surface of a deeply divided and disaffected population. Just two days ago on March 7th, President Mesa tendered his resignation to the Bolivian Congress. In Bolivia, Ecuador, and Perú distrust and loss of faith in failed institutions fuel the emergence of anti-US, anti-globalization, and anti-free trade demagogues, who, unwilling to shoulder the burden of participating in the democratic process and too impatient to undertake legitimate political action, incite violence against their own governments and their own people.

The Conditions of Poverty, Inequality and Corruption. The roots of the region's poor security environment are poverty, inequality, and corruption. Forty-four percent of Latin America and the Caribbean are mired in the hopelessness and squalor of poverty. The free market reforms and privatization of the 1990's have not delivered on the promise of prosperity for Latin America. Unequal distribution of wealth exacerbates the poverty problem. The richest one tenth of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean earn 48% of the total income, while the poorest tenth earn only 1.6%. In industrialized countries, by contrast, the top tenth receive 29.1%, while the bottom tenth earn 2.5%. Uruguay has the least economic disparity of Latin American and Caribbean countries, but its unequal income distribution is still far worse than the most unequal country in Eastern Europe and the industrialized countries. A historical climate of

corruption siphons off as much as 10 percent of the gross domestic product and discourages potential foreign investment.

These conditions are only made worse by natural disasters such as hurricanes, mudslides, floods, and earthquakes. Such disasters can strike the region at any time, resulting in thousands of dead or displaced persons. Natural or man-made catastrophes can trigger mass migration, which cause additional suffering and instability.

SOUTHCOM and Partner Nation Initiatives.

JTF-Guantánamo. This command has continued to support the War on Terrorism through detainee operations at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where approximately 550 enemy combatants in the Global War on Terrorism are in custody. A significant number of these enemy combatants are highly trained, dangerous members of al-Qaida, its related terrorist networks, and the former Taliban regime. More than 4,000 reports detail information provided by these detainees, much of it corroborated by other intelligence reporting. This unprecedented body of information has expanded our understanding of al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations and continues to prove valuable. Our intelligence and law enforcement communities develop leads, assessments, and intelligence products based on information detainees provide. The information delineates terrorist leadership structures, recruiting practices, funding mechanisms, relationships, and the cooperation between groups, as well as training programs, and plans for attacking the United States and other countries. Detainees have identified additional al-Qaida operatives and supporters and have expanded our understanding of the extent of their presence in Europe, the United States, and throughout the CENTCOM area of operations. Detainees have also provided information on individuals connected to al-Qaida's pursuit of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. Recent exchanges with

European allies have supported investigations and apprehensions of Islamic extremists in several European countries.

In performing our intelligence mission, we continue to emphasize the U.S. government's commitment to treating detainees “humanely, and to the extent appropriate and consistent with military necessity, in a manner consistent with the principles of Geneva.” Along these lines, we have a good working relationship with the International Committee of the Red Cross. We take their recommendations seriously and act upon them when appropriate. All credible allegations of abuse have been investigated and appropriate disciplinary action was taken against those who have engaged in misconduct. It is important to recognize that there have been only a small number of substantiated allegations of abuse or misconduct at Guantánamo over the last three years. I recently directed an investigation into allegations of questionable conduct made by members of the FBI. That investigation is ongoing.

There are four different legal proceedings that JTF Guantánamo supports in one capacity or another: 1) habeas litigation in federal court, 2) combatant status review tribunals, 3) administrative review boards, and 4) military commissions. Let me briefly review them. Habeas litigation is the result of the U.S. Supreme Court decisions from last year that now allow civilian attorneys representing detainees to file habeas corpus petitions in federal court to challenge the basis for their detention at Guantánamo. As the habeas litigation proceeds, civilian attorneys have been given access to their clients at Guantánamo. In addition, the Deputy Secretary of Defense directed the Secretary of the Navy to conduct combatant status review tribunals (CSRTs) on each detainee; these provide each detainee a one-time opportunity to contest their status as an enemy combatant. As of 14 February of this year, 558 CSRTs have been conducted and final

action has been taken in 422 of those cases. Of these, 12 detainees have been determined to be non-enemy combatants, who have or will be released. The Deputy Secretary of Defense also directed the Secretary of the Navy to conduct administrative review boards (ARBs) on each detainee determined to be an enemy combatant; this provides annual assessments of whether detainees should be released, transferred or continue to be detained depending on their threat to the U.S. As the CSRTs wind down, the ARBs are beginning. Both require extensive logistical support and information requirements from JTF Guantánamo. And finally, military commissions of four detainees commenced last fall. These are trials of detainees who the President determined there is reason to believe are members of Al Qaida or engaged in international terrorism against the United States. However a federal court ruling recently stayed the proceedings in one of the commissions. The Department of Justice is appealing that decision. The Appointing Authority for Military Commissions, Mr. Altenburg, suspended all military commissions pending the outcome of that appeal.

Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG). To counter the threat of transnational terrorism, we will continue to apply our human and material resources toward disrupting and defeating terrorist groups' illicit activities. The Joint Interagency Coordination Group is used as our forum for fusing together all elements of national power to achieve U.S. national security objectives in our AOR. Southern Command gains actionable intelligence on terrorist activities that is then used by U.S. law enforcement agencies and our partner nations to disrupt terrorist operations and their means of support. Narco-terrorists use the illegal drug trade to finance their activities. To further these efforts we enhance partner nation capabilities to control borders, eliminate safe havens, and project government presence.

Support to Colombia. The Colombian Government continues to make tremendous progress in the battle against terrorism and the restoration of security for the strengthening of its democratic institutions. Under a very courageous president, the government of Colombia has enacted the democratic security and defense policy to restore order and security while establishing a relationship of mutual trust with its citizens. In 2004, homicides decreased 16%; the lowest level since 1986. The year 2004 also saw a 25% decrease in robberies, a 46% decrease in kidnappings, and a 44% decrease in terrorist attacks nationwide. For the first time, there is a government presence in all of the municipalities in Colombia. Fundamental to this policy has been the military component of the Colombian government's Plan Colombia – Plan Patriota. SOUTHCOM is providing substantial resources to support this military campaign. U.S. training, equipment and logistical support have been vital to the success of Colombian Plan Patriota efforts to date and will continue to be needed into the future.

Military Progress in Colombia. The government's security policy has significantly diminished the FARC's ability to carry out offensive actions in a sustainable, coherent manner. Over the past two and a half years, the FARC has been reduced from 18,000 to an estimated 12,500 members. Numerous FARC leaders have been killed or captured by the Colombian military and police. Simon Trinidad is in a U.S. jail awaiting trial on drug trafficking charges. Nayibe "Sonia" Rojas, a key FARC narco-terrorist leader, was captured by the Colombian military, and the disposition of her case is pending. The Colombian military's Plan Patriota is slowly strangling the FARC's operations in southern Colombia. The ELN, with approximately 3,500 fighters, has been marginalized. The ELN struggles to survive as an organization as combat losses and leadership divisions take their toll. The AUC, with an estimated strength of 12,000

combatants, is currently negotiating peace with the Colombian government and the government has established a concentration zone to facilitate peace talks and demobilization. Over 4,600 AUC members have been demobilized to date, and the removal of these combatants from the fight represents a victory for the government. Significant issues, notably extradition to the U.S. and prison terms, remain for full demobilization of all AUC elements. Nonetheless, the Colombian government is making progress at removing combatants from the field and converting them into productive members of society. Once started, the Colombian government's demobilization program must succeed. The first combatants to demobilize are currently in the sunset phase of their demobilization and reintegration process and are ready to reintegrate themselves into Colombian society. Failure of this program will not only re-create the conditions for violence but also undermine current peace negotiations and incentive for further demobilization.

Colombian Civil Affairs Program. The Colombian government's efforts to reassert or establish governance in areas previously controlled by narco-terrorists are essential to build on recent military successes. Recognizing this and working within limitations of US law, USSOUTHCOM has worked with the Colombian Ministry of Defense to develop mechanisms to synchronize interagency planning needed to reestablish governance. To this end, the Government of Colombia established a Coordination Center for Integrated Action, which assembles representatives from 13 different ministries chaired by a board of directors that reports directly to the President of Colombia. The Center's responsibility is to develop policies and plans to ensure a coordinated and expeditious response that will re-establish government presence and services in territory reclaimed from narco-terrorists. To date, the Colombian Government

has committed over \$30 million to this effort. Related to this program, USSOUTHCOM is providing \$1.5 million in Fiscal Year 05 to develop the Colombian military's Civil Affairs capability. This capability will enable Colombian military to coordinate within their interagency, with NGOs, and integrate humanitarian assistance into military operational planning. In the departments of Arauca, Cundinamarca, Caquetá, and Guaviare, portions of which are in the former narco-terrorist controlled demilitarized zone, the Colombian military has provided basic medical care to over 30,000 civilians and has rehabilitated numerous educational and medical facilities. On 31 January 2004, the Government of Colombia announced subsidies for building 218 low-cost housing units, new projects benefiting over 530 families in the Caquetá department and the issuance of 17,000 land titles in Caquetá. Plan Colombia also has planned in this region the rebuilding of 81 houses affected by terrorism, an increase in alternative development, and \$2.5 million for small business loans. These activities build on military success to gain lasting confidence of the civilian population in the government and its institutions.

Eradication and Interdiction Gains. We have also made significant gains in attacking the illicit narcotics industry that provides nearly all of the world's supply of cocaine and about half of the US's supply of heroin. Through our close cooperation with the Government of Colombia, the eradication program in Colombia has had another record year. In 2004, over 342,000 acres of coca and over 9,500 acres of opium poppy were destroyed. Also in 2004, Colombian authorities seized 178 tons of cocaine, a 36% increase over the same period last year and over 1,500 pounds of heroin, a 67% increase.

In 2003 Colombia resumed a thoroughly vetted and robustly staffed Air Bridge Denial Program. Since then, 20 narco-trafficking aircraft have been destroyed and 6 have been impounded resulting in a total of 10.8 metric tons of seized cocaine.

Colombian Judicial Cooperation. The Colombian Judiciary and President Uribe have approved the extraditions of 154 Colombian major drug traffickers, terrorists, and corrupt legislators to the United States. Most recently, the government of Colombia extradited Simon Trinidad, a major FARC leader, to the United States to be tried. This action underscores to the global community that the FARC leaders are criminals and terrorists, not ideologically guided revolutionaries. All of these actions by the Colombian government have greatly assisted in the global struggle against illegal drug trafficking and narco-terrorism. With continued U.S. support and expanded authorities, I am confident that Colombia will win its 40-plus year battle against these narco-terrorist groups.

Colombia's War to Win. The government of Colombia understands that this is its war to win. Defense spending as a percentage of GDP rose from 3.5% to 5% in 2004. Colombia increased its tax revenue 17.4% in the first nine months of 2004, enabling the government to expand its security forces by nearly 80,000 uniformed security members in the past two and a half years. The Colombian military is a much better and more capable force in its operations against the FARC, the ELN and the AUC, nearly doubling the number of terrorists captured while also seizing the initiative on the battlefield.

Economic Indicators. Since assuming office in August 2002, President Uribe's emphasis on "Democratic Security" has aided Colombia's economic recovery. Colombia has seen growth in GDP since 2002 from 1.8% to 3.9% in 2003 and 2004. This comes after a severe economic crisis with a net GDP loss of more than 4% in 1999. The nation's unemployment rate eased from 15.1% in 2002 to 14.15% in 2003, to less than 13% in 2004. Inflation dropped from 7.1% in 2003 to 5.9% in 2004. Colombia's trade has also improved with exports outpacing imports by \$809 million in 2004

compared to \$437 million in 2003. Electrical Interconnections INC (ISA), Colombia's largest energy transport company reported a significant decrease in terrorist attacks on Colombia's utilities. Over the past five years, an average of 224 annual terrorist attacks occurred against Colombia's utilities. In 2004, thanks to government of Colombia initiatives and US government support for them, only 80 attacks occurred--down from 209 attacks in 2003 - the lowest number since 1998.

Regional Support for Colombia. The Colombian government's success has pushed the illegal armed groups to seek refuge across neighboring borders. Most of Colombia's neighbors have taken action to protect their sovereignty. The Ecuadorian military has placed many of its best troops on its northern frontier and has established cross-border communications with the Colombian military. Brazil has reinforced military presence along its border and has initiated an Airbridge Denial Program to prevent narco-trafficker use of Brazilian air space. Panamá continues to stress border cooperation due to the FARC's presence in Panamá's Darién border region. In February of 2004, Colombia, Brazil, and Perú signed a pact to improve border coordination, a superb example of regional cooperation against common threats. In April 2004, Peruvian President Toledo met with President Uribe to discuss border security and illegal drug trafficking among other topics. Among Colombia's neighbors, Venezuela's record of cooperation remains mixed. We remain concerned that Colombia's FTOs consider the areas of the Venezuelan border with Colombia a safe area to rest, transship drugs and arms, and procure logistical supplies.

Cooperative Security Locations/Forward Operating Locations (CSL/FOL) and Joint Task Force Bravo (JTF-B). El Salvador provides Southern Command the use of Comalapa Airport as a CSL/FOL for counter-drug surveillance flights throughout

Central America, the eastern Pacific, and the Western Caribbean. Joint Task Force Bravo in Honduras continues to provide a logistical support base to the humanitarian missions in the region, as well as to counter illicit trafficking operations. Ecuador continues to host one of the Southern Command's CSL/FOL's in Manta, which has been especially critical in providing aerial coverage on the eastern Pacific vector of illicit trafficking. Since the establishment of the Manta CSL in 1999, the information resulting from its operations has resulted in the seizure of 75 tons of cocaine with a street value of \$3.4 billion. Finally, Aruba and Curaçao each continue to host one of the Southern Command's CSL/FOL's.

Partner Nation actions against support for Islamic Radical Groups. In the War on Terror, we have seen countries like Paraguay and Uruguay take decisive action to disrupt or deter terrorist related activities over the past few years.

In 2002, Paraguay arrested and sentenced Assad Ahmad Barakat, an alleged Hizballah chief in the Triborder Area (TBA), for tax evasion. According to the Paraguayan chief prosecutor, Barakat's remittances to Hizballah totaled about \$50 million since 1995. Subhi Mohammad Fayad, a member of Barakat's network was also convicted of tax evasion in Paraguay. In 2004, Paraguayan agents raided a money exchange house in the TBA, which was owned by Kassen Hijazi's, a suspected Hizballah facilitator. Hijazi's money house was suspected of running an international money-laundering scheme that moved an estimated \$21 million over three years. In 2003, Said Mohkles, who was wanted by the Egyptians in connection with the 1997 Luxor terrorist attacks, was extradited to Egypt from Uruguay. We will continue to strengthen our cooperative security efforts with all countries in the AOR that may be affected by Islamic

Radical Group activity. We will also work to increase information sharing agreements and explore all possible options for security cooperation in the future.

Regionalization. U.S. Southern Command hosts four annual regional security conferences. These conferences bring together the chiefs of defense throughout the AOR to build consensus on security issues. Through these conferences, SOUTHCOM fosters and participates in frank and candid dialogue among the Chiefs of Defense in each sub region, regarding regional security threats and ways to increase regional security. In November of 2004 I co-hosted the Andean Ridge Security Conference in Lima, Peru with the Peruvian Chief of defense. It was the first Andean Ridge conference to be co-hosted within the region. Previous security conferences for the Caribbean and Central American sub regions have been held within their respective regions and this is significant as it is symbolic of the effort to solve regional problems within the region. I plan to continue this focus with the objective of assisting in the development of regional security organizations, appropriate to the constitutional limitations of each country and the needs of each region. This May, SOUTHCOM will co-host a Southern Cone Defense Conference in Buenos Aires with Argentina.

Support for Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua sent forces to participate in Operation Iraqi Freedom. El Salvador has maintained continual presence in Iraq and sent a fourth contingent of troops last month. The Salvadoran troops have performed brilliantly in Iraq. In March 2004, Salvadoran troops saved the life of the Governorate Coordinator and five members of the Coalition Provisional Authority when they were ambushed in Al Najaf. In April, when the Salvadoran contingent was attacked during the Najaf uprising, the Salvadoran troops fought bravely against overwhelming odds. Private Natividad Méndez Ramos gave his

life that day and 10 Salvadorans were wounded. When they ran out of ammunition and were still being attacked, Corporal Toloza attacked ten enemy fighters with his knife. His actions were decisive and carried the day!

Haiti. In Haiti, the resignation and departure of former President Aristide, which resulted in a constitutional transfer of power to the interim government, presented the nations of the AOR with the opportunity to unite to help one of its neighbors. Following the passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1529, we established the Multinational Interim Force-Haiti (MIF-H), consisting of forces from the United States, France, Chile, and Canada. Chile deployed a force to Haiti within 48 hours of the start of the crisis and continues to have troops deployed in support of the Multinational United Nations Stabilization Force in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The rapid reaction of our troops and those of our partner nations saved the lives of innocent Haitians, prevented a mass migration during a time of rough seas, and fostered regional and international cooperation to assist a nation in need. MINUSTAH stood up in Haiti in June of 2004 and is composed mostly of Latin American countries and led by Brazil. We currently have four personnel assigned to the MINUSTAH staff. To anyone familiar with Haiti, it is obvious that more than security is needed to rehabilitate Haiti. I believe that Haiti will require a significant investment of aid for the next 10 to 15 years to get back on its feet. When a new Haitian government is elected in November, the history of predatory institutions and “winner-take-all” political environment must end, to benefit all Haitians and reestablish faith in government.

Exercises. Exercises provide unique opportunities for military-to-military interaction, enhanced interoperability, and invaluable training for both partner nations and U.S. forces. SOUTHCOM conducts three types of exercises: US-only exercises that

test our contingency plans, bilateral and multilateral exercises with partner nations, and New Horizons - humanitarian assistance exercises which provide medical, dental, and veterinary treatment to underserved populations in remote areas. Components of SOUTHCOM conducted 16 joint exercises last fiscal year involving 5,675 US and 10,320 Partner nation troops. One of the most important exercises was PANAMAX, a multinational exercise focused on maritime interdiction and security of the Panama Canal. Chile, the fourth largest user of the Panama Canal, took an active leadership role in the Southern Command sponsored PANAMAX exercise designed to protect the Panama Canal. This year's PANAMAX exercise will include 15 participating nations. In 2004, New Horizons exercises completed 30 engineer projects consisting of constructing schools, medical clinics, community centers, sanitary facilities, wells, and road construction and repair. We had 69 medical readiness deployments (MEDRETE) that treated more than 290,000 people, some of whom walked for days to be treated by qualified doctors for the first time in their lives. During these exercises, our veterinary teams treated approximately 525,000 animals in varying livestock categories, which contributed significantly to sustaining local health and economic wellbeing. New Horizons exercises improve local infrastructure, strengthen the bonds of friendship between the US and partner nations, and provide unique and rigorous training opportunities to engineer, medical, and civil affairs units. Currently, we are conducting New Horizons exercises in Haiti, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama. The Haiti New Horizons will result in the construction of four wells, three schools, and a road and it will also include a Medical Readiness Training Exercise to provide needed medical care to the population in the Gonaives area – the site of devastating floods last year. The El Salvador New Horizons will construct three schools, two clinics, one well, and will conduct three

Medical Readiness Training Exercises. The New Horizons in Nicaragua will build three schools, three clinics, one well and will conduct three Medical Readiness Training Exercises. The Panamá New Horizons will construct three schools, three community centers, one well, and one road and will do three Medical Readiness Training Exercises.

Partner Nations' Support of UN Peace Operations. Many of our exercises are tailored to enhance partner nations' Peace Operations capabilities. These exercises provide real-world scenario-based training that hones the skills necessary to provide a significant contribution to United Nations and other peace operations. The success of these exercises is clear in the examples I've already mentioned; the MIF-H, MINUSTAH, and AOR nation participation in peace operations around the world. For example, a Chilean platoon, Paraguayan platoon, as well as personnel from Bolivia, Peru, and Uruguay are serving under Argentine command in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Cyprus.

Central American Regionalization. Efforts toward regional integration made possible by organizations like the Conference of the Central American Armed Forces (CFAC) give me great confidence in the future of Central American regional security. An initiative of the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua for the purpose of regionalizing their security efforts, CFAC was established in 1997, this organization has since provided collective support for flood and hurricane relief, as well as assistance in combating outbreaks of dengue that have plagued the region. CFAC was quick to show its collective solidarity post 9-11, and has since taken steps to enhance regional cooperation in the global war on terrorism. Most recently CFAC has developed a plan of action to be implemented this year to strengthen their capacity to support international peacekeeping operations.

One of the most impressive aspects of CFAC is that it is a Central American initiative that has evolved with a Central American vision. With ownership comes commitment, and these armed forces are committed to serving their civilian democratic governments and their people.

On February 1, 2005, the presidents of the Central American nations held a summit in Honduras under the umbrella of SICA, which is the Central American Integration System.

Created in 1991 to develop common policies and strategies to serve the Central American public, SICA recognizes the changing nature of the threats to national security and socio-economic development. In this most recent summit declaration the presidents agreed to take concrete steps to deal with a broad range of transnational issues in a transnational way – from health, to trade, to security. Among the elements of this declaration, they agreed to create a regional rapid reaction force to deal with narco-terrorism and other emerging threats. They agreed to implement a common arms sale and transport policy. They agreed to a regional study to better understand the theme of high-risk youth. And equally important, they are holding themselves accountable, having set a 30-day suspense to stand up a joint and combined task force to include military and police forces, to deal with these emerging threats.

Strategic Capabilities. To address the security challenges and achieve U.S. national security objectives in our AOR, the Command has five overarching strategic mission requirements:

1. An improved ability to detect and support interdiction of illegal trafficking into the United States.
2. Continued detainee operations at Guantánamo.

3. Continued ability to provide partner nation Security Forces with equipment and training.
4. Improved interoperability between our Armed Forces and those of our partner nations.
5. Improved operational reach to rapidly respond to crises in the region.

Interdiction of Illicit Trafficking. We must enhance our ability to detect and interdict illicit trafficking at its source and in transit, preventing illegal drugs, weapons, and people from reaching our borders. As we have successfully done in the past, the Command will conduct these operations in concert with our interagency partners, principally the U.S. law enforcement community, and with our partner nations, whose participation and support for these operations are indispensable. Success in this mission area will not only stem the flow of illegal narcotics on U.S. streets, but also deny a source of funding that terrorist groups may use to finance their operations.

As with virtually all of our operations in the AOR, the interdiction of illicit trafficking depends on the timely collection and distribution of accurate intelligence information. We continue to employ our limited air-, sea-, and ground-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets to detect, identify, and monitor illicit activities, particularly terrorist groups, their support network, and the criminal elements that serve terrorist purposes. Given the size and geography of the region, this is a formidable task. Furthermore, with the majority of ISR assets presently at our disposal focused on operations in Colombia, the means to achieve persistent ISR presence throughout the entire AOR remains a concern.

Guantánamo Construction. I would like to thank the committee and the Congress for their support of the construction of military facilities, which has resulted in

better security, and better quality of life for the troops at JTF-GTMO. I request your support in funding two construction projects on the FY05 Supplemental request that total \$42 million. The first project is Camp 6, which represents part of the way ahead for detention operations at Guantánamo and recognizes that some of the detainees there will remain a threat to the U.S. for the foreseeable future. The Camp 6 facility will be based on prison models in the U.S. and is designed to be safer for the detainees and the guards who serve at GTMO. The second project is the security fence with sensors that is required for security around the new facilities. This security fence would be an electronic "smart fence" to detect, deter and assess potential intrusions around the perimeter of the detainee camp. Both Camp 6 and the Security Fence will provide a reduction in approximately 300 soldiers currently required to guard the detainees.

Training and Equipping our partner nation Security Forces. We must continue to provide partner nation security forces with the equipment and training they need to ensure their territorial integrity and to defeat threats such as terrorist groups operating within or transiting their borders.

The center of the fight against terrorist groups is in Colombia and because of the transnational nature of the threat, it radiates throughout the Andean Ridge. We need to maintain support in Colombia and address the spillover effect in the rest of the Andean Ridge. Our continued support will leverage the Government of Colombia's recent successes, enabling the Government of Colombia to not only defeat narco-terrorist groups, but also to establish responsible governance for all Colombians.

IMET and ASPA Sanctions. Promoting security and enabling effective security forces among our partner nations will deny terrorists the safe havens they need to prepare or conduct operations, will hinder illicit trafficking, and will prevent internal conflicts

that may lead to the destabilization of governments. SOUTHCOM fully supports immunity from ICC prosecution for U.S. service-members serving overseas. However, using IMET to encourage ICC Article 98 agreements may have negative effects on long-term U.S. security interests in the Western Hemisphere, a region where effective security cooperation via face-to-face contact is absolutely vital to U.S. interests. IMET is a low-cost, highly effective component of U.S. security cooperation that builds and expands regional security forces' professionalism and capabilities, enables a cooperative hemispheric approach to meeting transnational threats to national sovereignty, and facilitates the development of important professional and personal relationships that provide U.S. access and influence to key players in the region. Once again, IMET provides SOUTHCOM with an invaluable tool that can be used to foster positive military-to-military relations with our partner nations.

Interoperability. Fourth, we must improve the interoperability among the armed forces of the United States and our partner nations by implementing mutually beneficial security agreements, regional and sub regional security organizations, military-to-military contacts, combined training exercises, and information sharing. Only by working together can the U.S. and our partner nations effectively address the common security challenges we face in this hemisphere.

Improving the command, control, communications, and computer (C4) architecture throughout the region has been, and will remain, a top investment priority for the Command. A particular challenge is our ability to share sensitive intelligence information with our U.S. interagency partners and with partner nations in a timely manner that supports combined efforts to interdict terrorist organizations and drug traffickers. We are, however, continuing to expand our partnerships with the Department

of Defense C4 community, and with other elements of the U.S. government and industry in order to identify, secure, and maintain robust, cost-effective means to communicate information and provide efficient and effective command and control of military operations throughout the AOR. Our current C4 infrastructure, while adequate for today's tasks, lacks the robust and flexible characteristics necessary to fully implement the network-centric warfighting capabilities we need to achieve.

Operational Reach. Another significant strategic mission priority seeks to enhance our ability to rapidly conduct time-sensitive military operations and to rapidly respond to humanitarian crises that may emerge on short-notice. We continue to explore alternative solutions that will enable us to rapidly position the right forces and materiel when and where they are needed. We are also evaluating and improving ways in which interagency resources and assets might be brought to bear in response to emerging humanitarian crises, such as those resulting from the annual stream of hurricanes that carom through the Caribbean. Since 1997, U.S. Southern Command headquarters has been located in Miami, Florida – the best strategic location for the SOUTHCOM headquarters. The future location of the headquarters will depend on the outcome of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure process. Throughout this endeavor we remain focused on properly supporting the Command's strategic requirements.

Conclusion. I have a slide in my command brief that shows which countries in the AOR were democracies in 1958, 1978, 1998, and the present. The slide depicts a very encouraging trend of governments turning from communist or authoritarian governments to democratically elected governments. Today, all 30 countries in the SOUTHCOM AOR are democracies, and SOUTHCOM has played a key role over the past 25 years in that remarkable achievement. However, if we in the US government are

honest with ourselves, we can look at the region today and see that we are not tending the fields with the same zeal we showed in planting the seeds of democracy. Too many of the democracies in our AOR are lacking some or all of the vital democratic institutions: a functional legislative body, an independent judiciary, a free press, a transparent electoral process that guarantees the rights of the people, security forces which are subordinate to civil authority and economic opportunity for the people.

Because a secure environment is a non-negotiable foundation for a functioning civil society, Southern Command is committed to building capabilities of the security forces of our region. The seeds of social and economic progress will only grow and flourish in the fertile soil of security.

We cannot afford to let Latin America and the Caribbean become a backwater of violent, inward-looking states that are cut off from the world around them by populist, authoritarian governments. We must reward and help those governments that are making difficult, disciplined choices that result in the long-term wellbeing of their people. The challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean today are significant to our national security. We ignore them at our peril.

Your Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Department of Defense civilians are working to promote U.S. national security interests, regionalization as well as preserve the gains made in professionalizing and democratizing Latin American and Caribbean militaries. We believe that over time this work will bring about a cooperative security community advancing regional stability and establishing an environment free from the threat of terrorism for future generations. Southern Command is a good investment of American taxpayer's dollars and trust.

Thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to responding to the Committee Members' questions.