

★ HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE ★

**TESTIMONY OF
GENERAL JAMES T. HILL
UNITED STATES ARMY
COMMANDER
UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND**

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

March 24, 2004

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Representative Skelton, Members of the Committee, it is my privilege to present the posture statement of the United States Southern Command. The men and women of our command are making enormous contributions to the War on Terrorism and the defense of this country on a daily basis. Your Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Department of Defense civilians are working throughout the region to promote U.S. national security interests. Their work has done much to preserve stability and strengthen relationships with our allies. Simultaneously we are building a cooperative security community that will advance security and stability in the generation to come.

The security picture in Latin America and the Caribbean has grown more complex over the past year. Colombia's considerable progress in the battle against narcoterrorism is offset by negative developments elsewhere in the region, particularly in Haiti, Bolivia, and Venezuela. These developments represent an increasing threat to U.S. interests. We face two primary types of threats in the region: an established set of threats detailed in previous years and a nascent set likely to raise serious issues during this year. On the traditional front, we still face threats from narcoterrorists and their ilk, a growing threat to law and order in partner nations from urban gangs and other illegal armed groups, which are also generally tied to the narcotics trade, and a lesser but sophisticated threat from Islamic radical groups in the region. These traditional threats are now complemented by an emerging threat best described as radical populism, in which the democratic process is undermined to decrease rather than protect individual rights. Some leaders in the region are tapping into deep-seated frustrations of the failure of democratic reforms to deliver expected goods and services. By tapping into these frustrations, which run concurrently

with frustrations caused by social and economic inequality, the leaders are at the same time able to reinforce their radical positions by inflaming anti-U.S. sentiment. Additionally, other actors are seeking to undermine U.S. interests in the region by supporting these movements.

These traditional and emerging threats are overlaid upon states in the region that are generally marked by weak institutions and struggling economies. This resulting frailty of state control can lead to ungoverned or ill-governed spaces and people, corruption, and clientalism. The militaries we work with in the area of responsibility are feeling the brunt of both threats and weak governments, but for the most part have supported their respective constitutions, remained professional, and respected human rights. They will be under increasing pressure from these stressors over the next several years. Consequently, we must maintain and broaden our consistent military-to-military contacts as a means of irrevocably institutionalizing the professional nature of those militaries with which we have worked so closely over the past several decades.

We are assisting our partner nations' efforts to address these threats and underlying structural factors through consistent, patient cooperation. We work closely with the interagency to build a coherent, long-term vision and to coordinate our efforts, but to realize that vision will require considerable time, energy, and resources. As in Colombia, the work will be hard and will require long-term dedication and commitment. The security, economic well being, and demographic fortune of our country is inextricably linked with Latin America and the Caribbean. The entire Americas, working as one, can confront these existing and emerging threats, and they can do so while providing for economic growth and opportunity. Consequently, this region of the world, despite all the other very real and pressing demands on our national attention and resources, requires increased attention in the coming year.

To describe the current state of affairs in U.S. Southern Command, I will outline in detail the threats we are facing, both traditional and emerging. I will provide a regional assessment, with particular emphasis on the progress we are seeing in Colombia under the Uribe administration, followed by an assessment of our progress in the War on Terrorism. Finally, I will address Southern Command's requirements.

Threats

The narcoterrorists in Colombia remain the largest and most well known threat in our region and have continued their illicit activities, yet not without a price. All three narcoterrorist groups are named on the Department of State's list of 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. Most observers now understand that these groups are narcoterrorists rather than romantic guerillas crusading for the downtrodden. While a few might retain some of their founding ideology, by and large these groups consist of terrorists and criminals who operate outside the rule of law in pursuit of illicit profits rather than political revolution.

The FARC still comprises the largest threat, with an estimated 13,000-15,000 members. The FARC has continued to conduct terrorist activities in Colombia and still holds three Americans hostage. Despite their numbers, they have suffered many setbacks this past

year, with the capture or elimination of a number of valuable leaders and front commanders. Most notably a high-level financier, Simon Trinidad, was captured by the Ecuadorians and turned over to Colombian custody. Over 2,000 FARC members have demobilized since August 2002. The ELN, a smaller organization with an estimated 3,500 to 4,000 members, is declining in importance. There has been some progress in encouraging the ELN to demobilize via peace talks, although those who refuse may merge with the FARC. Much of the AUC, while still a threat and still heavily involved in narcotics trafficking, is in peace negotiations with the Government of Colombia. 10,000 to 12,000 members of the illegal self-defense groups are estimated to be involved in the peace process, though another 2,000 to 4,000 remain outside the process.

The narcoterrorist influence is bleeding over into what we see as a second and increasing threat to the region: growingly sophisticated criminal gangs. While not all gangs are fueled by illicit narcotics, most bolster their criminality by drawing substantial support from the drug business. The World Health Organization has described Latin America as the world's most violent region based on the numbers of homicides per capita, surpassing even war-torn Africa. Homicides and violent crime take a direct toll daily on Latin Americans. There is another insidious second order effect. The Inter-American Development Bank has estimated that per capita GDP in Latin America would be nearly 25 percent higher if Latin American crime rates resembled those of the rest of the world. Violent crime causes capital flight from within the country and stifles investment from outside the country. It literally takes money out of the pockets of those who need it most and most hurts those who have the least. This second threat faced by many Latin American countries is difficult and complex because it falls precisely on a seam between law enforcement and military operations. Latin American leaders need to resolve this jurisdictional responsibility issue to promote cooperation among their police and military forces while simultaneously restructuring their states' security forces.

Beyond narcoterrorist and gang violence, branches of Middle Eastern terrorist organizations conduct support activities in the Southern Command area of responsibility. Islamic radical group supporters, extending from the Caribbean basin to the tri-border area of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil, conduct fund raising activities. Terrorists who have planned or participated in attacks in the Middle East and the United States, such as captured high profile al Qaida terrorist Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, have spent time in the region. Supporters generate illicit funds through money laundering, drug trafficking, arms deals, human smuggling, piracy, and document forgery. They funnel tens of millions of dollars every year back to their parent organizations in the Middle East, thus extending the global support structure of international terrorism to this hemisphere. Not surprisingly, Islamic radical groups, narcoterrorists in Colombia, and urban gangs across Latin America all practice many of the same illicit business methods.

Radical populism is another emerging concern in the region. Populism in and of itself is not a threat. Rather, the threat emerges when it becomes radicalized by a leader who increasingly uses his position and support from a segment of the population to infringe gradually upon the rights of all citizens. This trend degrades democracy and promises to concentrate power in the hands of a few rather than guaranteeing the individual rights of the many. Anti-American sentiment has also been used to reinforce the positions of radical leaders who seek to distract the populace from their own shortcomings. Anti-American sentiment also troubles our partner nations as well, as elected leaders must

take into account the sometime very vocal views of their constituents. The threats and trends in the region paint a negative picture in many regards and certainly bear close scrutiny in the coming year. We will maintain vigilance. We will also continue our work with partner nations and the interagency to shore up stability and promote increasing security cooperation.

Regional Assessments

Andean Ridge

Colombia is where the most is at stake. The United States made an enormous investment in the Government of Colombia three and a half years ago with our support to Plan Colombia. That investment is beginning to pay dividends. Under President Uribe, the Government of Colombia, with robust popular support, is making impressive progress in defeating the narcoterrorists and rejoining the ranks of peaceful, safe and secure states. I have been to Colombia 23 times since I took command, and I have seen progress on every visit.

President Uribe is a unique leader who has galvanized the will of the people and motivated his armed forces. He has personally demonstrated that one individual can change the course of events. Without his personal leadership, energy, and dedication, I don't think the Colombians would have achieved the remarkable progress we have seen. Yet his personal charisma and drive only go so far, and he well knows it. That is why he is building the structures to sustain momentum and institutionalize success beyond that of his term and beyond that of Plan Colombia.

The Colombian military has become much better and more aggressive in their operations against the FARC, the ELN and the AUC. They have nearly doubled the number of narcoterrorists captured while also seizing the initiative on the battlefield. They have had increasing success against the enemy's leadership. Demobilizations are up, with some 3,500 members of illegal armed groups having voluntarily given up arms since President Uribe took office. There have been fewer terrorist attacks on the electrical grid, the oil pipeline, communications towers, roads, bridges, and towns. Cocaine eradication is up along with interdiction and seizures. Colombia has resumed a thoroughly vetted and robustly staffed Air Bridge Denial Program. Across the entire country, homicides, kidnappings, robberies and thefts are down. Colombia's economy is growing as measured in its GDP, stock market, foreign investment, exports, and banking revenues. I am heartened by the progress the Colombians are making, of their own volition, and with our aid. We need to stay the course in our support of their efforts to ensure that the Plan Colombia dividend is paid in full.

The Colombians are abiding by the norms of International Humanitarian Law in their struggle. The State Department has certified this performance. Under President Uribe's "Democratic Security Policy," extrajudicial executions in 2003 were down 48 percent, assassinations were down 41 percent, homicides of trade unionists were down 68 percent and forced displacements were down 68 percent. None of the units U.S. forces have vetted and trained have been found to have committed human rights abuses. Alleged human rights abuses by Colombian security forces are now less than two percent of those

reported and the institutionalization continues with the opening of Colombia's Armed Forces School of International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights, and Military Justice that teaches human rights and international humanitarian law to attorneys, commanders, officers, and sergeants. I am confident that President Uribe and the Colombian military have taken respect for human rights to heart, unlike their adversaries, who commit the vast majority of human rights abuses. In 2003, as members of the illegal armed groups demobilized, over 77 percent of those who did so turned themselves into government forces. If those demobilizing suspected they would be subject to torture and abuse, they would turn themselves into non-governmental organizations and the Church as they did in years past, before human rights became an integral part of the Colombian military's ethos. That professional ethos is also reflected in public opinion that now lists the Colombian military as the second most respected institution in the country just behind the Church. The Colombian military is at war, which it will win while fighting justly.

Venezuela remains an oil rich nation that provides some 13 percent of oil imported into the United States. The domestic political situation continues to be exceedingly complex, and the prospects of the presidential recall referendum are still in considerable doubt. Venezuelan society is deeply polarized and will continue to be so as long as the Government of Venezuela continues along an authoritarian path. Well-organized street protests numbering in the hundreds of thousands occurred on a frequent basis over the past year.

Bolivia faced significant turmoil over the past year. Bolivia has a very deep geographic divide between two parts of the country, the La Paz region and the lowlands around Santa Cruz, which is mirrored by deep ethnic and social divisions. There are legitimate and historic grievances, manifested partially in tension over indigenous traditions that revolve around growing coca in limited amounts as a part of their native culture. Yet the limited amounts never seem to stay limited, and the *cocaleros* who seek expanded rights to grow coca certainly envision the profits from illicit narcotics rather than the practice of ancient traditions. These *cocaleros* have found leaders who have tapped into indigenous and other social tensions. Indigenous groups, working with labor unions and others, mounted violent protests last October that led to the eventual resignation of then President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada. If radicals continue to hijack the indigenous movement, we could find ourselves faced with a narco-state that supports the uncontrolled cultivation of coca. Since his elevation to the presidency in October, however, President Mesa has been able to stabilize the country. Still, Bolivia bears very close scrutiny in the upcoming year.

Ecuador has demonstrated over the past year that it has the political will to secure its border with Colombia and to fight drug traffickers. Despite limited resources and a vast expanse of thickly vegetated country that needs to be covered, the Ecuadorian military has placed many of its best troops on its northern frontier and has established cross-border communications with the Colombian military. Ecuador continues to host one of the Southern Command's Cooperative Security Locations (CSL) in Manta, which has been especially critical in providing coverage on the eastern Pacific vector of drug smuggling.

In Peru, President Toledo suffers from very low popularity ratings despite a good economy. Peru's large indigenous population remains relatively politically inactive and has not been mobilized to the extent seen in Bolivia. Sendero Luminoso (SL) remains an ongoing problem. The Peruvian military has aggressively pursued them, and they do not

possess the strength or capabilities they once displayed. Ominously, SL has now adopted the FARC model of protecting narcotics traffickers in exchange for funding. In a reassuring example of regional cooperation, the defense ministers from Peru, Colombia, and Brazil signed a three-way agreement to combat illegal drug trafficking in the Amazonian region on February 10th, 2004.

Caribbean

Following the resignation and departure of former President Aristide, there was a constitutional transfer of power to the interim government in Haiti, and with it, an opportunity to move forward. With United Nations support and in conjunction with our partners, we have established the Multinational Interim Force, consisting of forces from the United States, France, Chile, and Canada. We are working to reestablish security and stability for the Haitian people until such time that Haitian institutions have been sufficiently bolstered to resume that task. This operation has had the effect of saving the lives of innocent Haitians, preventing a mass migration during a time of rough seas, protecting U.S. interests in the Caribbean, and fostering regional and international cooperation to assist a nation in need. Much work remains to be done, and we will continue providing our assistance to the Multinational Interim Force's efforts and to developing plans for a potential follow-on U.N. Multinational Stabilization Force.

Beyond Haiti, the primary challenges in the Caribbean come from narco trafficking, terrorism, document fraud, and corruption. Democratic institutions remain relatively immature, rendering many countries unable to police fully their sovereign territory, resulting in porous borders and coastlines and ungoverned spaces. Migration remains a concern should Caribbean governments be unable to meet the needs of their people. Additionally, violent crime has grown over the past decade, much of it related to narco trafficking, arms trafficking, and money laundering. To meet these challenges regional governments are attempting to focus on cooperative efforts such as the Regional Security System (RSS), the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Caribbean Information Sharing Network (CISN), and the U.S. Coast Guard's Caribbean Support Tender (CST). A key element of Southern Command's efforts in the Caribbean is the uniquely focused Tradewinds exercise. Conducted annually, Tradewinds exercise objectives focus on combating transnational threats, counter drug operations, and disaster preparedness.

Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles continue active support of Southern Command counterdrug efforts with their respective Cooperative Security Locations. Of all our allies in the Caribbean, the Dominican Republic has the strongest military and has often been the most supportive. Their military capability and political leadership allowed them to support multinational forces in Iraq with a battalion sized task force. The Dominicans will be key partners in expanding the Third Border Initiative to build a Caribbean zone of confidence. The Enduring Friendship initiative will help synchronize all maritime activities in the Caribbean, deny terrorist access, protect legal trade, and suppress illicit trafficking.

Central America

Democratic governance continues to be the accepted model throughout Central America

and the region is generally pro-United States. Central American leaders have shown a commitment to free trade and open economies and have also begun laying the groundwork for greater regional integration. They are overcoming historical border differences and tensions in order to pursue regional economic and military integration.

Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua sent forces to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. Current relations with Nicaragua are a testament to how much improvement has been made in just two decades with patient, cooperative efforts. Additionally, El Salvador provides Southern Command the use of Comalapa Airport as a Cooperative Security Location for counter-trafficking coverage 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 critical humanitarian missions of the region, as well as to counter illicit trafficking operations.

Despite progress, Central American countries lack resources and remain susceptible to the ills of narcotics and arms trafficking. This region is also a primary avenue for illegal migrants and drugs entering the United States. Especially troublesome is the growth in gangs and drug related crime we are seeing across Central America. Unemployment and poverty, together with a demographic surge in the younger population and thousands of leftover weapons from the wars of the 1980s, make Central America a fruitful recruiting ground for organized criminals. Violence is a major problem in this area with local vigilantism taking the place of judicial systems that do not work. There are estimated to be at least 25,000 gang members in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, the three countries where the problem is worst. There is also some 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 re-migration to their home countries.

Southern Cone

The Argentine economic crisis has caused many to question the validity of neo-liberal reforms, manifested in the Buenos Aires Consensus signed last October by Presidents Kirchner and Lula and stressing "respect for poor countries." Southern Cone countries, traditionally strong supporters of multilateralism and the United Nations, were also the most vociferous in opposition to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Limitations related to the American Servicemember Protection Act (ASPA) have added yet one more complaint. Brazil continues along a moderate path but is suffering from narcotics fueled urban gang violence. The Brazilian minister of justice stated that violence in Brazil's three biggest cities costs \$4.5 billion dollars a year. Nevertheless, progress and stability in Brazil is not in question.

We are maintaining strong military-to-military relations with the countries of the Southern Cone. Southern Command has developed relationships with the new Argentinean military leadership and expects sustained cooperation in the future. Cooperation with the Brazilian administration and the Brazilian military continues routinely. We have received good cooperation from Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay in disrupting terrorist activities in the Tri-Border Area (TBA). A Chilean platoon and a Paraguayan platoon are serving under Argentine command in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Cyprus, with additional military personnel from Bolivia, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay also serving with the Argentine-led force. Chile, the fourth largest user of the Panama Canal behind the United States, Japan, and China, took an active leadership role in the Southern Command

sponsored PANAMAX exercise designed to guarantee the security of the Panama Canal. The Chileans rapidly deployed a force to Haiti during the recent crisis. We look forward to a growing and cooperative relationship with Chile and its armed forces.

War on Terrorism

Terrorists throughout the Southern Command area of responsibility bomb, murder, kidnap, traffic drugs, transfer arms, launder money, and smuggle humans. Southern Command gains actionable intelligence on these and other terrorist activities that is then used by U.S. law enforcement agencies and our partner nations to disrupt terrorist operations and means of support. To further these efforts, we train, equip, build and exercise partner nation capabilities to control borders, eliminate safe havens, and project government presence. Our primary efforts are in the areas of improving Colombian military capabilities, conducting detention operations, improving interagency cooperation, resetting our strategic architecture, promoting security cooperation, and institutionalizing partner nation professionalism and human rights adherence.

Colombia's Military Capabilities

Southern Command assistance programs are helping Colombia develop the capabilities to achieve security and stability. Military training of Colombian units that are vetted for human rights abuses is a key enabler in their fight. In addition to working closely with the Colombian Ministry of Defense, Army, Navy and Air Force, we developed over the past year a close working relationship with the Colombian Special Operations Command, the 1st Commando Battalion, the Lancero Battalion, and their urban counter-terrorist unit. We assist in providing operational support and developing thorough logistics systems, with a particular emphasis on casualty evacuation. We continue training the Counter Narcotics Brigade and its aviation units. The Plan Colombia helicopters have proven to be a major asset in the fight against narcoterrorism, and the procedures for coordinating their use have been optimized and institutionalized. As we look to the future, careful consideration should be given to the eventual nationalization of these assets, while maintaining and respecting Congressional intent in their provision. We work on riverine techniques with the Colombian Marines and assisted in the establishment of operationally focused Riverine Combat Elements (RCE). We assisted in infrastructure security planning, and ensured that all systems were in place to resume the State Department-managed Air Bridge Denial (ABD) program. We are working closely with Colombian Military Intelligence to assist them in developing intelligence driven operations. We sent Planning Assistance Teams to support Colombian units in numerous locations throughout Colombia. We helped develop Civil Affairs capabilities that have been well used as the government reestablished its official presence in all municipalities. With funds made available from the original FY 2000 Plan Colombia emergency supplemental, we have helped the Colombian Ministry of Defense institute legal reforms through the creation of a Military Penal Justice Corps (MPJC), similar to our Judge Advocate General's Corps. To provide for the long-term institutional health of the Colombian Army, we assisted them in establishing a Command Sergeants Major Academy to develop a robust non-commissioned officer corps. Finally, drawing on lessons learned in our own operations, we are assisting in Colombian efforts to strengthen interagency cooperation.

Detention Operations

In addition to its work in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southern Command has directly and actively supported the War on Terrorism since January 2002 by operating a terrorist detention and intelligence operations facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Intelligence operations at Guantanamo have provided critical information regarding terrorist organizations' leadership, organization, finances, planned attacks, potential attacks, and other specific information that has thwarted terrorist activities. As Guantanamo operations continue, we will improve intelligence exploitation, detainee review and repatriation procedures, and quality of life for service members. We are prepared for our role as host of military commissions.

Inter Agency Cooperation

JIATF-South continues to serve as a model joint, interagency, and multinational organization as it coordinates source and transit zone activities from Key West, Florida. With the proven nexus between terrorists, drugs, and arms trafficking, counter illicit trafficking is becoming an increasingly important expansion of counterdrug efforts. JIATF-South and the Joint Southern Surveillance Reconnaissance Operations Center (JSSROC) successfully merged last July, with a gain in efficiency by concentrating the trackers and planners in one headquarters. In January JIATF-South hosted a successful interagency counter narcotics trafficking conference that included high-level Colombian participation and set the course for future operations.

Responding to Secretary Rumsfeld's guidance to establish a Joint Interagency Coordination Group, Southern Command meets monthly to focus on the War on Terrorism with representatives from the Department of Treasury, Drug Enforcement Agency, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, the intelligence agencies, and Department of Defense. The Joint Interagency Coordination Group is also a venue for sharing intelligence and effectively coordinating our regional counter-terrorism efforts. Within the interagency terrorist financial designation process, Southern Command is partnering with the Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control to assist in interdicting the flow of capital acquired through illicit activities.

Strategic Architecture

Southern Command serves as a model unified command with modest forward presence and ability to respond regionally. Over the past year we have relocated some of our components and will continue throughout this year. U.S. Army South (USARSO) relocated from Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas. Special Operations Command South (SOCSO) is in the process of relocating from Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, to Homestead, Florida. This move is in conjunction with the U.S. Navy's decision to leave Roosevelt Roads, which also involves Naval Forces South (NAVSO) moving from that location to Naval Station Mayport, Florida. Southern Command, Northern Command, and Pacific Command successfully agreed to establish a Joint Operating Area (JOA) that gave JIATF-South the area responsibility in the eastern Pacific all the way to the California border. This JOA is just one example of combatant commands cooperating to resolve seam issues. Additionally, Southern Command has established a J-7 directorate for transformation and is establishing a Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) in cooperation with Joint Forces Command. This prototype SJFHQs

deployed from the headquarters for the first time to Soto Cano Air Force Base, Honduras, in January and conducted a two week long exercise with full connectivity to Southern Command in Miami. Overall, these changes in Southern Command's strategic architecture will allow us to prosecute the War on Terrorism in a more effective manner.

Security Cooperation

Southern Command's security cooperation activities expand U.S. influence, assure friends, and dissuade potential adversaries. The overarching goal is to promote regional security and stability through training, equipping, and developing allied security force capabilities that improve competence and professionalism while underscoring respect for human rights. Command programs are also intended to strengthen respect for the rule of law, civilian control of the military, and support for democratic ideals. We do this not only because it is in tune with the highest values of the American people, but also because it is a strategic, operational, and tactical necessity. Security forces must earn the trust and confidence of their people before they can be effective. Only by respecting the law and the dignity of all the citizens they are sworn to defend can security forces hope to gain the respect of those they protect.

We annually coordinate and direct more than 30 legal engagement activities among military counterparts, regional governments, and non-government organizations. Throughout the Southern Command area of operations we have advocated reform of military justice codes and procedures, education on human rights and law of war, and the inclusion of military lawyers in the planning and execution of military operations. Complementing this training are disaster relief programs to teach militaries how to respond to their civilian authorities when disasters occur. *Fuerzas Aliadas Humanitarias* is the cornerstone of this program and will be hosted by Panama this year. More than 20 nations will participate, including our regional partners.

Beyond disaster relief, New Horizons exercises provide unique and rigorous training opportunities to engineer, medical, and civil affairs units. These activities hone U.S. forces' engineering and medical skills in challenging environments under conditions nearly impossible to replicate in the United States. Last year the New Horizon exercises completed 31 engineer projects consisting of schools, medical clinics, wells, and rudimentary road construction and repair. The 70 humanitarian medical deployments treated more than 300,000 patients. During these deployments, our veterinary teams treated approximately 57,000 animals in varying livestock categories, which contributed significantly to sustaining local economic health. Panama, Belize, Dominican Republic, Grenada, and St. Kitts will host New Horizons exercises this year.

The annual naval exercise, UNITAS, is conducted throughout the region with significant participation by several countries. This year, Peru will host the UNITAS Pacific Phase and the UNITAS Amphibious Phase, while Uruguay is scheduled to host the UNITAS Atlantic Phase in November. Central American nations will host several exercises this year to include Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) NORTH that will focus on strengthening the peacekeeping skills and capabilities of the 25 participating nations. All the Central American countries and the majority of Caribbean nations will participate. We will also conduct PKO SOUTH and Cabañas to strengthen the peacekeeping skills, cooperation, and capabilities of the rest of the region's military forces.

Professionalism and Human Rights

A number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have a history of military dictatorships, authoritarian governments, violent internal conflicts and rampant human rights abuses dating back to the 1950s and into the early 1990s. Many countries in the Southern Command area of responsibility are dealing with the legacy of human rights abuses committed during military dictatorships by strengthening judiciary and democratic institutions and by cementing civilian control of the security forces. Since 1996, USSOUTHCOM has conducted the Human Rights Initiative (HRI), "Measuring Progress in Respect for Human Rights," focusing on developing regional standards for human rights programs in the military and security forces. The HRI is a major strategic enabler tool for USSOUTHCOM and is a key component of the Command's Theater Security Cooperation Plan. We also ensure that all units that receive U.S. security assistance are vetted for human rights violations in accordance with the Leahy Amendment.

Requirements

As the War on Terrorism progresses we will increasingly pursue operations of mutual interest with goals that increase interoperability with our allies. We will pool our resources to the extent possible, but we foresee additional threats to U.S. security interests that may require additional resources or the reprioritization of programmed funds. To reinforce success in Colombia we will address the current personnel cap. We also expect an increase in requirements for persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) and additional stress on our theater communications architecture, as well as a requirement for the renewal of Expanded Authorities legislation.

Colombia Personnel Cap

The current personnel cap limits the U.S. presence in Colombia to 400 military personnel and 400 contractors. We manage the cap on a daily basis, rigorously remain under the ceilings, and frequently must cancel or postpone planned personnel travel to Colombia, request aircraft to reduce crew size, create complicated work-around schedules for aircraft flights, or simply cut back on training. Part of the difficulty lies in the types of personnel that we have counted against the cap, which include, for example, the permanent party military group itself, those in aircraft flying over but not stationed in the country, and personnel who have completed their assignments but have not yet left the country. A review of whether such personnel should be counted would be warranted.

The decision for the Departments of Defense and State to seek an increase in the personnel ceilings is a change from our previous belief that we could continue our programs efficiently under the previous ceilings. The progress made by President Uribe and Colombia have led us to conclude that there is a real opportunity, with only a small increase in U.S. personnel, if we are to achieve our policy goals in Colombia. I would emphasize that we do not seek to change the prohibition on U.S. involvement in combat.

To date the impact of the personnel cap has been small. In the coming year, however, as the Colombian Military conducts full-scale operations across the depth of the country, the

personnel cap will begin to have a deleterious effect on the mission. While U.S. personnel will not be directly on the front lines with the Colombian troops, more training and planning assistance at a variety of headquarters is required since a greater portion of the Colombian Military will be directly engaged on a broader front in operations to defeat the narcoterrorists. We should reinforce success this year rather than constraining ourselves with a cap number that made sense at the beginning of Plan Colombia but has not been adjusted for the current and future situation on the ground. Consequently, the Administration has requested an increase of the personnel cap to 800 military personnel and 600 civilian contractors in Colombia in support of Plan Colombia.

Persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

We conduct varied detection and monitoring (D&M) operations that require a high state of readiness and a joint effort to link multi-intelligence collectors targeted against strategic, operational, and tactical requirements. This melding of organic and national collection resources will improve operations and fulfill the Quarterly Defense Review Transformation requirement for continuous and persistent intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). Southern Command's role in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM includes the employment of national, airborne, ground, and maritime ISR assets that are targeted against regional terrorist groups and transnational support cells. Their combined products create a common operating picture of regional activity that can be shared with our allies as appropriate. Still, the majority of assets available to us are focused on the tactical fight in Colombia and thus unavailable for other missions. A capability to support Colombia and our other areas of concern in the War on Terrorism is essential to gain the situational awareness requirement to disrupt terrorist activity. When sufficiently funded, D&M programs provide a formidable capability to detect and monitor illicit trafficking of arms, drugs and other illegal activities that fuel terrorist groups. Overall, this capability further provides critical information used by the U.S. and host nations to effectively counter the expansion of narcoterrorism and international terrorism.

Command, Control, Communications and Computers (C4)

Improving C4 architecture for fixed and mobile operations throughout the region has been a consistent priority, as outlined in previous testimonies. The current C4 infrastructure lacks the flexibility to execute the assigned mission due to over-reliance on inadequate commercial communications systems, limited communications bandwidth, and fragmented operations and maintenance support. Consequently, Southern Command is unable to effectively and efficiently support a counterdrug mission simultaneously with another contingency operation such as anti-terrorism, noncombatant evacuation, migrant operations, disaster relief, or defense of the Panama Canal.

Since existing military systems alone are insufficient, it is my intention to transform, expand, and maintain a cost-effective, efficient, centrally managed, and robust infrastructure that supports the Theater Security Cooperation Strategy. This strategy includes counter-terrorism operations, regional engagement, crisis response, and counterdrug missions. We are partnering with the Defense Information Systems Agency and the Department of State's Diplomatic Telecommunications Service Program Office to explore commercial alternatives such as fiber optic communication links. This effort shows promise for improving C4 effectiveness throughout the region.

Expanded Authority

In 2003 and 2004, Congress gave us Expanded Authority to use counter-drug funds for counter-terrorism missions in Colombia because it concluded that there is no useful distinction between a narco-trafficker and his terrorist activity, hence the term narcoterrorist. This link between narcotics trafficking and terrorism in Colombia was also recognized in the National Security Presidential Directive 18 (NSPD-18) concerning support to Colombia. Operations today are more efficient and effective because our expanded authorities allow the same assets to be used to confront the common enemy found at the nexus between drugs and terror. Expanded Authority permits greater intelligence sharing and allows Colombia to use U.S. counterdrug funded equipment for counter-terrorism missions. Expanded Authority from Congress is essential to this command's ability to deal with narcoterrorists. We are requesting that Congress again pass Expanded Authority for Fiscal Years 2005 and 2006.

Reprogramming of \$50 Million

We request congressional support of Department of Defense reprogramming of \$50 million to support Colombia's campaign plan. Along with Expanded Authority and the increased troop cap, this reallocation of funds will synchronize U.S. Government efforts in assisting Colombia at this critical juncture in their fight against narcoterrorism.

Conclusion

I'm proud of the effort the men and women of Southern Command have made over the past year. They have been able to protect our interests in the area of responsibility while the nation's attention was focused elsewhere, and their dedication and focus has paid off, especially in Colombia where the Colombian government is making real progress against narcoterrorists and criminal groups. These successes, however, may not be enough to stem the growth of radical populism and popular dissatisfaction in some countries where reforms have failed to solve underlying social and economic woes. We continue to work to improve both the capabilities and professionalism of our partner nations' militaries, so they can maintain their own security and can assist in combating common transnational threats. Our partner nation military forces are currently under tremendous stress while simultaneously institutionalizing their roles in democratically elected governments. These forces, if properly trained and equipped, can ameliorate aspects of the struggles many countries face. We will continue to encourage professionalization through what we are doing in Colombia, and through what we are doing throughout the AOR with security assistance, theater security cooperation, and exercises. We will continue working diligently with the interagency to build the coherent long-term policy that will improve the security, and resulting economic and social health, of the entire Americas.

I would like to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Committee for this opportunity and for the tremendous support you have provided this command. Southern Command is a good investment of both your dollars and your trust. I can assure you that the men and women of the United States Southern Command are working to their utmost to accomplish their missions for our great country.

House Armed Services Committee
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515