

# FOCUS

## on U.S. Southern Command

### *Executive Summary*

It is often said that America's heart lies in Europe and its wallet in the Pacific Rim, but demonstrably, both interests are migrating much closer to home. The United States, for instance, imports more oil from the Caribbean and Latin America than it does from the Middle East. Forty percent of our foreign trade lies within this hemisphere, and two-thirds of the cargo transiting the Panama Canal is heading toward or leaving from U.S. ports. Fully one-quarter of the world's fresh water runoff lies within the U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) area of responsibility, and an equal percentage of our pharmaceuticals find their origin in the Amazon. An estimated 40 million Hispanics reside in the United States (in addition to the 4 million in Puerto Rico) and represent the largest and fastest-growing minority population.

The policies and practices that USSOUTHCOM observes in its theater security cooperation with the 32 nations within its area of responsibility remain heavily influenced by the European conquest of the New World. Experts cite postcolonial Hispanic culture, the legacies of friction with a youthful, expansionist U.S. democracy, and the more recent exploitation of large ungoverned areas and porous borders by transnational criminal organizations fueled by U.S. demand for illegal narcotics. Unlike any other regional combatant command, every member of USSOUTHCOM traveling abroad, and every host nation or organization with which they officially interact,

is vetted for human rights training and compliance to prevent repetition of past errors and to promote better interaction.

With fewer apportioned forces and a smaller budget than other regional combatant commands, USSOUTHCOM has a great appreciation for the importance of interagency partnership and innovative security cooperation practices. In this issue, *Joint Force Quarterly* seeks to underline some notable achievements and failures that may benefit security professionals facing related challenges in other areas of responsibility.

Our first Forum article, "The Americas in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Challenge of Governance and Security," is an intriguing introduction to the current challenges facing the USSOUTHCOM commander. The candid assessment by General John Craddock and Major Barbara Fick of security cooperation between the United States and its southern neighbors leads to an argument for change. The authors observe that the United States and its partner nations in the Caribbean and Latin America are at a crossroads where they must depart from the comfortable and familiar approaches to mutual security issues to reach the next level of collective performance. They then make a case for links between effective national security and healthy democracies, and, like General Pace, they emphasize that integrated elements of national power are crucial in this effort. (See also General Carlos Alberto Ospina's complementary observations of mutual challenges from a Colombian perspective in the Commentary section of this issue.)

In the second article, "Limits of Influence: Creating Security Forces in Latin America," Dr. Richard Millett addresses crucial lessons that the U.S. Armed Forces have learned in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to develop host-nation military and civilian security forces. The implications for U.S. Central Command are obvious, if not optimistic (more than once, the United States has found itself obligated to return and confront the same forces that it has painstakingly trained). Inculcating martial competence, teamwork, and supporting institutions is very different from exporting values regarding moral authority and faith in the rule of law. Dr. Millett outlines seven germane lessons that provide insights to similar missions elsewhere. He also emphasizes that there are "substantial limits" on U.S. ability to influence the values requisite to achieve the long-term democratic goals so often sought.

Our third Forum feature, "A Prescription for Protecting the Southern Approach," addresses the requirement for the same quality of early warning and defense-in-depth to the south as the United States enjoys from the other three points of the compass. In this optimistic treatment of a long-standing challenge, Colonel John Cope promotes a new multilateral apparatus to monitor mutual security issues in the Caribbean basin, while avoiding traditional barriers to close cooperation. He asserts that Mexico's defense relationship with the United States is tentative by design, as our southern neighbor professes to have no enemies. How, then, can Mexico be inspired



to participate in a multilateral relationship when it perceives no threat? Colonel Cope offers three near-term actions tailored to improve prospects for more effective collaboration and promotes Mexican leadership of an organization with precisely this mandate.

In “The State Partnership Program: Vision to Reality,” Major Pablo Pagan describes a very successful theater security cooperation initiative that few people know much about. When most think about U.S. bilateral engagement with foreign nations, they envision relationships between governments at the national level. In the United States, however, some of the most effective cooperation occurs at the state and local levels, and this kind of cooperation is in great demand throughout the hemisphere. The ability of the National Guard, for example, to work directly with host nations and local U.S. civil institutions, such as schools, businesses, and infrastructure support organizations, is increasingly valuable. While more than one-third of the State Partnership Program countries lie within the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility, this

flexible program is a powerful tool returning dividends globally.

The fifth Forum offering, “JIATF–South: Blueprint for Success,” is an excellent overview of U.S. Southern Command’s model for effective combined, interagency operations: Joint Interagency Task Force–South. The author, Lieutenant Richard Yeatman, shows how this true interagency command has achieved a mature collaboration of diverse military and civilian, foreign and domestic agencies that has made great strides in interdicting narcoterrorist logistics.

The final article in the Forum is entitled “JTF–Bravo and Disaster Relief.” In it, Colonels Edmund Woolfolk and James Marshall trace the origins of Joint Task Force–Bravo to its present role as U.S. Southern Command’s most forward-deployed joint force capable of rapidly addressing natural disasters and manmade crises, such as noncombatant evacuations. Indeed, all regional combatant commands organize differently to address their prioritized mission challenges within unique geographic and cultural environments. JTF–Bravo is very much a “contextual command” in this vein,

and its regional engagement and life-saving accomplishments have generated tremendous goodwill for over two decades.

Lessons learned in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility are instructive for all combatant commands, and *JFQ* is dedicated to supporting this exchange of ideas. As is the case in other parts of the world, the better we explain U.S. policies and viewpoints to the people of Latin America and the Caribbean, the more fruitful our common security objectives will become. The success of democratic rule, economic development, and the avoidance of armed conflict will continue to be high priorities for the United States in the hemisphere. Together with our neighbors, we can deny sanctuary to terrorists, narcotraffickers, and other criminal elements. These worthy goals require an effective interagency effort to leverage all instruments of U.S. national power. Only a synchronized interagency collaboration will ensure success. **JFQ** **D.H. Gurney**