

**POSTURE STATEMENT OF
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**BEFORE THE 115TH CONGRESS
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to address you today. On behalf of the men and women of U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), we appreciate your support to our team and to our partners in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. I look forward to providing an update on our work defending the southern approaches to the U.S. homeland and promoting regional security and stability.

Although other regions may figure more prominently on U.S. foreign policy and national security agendas, Latin America and the Caribbean is the region most connected to our own society, prosperity, and security. We are inextricably linked by our shared values, cultures, and the rapid flows of goods, services, people, and information throughout our hemisphere. Coupled with geographic proximity, these interconnections mean there's no such thing as a purely "Latin American and Caribbean problem." Simply stated, security challenges in the region are likely to become security challenges to the U.S. homeland.

Just consider the following. Threat networks aggressively operate across borders (including our own), moving anything and anyone and fueling violent crime on the streets of Tegucigalpa and Tucson. Individuals from across the world—some fleeing conflict and insecurity, some seeking economic opportunity, and some with possible ties to terrorism—can exploit the region's security vulnerabilities to attempt illegal entry into the United States. A mosquito-borne virus crosses an ocean and causes a regional and domestic health crisis. China, Russia, and Iran seek to expand their influence and challenge the international order and democratic principles of transparency, good governance, and rule of law abroad—and much closer to home.

Although USSOUTHCOM has a tradition of excellence in interagency and regional cooperation, we believe ‘business as usual’ is no longer sufficient to address these types of transregional challenges, or to embrace transregional opportunities. Higher-level guidance also demands we adjust our approach; the National Military Strategy directs the entire Joint Force to work in a more integrated manner to address the increasingly transnational, transregional, multi-domain, and multifunctional nature of today’s security challenges. In response, USSOUTHCOM is becoming a more agile organization and redoubling our commitment to—and integration with—our partners. This isn’t a matter of altruism; it’s a matter of our national interests, because in this uncertain world our security partnerships are more important than ever before. Trust and understanding can’t be surged when crisis hits, and complex threats can’t be addressed by any one nation or agency. Mr. Chairman, it’s simple, really: our security partnerships help create a layered defense of our homeland by keeping our *shared home* stable and secure.

OUR APPROACH

USSOUTHCOM’s main effort is **countering threat networks**. We also **prepare for and respond to disasters and crises**; and we **build relationships to meet global challenges**. We employ a networked approach that stops threats *before* they reach our nation’s borders, destabilize our partners, or undermine the security of the Western Hemisphere. Our components and task forces—U.S. Army South, U.S. Air Forces Southern/12th Air Force, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. Fourth Fleet, U.S. Marine Corps Forces South, U.S. Special Operations Command South, Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South, Joint Task Force (JTF) Bravo, and JTF Guantánamo (GTMO)—are often at the forefront of these efforts, and we appreciate the Committee’s continued support to the entire USSOUTHCOM team.

SECURITY ENVIRONMENT (The Challenges)

Threat Networks. Mr. Chairman, Members, if I were appearing before you in 1987, 1997, or even 2007, I would tell you that drug trafficking is the most significant security challenge in Latin America and the Caribbean. But it's 2017, and drugs—or any of the illegal commodities that move through our hemisphere—are not the *only* thing we have to worry about. The illicit flows of goods and people, and the violence and corruption these flows fuel at home and abroad, are the visible manifestations of complex, adaptive, *networked* threats. Transregional and transnational threat networks are now the principal threat to regional security and stability. These networks operate unconstrained by legal and geographic boundaries, unimpeded by morality, and fueled by enormous profits. Their interests, influence, capabilities, and reach extend beyond the responsibilities of any one Geographic or Functional Combatant Command, undercutting our national interests in multiple domains and many regions. They prey on weak institutions and exploit the interconnected nature of our modern financial, transportation and communication systems and the seams in our organizational boundaries.¹



A recent DABIQ article featured an interview with a Trinidadian foreign terrorist fighter, Shane Crawford, who encourages ISIS supporters to attack the U.S. and Trinidadian governments and civilians, citing potential targets in California, Florida, and France.

Threat networks engage in a range of destabilizing illicit activities that further dangerous ideologies or generate profit. Violent extremist organizations like ISIS seek to radicalize and recruit vulnerable populations in the Caribbean and parts of Central and South America. Hezbollah members, facilitators, and supporters engage in licit and illicit activities in

¹ Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization. Center for Complex Operations, National Defense University, 2013.

support of the organization, moving weapons, cash, and other contraband to raise funds and build Hezbollah's infrastructure in the region.

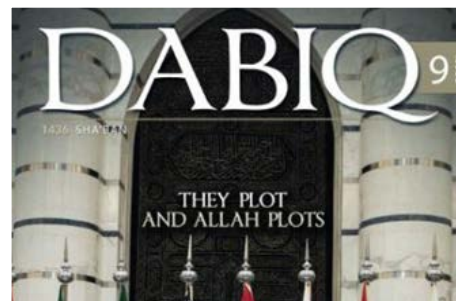
Criminal networks, in contrast, are motivated by wealth and power. Some are globally-integrated enterprises with worldwide reach—and profit margins that rival Fortune 500 companies. Some smuggle precursor chemicals and fentanyl from China into Central America and Mexico, where they produce extremely potent heroin that is driving overdose epidemics across the United States. Other networks move large shipments of cocaine to markets in the U.S., West Africa, Europe, and Australia, while some reap enormous profits by illegally mining gold in Guyana, Peru, and Colombia. Many dabble in poly-crime activities, including kidnapping, money laundering, and extortion. Still other networks have diversified into the smuggling of weapons and people, including individuals who pose a potential threat to national security—through the region and into the United States.

Although each of these activities undermines regional security, the most dangerous scenario is that terrorist organizations will exploit criminal capabilities or human smuggling routes to enter the United States. The most chilling manifestation, of course, is the possibility that terrorists with chemical or biological weapons—or the knowledge of how to build and employ them—will move through the region and attempt to infiltrate our Southwest border. This potential threat raises the question of criminal-terrorist collusion, which has been a topic of significant debate within the U.S. government. I'd like to share my view on the subject.

Conventional wisdom downplays the possibility that criminal and terrorist networks would actively collaborate in this part of the world. Observers are correct when they say that drug traffickers are likely reluctant to work with terrorists, and vice-versa. But here are the

shortcomings I and many of our interagency partners see with this view: it presumes criminal networks exercise absolute oversight and control over their smuggling routes. It presumes they conduct thorough background checks and screen everyone and everything that moves along the region's illicit superhighways. It presumes that just because witting collaboration might not take place, unwitting collaboration *couldn't*. While this scenario may be unlikely, we and our partners know it is also not totally impossible.

Mr. Chairman, I think about those smuggling routes that thread through our southern approaches and into our homeland. Despite the heroic efforts of law enforcement, these are highly efficient systems that can move just about anything and anyone into our country. And what keeps me up at night is knowing I'm not the only one thinking about those routes—extremist networks like ISIS are thinking about them too, and how to use them.



ISIS dedicated an article in DABIQ to discussing a scenario in which ISIS followers could exploit already established trafficking networks to make their way to our Southwest border.

Ultimately, the argument about whether criminal and terrorist networks collaborate or keep their distance from one another in Latin America distracts from the most important point. Both groups inhabit the same illegal orbits. They both seek to circumvent or subvert the rule of law. They both exploit the same permissive environment and could use the same key facilitators (money launderers, document forgers, and corrupt officials) to support their operations. By affecting the permissive environment, functions, and enabling activities that both types of networks rely on, we can help degrade criminal and terrorist networks alike.

Regional Stability. In addition to the challenge posed by threat networks, Latin America and the Caribbean are also vulnerable to disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, and the outbreak of infectious diseases with the potential for secondary impact in the United

States. Varying prevention, management, and response capabilities in the region—coupled with underlying challenges like chronic poverty and economic insecurity—can amplify the impact of disasters, contributing to other ‘push factors’ that drive illegal migration.

<i>Apprehensions and Interdictions</i> <i>Source: Customs and Border Protection</i>	<i>FY 15</i>	<i>FY 16</i>
<i>Cubans (land and sea)</i>	<i>48,549</i>	<i>60,311</i>
<i>Haitians (land and sea)</i>	<i>3,435</i>	<i>7,932</i>
<i>Unaccompanied Children (from Northern Triangle)</i>	<i>28,396</i>	<i>42,405</i>

Overall the region is stable, although the gap between public expectations and government performance manifests itself in social protests, most often against corruption and mismanagement of public resources. Bolivian citizens have engaged in mass protests to demand resolution to a severe water shortage, while Venezuela faces significant instability in the coming year due to widespread food, and medicine shortages; continued political uncertainty; and a worsening economic situation. The growing humanitarian crisis in Venezuela could eventually compel a regional response.

Activities of China, Russia, and Iran. While threat networks and potential crises are immediate concerns, we also face strategic challenges. Over the past decade, China, Russia, and Iran have established a greater presence in the region. These “external actors” require separate and serious consideration, especially as it relates to the broader global security environment. Knowing the political establishment in China, Russia, and Iran will likely scrutinize this

testimony—and in the case of Russia, attempt to distort it—I’m going to choose my words with care.

Mr. Chairman, I’ll speak plainly: if we care about what’s going on in the South China Sea, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East, it’s worth keeping an eye on Chinese, Russian, and Iranian activity in this part of the world, too. For Russia, China, and Iran, Latin America is not an afterthought. These global actors view the Latin American economic, political, and security arena as an opportunity to achieve their respective long-term objectives and advance interests that may be incompatible with ours and those of our partners. Their vision for an alternative international order poses a challenge to every nation that values non-aggression, rule of law, and respect for human rights—the very same principles that underlie the Inter-American system of peace and cooperation. Some of what they’re doing—while not a direct military threat—does warrant examination. Even seemingly benign activities can be used to build malign influence.

Now the region’s number two trading partner, China has courted Latin America through economic diplomacy, importing more and more raw materials, offering loans, and pledging billions in investments in infrastructure development. It sees its own development as contingent on the development of other countries, including those in Latin America and the Caribbean.² Beijing cooperates with Latin America on space, potential nuclear power projects, and telecommunications networks, which could pose security concerns to the United States. China’s military soft power lies in its ability to engage through offers of all-expenses-paid training, no-strings-attached defense sales and financing to regional militaries, and donations of equipment and humanitarian aid. China prioritizes engagement with regional organizations like the

² The People’s Republic of China, *Policy Paper on Latin America*. November 24, 2016.

Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) that exclude the United States, and seeks to leverage regional relationships to reshape international economic and financial institutions to its advantage.³

As part of the Kremlin's aim to regain its status as a global power and prove its prowess to domestic audiences, Russia uses soft power tools in an attempt to challenge U.S. leadership in the Western Hemisphere and displace traditional U.S. goodwill initiatives. Examples include the construction of an international police training facility in Nicaragua that will be used to provide regional counternarcotics training and the funding of a vaccine production plant that will supposedly make drugs accessible and affordable throughout Central America. Additionally, Russia seeks to discredit the United States through state-owned media like RT-Español and SputnikMundo, which spread misinformation to create doubts and distrust about U.S. intentions and policy towards the region and other parts of the world. The Russians are also engaging in some disquieting behavior, such as providing battle tanks to Nicaragua, which impacts regional stability and could cause its neighbors to divert vital resources (needed to fight threat networks and address developmental challenges) to maintain parity.

As a continuing state sponsor of terrorism, Iranian involvement in the Western Hemisphere is *always* a matter of concern. With the easing of economic sanctions, Iran may be seeking to rebuild its relationships in the region. Tehran uses cooperative technological, economic, and diplomatic interests as the centerpiece of its regional diplomacy. Although on the surface it portrays its actions as innocuous, Iran could exploit its cultural centers to build networks, which could be leveraged to extend its influence and advance its interests.

³ Ibid.

Broadly speaking, some of this outreach is concerning, especially to those of us who care about advancing human rights and promoting regional peace and stability. Keep in mind there's no Chinese, Russian, or Iranian equivalent of a Leahy Law, no comparable conditions on security assistance, no independent domestic media that carefully scrutinizes their activities. Their arms sales aren't tied to international protocols or human rights vetting. Their loans don't come with requirements to follow strict environmental or anti-corruption standards, or even clear terms and conditions for repayment. Their unscrupulous business practices and disregard for rule of law facilitates corruption, reduces trust in governments, and poses challenges to the norms and values that have brought prosperity and security for millions of people across our hemisphere.

It's also worth noting that in recent years these actors have capitalized on the perception that the U.S. is disengaging from the region. Our partners plainly see that we are conducting fewer engagements; holding smaller and less frequent exercises; and that we have smaller U.S. military presence in regional embassies and fewer forces and platforms than ever before. When budget constraints limit our ability to engage with our regional partners, it sends a message that others can, and do, exploit.

And while we should work harder to understand the true intentions of these actors, whatever they intend, in most cases our best response is to strengthen our own security relationships, rather than focus on "countering" or "competing" with the likes of China or Russia. At times—when it supports our interests and those of our partners—we should follow avenues for cooperation. At others, we might find we need to work with our partners to address negative influence or destabilizing actions. At all times, we should focus on being the best possible partner to the region.

So it's on us to demonstrate our commitment by being an equal and principled partner; it's on us to earn, and keep, the region's trust. It's on us, because we lose relationships not as a result of any Chinese or Russian actions; we lose them, in large part, by not demonstrating the depth of our commitment to the region. Our leadership is weakened not because China or Russia offer compelling alternatives, but because it's not always clear to our network of allies and partners what's important to us. American (and Inter-American) principles are undermined not because they no longer matter, but because we and our partners don't do everything we can to protect and promote them. Mr. Chairman, it comes down to this: we have a choice. Success or failure in this region depends on us, what we stand for, and what we do, much more than it depends on anyone else.

DEFENDING OUR SOUTHERN APPROACHES (What We're Doing About It)

To address many of these security challenges, we work with our network of interagency, regional, and non-governmental partners. I look forward to describing how our networked approach keeps our southern approaches defended, our nation safe, and our shared home secure.

Countering Threat Networks. To keep pace with the challenge of threat networks, we must do more than just stop illicit commodities, and our Southwest border must be our last—not our first—line of defense. To that end, we are working with our interagency and regional partners to pressure threat networks along multiple fronts. We aim to degrade threat network capabilities, disrupt their operations, and affect the underlying conditions that allow them to flourish.

Strengthening Interagency Partnerships. We have stood up communities of interests (COIs), meetings that bring together stakeholders from across the U.S. government to share

Last year, our Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) COI, hosted the first of its kind regional conference on non-proliferation and WMD.

information and intelligence, expand understanding and awareness about

networks and our activities to counter them, and predict how our efforts will affect their illicit operations. Last year, information sharing and support to tactical operations through our Central America COI—which is hosted by Joint Task Force (JTF) Bravo and includes over 700 participants from various U.S. government agencies—helped dismantle major threat networks by targeting their leadership structure. While we’ve always supported our interagency partners, what’s changed is *how* we’re supporting them—and the combined effect we’re having, together.

By sharing information in the Central America COI, interagency participants are better prepared to enable one another to apply pressure across threat networks, forcing them to adapt on our terms—

In 2016, the CENTAM COI supported a multinational intelligence-driven operation that resulted in the arrest of Wilter Blanco (the head of the Atlantic Cartel who reportedly plotted the assassination of the U.S. Ambassador and the Honduran President) by Costa Rican law enforcement.

not theirs. As we put pressure on these networks, they are forced to move their operations and change their tactics, exposing them and their vulnerabilities. As law enforcement is able to arrest individuals, the group quickly analyzes and predicts the expected reaction across the entire network, which leads to a better understanding of how members of one network interact with each other and with other networks in the region.

Building on this COI success, we are establishing a permanent counter-threat network team inside our headquarters. In support of U.S. government and regional partners, this team will analyze, fuse, and synchronize intelligence and operations to illuminate and affect threat networks. Through network mapping and outreach, elements of this team will also provide an

amplifying capability to efforts by U.S. country teams, U.S. and partner nation law enforcement, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and other Combatant Commands to disrupt the flow of SIAs and the potential return of foreign terrorist fighters to the region. As part of this effort, we're partnering with the Intelligence Community to pursue innovative approaches to integrate unclassified open source, social media, and publicly available information (PAI) to better characterize the regional security environment and facilitate increased information and intelligence exchanges with regional and interagency partners.

We also collaborate with the Department of State to encourage our partner nations to define and develop legal instruments against terrorism. Such legislation is critical to addressing radicalization and the return of battle-hardened ISIS fighters with combat experience. These individuals pose a significant threat, as they will be well-positioned to spread an extremist message and potentially execute acts of terror against our partner nations and U.S. citizens in the region. As this Committee knows, ISIS is emphasizing external attacks in response to increasing pressure in Syria and Iraq, and some of our partners have expressed concerns over the potential for ISIS-directed or inspired attacks in this part of the world. I share these concerns.

To complement these efforts, we are expanding our coordination with U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and USSOCOM to support the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as they target the smuggling operations of individuals who may pose terrorist risks. Last year we expanded our support to Homeland Security Investigation's (HSI) Operation CITADEL, a multi-year, multi-agency effort to dismantle human smuggling networks and identify migrants that may represent security threats while undertaking protection screening for those who may have a credible fear of persecution. Our planning support, intelligence capabilities, and airlift are

enhancing HSI's ability to prevent persons of interest from transiting the region, reaching our borders, and potentially gaining entry into the U.S. homeland.

As this Committee knows, JIATF South is the gold standard of interagency cooperation. They were doing counter-threat network operations (if by a different name) long

In FY16, JIATF-S operations resulted in the detention of 780 drug traffickers and the disruption of 282MT of cocaine valued at over \$5.5 billion.

before the term existed. JIATF South supports interdiction operations that are force multipliers for evidence collection, grand jury proceedings, indictments, and extraditions, all of which lead to the eventual dismantlement of threat networks. While JIATF South's core detection and monitoring mission continues to support law enforcement efforts to stem record detected flows of cocaine and other illicit drugs, the task force is also broadening its support to interagency operations targeting global money laundering, bulk cash smuggling, and counter proliferation.

Enabling partner nations. One key to addressing the illicit pathway and threat networks in the region is to help improve the capability of partner nations in the region to investigate,

In 2016, USSOUTHCOM's DoD Rewards Program enabled our Colombian, Peruvian, and Panamanian partners to bring 26 members of terrorist organizations to justice.

interdict and dismantle the networks.

Enabling partner nation capacity is

essential if we hope to address the

permissive environment that permits these networks and pathways to operate.

Cooperation with Colombia remains essential as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and criminal networks seek to move in on former Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) held zones to fill the power vacuum and take over the lucrative global cocaine market. With coca cultivation and production in the Andean region approaching all-time highs, these networks could jeopardize recent Colombian security gains. To help Colombia contain this

threat, we will continue to train, equip, and sustain key specialized units with Department of Defense authorities as well as via our partnership with the Department of State's Bureau of Political Military Affairs and Foreign Military Financing. We're also leveraging the U.S.-Colombia Action Plan for Regional Security (USCAP) to synchronize the delivery of counter-network capacity building efforts to confront the effects of transnational criminal networks and drug trafficking in the region. This program helps deepen the partnership between USSOUTHCOM, the State Department, the Colombian Ministry of Defense, and the six Central American and Caribbean recipient countries⁴ to improve interoperability against criminal networks.

Elsewhere, USSOUTHCOM and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) joined the Department of State and the Federal Bureau of Investigation in cooperating with Brazil during the Rio Olympics. This successful partnership has provided new opportunities to work with Brazil in the areas of threat networks, CWMD, cyber, space, and information sharing. In the Caribbean, we are partnering with the Caribbean Community's Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS) and the Regional Intelligence Fusion Center (RIFC) to facilitate greater information sharing and close our capability gaps in addressing illicit flows of drugs, people with potential ties to terrorism, and foreign fighters. Along with the State Department, we are also supporting the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in their development of a regional counterterrorism strategy and working with key partners like Trinidad

⁴ The six USCAP recipient countries are Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. To date, the USCAP program has trained 4,008 partner nation personnel (3,095 military and 912 public security forces).

and Tobago to illuminate and degrade extremist networks with global ties to ISIS and other dangerous groups.

With the help of this Committee, our counternarcotics (CN) programs in Central America—including train and equip, infrastructure, and building partner nation capacity—play an important role in stabilizing the sub-region from the effects of threat networks.

Our maritime capacity building efforts in the region have better enabled us to meet our detection and monitoring statutory obligations

while ensuring the layered defense of the U.S. homeland. Central American partners are increasingly capable, playing a significant role in almost a quarter of JIATF South's maritime interdiction operations and conducting operations on their own, and with one another.



A pair of UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters assigned to Joint Task Force-Bravo's 1st Battalion 228th Aviation Regiment provide aviation support during Operation Serpiente, a joint air assault training mission led by members of the U.S. 7th Special Forces Group and Naval Special Warfare, Dec. 2, 2016 at Ilopango Airport, El Salvador. (Photo by Master Sgt. Kerri Spero)

We've also helped enhance their land interdiction capabilities through training, essential infrastructure, and mobility and communication equipment. As a result, we've seen significant improvements across Central American security and military forces. Guatemala's Interagency Task Forces (IATFs) combine the best of military and law enforcement authorities and capabilities, helping control Guatemala's borders and stopping the illegal flow of people, drugs, and other threat network activity. Honduras has also made a concerted effort to dismantle threat networks, extradite suspected drug traffickers to the U.S., and eliminate corruption. Panama is coming off a record year disrupting threat network operations. As we seek to intensify combined operations, Panamanian efforts to counter a wide spectrum of threats showcase them as an

increasingly capable partner and force multiplier at a critical geographic chokepoint. In the coming year, we will expand our support to Panama and Costa Rica to deter threat networks from moving into the southern portion of Central America's isthmus.

Empowering public-private collaboration. Since threat networks are enabled by exploiting socio-economic vulnerabilities in the region, we seek to integrate the efforts and expertise of the private sector, NGOs, and civil society to mitigate those vulnerabilities and help create communities less vulnerable to criminal exploitation. We routinely conduct community support activities in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean as part of our humanitarian assistance program. Rather than the U.S. government repairing schools, wells, and improving local hygiene and sanitation on its own, we instead work alongside our partner nations and NGOs, business, and academic partners to expand the reach and effect of these programs. This also supports our partner nations in acquiring these skills, which they can use to demonstrate state presence and reduce the influence of criminal networks.

Preparing for and Responding to Disasters and Crises. Given the inevitability of natural disasters in Latin America,

During the early stages of last year's Zika outbreak, the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 6 (NAMRU-6) became the only U.S. Bio Safety Level III laboratory capable of testing for the Zika virus in South America, helping the Centers for Disease Control, Health and Human Services, and the Pan American Health Organization quickly track the progress of the virus.

we work with our partners to improve our collective preparedness and response capabilities. Within our headquarters, we are focused on institutionalizing our own capabilities to provide agile and effective support to our interagency and regional partners. Within the region, we are strengthening our linkages to the very network of regional militaries, civilian agencies, and experts that we will cooperate with in the event of a crisis.

Strengthening Interagency Partnerships. That cooperation starts with trust; it is the lynchpin of our ability to rapidly respond and work seamlessly with our partners. We build this trust during routine exercises and deepen it during crisis response operations. While most of our exercises involve multiple partner nations, INTEGRATED ADVANCE is dedicated to improving our integration with DHS, the Departments of State and Health and Human Services, and the State of Florida in the event of a Caribbean mass migration. This year's exercise stressed our ability to conduct migrant operations at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay and support interagency partners in responding to migrant landings in the United States.

Last year, we deepened our already strong partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). In April, we immediately responded to a request from USAID/OFDA to support the government of Ecuador in the aftermath of a devastating 7.8 earthquake. We deployed an airfield assessment team and a mobile air traffic control tower to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into Manta, one of the hardest-hit areas. In October, USSOUTHCOM stood up and rapidly deployed Joint Task Force (JTF) Matthew to support USAID/OFDA's Hurricane Matthew response efforts in Haiti.

By leveraging forward-deployed forces already in the region, JTF Matthew provided a tailored, rapid response that was critical during the early stages of relief operations. Utilizing our presence at Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras and the U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, we moved elements from JTF-Bravo and a Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) to Haiti within 24 hours. JTF-Bravo and the SPMAGTF team—which had previously been conducting security cooperation activities in Central America—provided unique

U.S. military capabilities that significantly aided the delivery of humanitarian supplies and alleviated the suffering of hundreds of thousands of Haitians.

Additionally, the immediate deployment of elements from U.S. Transportation Command's (USTRANSCOM) Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC) was absolutely critical to our effective response. U.S.-based forces deployed aboard the USS MESA VERDE and USS IWO JIMA also provided robust relief from the sea. During the relief mission, we also coordinated with our U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) partners to deter potential migration in the aftermath of the hurricane and supported the Department of State's outreach to regional partners seeking to contribute to the response effort.



U.S. service members from Joint Task Force Matthew offload bags of food from the World Food Programme onto a pallet in preparation for delivery to the areas affected by Hurricane Matthew in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Oct. 12, 2016. By the end of their mission, Joint Task Force Matthew delivered 275 metric tons of supplies and conducted 98 missions in support of USAID/OFDA and the Government of Haiti. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Adwin Esters)

Finally, one of the most important response tools lies in our ability to predict crises and, if possible, avert their onset or mitigate their impact. We are analyzing early-warning signs of latent risks and underlying vulnerabilities to better identify potential instability or crises. This understanding will help us plan and execute activities that align with USAID's Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy and enhance our longstanding partnership to build local, national, and regional response capabilities. We have also partnered with the Pacific Disaster Center to utilize their risk management tool to simplify, integrate, and expedite the flow of information before, during, and after disaster strikes. Our assessments, which we conduct with our partner nations'

FEMA-equivalents, civilian ministries, NGOs, and universities, provide a comprehensive understanding of partner nation disaster preparedness capabilities.

Enabling Partner Nations. Exercises like PANAMAX, FUSED RESPONSE, TRADEWINDS, and FUERZAS ALIADAS HUMANITARIAS test

2,500 personnel from 20 nations participated in PANAMAX 2016. Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Peru played major leadership roles in the multinational and functional commands.

multinational responses to an attack on the Panama Canal, the trafficking of WMD, a terrorist act, and natural disasters. Multinational exercises are the most important way we train with our partner nations and Allied military and security forces, helping improve interoperability, institutionalize preparedness and response measures, and building confidence in the United States as a reliable partner. These relationships and trust can help reduce the scope and duration of a crisis and increase the likelihood our partners can respond to crises on their own.

Along with DTRA, we are working with a diverse group of nations—Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Brazil—to develop and enable WMD crisis response capabilities for both military and civilian first responders. This year, we look forward to deepening our collaboration with Chile and Argentina in this important effort. These partnerships demonstrate our enduring resolve and commitment to our partners in the face of the worst of potential disasters. We also include Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) workshops in exercises like PANAMAX and UNITAS to help our partners understand and respond to the growing challenge posed by proliferation of WMD, their delivery systems, and related materials.

Regionally, our health and medical readiness engagements build partner nation capacity—including infrastructure, equipment, and skilled personnel—to prevent, detect, and respond to disease outbreaks. At the early stages of the Zika outbreak, the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 6 (NAMRU-6), based in Peru, established research sites in partnership with Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras,



The U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 6, located in Lima, Peru, prevents, detects and responds to disease outbreaks, in particular, mosquito-borne illness to include Zika, dengue fever and chikungunya. (Courtesy Photo)

Paraguay, Bolivia, Venezuela, and Peru to actively support partner nation Zika response efforts. We also implemented a disease surveillance tool that strengthens Honduras' capabilities to address global health threats, and are working with Guatemala to do the same this year.

Many of our capacity-building efforts would not be possible without the dedication of our Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve forces, especially in our Components and the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP). Last year, the partnership between the Florida National Guard and Barbados strengthened the Barbadian government's ability to respond to natural disasters with a focus on critical infrastructure and interagency

USSOUTHCOM is proud of the newest SPP partnership between Argentina and Georgia's National Guard, our 23rd State Partnership.

collaboration. Massachusetts' partnership with Paraguay allows governmental agencies to access outlying communities that are often far from first responders. We appreciate the support Congress provides to SPP, which enables us to leverage the strength of our National Guard.

Empowering public-private collaboration. In addition to collaborating with our interagency and regional partners, we also seek to build a culture of crisis management and trust across our network of non-governmental partners. During the lead-up to the Rio Olympics, we partnered with international cruise lines and law enforcement agencies to share information about potential threats and ensure security protocols were in place. We are beginning work with the College of William & Mary's Violent International Political Conflict and Terrorism (VIPCAT) lab to help predict violence in partner nations, assess deterrence option effectiveness, and forecast tactical successes. We also regularly join chaplains in our partner nation militaries to engage religious leaders in the region about their role in disaster recovery and potential opportunities to work together when crisis hits.

Led by U.S. Army South and U.S. Air Forces Southern/12th Air Force, our BEYOND THE HORIZON and NEW HORIZONS humanitarian and civic assistance exercises incorporated more than 2,000 U.S., partner nation, and public/private participants from seven nations. This network

treated nearly 30,000 patients, conducted 242 surgeries, and constructed schools and clinics in remote areas. Similarly, our training missions like JTF-Bravo's medical engagements and CONTINUING PROMISE bring together U.S. military personnel, partner nation forces and civilian volunteers to treat tens of thousands of the region's citizens. We are also building basic infrastructure like schools, medical clinics, and emergency operations centers and warehouses for relief supplies. These activities provide training opportunities for our own personnel, while also improving the ability of our partners to provide essential services to their citizens and meet



USSOUTHCOM coordinated the donation of 600 pairs of shoes from the Shuzz Fund during the 2016 NEW HORIZONS exercise. (Photo by Ms. Tatiana Escudero, USSOUTHCOM)

Last year we integrated 18 different U.S. and regional NGO, private sector, and academic organizations into various exercises and humanitarian missions. In total, these groups provided \$2.5 million in gifts-in-kind donations of services and goods like medicine and food.

their humanitarian needs
during a disaster or
emergency response,

enhancing the legitimacy of regional governments.

Building relationships to meet global challenges. Whether we're remaining vigilant of the activities of Russia, China, and Iran, fostering greater regional and multinational cooperation against shared challenges, or reinforcing the rules-based international order, security partnerships are the foundation of everything we do. These partnerships—based on shared values, mutual respect, and principled U.S. and regional leadership—ensure our hemisphere remains a beacon of peace and prosperity.

Strengthening interagency partnerships. Over the past year we have expanded our support to our interagency partners and fellow Combatant Commands to address the global challenges of Russia, China, and Iran. We work with the Intelligence Community and our diplomatic colleagues to build a better shared understanding of what they intend by their actions and how their activities in Latin America advance their respective global strategies. We routinely share information with U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), and USCENTCOM on issues of mutual interest and concern. We also contribute to Department of Defense-wide deliberations on our strategic approach to the Russian problem set, and to the USPACOM-led China Strategic Initiative (CSI) to inform whole-of-government efforts. In the coming year, USSOUTHCOM and USPACOM will host a meeting with our Allies and partners in Southeast Asia and South America to share information on Asia-Pacific security and transregional threat networks.

Enabling partner nations. While our capacity building efforts help partner nations address immediate threats, over time we seek to encourage a network of capable partners who contribute to international security and advance shared principles like good governance and human rights. Chile is a regular participant in USPACOM's annual RIMPAC exercise and will assume a greater exercise leadership role in the future. Colombia is leading an effort to integrate a block of Pacific Alliance nations into the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, and is expanding defense cooperation with South Korea, Japan, and potentially Vietnam. Colombia has entered into a partnership agreement with NATO, and we are working closely together on deepening this cooperation. Brazil is deepening its maritime security cooperation with West Africa, focusing on countering illicit trade between the South American and African continents. Many nations in the hemisphere have joined many other regional leaders in supporting UN peacekeeping operations around the world, including the UN mission in Haiti. Through the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), we have helped sustain critical partner capabilities for Guatemala and Uruguay peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti; helped El Salvador deploy helicopters to the UN mission in Mali; and supported Peruvian airfield engineers to the Central African Republic.



*A Colombian demining team conducting demining drills.
(U.S. Army South photo)*

In Colombia, the 52-year conflict has also left the country among the world's most heavily contaminated by landmines, improvised explosive devices (IED), and unexploded ordnance (UXO), which affect 31 of Colombia's 32 departments. As part of an interagency effort,

USSOUTHCOM's Humanitarian Mine Action

program provides ‘train-the-trainer’ courses to instructors at the Colombian military’s International Demining Training Center (CIDES), helping meet the Colombian government’s goal by training 41 Army Platoons and 5 Marine Platoons. In this effort we are joined by the Department of State and the twenty other countries and European Union that came together as part of the Global Demining Initiative for Colombia. Humanitarian demining will spare thousands of additional victims, facilitate land restitution and resettlement of internally displaced persons, and help lay a foundation for rural economic opportunity—all essential steps for this valued partner to consolidate lasting peace. As they work through this process, Colombia and the Colombian people are counting on our steadfast commitment, and I thank the Congress for its continued support to this important bilateral partnership.

We also promote the continued professionalization of regional defense and security institutions. Transparent, accountable militaries and security forces help reinforce good governance by being responsive to civil authority and respectful of the rule of law. They are also better able to resist unwelcome coercive pressure by state (and non-state) actors. We have identified four key military imperatives to enhance professionalism in militaries across the region: respect for human rights; the institutionalization of a culture of enhanced ‘jointness;’⁵ the development of a professional non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps; and the pragmatic integration of gender perspectives into military operations. We consider these “imperatives,” as these interlocking, interdependent, and mutually supporting characteristics are the hallmarks of modern security forces, the foundation for successful coalition operations, and the bedrock of legitimacy with civilian populations.

⁵ As part of enhanced ‘jointness’ we encourage our partners to embrace inter-service, interagency, and inter-organizational mindsets.

Since its creation, the IADC has graduated 2,732 students from 26 nations. Alumni from the region include 3 presidents, 31 Ministers of State, 11 senior level government officials, and 775 generals and admirals.

We advance these four areas in several ways. Now in its 20th year, our landmark Human Rights Initiative brings together representatives of military, security forces, civilian government, and civil society to work together to develop and strengthen human rights programs within the region's armed forces. We continue to see significant progress in this area; Guatemala recently announced its military will begin to withdraw from civilian policing duties, an important step heralded by many human rights NGOs. Educational institutions like the Inter-American Defense College (IADC), the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, and the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) help our partners institutionalize these concepts and build their own network of civilian and military defense professionals. In Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, Guatemala, Chile, and Colombia, our Defense Institution Building and Defense Institution Reform Initiative programs promote the development of effective institutions that embrace interagency, joint, and public-private approaches.

Through our NCO development program, we supported the development of a Senior NCO Course in the Dominican Republic; the first designated Sergeant Major of the Army for Brazil and Chile; and joint senior enlisted meetings across multiple countries. We have also brought on a dedicated combat-proven Gender Integration Advisor to promote the inclusion of diverse perspectives in partner nation military operations. As part of this effort, we will host our second Women in the Military Conference in Guatemala, which will focus on effectively integrating fully trained and qualified military women into operational and peacekeeping units.

Empowering public-private collaboration. We routinely engage with U.S. and regional academic centers and the private sector to discuss the implications of Chinese, Russian, and

Iranian engagement in the region. This network of experts, economists, and business representatives can also help us, and our partners in the region, better understand potentially exploitative behavior by state and non-state actors alike. We also hold regular dialogues with members of the human rights community, including routine outreach to influential (and often critical) NGOs. This frank exchange of perspectives helps us better understand and address NGO concerns, and has also led to improved NGO awareness and support of USSOUTHCOM's mission and human rights efforts.

Our no-fail mission: detention operations. Although most of our efforts are focused on engaging with our partners in Latin America, we also continue the safe, humane, legal, and transparent care and custody of the remaining detainees at JTF-GTMO. As many members of Congress have witnessed firsthand, the medical and guard force at JTF-GTMO are not merely *caring* for these detainees; they are providing the *best of care*. Our troops in close contact with detainees face periodic assaults and threats to them and their families, yet they remain steadfast in their principled care and custody role. Every day they demonstrate the same discipline, professionalism, and integrity as they confront the same dangerous adversaries as our men and women fighting in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere around the world. I know this Committee, our Secretary of Defense, and our President applaud their commitment and share my pride in



An estimated 580 troops live in containerized housing units manufactured in 2006 and 2008. All units have exceeded their economic life of five to seven years. Common problems with the units are roof leaks, plumbing failures and mold growth. (Courtesy Photo)

these young troops serving in this enormously sensitive and demanding mission, and we thank you for your continued support.

INITIATIVES: HARNESSING INNOVATION & TAKING CARE OF OUR PEOPLE

To support our efforts, we've dedicated ourselves to becoming a platform for experimentation and innovation. We actively collaborate with our partner nations and the Services, and the defense technology enterprise, including the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering and the Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx), private industry, and academia to test a range of technologies in the region. These collaborations have yielded some promising and ongoing experimentation with unmanned platforms, advanced sensor and communications systems, and small spacecraft technologies.

In addition to embracing a culture of innovation, we're implementing several initiatives to improve how we support our team members. We deeply value the investment made by our partners in strengthening hemispheric cooperation by placing foreign liaison officers in our headquarters and subordinate staffs. We do not take those partnerships for granted, and are doing everything we can to strengthen and deepen them. We now include our partner nation liaison officers in many of our operations and intelligence briefings. Along those same lines, we are also expanding the use of communication platforms in our multinational exercises to improve real-time information sharing with participating partner nations and Allies.

At USSOUTHCOM our people are more than just our most important asset; our people are largely our *only* assets and they are absolutely essential to our ability to do our mission. Previous reductions have had a disproportionate impact on our ability to engage with the region and within the U.S. government. As an example, without intervention or staff realignment, we will soon have no liaisons placed with several key interagency partners—something I'm

committed to fixing. So while we are not seeking to expand our headquarters staff, we are seeking to strengthen it. In an effort to improve interagency integration, we are committed to finding the right people from within our headquarters to serve as liaison officers across different agencies in the U.S. government and in regional information-sharing centers. Not only does this improve awareness and collaboration, but also realigns our headquarters staff to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. We're also working to develop an agile workforce by equipping our team with skillsets and technologies needed to address complex challenges.

REQUIREMENTS

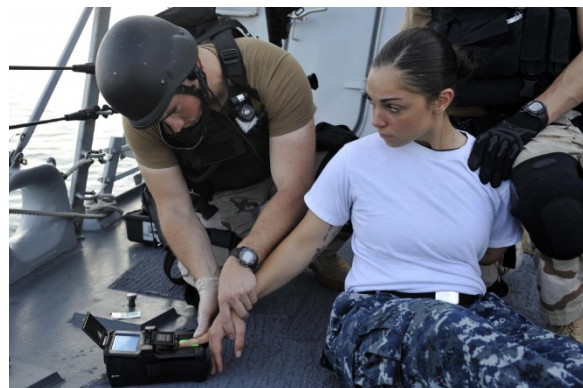
As we continue adapting to the evolving security environment and supporting efforts to enhance the defense-in-depth of our Southwest border, I will work with Congress to secure our southern approaches and enable our regional partners to address our common challenges. We appreciate the greater flexibility provided in the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act, as well as this Committee's efforts to codify the counterdrug authorities that are so critical to our efforts in the Western Hemisphere. We are concerned, however about some potential negative impacts these changes may have on our ability to equip our partner nations. We look forward to working with the Committee to ensure we minimize disruption to these effective programs that help build a layered defense of our homeland, and to discussing the best ways to support an effective counter-threat network approach.

As this Committee knows, USSOUTHCOM has historically received minimal allocated and assigned forces. Until capabilities like intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), maritime support platforms; and analysis of open source/publicly available information (PAI) no longer outpace supply, commercial alternatives will remain the only immediately feasible options available to USSOUTHCOM.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to provide a more detailed overview of our main requirements.

Countering threat networks. A critical element of dismantling threat networks involves affecting their financial and transportation sub-networks. Cocaine remains a source of enormous profit for many networks operating in the region, but we face significant limitations in stopping the deluge of drugs that reach our shores and streets. As this Committee knows, USSOUTHCOM has traditionally faced significant resource constraints. For the past several years, our Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and other force requirements have not been met due to competing global priorities. We have felt these impacts most acutely in our Detection and Monitoring (D&M) mission, where we have long received less than a quarter of our maritime and airborne requirements. The consequence is well-known to this Committee: although JIATF South detected a record amount of cocaine moving in the maritime domain last year, they were unable to target 75% of validated events due to a shortage of forces. That equates to hundreds of tons of additional cocaine on our streets, and nodes in that network that continue to operate rather than face disruption and prosecution. To that end, we greatly appreciate the additional funding from the Congress that allowed us to work with the U.S. Air Force to purchase contract aircraft to off-set the loss of Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA).

Our detection and monitoring challenges are due in part to the low number of U.S. Navy platforms available to support JIATF South's mission. Since 2007, Navy long and medium range ship allocation has steadily decreased. The last time we were above 1.0 was 2014—and



A biometrics machine, similar to this one used in a board, search and seizure exercise aboard the USS Jason Dunham, is used to confirm identity. This technology catches people using fraudulent passports to travel and exposes criminal records. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Devan B. King/Released)

not by much. Since 2015, when the Navy's frigates were decommissioned, we have averaged a Navy presence of less than .50. Under the Commandant's superb leadership, our Coast Guard partners are doing everything they can, punching well above their weight by helping us partially fulfill a portion of our Title 10 detection and monitoring obligations. The USCG, however, cannot be the indefinite bill-payer for our statutory mission. This Committee is well aware of the maritime platform gaps we have experienced for the past few years. In the near term, we are exploring non-traditional alternatives to fill these requirements until more Littoral Combat Ships are in the fleet and available for assignment to USSOUTHCOM.

To effectively counter threat networks, we need two types of tools: interoperable, multi-domain, tools that help us understand the environment, capture weak signals, and anticipate change (all-source intelligence capabilities and analysis); and tools that help us conduct sustained engagement and build capacity (Civil Affairs, MISO, medical teams, SOF capabilities, and SCO personnel). We also require biometrics equipment to identify and track individuals who may represent security threats; biometrics analytical capability to process, exploit and disseminate biometric collected data; and visualization technology to better coordinate and integrate operations with our partners. With these capabilities, we can do more than just chase after shifting trafficking routes or disrupt illicit commodities—we can have a more lasting and transformative effect countering the networks doing those activities. We also need staying power on land and at sea. A sustained Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) deployment and maritime forces would generate endurance and increase reach and impact in all of our counter-network operations. Given its dual use that supports both rapid response and countering threat networks, the SPMAGTF is extremely valuable, and we greatly appreciate Congressional support to the U.S. Marine Corps to resource this multi-mission force.

As the Congress takes steps to address border security, I urge Members not to forget about the Caribbean. Like our USNORTHCOM partners, we are concerned by the vulnerability of this “Third Border”—the Caribbean, where documented cocaine flow is the highest in 10 years. Improved security along the U.S.-Mexico border will likely increase security challenges in the Caribbean. Our island nation partners are ill-equipped to deal with an influx of threat networks and our force limitations hinder our ability to fully secure the Caribbean from illicit flows of SIAs, weapons, and narcotics.

On a related note, our current long-distance radar solution in the Caribbean and Central America—the Relocatable Over-The-Horizon Radar (ROTHR) radar system—faces operational challenges. I am becoming very concerned over the construction of several hundred wind turbines as part of wind farms in Virginia and Texas. These farms could, and likely will, adversely impact our radar systems that provide a critical detection and monitoring capability to track illicit aircraft. This interference will degrade our capability to use these same systems to detect and track threat network operations in the maritime domain. We are working within the Department of Defense and with developers and stakeholders to develop potential mitigation solutions and exploring alternative technical solutions. Current law, however, dictates the Department assume the operational risk as well as the cost burden for testing, modeling, and risk mitigation for these types of projects—a potentially unlimited drain on resources.

I would also like to go on record to express my unqualified support for resourcing our U.S. law enforcement, diplomatic, and development partners. Effectively securing our southern approaches requires a true team effort. The Department of Defense is just one contributor to the counter-network fight in the Caribbean and Americas; DHS, the Department of Justice, the Department of State, the USAID, and members of our Intelligence Community are key for any

lasting success. Degrading threat networks requires effective partner nation law enforcement, judicial, and prison systems. A balanced package that includes assistance to strengthen governance, economic development, intelligence, and security is needed, as well as comprehensive efforts to stem our country's insatiable demand for illicit goods.

Preparing to and responding to disasters and crises. Unfortunately, previous budget constraints on the Department of Defense's Combatant Commanders Exercise and Engagement (CE2) Program have forced us to reduce or significantly de-scope our exercise program. This impacts the readiness of our force and limits our ability to build and strengthen relationships. It's also a missed opportunity to project U.S. presence, which can affect the calculations of threat networks and potential competitors alike.

When it comes to presence, the Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay plays a major role in the interception, screening, and repatriation of migrants as well as a place of protection for those who have a credible fear of persecution. It is also a critical distribution and staging area for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in the Caribbean, as well as logistical support for forces conducting our detection and monitoring mission. Similarly, Soto Cano Air Base—which houses JTF-Bravo, Special Operations Forces, and the SPMAGTF headquarters—provides our only forward presence in Central America and allows us to efficiently support willing regional partners, provide continuous, adaptive support to counter-network operations, and respond immediately to natural disasters. Both these assets are critical to USSOUTHCOM, and we thank the Committee for its support to their continued operations and for the additional MILCON to address migrant operations at Guantanamo.

Given the minimal forces traditionally allocated to USSOUTHCOM, it would be impossible for us to respond effectively to a crisis absent the depth and breadth of expertise

available via U.S. Transportation Command's Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC). I would like to go on record expressing my unqualified support for this capability. Any move to disestablish and redistribute those resources back to individual Combatant Commands could deprive USSOUTHCOM of this invaluable resource.

As this Committee knows, the U.S. military's unique capabilities, while exceptional, play a small role of short duration in any disaster response. We appreciate the support of the Congress to USAID, whose OFDA office provides our nation's frontline responders. These partners are the appropriate lead for addressing humanitarian crises and long-term development challenges that affect regional stability.

Building relationships to meet global challenges. Programs like Foreign Military Financing (FMF), Foreign Military Sales (FMS), and International Military Education and Training (IMET) will remain foundational tools for building partner capacity, sustaining trust, and improving interoperability. Compared with the U.S. defense industry, Russian and Chinese arms are less reliable, significantly less capable, and come with almost non-existent maintenance or logistical support. They beat us handily, however, when it comes to faster and more efficient procurement.

IMET is a critical program in this region that helps build a network of former students who understand our approach, share our values, and are willing and eager to work with us. Every seat in one of our courses is an opportunity to build partnerships with a new generation of leaders. The IMET experience also demonstrates that what we build lasts and that we are committed to the long-term investment of developing strong regional institutions.

Detention Operations. Troop housing for our JTF-Guantanamo forces remains a priority concern. The facilities still fail to meet standards, and routinely suffer leaks and structural

damage with every passing storm. While we escaped the brunt of Hurricane Matthew last year, a direct hit (even by a Category 2 storm) will have significant consequences. Our men and women deserve better.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, some may ask if we can afford to remain engaged in Latin America, especially given the scope of challenges we face across the world. I believe, quite frankly, that we can't afford not to. To echo Secretary Mattis' statements during his confirmation hearing, "islands of stability in our hemisphere are under attack by non-state actors and nations that mistakenly see their security in the insecurity of others."⁶ As I said earlier, when it comes to this region, we have a choice. With the support of the Members of this Committee, I am confident we will choose wisely. Thank you for your continued support to the men and women of USSOUTHCOM as they work to defend our southern approaches. I stand ready to answer your questions and look forward to our discussion.

⁶ James N. Mattis, Nomination Hearing Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee