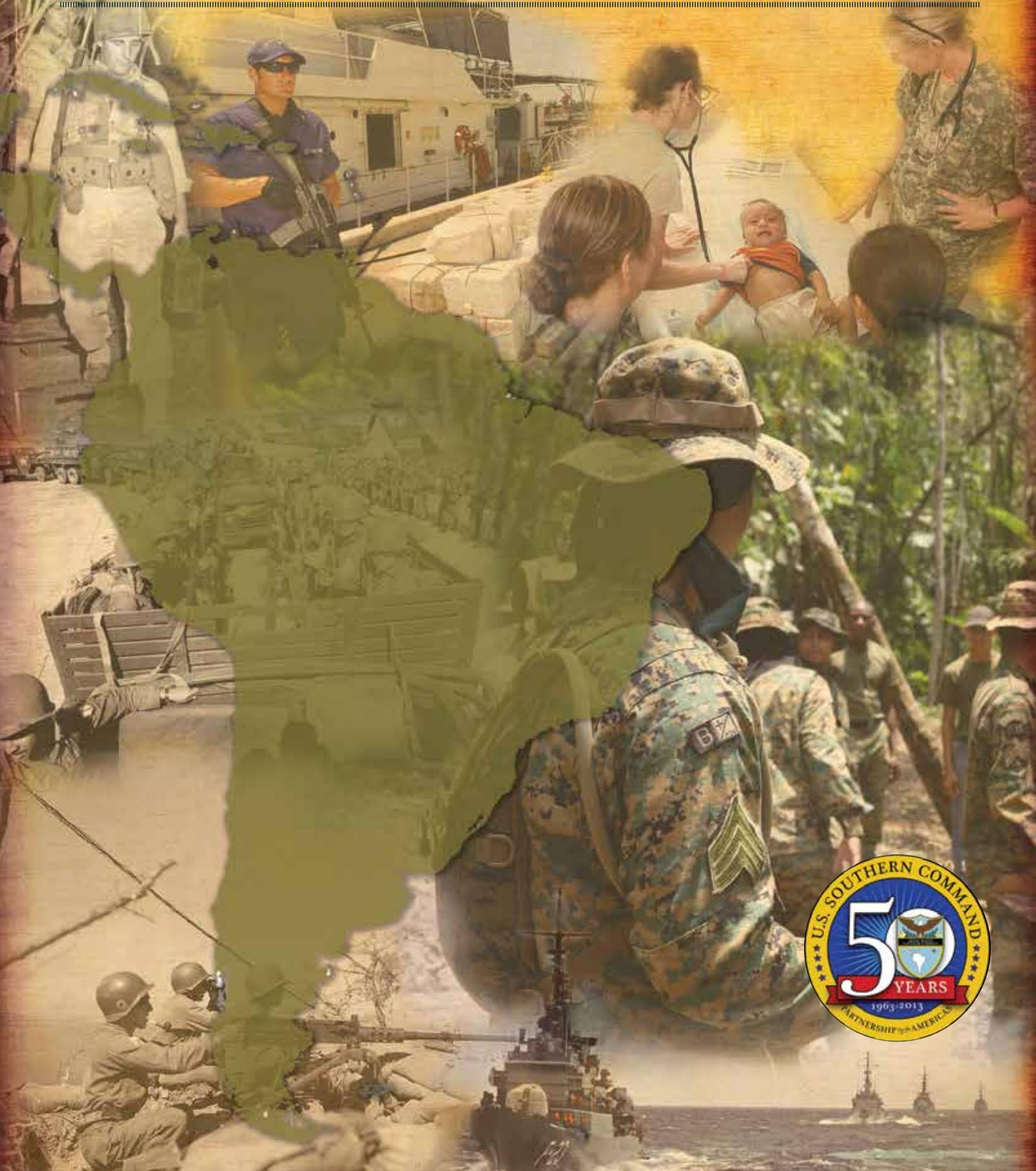


A HALF-CENTURY OF SERVICE

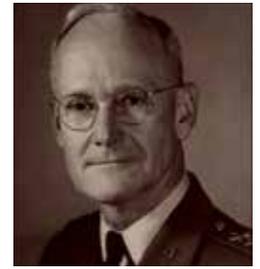
SOUTHCOM



Former SOUTHCOM Commanders



Gen. Andrew P. O'Meara
USA, June 1963 – Feb. 1965



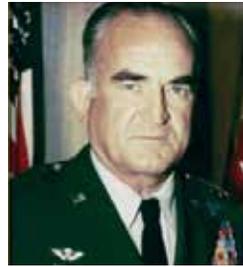
Gen. Robert W. Porter, Jr.
USA, Feb. 1965 – Feb. 1969



Gen. George R. Mather
USA, Feb. 1969 – Sept. 1971



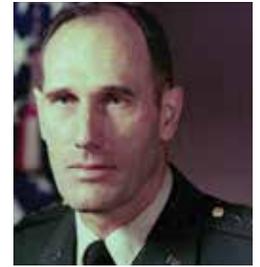
Gen. George V. Underwood
USA, Sept. 1971 – Jan. 1973



Gen. William B. Rosson
USA, Jan. 1973 – July 1975



Lt. Gen. Dennis P. McAuliffe
USA, Aug. 1975 – Sept. 1979



Lt. Gen. Wallace H. Nutting
USA, Oct. 1979 – May 1983



Gen. Paul F. Gorman
USA, May 1983 – March 1985



Gen. John R. Galvin
USA, March 1985 – June 1987



Gen. Frederick F. Woerner
USA, June 1987 – July 1989



Gen. Maxwell R. Thurman
USA, Sept. 1989 – Nov. 1990



Gen. George A. Joulwan
USA, Nov. 1990 – Nov. 1993



Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey
USA, Feb. 1994 – Feb. 1996



Gen. Wesley K. Clark
USA, July 1996 – July 1997



Gen. Charles E. Wilhelm
USMC, Sept. 1997 – Sept. 2000



Gen. Peter Pace
USMC, Sept. 2000 – Sept. 2001



Maj. Gen. Gary D. Speer
(Acting), USA, Oct. 2001 – Aug. 2002



Gen. James T. Hill
USA, Aug. 2002 – Nov. 2004



Gen. Bantz J. Craddock
USA, Nov. 2004 – Oct. 2006



Adm. James G. Stavridis
USN, Oct. 2006 – June 2009



Gen. Douglas M. Fraser
USAF, Oct. 2009 – Nov. 2012



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
 UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND
 OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER
 9301 NW 33RD STREET
 DORAL, FL 33172-1202

I am honored to serve as Combatant Commander as U.S. Southern Command celebrates its 50th anniversary. I hope you enjoy reading about the command's accomplishments, which are a reflection of the outstanding service members and civilian employees who work tirelessly to support our mission.

A descendent of U.S. military units dispatched to Panama in the early 20th Century, U.S. Southern Command's history as a unified military headquarters began during World War II, when U.S. planners established the U.S. Caribbean Defense Command. During the 1950s, the command's responsibility shifted from U.S. military missions in the Caribbean basin to operations focused in Central and South America. On June 11, 1963, the command was formally designated by its current name: U.S. Southern Command.

U.S. Southern Command's mission has evolved over the ensuing decades. Originally established to defend the Panama Canal and surrounding areas during WWII, today U.S. Southern Command is responsible for providing contingency planning, operations, and security cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean. Now headquartered in Miami, Florida, U.S. Southern Command focuses on building bilateral and multilateral security relationships that enhance the defense of the United States and the security of the region.

The nations of Latin America and the Caribbean have also undergone a profound transformation over the past 50 years, with the past decade of globalization bringing deeper integration between the nations in our hemisphere. Today, the United States is more economically and culturally connected to Latin America and the Caribbean than ever before.

Geographic proximity and the economic, cultural, and social interconnections of the region to the United States also mean we share many of the same challenges. U.S. Southern Command engages with regional security and defense forces to address an array of issues, including drug and other illicit trafficking, disaster response, terrorism, and the security of the global commons. We are committed to working with our partners, both in the region and in the U.S. government, to build a strong, secure, integrated system of defense cooperation based on shared values, respect for human rights, and effective, accountable, democratic governance.



As we look ahead to the next 50 years, I believe we have a unique and exciting opportunity: to begin a new era of engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean, to reinvigorate our relationships, and to begin a new phase in our partnership—a Partnership with the Americas.

John F. Kelly
General, U.S. Marine Corps

SOUTHCOM History

By John D. Gresham

Beginnings

For centuries, strategists and merchants in America, Great Britain, and elsewhere had dreamed of a canal joining the Atlantic and Pacific across the narrow land bridge of the Isthmus of Panama. In the 1880s, a French company began construction, but technical problems and epidemic tropical disease left it bankrupt. Panama was then a province of Colombia, wracked by chronic unrest and rebellion; in 1885, a battalion of U.S. Marines landed at Colón to restore order after rebels burned the town and took Americans hostage. In 1903, Panama declared independence, with U.S. backing. The United States recognized Panamanian independence on Nov. 6, and a treaty with the new government was signed on Nov. 18, giving the United States sovereignty over a Canal Zone 10 miles wide. Eleven years later, on Aug. 15, 1914, the canal officially opened to traffic, reshaping American maritime strategy and endowing the region with a much greater strategic value.

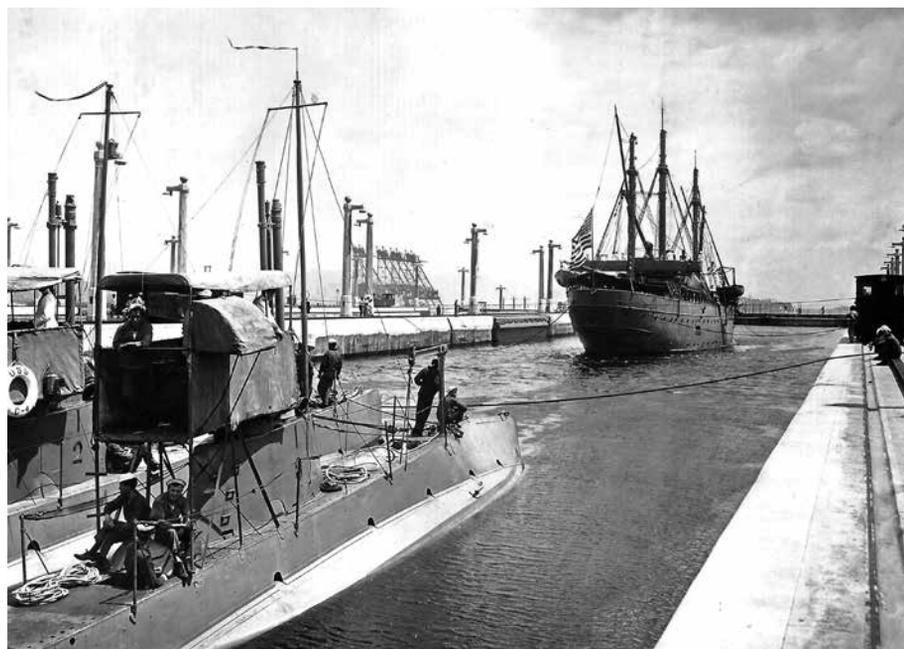
In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt had added his own corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. He asserted that the United States would enforce order in a troubled hemisphere to “exercise international police power in flagrant cases of ... wrongdoing or impotence.” European banks commonly extended unrealistic loans to regional leaders, expecting their own governments to enforce repayment through “gunboat diplomacy.” When Venezuela defaulted on German loans and ignored a German ultimatum demanding payment, the German navy blockaded the country, sank Venezuelan ships, shelled forts along its coastline, and landed troops. Roosevelt, worried that economic debt could become a pretext for the establishment of European bases in the Americas, pushed the Germans

into arbitration with Venezuela and declared that the United States would intervene, as a last resort, to ensure that other nations in the Western Hemisphere fulfilled their obligations to international creditors. The following two decades saw Marine landings and U.S. occupation in Nicaragua (1909-1933), Honduras (1912), Haiti (1915-1934), and the Dominican Republic (1916-1924) for a variety of reasons. In addition, in 1916, Denmark sold the islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix to the United States, adding to American interests in the Caribbean.

The years between World War I and World War II did little to change U.S. relations with Latin America. Along with continued interventions in the region, American business interests continued to grow. Just before World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the U.S. Caribbean Defense Command (1941-1947), an early version of a unified military organization designed to defend the Panama Canal and surrounding areas. Based in Panama, the command organized

and implemented a regional defense program that included antisubmarine and counterespionage operations and established U.S. military training missions throughout Latin America. It also distributed military equipment to regional partners through the Lend-Lease program, and opened U.S. service schools to Latin American soldiers, sailors, and aviators. At the height of World War II, the United States had assigned 135,000 uniformed personnel to duty stations in Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately half of whom were under the direct control of the U.S. Caribbean Defense Command.

U.S. submarines, with tender ship *USS Severn*, pass through the Panama Canal's Gatun Locks April 15, 1914. A major engineering achievement, the construction of the Panama Canal, which opened in 1914, created new lines of commerce, communication, and defense. It occupied a central place in U.S. global strategy during the 20th century.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PANAMA CANAL COMPANY, NARA

During the war, Latin American nations not only provided the U.S. military bases, both to hunt German U-boats and provide transport links to West Africa, but a number also joined the Allied war effort. The Brazilian Expeditionary Force of more than 25,000 troops, for example, fought alongside U.S. forces in Italy during 1944-1945.

The Cold War and Expanded Responsibilities

After World War II, U.S. strategy in the region evolved beyond defense of the Panama Canal to embrace broader security responsibilities in Central and South America. U.S. Caribbean Defense Command therefore became U.S. Caribbean Command (CARIBCOM) in 1947. With the name change came an expansion of the command's area of responsibility (AOR) to include Central America (excluding Mexico), South America, the Caribbean Sea and islands, and a portion of the Pacific from the Mexico-Guatemala border to the Peru-Ecuador border. CARIBCOM's mission set included the security of U.S. forces in Panama and the region, along with defense of the Panama Canal and its maritime approaches, but also reflected the beginning of the Cold War and growing threat of communist-backed insurgencies in the region. Under the U.S. government's Military Assistance Program, begun in 1951, military ties between the United States and nations of the region were strengthened to improve readiness. CARIBCOM only rarely had to respond to military threats during this period, especially after the Pentagon handed over responsibility for much of the Caribbean to the U.S. Atlantic Command (LANTCOM) in 1956. However, the region continued to be prone to natural disasters, and disaster relief – a secondary CARIBCOM mission – came to the fore. In 1949, Ecuador suffered a magnitude 6.8 earthquake, and the command coordinated an airlift of 41 tons of relief supplies to affected areas. In March 1953, CARIBCOM returned to Ecuador after severe flooding severed road and rail links



U.S. infantrymen carry ammunition to a machine gun position, Panama, October 1942.

between the country's two major cities, Quito and Guayaquil. The command airlifted 657 tons of relief supplies from the Canal Zone to Ecuador, and established an air bridge between the two cities until U.S. Army combat engineers could clear roadways and repair rail lines. Nearly a year and a half later, in September 1954, CARIBCOM evacuated victims and coordinated delivery and distribution of 50 tons of relief supplies and water purification equipment after flooding from Tropical Storm Gilda destroyed thousands of acres of banana plantations and left 3,000 homeless. In October 1954, the command, coordinating with LANTCOM, delivered

In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt had added his own corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. He asserted that the United States would enforce order in a troubled hemisphere to “exercise international police power in flagrant cases of ... wrongdoing or impotence.”

relief supplies to Haiti after Hurricane Hazel. The following year, CARIBCOM coordinated an airlift of relief supplies to Costa Rica after heavy flooding, as it did in Colombia in November 1955. In January 1956, the command airlifted several tons of medicine and medical equipment to aid Argentina during a polio epidemic. In 1960, CARIBCOM went to the aid of Peru (earthquake), Brazil (flooding), and Chile (earthquake).

The first UNITAS (United International Anti-submarine) exercise, initially coordinated by LANTCOM, was also held in 1960. This cooperative annual exercise joining the navies of the Americas and the Caribbean has continued ever since. The initial intent of UNITAS – training to better defend the hemisphere against the Soviet threat – has changed over the intervening years to an exercise based on training together to counter the challenges of today.

The arrival of President John F. Kennedy in the White House in 1961 forever changed American relations with Latin America. The abortive Bay of Pigs Invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis focused American attention on the proximity of a socialist Cuba in the Caribbean, and the administration's Alliance for Progress program sought to aid development in Latin America in order to begin to remedy widespread poverty and income inequality that could inflame pro-communist movements.

In an attempt to better coordinate military operations in Latin America, the Kennedy administration decided to make CARIBCOM into a unified command focused on protecting U.S. interests in the region. The CARIBCOM designation improperly identified a command whose Caribbean responsibility had been handed to LANTCOM and whose dominant concerns now rested with Central and South America. On June 11, 1963, the administration redesignated CARIBCOM as U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). Concurrently, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara elevated SOUTHCOM to a four-star command. Defense of the Panama Canal (where the command was based) remained SOUTHCOM's top priority, but the

1963-1965 SOUTHCOM established

1965-1969 Intervention in Dominican Republic



A U.S. military adviser instructs students on the use of engineering equipment in Bolivia, July 1963. During World War II and the early years of the Cold War, U.S. military efforts in Latin America concentrated on conventional security matters. In the 1960s, the U.S. military focus shifted toward civic action and counterinsurgency programs.

Honduran soldiers arrive in the Dominican Republic, 1965.

command's mission set expanded to include contingency planning for Cold War activities, administering the U.S. foreign Military Assistance Program in Latin America, and undertaking civic action projects with partner-nation personnel to aid regional development under the Alliance for Progress initiative.

From the early 1960s, military assistance evolved from preparing for conventional warfare to concentrating on civic action and counterinsurgency. One of the first flashpoints occurred in the Dominican Republic in the early 1960s, a result of the disputed national elections following the assassination of dictator Rafael Trujillo. By early 1965, the constitutional government faction had requested U.S. military assistance, which President Lyndon B. Johnson approved over the objections of virtually all of his civilian and military foreign

policy advisers. On April 28, 1965, elements of XVIII Airborne Corps, including units of the 82nd Airborne Division and 7th Special Forces Group, began a yearlong occupation of the Dominican Republic under Operation Power Pack. Following negotiation of a peace settlement between the opposing parties, the last U.S. personnel left the country in 1966. A multinational peacekeeping force, drawn from member states of the Organization of American States (OAS), replaced them. The peacekeeping operation, known as Operation Push Ahead, included troops from Brazil, Honduras, Paraguay, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua.

Disaster relief operations continued as always. SOUTHCOM responded to fires in Brazil in 1963; returned with food and medical supplies after flooding in 1964; airlifted medical teams and supplies to Bolivia in 1964 during an epidemic of hemorrhagic fever; and responded at "home" when Panama was lashed by a tropical storm. From 1965-1968, SOUTHCOM provided assistance following earthquakes that struck Chile, El Salvador, Peru, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. Throughout the decade, the command responded to flooding, drought, volcanic eruptions, and other natural disasters.

A Cemented Role Amid Latin American Unrest

Despite SOUTHCOM's elevation of status under the Kennedy administration, over the next decade, senior administration and military leaders, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, considered disestablishing SOUTHCOM in an effort to reduce America's military footprint around the globe. At one point, SOUTHCOM was downgraded to a three-star command status, and its various service component commands were eliminated. By the mid-1970s, SOUTHCOM's mission set was being rapidly drawn down, limited mostly to defense of the Panama Canal, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and contingency planning. Actual forces assigned to the command were always limited, and personnel and assets frequently had to be borrowed from other regional commands to fulfill specific missions. Despite this, SOUTHCOM was a busy and vital place to be assigned during the Cold War, especially with regard to the threat of national or regional insurgencies in civil wars.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION



A U.S. medic examines a Panamanian boy during a medical training exercise in Panama, April 1974.

For Panama, the most notable event of the '70s was the signing of the Panama Canal Treaties by U.S. President James E. "Jimmy" Carter and Panamanian Chief of Government Gen. Omar Torrijos in 1977, which arranged for the handover of the canal to Panama in 2000. Implementation began in October 1979, but elsewhere in the region, less peaceful events were taking place. In Nicaragua, the Sandinista uprising began in July 1979, and in October, a civil war began in El Salvador between the civil-military government backed by the United States and a coalition of five leftist guerrilla groups. Around the same time, cocaine cartels began their rise in Colombia as well as in the mountainous regions of Peru and Bolivia. Peru was also combating the rise of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) communist insurgency.

By the early 1980s, the combined importance of these developments removed any remaining thoughts of standing down SOUTHCOM. The Reagan administration, in fact, decided early on to revitalize military



President James E. "Jimmy" Carter, Organization of American States Secretary General Alejandro Orfila, and Gen. Omar Torrijos (far right) sign the Panama Canal Treaties in Washington, D.C., September 1977.

influence in the region, and in October 1983, the Joint Chiefs of Staff promulgated a new Unified Command Plan that restored SOUTHCOM to a four-star billet. They further enhanced the command's authority by restoring responsibility for contingency planning of Cold War operations in Latin America. The Joint Chiefs also added a new mission of conducting contingency planning for counternarcotics activities, and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief was reduced to a secondary mission. Finally, the service chiefs also reactivated major subordinate commands as SOUTHCOM components. It was an important restoration of prestige, responsibility, and authority for the command. Along with an increase in military assistance, training and exercises accelerated. In 1985 alone, SOUTHCOM

At one point, SOUTHCOM was downgraded to a three-star command status, and its various service component commands were eliminated.

participated in 13 joint training exercises with Latin American militaries. Highlighting the move toward counterinsurgency in 1986, the United States activated Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH) to organize and conduct special operations in the theater. U.S. troops also acted as peacekeepers in the region as Nicaragua's civil war spilled over into Honduras, and in March 1987, 3,200 U.S. troops were deployed to stabilize the border between the two countries.

While SOUTHCOM was not tested with any large contingency operations in the early 1980s, it was not immune from those operations run by other regional commands. In particular, LANTCOM had run Operation Urgent Fury into Grenada in 1983. The operation was significant in that it exposed a number of weaknesses in the existing Unified Command Plan as well as multiservice ("joint") command, control, communications, and intelligence operations.

1980-1984 Intervention in Grenada



82nd Airborne artillery personnel load and fire M102 105 mm howitzers during Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada.

Taken together with failed missions such as Operation Eagle Claw (Iran, 1980) and the casualties taken from the barracks bombing in Beirut, Lebanon (1982 to 1984), these issues began by the mid-1980s to drive a movement in the Congress for reform of the Department of Defense (DoD) and the military. The result was the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reform Act (1986) and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment (1987), which reorganized the way America would go to war into the next century.

As part of the defense reforms enacted by Congress, SOUTHCOM was redefined as a Unified Combatant Command (UCC), which enhanced operational flexibility and the ability to influence regional policy in Latin America, as well as granting more autonomy in new systems procurements by the DoD. These reforms came at an opportune time, as a problem in Central America reached crisis proportions: Gen. Manuel Noriega in Panama. Once a strong ally of the United States in the region, by the late 1980s Noriega had become deeply

corrupt and supportive of the narcotics trade moving up from South America. He also had become quite hostile toward the United States, requesting and receiving military aid from Cuba, Nicaragua, and Libya. In light of the upcoming transfer of the Panama Canal to Panamanian control, the U.S. government began to view Noriega as both a criminal and a threat to American interests. When he was indicted by the U.S. Justice Department for narcotics trafficking, the already sour relationship between America and Panama became hostile.

In 1989, Noriega began to actively harass U.S. military and civilian personnel in the Canal Zone, causing the new American president, George H.W. Bush, and his administration to develop contingency plans for a possible invasion of Panama and the removal of Noriega from office. A new SOUTHCOM commander, Gen. Maxwell R. Thurman, U.S. Army, was assigned to complete the planning and execute the operation if required. During 1989, the command expanded its counterdrug operations throughout the region, but the situation in Panama only worsened. By late 1989, conditions had grown so dire that Bush finally ordered the execution of Operation Just Cause, and on Dec. 20, 1989, combat forces of the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy,

1985-1989 Toppling the Noriega regime



Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry, parachute from a C-130E Hercules aircraft into a drop zone outside the city to conduct operations in support of Operation Just Cause in Panama in 1989.

U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Army rapidly took over Panama. Though initially the fighting was intense, overall casualties on both sides were light. Noriega was taken into custody for trial and eventual incarceration for his drug trafficking.

Just Cause was the largest operation to date by SOUTHCOM, in the first test of the new operational rules set down by Goldwater-Nichols. It provided important lessons for future operations, including operations by U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) against Iraq in Southwest Asia. SOUTHCOM now was an equal to the other U.S. combatant commands in standing, if not in funding, ready to take its place in future post-Cold War military operations.

The 1990s: Haiti, Colombia, and the Growing Pains of Democracy

Following the first round of U.S. post-Cold War military operations,



A Super Étendard aircraft of the Argentine navy takes part in touch-and-go landings on the flight deck of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) in 1990.

U.S. Southern Command Headquarters moved into the Maxwell R. Thurman Building, Miami-Doral, Fla., in September 1997. Thurman served as commander, U.S. Southern Command, during Operation Just Cause.

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such as Just Cause and Desert Shield/Storm, the combatant commands spent the next decade participating in a variety of small but significant military operations across the globe. For SOUTHCOM, this meant a change in focus away from Cold War contingency operations to becoming a partner with other U.S. government agencies and departments to undo the tangle of American policy initiatives dating to the end of World War II. The emphasis on counterdrug efforts continued, and the command implemented a multinational initiative to synchronize Bolivian, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, and U.S. counterdrug operations. In 1994, Joint Interagency Task Force-South (a two-star intelligence fusion and planning operation located in Key West, Fla.) was stood up to plan, conduct, and direct interagency counterdrug operations in Latin America.

Other operations included humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as well as peacekeeping, including

Operation Uphold Democracy, a multinational intervention in Haiti in 1994 to remove a military regime that had ousted the democratically elected government, which stepped down peacefully. Follow-on peacekeeping, relief, and infrastructure-building operations lasted through March 1995. In addition, SOUTHCOM ran a vast array of multinational training and assistance operations in Latin America throughout the 1990s. Some of these, like UNITAS, were continuations of annual exercises dating back to the Cold War, and have continued to the present day. Other missions, like those run under the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program funded by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, though small in size and manpower footprint, greatly improve the professionalism and skills of a number of Latin American military and internal security forces. But SOUTHCOM would face a long and tough, though ultimately worthwhile, fight alongside Colombia as it fought its war against the drug cartels and FARC (translates as the Revolutionary Army Forces of Colombia) insurgency.

Ever since the days of the “Cocaine Cowboys” of the 1980s, narcotics trafficking to the United States from South America had become a greater national

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problem and a genuine threat to the regional security of northern South America, Central America, and nations of the Caribbean. Every year, hundreds of tons of refined cocaine made their way north into the United States and Canada, generating billions of dollars in profits for drug producers and traffickers along with untold woe and violence in North America. Beginning in the late 1980s, the Reagan and Bush administrations made interdicting narcotics traffic a major priority for a variety of governmental agencies and departments. Included in this effort was SOUTHCOM. Late in 1988, the U.S. military’s active participation was expanded by the Bush administration through Public Law 100-456, which amended USC Title 10, Chapter 18. The changes required DoD “to serve as the lead agency for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States.” The Secretary of Defense

2000-2004 Supporting Colombia

2005-Present Interagency cooperation



Colombian riverine operations, 1999. The U.S. government supported Colombian state-building efforts through Plan Colombia.

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was now authorized not only to make available military equipment and facilities for law enforcement authorities, but also to train equipment maintenance and operation personnel.

Because the majority of the production and transport of illegal drugs took place in the SOUTHCOM AOR, the command took on the lion's share of the mission, partnering with nations in the region like Colombia to aid its internal efforts, as well as stepping up interdiction of drugs in transit on the high seas and in the air.

Colombia had been ravaged by an ongoing rural insurgency, which had been further complicated by the rise of a number of cocaine-producing cartels. In the early 1990s, the worst of these, the so-called "Medellín Cartel" headed by drug kingpin Pablo Escobar, was in virtual control of the country, and Colombia was on the verge of becoming a failed state. Following a request from the government of Colombia, in 1992 SOUTHCOM and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM)

dispatched a joint task force (JTF) along with personnel from the Drug Enforcement Administration and other departments, to help the Colombians hunt down and (hopefully) capture Escobar. The JTF faced an uphill battle against corruption, bribery, and the very real threat of violence from Escobar and his organization. Escobar had no scruples regarding violence to protect his drug empire, including blowing up an airliner and the Colombian Supreme Court, along with killing a presidential candidate.

Much of the U.S. effort centered around training and supporting a unit of the Colombian National Police force known as Search Bloc. Search Bloc had a single mission – the elimination of Escobar and his organization – and it would be a long and bloody task to bring Escobar to justice. Specialized signals intelligence units from both the United States and Colombia had to be brought in to help hunt down Escobar, who, by this time, was on the run and only communicating via radiotelephone. On Dec. 2, 1993, Search Bloc finally ran down Escobar in a suburb of Medellín. In the gun battle that followed, Search Bloc killed Escobar and a bodyguard, bringing his bloody reign of terror to an end. Sadly, however, the death of

Marines and sailors of Combat Logistics Battalion 24, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, offload three Haitian patients from an MH-60 helicopter, Feb. 5, 2010. The patients were transported from USNS Comfort.

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Escobar ended neither the insurgency nor the drug trade in Colombia, and it would take another decade to get control over both of those problems.

Meanwhile, on Jan. 1, 1996, the first part of a two-phased transition for SOUTHCOM began under a new Unified Command Plan laid out by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Under this plan, SOUTHCOM assumed responsibility and control for maritime waters around Central and South America out to the 12-mile limit. For the first time since the 1950s, SOUTHCOM had a maritime role in the Latin American AOR. On June 1, 1997, the second part of the new Unified Command Plan's transition gave SOUTHCOM operational responsibility for the Caribbean islands and waters – a region highly prone to natural disasters. This required the command to elevate humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to a primary mission, a task made easier by the relatively low level of conflict in the region. SOUTHCOM

U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND PHOTO / DOD PHOTO

headquarters also began relocation from Panama to Miami, Fla., a move that was completed on Sept. 26, 1997. After two particularly severe storms struck the Caribbean and Central America in 1998, SOUTHCOM responded with a massive transnational aid effort and coordinated more than 20,000 personnel carrying out disaster relief operations. One positive outgrowth of the disasters was renewed relations with Nicaragua, which had been strained at best.

The coming of the 21st century began a new era for SOUTHCOM, as American attention focused across the oceans following the terrorist attacks on 9/11. However, just because the command did not have a primary mission in the Global War on Terrorism (Operation Enduring Freedom) or the invasion of Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom) did not mean that SOUTHCOM was not a busy place in the early days of the new millennium. On the contrary, the continuing war against narcotics trafficking, one element of “transnational organized crime,” became even fiercer, with SOUTHCOM gaining real traction against the cartels but also shifting the fight elsewhere as a result of its success.

Unveiled by Colombian President Andrés Pastrana in 1999, Plan Colombia was a multinational effort to not only choke off the drug trade to North America and Europe, but also to deal with the long-term civil war that had been going on for decades between the government and the FARC, a leftist rebel insurgency group. This combined U.S./Colombian effort was designed, much like the effort with Search Bloc a decade earlier, to improve the capabilities and capacity of Colombian military and security forces, while at the same time providing sustained planning and support to help defeat both the FARC and the drug cartels. While much of this has taken place in Colombia itself, improved interdiction efforts thanks to Joint Interagency Task Force – South resulted in intercepts approaching 50 percent of the refined cocaine and other illicit cargo moving toward North America and Europe, driving the FARC to the negotiation tables and imposing a significant imposition on the

drug cartels – so much so that efforts to transport drugs and other illegal items directly to U.S. shores have been virtually eliminated, and now occur in Central America and Mexico.

Along with making a significant dent in the flow of illicit drugs and goods toward North America, SOUTHCOM has also conducted some of the most important and far-reaching humanitarian/disaster relief efforts of the new millennium. While Latin America has always been a region prone to natural disasters (volcanoes, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.), SOUTHCOM has consistently made itself ready to respond, even in the worst and most unexpected of circumstances. Perhaps the most impressive example of this

Along with making a significant dent in the flow of illicit drugs and goods toward North America, SOUTHCOM has also conducted some of the most important and far-reaching humanitarian/disaster relief efforts of the new millennium.

came in 2010, when on Jan. 12, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck the Haitian capital city of Port-au-Prince, destroying many parts of the city along with most of the country’s infrastructure. All ports and airfields were severely damaged or destroyed, and initially, there was no way for relief and aid to reach the shattered country.

SOUTHCOM quickly dispatched an aerial task force, drawn from Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), to reopen the airport at Port-au-Prince, and organized a naval task force to move to Haiti and provide relief to the thousands of survivors. What became known as Operation

Unified Response delivered a vast stream of relief supplies and evacuated hundreds of injured Haitians to medical care overseas. In addition, SOUTHCOM helped nongovernmental organizations gain access to the disaster area and supported them and their lifesaving/rebuilding efforts.

Along with these large and very public operations, SOUTHCOM continues to this day to run hundreds of different training, partnering, and multinational exercises throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. This includes everything from medical civic action programs (MEDCAPs), including visits by U.S. Navy hospital ships, to multinational exercises to help build relationships, capacity, and operational experience with partner nations throughout the region. And while SOUTHCOM currently has no real areas of conventional military conflict, the command remains functionally and structurally ready to deal with any contingency that might arise within its AOR.

Conclusion

Over the decades, U.S. SOUTHCOM has, with its various names and missions, provided the United States and Latin America with strong, central military leadership around which the region can rally in times of war and trouble. And while for much of its history SOUTHCOM was viewed as something of a “backwater” command, the end of the Cold War in 1989 destroyed any notion that Latin America is anything but an area of critical U.S. interest. The Americas constitute a region with as much or more promise economically and socially as any other. As SOUTHCOM moves into the middle of the 21st century, it does so as the only combatant command not facing a major conflict, and, with one notable exception (Cuba), virtually every nation within its sphere of influence has some form of democratic government. Its key role of facilitating partnership among nations of the Americas today places U.S. SOUTHCOM among the most successful regional combatant commands in the U.S. military. ■

U.S. Southern Command Today

By John D. Gresham

Introduction

For much of American history, Latin America and the Caribbean were seen as areas to be overseen and protected. Under the Monroe Doctrine, the region was seen as vulnerable to the colonial intentions of European monarchies. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union became the primary concern, and the United States actively aided Latin American governments that appeared to be threatened by communist subversion. However, the end of the Cold War in 1989 led to a wave of new Latin American democracies, along with some of the strongest economic growth anywhere in the world. And while the region continues to suffer large-scale poverty and requires continued investment to realize its potential, Latin America is today on a path to become an economic and political powerhouse by the middle of the 21st century.

“It is a region of enormous promise and exciting opportunities, but it is also one of persistent challenges and complex threats,” SOUTHCOM Commander Gen. John F. Kelly, USMC, told Congress in March 2013. “It is a region of relative peace, low likelihood of interstate conflicts, and overall economic growth, yet is also home to corrosive criminal violence, permissive environments for illicit activities, and episodic political and social protests.”

The United States’ links with Latin American and Caribbean countries have become increasingly dynamic and multivariate over the past few decades, with many actors, from the federal down to the state and local levels, having a part to play. Over the past five decades, however, one of the dominant influences in the region has been U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), located in Doral, Fla. SOUTHCOM’s military and civilian

professionals lead America’s efforts to promote stability and peaceful engagement between the nations of the region, helping to meet some of the critical needs of governments of countries with vibrant futures but faced with sometimes daunting challenges. In fact, SOUTHCOM is unique among the unified combatant commands of the U.S. military these days, in that it does not face any obvious emerging conventional military threats, though there are other, dangerous threats beyond those conventional military ones. “These challenges are non-traditional in nature, networked in design, and transnational in scope, requiring constant vigilance, regional cooperation, and collective action,” Kelly told Congress. “When it comes to South America, Central America, and the Caribbean, I cannot overstate the importance of awareness, access, and the enormous return on investment from personal, on-the-ground security relationships. As the United States turns its attention to the home front to address domestic economic and budget issues, I firmly believe we must remain engaged with the nations in our shared home, the Western Hemisphere, for one very simple reason: proximity. Left unaddressed,

“When it comes to South America, Central America, and the Caribbean, I cannot overstate the importance of awareness, access, and the enormous return on investment from personal, on-the-ground security relationships.”

security concerns in the region can quickly become security concerns in the homeland.” USSOUTHCOM’s efforts are focused upon three strategic objectives: to defend the United States and its interests, foster regional security, and serve as an enduring partner of choice in support of a peaceful and prosperous region.

The SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility: Latin America Today

SOUTHCOM’s geographic responsibility covers fully one-sixth of the globe – 16 million square miles – including large parts of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, along with 31 independent countries and 15 “areas of special sovereignty” (mainly territories of Great Britain, the Netherlands, and France). Living in SOUTHCOM’s area of responsibility (AOR) are more than 486 million people. Some 200 million of them speak Portuguese, and the rest Spanish, with some English, French, and Dutch speakers, mainly in the Caribbean. About 45 million are considered “indigenous” – native tribes that have often been targets of discrimination by their own governments.

The region is rich in minerals, which historically have attracted the interests of more powerful nations. Mexican and Bolivian silver accounted for 20 percent of Spain’s total budget by the end of the 16th century, and it is estimated that the world’s stock of precious metals was more than doubled by silver from the Americas. This historical richness in mineral wealth has continued to the present day. Mining of precious metals is once again on the increase, and again has aroused the interests of powerful nations. China, for example, has a joint agreement with Venezuela to develop the Las Cristinas gold mine, one of the largest gold reserves in the world, and



The 612th U.S. Air and Space Operations Center provides command and control of U.S. air and space power in U.S. Southern Command's area of responsibility, to include 31 countries covering one-sixth of the world's land mass. The \$55 million facility, which spans 26,750 square feet, operates 24 hours a day to support joint and coalition efforts in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

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has also invested \$1.4 billion in copper mines in Ecuador. Venezuela's petroleum reserves are possibly the largest in the world, and Brazil continues to make vast offshore oil discoveries. The area is also rich in agriculture, exporting much of the world's coffee, sugar, and bananas.

High birth rates and persistent poverty also make the region a major exporter of people, an international problem when these people are smuggled and victimized by

criminal traffickers. Human trafficking is a growing concern in the region. According to a Congressional Research Service report, "Trafficking in Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean," internal trafficking of human beings is widespread among many countries of the region for forced and child labor. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has estimated that sex trafficking in Latin America alone generates some \$16 billion annually. In addition, the State Department has identified several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean as major source, transit, and destination countries for victims of transnational human trafficking.

Source countries identified include Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. Destination countries include Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Panama, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago. All

the countries of Central America and the Caribbean are considered transit countries.

Though blessed with natural resources, the region is also afflicted with frequent natural disasters: tropical storms, earthquakes, and volcanic activity. Of even greater impact have been the man-made disasters of racism, military dictatorship, and pervasive corruption; long nightmares from which the region has been slowly awakening. Today, except for Communist Cuba, all the nations of the region have some form of democratic governance. Economic growth has also been robust. In the past decade, the region has averaged a remarkable 3.5 percent growth in GDP, despite global financial crises. Per capita income is up 57 percent, and 12 percent of the population has been lifted from poverty, notably in Brazil. During this period U.S. exports to the region increased by 72 percent, while U.S. imports have increased 114 percent.



SOUTHCOM: Structure and Forces

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) divides the globe into six joint geographic combatant commands. Among these, SOUTHCOM is the smallest, in terms of manpower and force structure. Kelly took command of SOUTHCOM in 2012. His deputy commander is Navy Vice Adm. Joseph D. Kernan. SOUTHCOM's Chief of Staff is Army Maj. Gen. Joseph P. DiSalvo, and the command sergeant major is William B. Zaiser. Ambassador Carmen Martinez, a State Department Foreign Service officer, serves as the civilian deputy to the commander and foreign policy adviser.

SOUTHCOM has five major components from which it can draw forces as required, as well as three task forces and a direct reporting unit:

- **U.S. Army South (ARSOUTH – Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas)** – As the U.S. Army component of SOUTHCOM, ARSOUTH conducts and supports multinational operations and security cooperation in the U.S. Southern Command AOR in order to counter transnational threats and strengthen regional security in defense of the homeland. In 2012,

ARSOUTH conducted 31 security cooperation events – engagement and partner-nation capability building with other militaries – in 13 countries in the SOUTHCOM AOR. ARSOUTH comprises 10 units, located in Arizona, Louisiana, Texas, Cuba, and Honduras, and is led by Maj. Gen. Frederick S. Rudesheim, who took command in 2012. Brig. Gen. Orlando Salinas is deputy commanding general, with Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Zavodsky as senior enlisted adviser.

- **12th Air Force, U.S. Air Forces Southern (AFSOUTH – Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, near Tucson, Ariz.)** – AFSOUTH is responsible for the combat readiness of 10 active-duty wings and one direct reporting unit. These units operate more than 520 aircraft, with more than 42,000 airmen. The command is also responsible for the operational readiness of 13 wings and other units of the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard, with more than 220 aircraft and 18,900 airmen. In 2012, AFSOUTH conducted 21 security cooperation events in 13 countries in the SOUTHCOM AOR, as well as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; airlift; and training missions.

Panamanian security forces perform personnel recovery land navigation training in Metetí, Panama, April 3, 2013, while participating in Beyond the Horizon – Panama 2013. Beyond the Horizon is a U.S. Southern Command-sponsored, Army South-led joint foreign military interaction and humanitarian exercise that began in Panama in late March and was to run through late June 2013.

Lt. Gen. Robin Rand leads 12th Air Force as its commander, Col. John R. Gordy II serves as AFSOUTH vice commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Calvin D. Williams is the command chief master sergeant.

- **U.S. Naval Forces, Southern Command; 4th Fleet (COMUSNAVSO/COMFOURTHFLT – Mayport Naval Base, Fla.)** – COMUSNAVSO/COMFOURTHFLT employs maritime forces in cooperative maritime security operations in order to maintain access, enhance interoperability, and build enduring partnerships that foster regional security in the SOUTHCOM AOR. Operation Martillo, Southern Partnership Station 2012, UNITAS 2012 (both Pacific and Atlantic), and PANAMAX 2012 were key activities in 2012. Rear Adm. Sinclair M. Harris, USN, a surface warfare officer, took command of COMUSNAVSO/COMFOURTHFLT in June 2012. Deputy commander since September 2012 is Rear Adm. Jon G. Matheson, a naval aviator. Capt. John C. Nygaard is chief of staff, Capt. Patrick Shea is director of the Maritime Operations Center, and Master Chief David Tellez serves as command master chief.
- **U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South (MARFORSOUTH – Miami, Fla.)** – MARFORSOUTH is the Marine Corps Service Component Command for SOUTHCOM. MARFORSOUTH commands all Marine forces assigned to SOUTHCOM and advises the commander of SOUTHCOM on the proper employment and support of those forces. MARFORSOUTH conducted 67 security cooperation events in 27 countries in SOUTHCOM's AOR and took part in training



exercises and counter-drug operations in 2012. Brig. Gen. W. “Blake” Crowe took command of MARFORSOUTH in December 2012. Col. Michael R. Ramos is chief of staff, and enlisted leadership is provided by Sgt. Maj. James N. Calbough.

- **Special Operations Command-South (SOCSOUTH – Homestead Air Reserve Base, Fla.)** – SOCSOUTH provides SOUTHCOM with its primary theater contingency response force, along with planning and conducting special operations forces (SOF) missions. SOCSOUTH also controls all SOF units in the region and establishes Joint Special Operations Task Forces when required. 2012 efforts concentrated on building partner-nation capacity – especially intelligence collection and analysis as well as logistics capabilities – and countering transnational organized crime. Brig. Gen. Sean P. Mulholland, USA, assumed command of SOCSOUTH in October. The deputy commander is Col. John E. Poast III, USAF, and senior enlisted adviser is Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas E. Wall.
- **Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South – Key West, Fla.)** – JIATF-South is an interagency task force that serves as the catalyst for integrated and synchronized interagency counter-drug operations and is responsible for the detection and monitoring of suspect air and maritime drug activity

Security personnel from the Panamanian State Border Service and Joint Task Force-Bravo (JTF-Bravo) personnel transport medical supplies to the site of a Medical Readiness Training Exercise in Marraganti, Panama, March 1, 2013. JTF-Bravo partnered with Panamanian government organizations to bring basic medical and dental care to the residents of Uala and Marraganti in the Darien region in order to exercise their ability to execute expeditionary medical and mission-control operations.

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in the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and the eastern Pacific. JIATF-South also collects, processes, and disseminates counter-drug information for interagency operations. The majority of the task force’s 2012 success in its counter-drug mission was due to JIATF-South leadership and coordination of Operation Martillo, which resulted in the seizure of 152 metric tons of cocaine, \$7.2 million in cash, and 101 vessels and eight aircraft. An increase in partner-nation support by nearly two-thirds from 2011 to 2012 contributed to these achievements. Rear Adm. Charles D. Michel, USCG, is director of JIATF-South.

- **Joint Task Force-Bravo (JTF-Bravo – Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras)** – JTF-Bravo operates a forward, all-weather, day/night

C-5-capable air base, organizes multilateral exercises, and supports, in cooperation with partner nations, humanitarian and civic assistance, counter-drug, contingency, and disaster relief operations in Central America. 228 air movements were conducted in 2012 in support of counter transnational organized crime operations, medical readiness training exercises, medical evacuations, and official visitor movements in Central America. JTF-Bravo is commanded by Col. Guy A. LaMire.

- **Joint Task Force-Guantanamo (JTF-Guantanamo – U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba)** – JTF-Guantanamo conducts detention and interrogation operations in support of the war on terrorism, coordinates and implements detainee screening operations, and supports law enforcement and war crimes investigations as well as military commissions for detained enemy combatants (eight such hearings were held in 2012). The International Committee of the Red Cross conducts assessments six times a year to verify Guantanamo’s compliance with international standards of custody. JTF-Guantanamo is also prepared to support mass migration operations at Naval Station Guantanamo. JTF-Guantanamo is commanded by Rear Adm. John Smith, Jr., USN.
- **Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (PCHS – Washington, D.C.)** The PCHS provides education and conducts outreach, research, and knowledge-sharing activities on defense and international security policy-making with military and civilian leaders of the Western Hemisphere.

Focus: SOUTHCOM Roles and Missions

For every element of the U.S. military, the primary objective remains the same: to defend the United States and its interests. Military thought emphasizes the importance of “forward defense”: to neutralize or intercept threats before they reach the borders of the homeland. For SOUTHCOM, facing no immediate military threats,

that primary mission of defending the southern approaches into the United States is accompanied by a number of secondary objectives, which might be considered “soft power,” to foster regional security and to be an enduring partner. These missions include:

- **Countering Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC)** – International criminal cartels engaged in narcotics, human smuggling, arms trafficking, and many other illegal activities have garnered so much wealth and power across the region that they represent a threat to the social and political stability of nations – notably those of Central America – but many others as well. Because the problem is international in scope, countering it demands a high degree of cooperation and mutual trust among military, intelligence, law enforcement, diplomatic, fiscal, and other agencies of governments. Developing that kind of trust and cooperation takes patience and determined effort over decades.
- **Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR)** – Natural disasters can easily overwhelm the resources of an affected area, nation, or region. To save lives, there is often a narrow window of time; assistance that takes more than 48 hours to arrive may be too late to help. In responding to natural disasters, military forces have unique capabilities: prepackaged field hospitals, helicopters that can deliver people and supplies when airfields and ports are destroyed, and heavy engineering equipment that can clear rubble to rescue survivors. Above all, military forces bring trained and disciplined people who are ready to deploy on short notice.
- **Peace Support Operations (PSO)** – The SOUTHCOM region has been relatively free of international conflict and civil war in recent years. Countries in the SOUTHCOM region are contributing more than 8,000 troops and police to U.N. peacekeeping operations in places like Haiti, Lebanon, and Sudan. This valuable experience builds the professionalism of participating



Honduran sailors tackle the tides during an over-the-beach surf passage training exercise as part of two eight-week Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S)-style selection courses conducted by members of U.S. Naval Special Warfare Task Element-Alpha (NSWTE-A) in order to help their Honduran counterparts establish the Honduran Fuerza Especiales Naval (FEN) division within the Honduran military. NSWTE-A was deployed to Honduras for six months in support of Special Operations Command-South (SOCSOUTH). With the assistance of SOCSOUTH and Naval Special Warfare Unit-FOUR, the Honduran military has stepped up its efforts to secure its borders in order to deter illicit activities entering the country through its waterways.

forces, but it requires careful training. SOUTHCOM executes the U.S. Department of State’s Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) to build the peacekeeping capacity of 11 partner nations.

SOUTHCOM Theater Engagement Strategy

A theater engagement strategy translates essentially to the fact that there is no substitute for “being there.” It is a plan to demonstrate the

benefits partnership and cooperation can provide.

- **Enabling Partner Capabilities/Capacity** – As the most combat-experienced professional military forces in the world, U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines enjoy the respect of their peers. Building partner-nation capacity and enhancing interoperability is a core mission for SOUTHCOM. Much of this mission is enabled through the series of training exercises conducted by SOUTHCOM every year, but the command also conducts military-to-military exchanges and seminars throughout its area of operations with partner-nation militaries to further the professional development of foreign military officers and senior enlisted personnel. The International Military Education and Training program helps send more than 2,000 students from the region annually to attend U.S. military training programs across DoD, including the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), the Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, the Inter-American Defense College, and the Inter-American Air Forces Academy. Crucially, these training programs stress respect for human rights and the role of a professional military in the context of a democratic society.

U.S. NAVY PHOTO BY ITC GINO RULLO, NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE UNIT-FOUR



Crew members aboard the Coast Guard Cutter *Valiant* transfer bales of contraband to a Coast Guard Station Miami 45-foot response boat-medium crew during an at-sea transfer Feb. 19, 2013. In total, the interdiction prevented 935 pounds of cocaine with an estimated wholesale value of more than \$11 million from making it to the United States.

- **Joint Training/Exercises** – Training exercises provide unique opportunities to “put all the pieces together” – to drive the vehicles and shoot the weapons, use the communications gear, employ the sensors, and direct all the moving parts to execute a complex plan. Multinational exercises are even more valuable, because they are an opportunity to see how other militaries perform similar missions. SOUTHCOM sponsors the UNITAS series of annual naval exercises, which, since 1960, have brought together the naval forces of Latin America and the Caribbean. Another series of exercises is PANAMAX, designed to improve the interoperability of the military and civil forces of concerned nations to assist Panama to protect and guarantee safe passage through the canal and ensure its neutrality. The Tradewinds exercises address transnational security threats in the Caribbean. The *Fuerzas Comando* exercises bring together SOF units from throughout the hemisphere in a demanding counterterrorism and special operations skills competition. Other exercises focus on peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and medical readiness. The Beyond the Horizon (BTH) and New Horizons (NH) programs

provide training for service members while performing services for communities throughout the region. U.S. forces, along with partner-nation personnel, build schools, water wells, clinics, community centers, and other projects as well as carry out medical readiness exercises.

- **Joint Planning/Information Sharing** – The creation of operational plans for various contingencies is hardly a new idea for command organizations like SOUTHCOM. However, given the relatively peaceful nature of Latin America these days, SOUTHCOM and its partner nations have been making plans of a much more constructive and positive nature in recent years. Since natural disasters (hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.) are prevalent in the region, SOUTHCOM makes contingency plans with nations in the region

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for first-response scenarios. In addition, operations and exercises such as Operation Martillo and *Fuerzas Comando* demand regular coordination. As experience has shown, good peacetime relations often require more and better communications than those between wartime allies.

- **Building Relationships** – Friendship between nations is ultimately based on friendship between people, and U.S. military personnel are excellent ambassadors because their compassion, professionalism, and basic decency speak a universal language. At a deeper level, America remains a melting pot; for example, it comprises the second-largest Spanish-speaking population in the world. For the militaries of our partner nations, U.S. personnel are role models. By force of personal example, they can positively influence those who will shape the future of their societies. This is particularly important in the area of civil-military relations, rule of law, and respect for human rights, where our traditions may be very different from the historical experience of our partners.

SOUTHCOM Success Stories

The quarter-century since the end of the Cold War has given SOUTHCOM many chances to exercise its unique approach to Latin America. A few of the command’s success stories include:

- **Operation Unified Response (Haiti)** – On the morning of Jan. 12, 2010, Haiti was struck by a devastating 7.0-magnitude earthquake. Centered near the capital of Port-au-Prince, the quake destroyed virtually all of Haiti’s transportation, communications,



the most competitive of military personnel. So the idea of pitting the skills of SOF operators from different nations against each other in a regional competition seemed only natural. What that notion has become over the past decade is *Fuerzas Comando*, arguably the best SOF skills competition in the world today. In 2012, 21 countries from around the Americas sent military and police SOF assault and sniper teams to compete, with Colombia coming out on top.

These three activities are just a sampling of the dozens of daily efforts being executed by SOUTHCOM in Latin America and the Caribbean today.

Conclusion

If America is to continue to fulfill its promise, it will need to do so in partnership with nations having similar intentions and objectives. Nowhere in the world does such a collection of countries exist with qualities so suited to partnership with the United States as Latin America. Already, the United States has built strong regional partnerships with nations like Colombia and Panama, and their neighbors are obvious candidates for stronger regional ties.

Celebrating its 50-year anniversary this year, SOUTHCOM is one of America's strongest and most effective tools in building partnership with the United States and an economic zone through almost 180 degrees of latitude. This partnership is a vital one, not only for security but also for economic reasons – nearly 40 percent of American trade moves north and south on the continent, and the United States imports more oil from Latin America and the Caribbean than from the Middle East.

“We are uniquely poised as an integral partner with the nations of our region,” Kelly said. “The United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean remain connected by geography, culture, and family – all of which are so valuable to our shared success. We are committed to maintaining – and constantly improving – these vital relationships.” ■

and public utilities infrastructure. Realizing that the first task was to reopen Toussaint Louverture International Airport, SOUTHCOM dispatched the 1st Special Operations Wing from U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command to attend to that task. In the days and weeks that followed, what became known as Operation Unified Response grew to a force of 23 warships, 57 helicopters, 264 fixed-wing aircraft, and more than 22,000 U.S. military personnel. By Feb. 18, 2010, the Air Force alone had delivered nearly 6,000 personnel, 19 million pounds of cargo and supplies, and evacuated 223 critical Haitian national patients for stateside care. March 24, 2010, marked the end of the mission.

- **Operation Martillo** – One of SOUTHCOM’s main CTOC efforts, Operation Martillo is an “end-to-end” intelligence and maritime interdiction effort run by SOUTHCOM, along with U.S. and partner-nation law enforcement agencies. Martillo engagements normally begin with an intelligence/operations plan created by JIATF-South, a two-star U.S. Coast Guard command based in Key West, Fla. From there, available resources (warships, planes, law enforcement personnel, etc.) are assembled, and interdictions are executed. Martillo

Air Force Capt. Alicia Catherine Prescott, 959th Medical Group pediatrician, Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, examines a young child during a medical clinic April 15, 2013, during Beyond the Horizon – El Salvador. Capt. Karoline Martin (top), Canadian Armed Forces Health Services Center nurse, Army Maj. Leslie McInally (right), Medical Detachment case manager, New Hampshire National Guard, and Spc. Taylor Armstrong (bottom left), Medical Detachment medic, New Hampshire National Guard, were in El Salvador treating Salvadorans during a five-day medical clinic in Caluco. Medical professionals from Canada, Colombia, and the United States worked together to treat patients with a variety of illnesses and ailments.

seizures are usually quite large, as shown by a recent confiscation by USS *Gary* (FFG 51) of more than 1,100 pounds (500 kilograms) of cocaine on Feb. 23, 2013. From the beginning of the operation in 2012 through the early part of 2013, more than 153 metric tons of cocaine have been intercepted, along with almost 30,000 pounds of marijuana, more than \$7 million in cash, and a few hundred drug runners.

- **Fuerzas Comando** – It goes without saying that SOF warriors are among



**UNITED STATES
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**AREA OF
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