

FIU/AWC Speech

10 March 05

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY AND I'M DELIGHTED FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND AND THE SECURITY CHALLENGES WE FACE IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.

SINCE TAKING COMMAND OF SOUTHCOM ON THE 9TH OF NOVEMBER, I'VE MADE SEVERAL TRIPS TO THE REGION. I AM GAINING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, BUT I DON'T CALL MYSELF AN EXPERT. I KNOW THAT YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU ARE EXPERTS ON LATIN AMERICA. I FEEL A LITTLE BIT LIKE A MULE AT A THOROUGHBRED HORSE RACE, SUCH AS THE KENTUCKY DERBY. I PROBABLY WON'T ADD MUCH TO THE EVENT, BUT I'LL BE ABLE TO RUN A LITTLE FASTER JUST FOR HAVING BEEN AROUND THE REAL RACEHORSES.

AS LATIN AMERICAN LEADERS AND EXPERTS ON THE REGION, YOU UNDERSTAND VERY WELL TRADITIONAL AND TRANSITIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND SECURITY LINKAGES AMONG THE NATIONS OF THE AMERICAS.

IN 2002, HISPANICS BECAME THE LARGEST AND FASTEST-GROWING MINORITY IN THE UNITED STATES. THE HISPANIC INFLUENCE IN THE UNITED STATES – IN SOCIETAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS – IS PROFOUND AND POSITIVE. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT BY THE YEAR 2050, ONE QUARTER OF THE US POPULATION WILL BE OF HISPANIC DESCENT. CURRENTLY, THE U.S. HAS THE WORLD'S 5TH LARGEST POPULATION OF SPANISH SPEAKERS.

MOST NORTH AMERICANS ASSUME THAT THE MIDDLE EAST IS THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF IMPORTED PETROLEUM. THE FACT IS THAT LATIN AMERICA PROVIDES MORE OF OUR IMPORTED OIL THAN ALL THE MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES COMBINED.

ECONOMICALLY, THE TIES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE REGION ARE TIGHTER THAN ONE MIGHT THINK. THE UNITED STATES SELLS MORE TO THE 4 MERCOSUR

COUNTRIES – ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, PARAGUAY AND URUGUAY- THAN TO CHINA AND INDIA COMBINED.

LATIN AMERICA IS THE FASTEST GROWING MARKET FOR US-MADE GOODS. WITHIN THE UNITED STATES, FLORIDA IS THE SINGLE LARGEST TRADING PARTNER WITH LATIN AMERICA WHICH SHOULD SURPRISE NO ONE!

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BE PARTNERS IN A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES —A HEMISPHERIC ECONOMIC ENGINE THAT WOULD NOT BE ANYONE’S HANDMAIDEN. I USE THE WORD “POTENTIAL” BECAUSE OUR GREATEST TRADE OPPORTUNITIES ARE YET TO BE REALIZED. TO A GREAT EXTENT, THESE OPPORTUNITIES ARE HELD HOSTAGE BY A LACK OF SECURITY.

TODAY’S GLOBALIZATION HAS NOT ONLY ALLOWED COMMERCE TO RAPIDLY AND EASILY CROSS BORDERS, BUT IT ALSO ALLOWS THREATS TO OUR WELL-BEING AND WAY OF LIFE TO DO THE SAME. THE TRANSNATIONAL TERRORIST, THE NARCO-TERRORIST, THE ISLAMIC RADICAL FUNDRAISER AND RECRUITER, THE ILLICIT TRAFFICKER, THE MONEY LAUNDERER, THE KIDNAPPER, AND THE GANG MEMBER ALL HAVE ACCESS TO AND LEVERAGE AN UNPRECEDENTED FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND ACTION. THIS DYNAMIC HAS LED TO THE EMERGENCE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN AS THE WORLD LEADER IN A CATEGORY OF DUBIOUS DISTINCTION: VIOLENCE. WITH A HOMICIDE RATE OF NEARLY 28 PER 100,000 PEOPLE, LATIN AMERICA HAS ECLIPSED AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST AS THE WORLD’S MOST DANGEROUS REGION, AND CONTINUES TO EXPERIENCE THE HIGHEST KIDNAPPING RATE ON THE PLANET.

TODAY’S LATIN AMERICA FACES A WIDE ARRAY OF THREATS THAT ARE SUPREMELY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND AND TO TACKLE.

FIRST AND FOREMOST AMONG THESE THREATS IS TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM. ALTHOUGH WE DON’T CURRENTLY SEE ACTIVE ISLAMIC RADICAL TERRORIST CELLS IN THE REGION, WE HAVE DETECTED A NUMBER OF ISLAMIC RADICAL GROUP

FACILITATORS WHO PARTICIPATE IN LOGISTICAL AND FUNDRAISING SUPPORT ACTIVITIES SUCH AS MONEY LAUNDERING, DOCUMENT FORGERY, AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING.

WE NEED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE NATURE AND COMPLEXITY OF THIS THREAT. WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT CONVENTIONAL MILITARY POWER IS INSUFFICIENT TO COMBAT IT.

A CLOSE RELATIVE OF TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM IS NARCO-TERRORISM. I'LL BE AMONG THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT NOT ALL NARCO-TRAFFICKERS ARE TERRORISTS AND NOT ALL TERRORISTS ARE NARCO-TRAFFICKERS, BUT WE ARE SEEING MORE INSTANCES OF THE TWO ACTIVITIES BEING CLOSELY LINKED AND LET ME TELL YOU WHY THAT'S IMPORTANT: NARCO-TERRORIST GROUPS NO LONGER SOLELY RELY ON POPULAR LEGITIMACY AS A SOURCE OF POWER, BUT ARE INSTEAD FUELED BY AN ENORMOUS SUPPLY OF DRUG MONEY.

WITH THIS MONEY THE NARCO-TERRORISTS CAN BUY POPULAR SUPPORT. THEY CAN BUY OFF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS -- AND IF SOLDIERS, POLICE AND JUDGES ARE NOT COOPERATIVE, THE NARCO-TERRORISTS, HAVE THE WHEREWITHAL TO PURCHASE THE FIREPOWER TO OUTGUN THEM.

GANGS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SHUT DOWN HUGE SECTIONS OF LARGE CITIES AT WILL. THE GANGS HAVE BECOME SUCH A PROBLEM THAT THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY HAS BEEN CALLED UPON TO ASSIST IN CONTROLLING THE MOST VIOLENT FAVELAS. THIS GANG PROBLEM HAS HIT CENTRAL AMERICA ESPECIALLY HARD -- ON A SCALE OF AT LEAST SEVENTY TO OVER 200 THOUSAND GANG MEMBERS. REPORTEDLY, THEIR PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME IS ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING. ALTHOUGH THESE GANGS HAVE DEMONSTRATED AN UNPRECEDENTED LEVEL OF BRUTALITY, THEY ARE ANYTHING BUT SIMPLE. THESE GANGS ARE HIGHLY COMPLEX ORGANIZATIONS. THEY USE BROADBAND AND WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY, EMPLOY THROW-AWAY CELL PHONES TO COMMIT CRIMES AND PURPOSELY USE FLEDGING MEMBERS WITH NO CRIMINAL RECORDS TO COMMIT MURDERS. THEY TRAVEL

AMONG CENTRAL AMERICAN NATIONS AND THE U.S., OFTEN WITH EASE, AND WHEN THEY FEEL PRESSURE IN ONE POINT OR ANOTHER, THEY CONTINUE TO MOVE.

THE PROBLEM OF KIDNAPPING IN THE REGION HAS GROWN INTO AN ENORMOUS SECURITY CHALLENGE. ALTHOUGH LATIN AMERICA ACCOUNTS FOR ONLY 10% OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION, 75% OF THE WORLD'S KIDNAPPINGS OCCUR THERE.

NATURAL DISASTERS CAN KILL THOUSANDS, OR AT TIMES, TRIGGER MASS MIGRATION, OFTEN RESULTING IN INCREDIBLE SUFFERING AND TRAGEDY. MASS MIGRATION ALSO PLACES UNACCEPTABLE STRESSES ON COUNTRIES ILL PREPARED TO SUPPORT THE BASIC NEEDS OF SUCH AN UNANTICIPATED AND UNREGULATED FLOW OF REFUGEES.

NOW, THESE THREATS DO NOT EXIST IN A VACUUM – THEY HAVE DEVELOPED OVER DECADES AND ARE FIRMLY ROOTED IN THE RELATED CONDITIONS OF POVERTY, INEQUALITY, AND CORRUPTION.

IN SPITE OF THE FREE MARKET ECONOMIC REFORMS AND GROWTH OF DEMOCRACY IN THE 1990'S, POVERTY IN LATIN AMERICA HAS GROWN BOTH IN ABSOLUTE NUMBERS AND AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE OVERALL POPULATION. TODAY OVER FORTY-FOUR PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ARE MIRED IN THE HOPELESSNESS AND SQUALOR OF POVERTY.

UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH EXACERBATES THE POVERTY PROBLEM. THE RICHEST ONE TENTH OF THE POPULATION OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN EARN 48% OF THE TOTAL INCOME, WHILE THE POOREST TENTH EARN ONLY 1.6%. BY COMPARISON, THE COUNTRY THAT HAS THE LEAST ECONOMIC DISPARITY OF ALL LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES, IS STILL WORSE THAN THE MOST UNEQUAL COUNTRY IN ALL OF EASTERN EUROPE.

AN HISTORICAL CLIMATE OF CORRUPTION IS WIDELY PREVALENT THROUGHOUT THE REGION. IT IS A CANCER FEEDING ON ECONOMIC SYSTEMS, DESTROYING INSTITUTIONS AND RUINING PEOPLE'S FAITH IN THEIR GOVERNMENT.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT MONEY IS A COWARD. NOWHERE IS THIS MORE TRUE THAN IN OUR REGION. THE WORLD BANK ESTIMATED BACK IN 1998 THAT LATIN AMERICA'S PER CAPITA INCOME WOULD BE 25% HIGHER IF IT HAD A CRIME RATE SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE REST OF THE WORLD. BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF SECURITY, FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT – THE LIFE BLOOD OF ECONOMIC GROWTH – IS GOING MORE TO ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST AND LESS TO LATIN AMERICA.

THE LACK OF SECURITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY THREATENS TO REVERSE DEMOCRACY'S HARD-WON PROGRESS. UNANSWERED GRIEVANCES AND UNFULFILLED PROMISES TO THE MARGINALIZED PEOPLES OF SOCIETY HAVE RESULTED IN DEEP-ROOTED DISSATISFACTION WITH DEMOCRACY AS A PROCESS AND AS AN INSTITUTION.

SINCE 1999, SEVEN DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED PRESIDENTS HAVE FAILED TO FINISH OUT THEIR TERMS OF OFFICE AND AS YOU KNOW, JUST LAST MONDAY, PRESIDENT MESA OF BOLIVIA TENDERED HIS RESIGNATION TO CONGRESS. THOUGH HIS CONGRESS VOTED NOT TO ACCEPT IT, THE SITUATION REMAINS UNSETTLED.

THE UNREST THAT HAS PLAGUED BOLIVIA SINCE 2003 STILL SIMMERS BELOW THE SURFACE OF A DEEPLY DIVIDED AND DISAFFECTED POPULATION. DISTRUST AND LOSS OF FAITH IN FAILED INSTITUTIONS FUEL THE EMERGENCE OF ANTI-US, ANTI-GLOBALIZATION, AND ANTI-FREE TRADE ELEMENTS WHO INCITE VIOLENCE AGAINST THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS AND THEIR OWN PEOPLE.

THE SOUTHERN COMMAND RECOGNIZES THAT THE THREATS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN TODAY ARE UNCONVENTIONAL. FOR THAT REASON, SOUTHCOM'S OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IS NOT CONVENTIONALLY MILITARY. MUCH OF OUR MISSION IS ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE INTERAGENCY, DIPLOMACY AND COOPERATIVE EFFORTS WITH OUR PARTNER NATIONS. WE DEPLOY PLATOONS TODAY FOR TRAINING EXERCISES WITH OUR PARTNERS SO THAT TOMORROW WE DON'T HAVE TO DEPLOY DIVISIONS.

SOME OF SOUTHCOM'S INITIATIVES ARE STANDARD MILITARY-TO-MILITARY ENGAGEMENT THAT IS NOT UNLIKE WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE FOR MANY YEARS. BUT MUCH OF WHAT SOUTHCOM IS DOING TO ACCOMPLISH ITS MISSION TODAY HAS VERY LITTLE DOCTRINAL BASIS AND PRECIOUS LITTLE PRECEDENT, AND THAT'S WHY "CHARTING NEW APPROACHES TO SECURITY" -- THE THEME OF THIS CONFERENCE -- IS APPROPRIATE AND OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND.

IN 2002 WE FORMED A JOINT INTERAGENCY COORDINATION GROUP THAT MEETS IN MY HEADQUARTERS AND IS CHAIRED BY MY CHIEF OF STAFF. THE COORDINATION GROUP IS MADE UP OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM MANY US GOVERNMENT AGENCIES THAT DEAL WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. OUR AGENDAS FOR THESE MEETINGS ARE WIDE-RANGING: COUNTERTERRORISM TO PORT SECURITY TO GANGS IN THE REGION TO COUNTERING ILLICIT TRAFFICKING OPERATIONS. WE SHARE INFORMATION, EVALUATE COMMON CHALLENGES, AND ARRIVE AT NEW WAYS TO COOPERATE AND COMPLEMENT WHAT THE OTHER AGENCIES ARE DOING. THIS JOINT INTERAGENCY COORDINATION GROUP IS COMPLETELY VOLUNTARY -- WE JUST INVITE- WE HAVE NO AUTHORITY TO ORDER ANYONE TO COME. THE COORDINATION GROUP HAS GROWN TO 50 REPRESENTATIVES, BECAUSE THESE AGENCIES SEE THE SYNERGISTIC BENEFIT OF COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION. THEY CAN WORK SMARTER INSTEAD OF HARDER.

WE HELP PARTNER NATION MILITARIES TO IDENTIFY AND OPTIMIZE NEEDED CAPABILITY -- AND - WITHIN THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITS -- PROVIDE SUPPORT TO THEIR POLICE. WE ENCOURAGE THEM TO TRAIN AND EQUIP TO ACHIEVE A CAPABILITY TO COMBAT TODAY'S TRANSNATIONAL THREATS. THIS CAPABILITY HAS MUCH MORE TO DO WITH CHANGING MINDSETS AND ESTABLISHING COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS THAN IT DOES WITH BUYING EQUIPMENT. IT REQUIRES AN HONEST APPRAISAL OF HOW PARTNER NATION MILITARIES ORGANIZE, TRAIN, EQUIP, AND OPERATE. IT REQUIRES AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL ROLES AND

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MILITARY AND THE POLICE IN EACH COUNTRY INSTEAD OF A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH. AND IN MANY WAYS, THE UNITED STATES MILITARY IS SETTING THE EXAMPLE IN THIS TRANSFORMATION BY HAVING THE VISION AND COURAGE TO TRANSFORM OURSELVES.

SOUTHCOM PROVIDES TRAINING, PLANNING ASSISTANCE AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST NARCO-TERRORISTS. THIS SUPPORT HAS BEEN A KEY ELEMENT OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT'S PROGRESS IN REDUCING HOMICIDES, KIDNAPPINGS, AND TERRORIST ACTIVITIES.

SOUTHCOM'S JOINT INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE IN KEY WEST, FLORIDA, IN CONJUNCTION WITH MULTINATIONAL AND INTERAGENCY EFFORTS, DIRECTLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE SEIZURE OF OVER 222 METRIC TONS OF COCAINE IN THE LAST FISCAL YEAR. THIS JOINT INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE IS A MODEL OF INTERAGENCY AND MULTINATIONAL COOPERATION -- AND IF YOU HAVE NOT VISITED, I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO GO TAKE A LOOK -- IT IS EXCEPTIONAL.

THIS INTERDICTION DOES TWO THINGS: IT KEEPS THE UNITED STATES SAFER AND IT DENIES NARCO-TERRORISTS THE FUNDS THEY NEED TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE.

SOUTHCOM SEEKS A REGIONAL APPROACH TO HEMISPHERIC SECURITY CHALLENGES. THE BEST CURRENT EXAMPLE OF REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION IS IN HAITI. THE UNITED NATIONS STABILIZATION FORCE IN HAITI -- KNOWN AS MINUSTAH -- IS LED BY BRAZIL AND SUPPORTED BY SECURITY FORCES FROM 10 LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES -- OVER 3500 SOLDIERS! CHILE'S CONTINUOUS PARTICIPATION IN HAITI GOES BACK TO THE MULTINATIONAL INTERIM FORCE, WHEN CHILEAN FORCES DEPLOYED WITHIN 48 HOURS OF THE PASSAGE OF UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION 1529.

IN YEARS PAST, THE UNITED STATES HAS PARTICIPATED IN A BILATERAL EXERCISE WITH THE PANAMANIAN TO PROTECT THE PANAMA CANAL. IN 2003, THAT EXERCISE EXPANDED TO 9 PARTICIPATING NATIONS. THIS YEAR, PANAMAX -- AS THE

EXERCISE IS KNOWN - WILL SEE 15 COUNTRIES WORKING TOGETHER IN A ROBUST AIR, GROUND, AND MARITIME EXERCISE.

THE REGIONAL SUPPORT OF COLOMBIA'S NEIGHBORS HAS BEEN VITAL TO THE IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS MADE AGAINST NARCO-TERRORIST GROUPS. TO PROTECT THEIR OWN RESOURCES, PEOPLE, AND SOVEREIGNTY, BRAZIL, ECUADOR, PANAMÁ AND PERÚ HAVE ALL TAKEN DECISIVE ACTIONS ON THEIR BORDERS.

HOWEVER - AMONG COLOMBIA'S NEIGHBORS - VENEZUELA'S RECORD OF COOPERATION REMAINS MIXED. THERE IS CONCERN THAT NARCO-TERRORIST GROUPS CONSIDER THE AREAS OF THE VENEZUELAN/COLOMBIAN BORDER A SAFE AREA TO REST, REFIT, AND TRANSSHIP DRUGS AND ARMS.

ORGANIZATIONS LIKE THE CENTRAL AMERICAN ARMED FORCES – KNOWN BY ITS INITIALS IN SPANISH: CFAC -- GIVE US GREAT CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL AMERICAN REGIONAL COOPERATION. THE GOVERNMENTS OF EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, AND NICARAGUA ESTABLISHED CFAC IN 1997 TO REGIONALIZE THEIR SECURITY EFFORTS. CFAC WAS QUICK TO SHOW ITS COLLECTIVE SOLIDARITY IN THE POST 9-11 WORLD, AND HAS SINCE TAKEN STEPS TO ENHANCE REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM. MOST RECENTLY CFAC HAS BEEN DEVELOPING A PLAN OF ACTION TO STRENGTHEN THEIR CAPACITY TO SUPPORT PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS.

AT UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND; WE CONTINUE TO ENHANCE THE RELEVANCE AND TRAINING VALUE OF OUR EXERCISES. THE SILVER LINING OF THE DARK CLOUD OF UNREST AND HUMAN TRAGEDY IN HAITI IS THAT PARTNER NATIONS' PEACEKEEPING FORCES DEPLOYED TO HAITI WELL PREPARED BY YEARS OF MULTILATERAL CABAÑAS PEACEKEEPING EXERCISES.

ALTHOUGH AS MILITARY PEOPLE, THERE'S LITTLE WE CAN DO TO DIRECTLY ATTACK THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY – WE CAN HELP TO MITIGATE ITS EFFECTS. OUR NEW HORIZONS EXERCISES BUILD DOZENS OF ROADS, DRILL WATER WELLS, BUILD CLINICS, AND SCHOOLS IN UNDERSERVED AREAS. LAST YEAR ALONE, MEDICAL AND VETERINARY READINESS DEPLOYMENTS TREATED OVER 290,000 PEOPLE AND OVER

525,000 ANIMALS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, ENHANCING THE HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF THOSE FOLKS.

THERE REMAINS MUCH TO BE DONE. WE BELIEVE THAT REGIONAL, MULTILATERAL APPROACHES TO REGIONAL PROBLEMS MAKES SENSE. THE SUCCESSES THAT COLOMBIA AND BRAZIL HAVE HAD IN ESTABLISHING NATIONAL AIR BRIDGE DENIAL PROGRAMS COULD WELL BE EXPANDED INTO A REGIONAL AIR SOVEREIGNTY PROGRAM. THIS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN CENTRAL AMERICA, WHERE SUSPECT AIR FLIGHTS CAN PASS THROUGH THE AIRSPACE OF AN ENTIRE COUNTRY IN MINUTES.

I AM CONVINCED THAT WE MUST DO BETTER IN THE AREAS OF INTEROPERABILITY AND INFORMATION SHARING. WE MUST BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE AND SHARE INFORMATION TODAY. WHEN A CRISIS ARISES, IT'S TOO LATE TO START FIGURING OUT IF WE HAVE COMPATIBLE SYSTEMS AND PERMISSION TO PASS OPERATIONAL INFORMATION. THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE THREAT DEMANDS THAT WE BE JUST AS FLEXIBLE.

THE MUTUAL SECURITY OF THE AMERICAS WILL CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES CANNOT EXIST IN AN ENVIRONMENT SO DANGEROUS THAT IT CANNOT ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTMENT.

TOMORROW'S SECURE ENVIRONMENT WILL BRING ABOUT MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TRADE OPPORTUNITIES, ENCOURAGE FOREIGN INVESTMENT, REDUCE POVERTY, AND CREATE OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRESS TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE FOR THOSE WITH LITTLE HOPE TODAY.

ENGAGEMENT WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IS A CLASSIC CASE OF WHAT WE CALL: PAY-ME-NOW OR PAY-ME-LATER. WE CAN CREATE STRONG HEMISPHERIC ECONOMIC AND SECURITY PARTNERSHIPS, OR WE CAN WATCH OUR HEMISPHERE'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS BEGIN TO DECAY AND CRUMBLE.

**WE AT UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND WRESTLE WITH THESE
QUESTIONS ON A DAILY BASIS.**

**I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE WITH YOU AND ADDRESS YOU
TODAY AND I LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR QUESTIONS.**