



UNITED STATES SOUTHERN COMMAND

PARTNERSHIP FOR THE AMERICAS

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Gen. Fraser's opening remarks to the Senate Armed Services Committee

OPENING STATEMENT

Senate Armed Services Committee

5 April 2011

Chairman Levin, Senator McCain, and distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss United States Southern Command's accomplishments and our future efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I'm pleased to share this table today with my friend and counterpart from U.S. Northern Command, Admiral James "Sandy" Winnefeld. Admiral Winnefeld and I have worked diligently to coordinate our respective activities in Mexico and Central America. From my standpoint, our efforts continue to ensure there is no disconnect or seam in U.S. military engagement in the western hemisphere.

Over the past year, United States Southern Command worked in close collaboration with other U.S. federal agencies and our international partners to respond to natural disasters, like the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, and to address the ongoing threats to regional security. This year, with the continued support of Congress, we will continue to promote U.S. national and regional security interests through enduring partnerships.

U.S. Southern Command engages with our military partners in the region to accomplish three broad goals – to defend the United States, to help maintain security and stability, and build enduring military to military partnerships. These partnerships, formed through routine education, training and military exercises, are the foundation and focus of the majority of our normal engagement activities. Using this foundation, U.S. Southern Command focuses on two immediate, but enduring challenges: natural disasters, like those we witnessed last year, and the ongoing threat to regional security posed by transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and the illicit activities they pursue. Hurricanes impact the northern part of our region every year. As a result, we help build Emergency Operation Centers and warehouses for relief supplies that our partners can use to help direct their domestic response to natural disasters. We also remain prepared to conduct foreign disaster relief operations whenever needed. In addition, we are working with our interagency and international partners to address the evolving regional security challenge caused by transnational criminal organizations. These TCOs engage in illicit trafficking of drugs, arms, money, and people across porous borders throughout the region, into the United States but also abroad, into Africa and Europe. They do not respect national sovereignty, laws, governments, or human life and the violence they use to enable their illicit activities is a significant security impact in the region. Nowhere is this more evident than in Central America, which is besieged by gangs and TCOs who conduct illicit trafficking with near impunity and are causing unprecedented levels of violence with the resultant erosion in citizen safety.

The Northern Triangle of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras is the deadliest zone in the world outside of active war zones. The newly-formed Central American Citizen Security Partnership announced by President Obama last week supports the multilateral efforts already being developed by Central American nations and builds upon existing U.S. interagency efforts. In addition, it leverages the capacities of partners such as Canada, Colombia, and Mexico in helping Central America respond to the challenges of organized crime, drug trafficking, and violence. U.S. Southern Command will support this effort.

In closing, I would like to thank the Committee for your support in funding the construction of our new headquarters in Miami. This state-of-the-art building enhances internal and external collaboration, improves our ability to conduct interagency operations, and raises quality of life for assigned personnel. On behalf of the men and women of U.S. Southern Command, thank you. I also want to thank the Committee for your continued support of our men and women in uniform and our families.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to answering your questions.