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FEATURED Q&A

How Good of a Partner Is the U.S. Military for Latin America?

Q In July, U.S. Southern Command issued its "Partnership for the Americas Command Strategy 2020," in which it listed counter-ing illicit drug trafficking, promoting the United States as a "partner of choice" for Latin America and building "enduring relationships with interagency partners" in the region as main objectives. How effective is the U.S. military currently as a partner for Latin America? How can it help to foster better relations between the United States and Latin America? What successes can it replicate and what failures should it avoid repeating?

A Richard Downie, Director of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies at National Defense University: "The political context of U.S.-Latin American relations has changed markedly in recent years. Yet with notable exceptions, including Cuba and Venezuela, U.S. military-to-military relations in the region have largely remained positive and productive, primarily by sustained institutional engagement through a network of exercises, exchanges, professional education and training, senior leader conferences and other programs. The military is—and will continue to help the U.S. remain—an effective and valued partner for Latin America and the Caribbean. Without doubt, most regional countries agree that collective responses are necessary to address transnational threats that do not respect national bound-

aries, such as natural disasters and illicit trafficking organizations. The U.S. Southern and Northern Commands, in particular, seek to foster and strengthen U.S.-Latin American relations by helping regional counterparts increase their professional capabilities and operate more effectively in those multinational efforts. In the spirit of partnership that President Obama highlighted at the 2009 Summit of the Americas, the United States should emphasize cooperation where regional security interests converge. These build on the suc-

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Ecuador to Trim Older Workers From State Payroll

Ecuador is planning to spend \$600 million in order to remove older workers from the government payroll. The measure is an effort to shrink the state workforce and boost efficiency, said Labor Minister Richard Espinosa. See brief on page 2.

File Photo: Ecuadorean Government.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Rescue of Trapped Chilean Miners Ahead of Schedule

The 33 Chilean miners trapped underground since Aug. 5 may be rescued sooner than expected, the Associated Press reported Tuesday. The progress of drilling suggests that the drill may reach the miners during the second week of October. Rescuers will then insert an iron sleeve in the chute to prevent rock falls, a process which will take eight days. Meanwhile, a technical team is in the process of choosing a final design for the rescue capsule, which will bring the men up to safety.

Hurricane Karl's Damages Total \$3.9 Bn in Veracruz: Governor

Hurricane Karl left 12 dead and economic losses of approximately \$3.9 billion, the governor of the Mexican state of Veracruz, Fidel Herrera, told the Televisa television network Tuesday, EFE reported. Adding that Karl's rains exceeded those of the previous seven hurricanes combined, Herrera affirmed that the port of Veracruz and infrastructure of Pemex were nonetheless unaffected. The category 3 hurricane made landfall in the state on Friday.

Ecuador to Spend \$600 Mn to Trim Older Government Workers

Ecuador could spend as much as \$600 million to remove older workers from government jobs, Bloomberg News reported Tuesday, citing Labor Minister Richard Espinosa. The plan, which aims to increase efficiency and reduce the size of the public payroll, would include seeking the voluntary retirement of 10,000 workers aged 65 to 69, said Espinosa, who would receive cash and bonds as a severance payment. Workers 70 and older would be required to retire and would get a cash severance payment.

Political News

Information Sharing Problems Bedevil U.S. Anti-Weapons Program

Problems including a failure to adequately share information and bureaucratic disputes among government agencies are menacing a U.S. Justice Department program that aims to stem the illegal flow of weapons to Mexico, according to an internal report obtained by NBC News. The draft report by the department's Office of Inspector General concerns Project Gunrunner, which is run by the Justice Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The report also is contrary to statements made by ATF officials. On Friday, the agency's deputy director, Kenneth Melson, lauded the program when he announced that a temporary increase in the number of agents in Arizona had led to authorities' seizure of

1,300 illegal weapons and 71,000 rounds of ammunition headed to Mexican drug cartels. The report by the inspector general's office said the program has "significant weaknesses" that "undermine its effectiveness." The report said that the ATF was not adequately sharing information about ille-

The report said that the ATF was not adequately sharing information about illegal weapons trafficking with other U.S. agencies.

gal weapons trafficking with other U.S. agencies, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an arm of the department of Homeland Security. ATF and ICE "do not work effectively" together and "rarely conduct joint investigations,"

Featured Q&A

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cess of the multinational response to the January earthquake in Haiti and international peacekeeping efforts. On the other hand, the failure to explain the intent and purpose of both the re-establishment of the U.S. 4th Fleet and the bilateral agreement allowing U.S. access to several Colombian military installations caused undue criticism stemming from fundamental misunderstandings. The United States should better inform and consult widely to gain support from other countries and multilateral organizations before announcing security-related initiatives that affect the region."

Arturo Contreras-Polgati, chairman of security and defense studies at the National Academy for Political and Strategic Studies of Chile: "Drug trafficking has many different manifestations: organized crime, corruption, the informal economy, extortion, usurpation of the state and development of private armies, among others. In addition to

economic motivations, FARC and the Shining Path add a dangerous ideological dimension. In this sense, the threat extends beyond the strictly military sphere of action, thus requiring a strategy for security cooperation and state development that restores confidence in the political system and repairs the rupture between the north and south. Each country in Latin America has different strengths, weaknesses, threats and priorities. An effective strategic association between the United States and Latin America must take these differences into account. Not doing so will perpetuate the erroneous perception that cooperation with one state in the region is a strategic disadvantage to others. The military institutions have great advantages that make them an efficient political instrument for international cooperation. But this cooperation must be put to the service of clearly defined, shared political objectives and carried out in the framework of a political, combined and joint strategy that allows the military to share the successes as much as the failures. In the current security conditions, military cooperation cannot be an aim in itself,

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despite a directive from the Justice Department that they do so, the report said. The agencies' failure to properly work together causes information that could lead to prosecutions in weapons cases not getting passed along, the report said. Mexican officials, including President Felipe Calderón, have complained that the United States is not adequately cracking down on the illegal flow of weapons into Mexico. A recent study by the Woodrow Wilson Center and the Trans-Border Institute at the University of San Diego concluded that of the 75,000 firearms seized by Mexican authorities during the last three years, 80 percent came from the United States.

Economic News

Aerolíneas Argentinas to Join SkyTeam Alliance

State-run airline **Aerolíneas Argentinas** will join the SkyTeam alliance, which is run by U.S.-based **Delta Air Lines** and **Air France-KLM Group**, two people familiar with the matter told Bloomberg News Tuesday. The airline, headquartered in



Recalde

File Photo: Juventud Peronista.

Buenos Aires, will sign a deal to become part of SkyTeam as early as the last week of October, said one of the people who asked for anonymity because the agreement has not been made public. Mariano Recalde, the president of Aerolíneas Argentinas, said that the airline has had discussions with SkyTeam, but would not confirm whether a deal was reached. "I can only confirm" the discussions, he told the news service in an interview. SkyTeam's addition of Aerolíneas Argentinas would help the alliance compete with the Oneworld Group, which has Chile's **Lan Airlines** as a member. The Chilean airline is buying Brazil's **Tam**, which is part of the **United Airlines**-led Star Alliance. Lan and Tam will form Latam Airlines Group, which has not decided whether to join Star or Oneworld.

Legal Briefs

U.S. Court Dismisses Colombian Plaintiffs' Lawsuit Against Dole

California-based **Dole Food Co.** announced Sept. 17 that the Los Angeles County Superior Court has dismissed a lawsuit brought by 185 Colombian plaintiffs claiming damages against Dole from alleged payments to Colombian paramilitary organizations. The lawsuit, *Emperatriz Marina Mendoza Gomez, et al. v. Dole Food Company, et.al.*, was originally filed as *Juana Perez 1A v. Dole Food Co. Inc.* in April 2009. In dismissing the lawsuit with prejudice, the Court ordered that Dole is "entitled to judgments against the 185 plaintiffs and that the plaintiffs shall recover nothing from Dole," the company said. "From the outset, Dole has adamantly denied the blatantly false allegations in this lawsuit," said C. Michael Carter, the company's general counsel. "It was based on the self-motivated declaration of a convicted Colombian terrorist in the custody of the Colombian government, which the court had found was 'inherently unreliable due to the unique circumstances in which [he] finds himself.' This lawsuit was grossly irresponsible," Carter said. Dole was accused in the suit of paying right-wing paramilitary groups to kill union leaders. Colombia has a history of violence directed against unions. The plaintiffs' attorney, Terry Collingsworth of **Conrad & Scherer**, says he plans to file the lawsuit in federal court, the Associated Press reported.

Ecuador Lawmakers End Three European Bilateral Investment Agreements

Ecuador's National Assembly on Sept. 17 approved a request from President Rafael Correa to end bilateral investment promotion and protection agreements with Germany, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, Dow Jones reported. National Assembly member Linda Machuca told Dow Jones that the investment agreements violate the country's 2008 constitution, which prohibits international treaties or legal instruments that allow the transfer of sovereign jurisdiction to international bodies when disputes over contracts or investments arise. Correa is expected to sign the treaty cancellations and communicate the decision to the countries involved. The government's decision to pull out of investment treaties comes at a time when some officials in Correa's administration have been seeking to create the perception of a better business climate, and will likely complicate efforts to attract more foreign investment to the Andean nation. [Editor's note: See related Q&A in the Sept. 17 [issue](#) of the *Advisor*.]



Correa

File Photo: Ecuadorean Gov't.

Arca Hires Legal Team for \$345 Million Acquisition of EBC

Mexico-based bottler **Arca** has hired Ecuadorean law firm **Bustamante & Bustamante**, along with Mexico's **Mijares, Angoitia, Cortés y Fuentes SC** and **Arizpe Garza Nuñez & Marcos SC**, to advise on its takeover of **Ecuador Bottling Company**, or EBC, the sole **Coca-Cola** bottler in Ecuador, *Latin Lawyer* reported Sept. 17. Arca, which is the second-largest bottler of Coca-Cola products in Latin America, announced Sept. 9 that it will pay \$345 million for 75 percent control of EBC as part of its strategic expansion in South America.

Featured Q&A*Continued from page 2*

nor should it be limited to the construction of bases, courses and information exchange. To achieve effective results, the military must be part of political strategy at the highest levels, allowing for the convergence of national, regional and hemispherical capacities. It is vital that the north and the south overcome the distrust of the military."

A **Orlando J. Pérez, chairman of the political science department at Central Michigan University:** "For the United States, the emergence of a new type of sub-regional cooperation skeptical of U.S. power has provided both opportunities and challenges for reshaping perceptions of the role of the U.S. military in the region. Recently, the United States has placed special emphasis on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, which helps bolster military cooperation and serves to improve the country's image. However, the Command Strategy fails to recognize the deep changes that have occurred in the hemisphere in the last decades, and offers very little in terms of resources that would incentivize Latin American countries to choose the United States as their 'partner of choice.' To the extent that the U.S. military can forge credible alliances to strengthen the fight against transnational criminal networks and provide more coordination in the area of disaster relief, it may be able to promote partnership with the United States. Nonetheless, it is important to note the limitations of U.S. policy, particularly regarding resource allocation. Central America, for example, will receive only \$100 million of the \$1.4 billion assigned to the Mérida Initiative in 2011. Mexico will receive the bulk of the assistance. While this disparity may be understood in terms of the magnitude of the Mexican problem and its proximity to the United States, the fact is that among the unintended consequences of U.S. policy in Mexico is to push the violence toward Central American countries. In the end, it is not clear the extent to which the new 'Command Strategy' will refocus U.S.

government attention to the Western Hemisphere, and thus seems increasingly likely that the nations of the region may look elsewhere for 'partners of choice.'

A **Gabriel Marcella, researcher and professor at the United States Army War College:** "Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. Southern Command has been trying to redefine its strategy in view of the very different geopolitical environment and the new threats that have emerged. The document's audience is both Washington and Latin America. In Washington, it's about the perennial competition for resources for a command that has been the smallest and least resourced of the regional unified commands. In Latin America, the document attempts to communicate a strategic vision for sharing the burden of meeting common challenges, such as drug trafficking, terrorism, crime and humanitarian needs. The document advocates sustained American engagement and even proposes a strategic partnership for the Americas, but it remains to be seen if such a partnership will be possible. Though the partnership is strong with Colombia, very effective in Haiti, and improving with other countries, populist governments wish to weaken the traditionally strong military-to-military ties. The United States should resume its role in the future as the partner of choice. To do so, it should respect the Latin American desire for greater autonomy in the relationship and for support in the form of military equipment and training that is suited to the needs of militaries of limited means. The United States has an enormous advantage: Latin American militaries and most civilian leaders prefer military ties with the United States. Unless the United States adapts its strategy to be responsive to the defense needs of Latin America there will be other countries waiting to fill the void."

The Advisor welcomes reactions to the Q&A above. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta at gkuleta@thedialogue.org with comments.

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