

Integrating Partner Nations into Coalition Operations

By BARBARA FICK



Ships from the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Spain, and Uruguay participate in USSOUTHCOM-sponsored Exercise *UNITAS 06*

Fleet Combat Camera Group, Atlantic (Michael Sandberg)

Within 48 hours of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's resignation and departure on February 29, 2004, Chilean forces deployed and integrated into a multinational interim force to help secure and stabilize the small, impoverished island nation. Days after the passage of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1529, Chile, Canada, France, and the United States established a multinational force responsive to and capable of coordinating with international authorities and aid efforts in Haiti. The rapid reac-

tion, deployment, and integration of coalition forces saved the lives of many Haitians, prevented mass migration during a time of rough seas, and facilitated transition to the process of restabilization. Chile continues to deploy forces as a member of the UN Stabilization Force Haiti (MINUSTAH), led by Brazil and comprised mostly of Latin American troops. While many challenges continue in Haiti, the success of initial security and stabilization operations, continued support to MINUSTAH, and the significant contribution of Latin American and Caribbean nations to peacekeeping

operations around the world demonstrate a growing capability in the Western Hemisphere for participation in joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations, such as those currently required in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) has been a key enabler of this growing capability, supporting a tailored exercise and theater security cooperation program that has encouraged partners such as Chile, Brazil, and El Salvador to develop skills in the conduct of integrated operations. The fruits of this program, borne out through examples such as the mission in Haiti and support to Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, also provide valuable lessons and extensive

Major Barbara Fick, USA, is Army Special Assistant to the Commander, U.S. Southern Command.

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partner nation experience that may be drawn upon as the United States develops doctrine for integrated operations.

Emerging Doctrine

The attacks on September 11, 2001, led to a general consensus in the U.S. Government regarding the need to reform national security architecture to meet current and emerging 21st-century threats, particularly in the areas of interagency coordination and coalition operation capabilities. Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have further highlighted the need for new doctrine and mechanisms to facilitate interagency coordination, as well as cooperation with other nations. This has led to new directives and multiple efforts within the Federal Government to explore such concepts. Each of these efforts gives rise to its own set of terms, structures, procedures, and doctrine. For the purposes of this article, *combined integrated operations* are those that include multiple military services and government-level entities from more than one sovereign country, and *multinational integrated operations* are those that include military forces and governmental agencies from many nations, nongovernmental organizations, international governmental organizations, and private industry partners.¹

Current U.S. Government approaches to the development of doctrine, organization, and procedures for combined and multinational integrated operations emphasize American structures and processes across agencies, rather than the multinational aspects of integration. Little work has been done formally to incorporate representatives, perspectives, and practices from potential partner nation military, civilian, and nongovernmental entities who may offer significant insight on the process of integration into coalition efforts led by or involving the U.S. Government and its forces. This is particularly the case with respect to developing nations, who may contribute unique experiences and approaches to operations in less stable and underdeveloped parts of the world.

Latin American Experience and Partners

El Salvador is an excellent example of a nation that has lately achieved democracy, having emerged from a 12-year civil war in 1992. In a visit to the United Nations, President Antonio Saca explained his

country's troop contribution to Operation *Iraqi Freedom* to the General Assembly, stating, "El Salvador suffered a prolonged internal conflict, and thanks to the support of the international community, it achieved a lasting peace. . . . We believe it is time for us to put our experience to the service of other peoples."² In addition to having lived through a period of conflict, negotiated peace, and transition to democracy, El Salvador has maintained close military-to-military relationships with the United States since 1992.

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Long-term participation in international military education and training and other training and exercise programs sponsored by USSOUTHCOM have been central to enhancing interoperability and coalition capabilities for participation in multinational peacekeeping or stability and reconstruction efforts.

A tangible return on the U.S. investment in this relationship has been the continued support of El Salvador in Operation *Iraqi Freedom*. In August 2003, for example, 360 soldiers of El Salvador's Cuscatlán Battalion deployed to become part of a Central American Battalion within the Spanish-led Plus Ultra Brigade. Since then, the country has deployed more than 1,600 troops in support of *Iraqi Freedom*. The Salvadoran troops are assigned reconstruction and humanitarian duties. They have overseen over 130 humanitarian projects worth in excess of \$7.6 million and ranging from a medical center, to potable water treatment facilities, and to schools, bridges, roads, and electrical projects. Operationally, they have been instrumental in checkpoint and convoy security, unexploded ordnance disposal, and security detail duties, including the protection of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Najaf, as well as training and equipping the Iraqi Civil Defense Forces in Najaf and Al Hillah—all to increase the security and internal development of Iraq. As a testimony to El Salvador's contribution, six Salvadoran soldiers earned Bronze Stars, presented by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in November 2004.³

Advances in regional interoperability, as demonstrated through support to operations

in Haiti, Iraq, and around the globe—paired with a growing tendency in Latin America and the Caribbean toward international cooperation—show the enormous potential of these nations as partners and contributors to the development of integrated operations doctrine, procedures, mechanisms, and training for future crises. The security environment today in Latin America and the Caribbean coincides with what most refer to as the new 21st-century global threat environment.

It encompasses transnational terrorism, narcoterrorism, illicit trafficking, forgery, money laundering, kidnapping, urban gangs, radical movements, poverty, corruption, natural disasters, and mass migration. Many of these threats have existed in the region in some form and to varying degrees long before the United States shifted its focus from the Cold War bipolar paradigm to transnational terrorism and the elements that support it.

Recognizing the post-9/11 security context, Honduran Minister of Defense Federico Breve Traveso has cited the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch (November 1998) and an increase in illicit trafficking within the region to frame regional security challenges from the Central American perspective:

*We have had to redefine the term security as we know it, for it is no longer simply a matter of winning on the military battlefield. The new battlefield is ungoverned spaces being exploited by illicit traffickers; the new battlefield is poverty and lack of opportunities that draw our youth towards international gangs; the new battlefield is the international criminal cartel that seeks the legal seams that exist between borders. For these reasons, I feel confident in saying the nation must rally together to protect our sovereignty and national interests—but in coordination and cooperation with our neighbors, who are also facing these same transnational and elusive threats.*⁴

Greater collaboration toward integrated approaches in support of common security interests, as expressed by Minister Breve, is recognized by many nations in Latin America and the Caribbean, and this recognition coincides with more recent developments in the U.S. focus on global security.

American Interests

The U.S. focus on Latin America and the Caribbean has shifted through-

New Mexico Air National Guard F-16s participate in Exercise *Salitre 2004*, hosted by Chilean Air Force



355th Communications Squadron (Matthew Lohy)

out history. In the second half of the 20th century, the region was viewed as a Cold War battleground. After 1989, U.S. concerns and resources there focused more on counterdrug initiatives and humanitarian action. By 1998, many saw the region as a success in terms of an increase in democratically elected governments, perceived stability, and lack of state-on-state violence. Notwithstanding positive trends, Colombia's 40-year insurgency-turned-narcoterrorist conflict persisted in the countryside; counterdrug initiatives continued and expanded; and emerging democratic institutions struggled to consolidate, in spite of the poverty, inequality, and corruption threatening to undermine the elements of good governance. During this period, U.S. Government priorities and resources continued to concentrate on counterdrug activities, necessitating continued and greater cooperation between the interagency community and the governments of those nations plagued by an increasingly transnational threat.

The perceived stability and lack of strategic threats Washington attributed to the region, and consequent lack of attention and resources available, have led to increased interagency and partner nation coordination to use limited resources more efficiently. U.S.

and partner nation entities have been cooperating and strengthening the relationships necessary to develop procedures for working together on such problems as drug-trafficking, mass migration, and natural disasters for some time. Current data indicate that

U.S. and partner nation entities have been cooperating on drug-trafficking, mass migration, and natural disasters for some time

these threats have intensified, become more interconnected, and grown beyond the region in scope and reach. They are no longer transnational within subregions of the hemisphere, but transnational with a global impact.

Regional and Subregional Integration

Many leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean have recognized that regional cooperation must link the efforts of all nations, creating a system for regional level coordination of the governmental and non-governmental approaches undertaken within each country. Bilateral, multilateral, and subregional organizations, agreements, and initiatives for political unity, and economic integration throughout the Latin America

and the Caribbean, are fairly well known. Cooperation for security, stability, and the well-being of citizens, on the other hand, is less familiar.

Within Central America, however, there is one notable example of a subregional integration effort to address these issues. The Central American Integration System, created in 1991 to develop common policies and strategies to serve the Central American public, includes all seven nations of the sub-region. In recent declarations during summits held in February and December of 2005, the presidents of member states agreed to take concrete steps to deal with a broad range of transnational issues in a transnational way—from health, to trade, to security. Most notable is the commitment expressed by the national presidents to the development of a regional security model and mechanisms to provide for democratic security, including further study of the gang issue, a regional border security strategy, and the creation of a regional rapid reaction force to deal with narcoterrorism and other emerging threats.⁵ The leaders and citizens of these nations have shown the will for integration and laid the foundations for cooperation to address common security concerns.

Additionally, the governments of four Central American countries chartered the Conference of Central American Armed Forces (CFAC) in 1997 to develop confidence-building measures and promote regional military integration. The CFAC mission is to “contribute to the security, development, and military integration of the region with an end result of realizing permanent and systematic cooperation, coordination and mutual support among the armed forces, and collegial study of areas of common interest and to provide an optimum level of defense against threats to democracy, peace, and liberty.”⁶ Since its inception, the conference has worked closely with the Coordination Center for Natural Disasters in Central America and other local, national, and international organizations to provide collective support for flood and hurricane relief, as well as assistance in combating outbreaks of dengue fever that have plagued the area. The CFAC was quick to show its collective solidarity after September 11 and has since taken steps to enhance regional cooperation in the war on terror. Most recently CFAC has developed a plan of action to strengthen its



U.S. Navy dive team working with Panamanian coast guard, Exercise Panamax 05

355th Communications Squadron (Veronica Pierce)

capacity to support international peacekeeping operations through the U.S. Global Peacekeeping Initiative.

Exercising for Integrated Action

The current regional posture toward integrated approaches to the shared challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the experience derived from operations and exercises in a traditionally asymmetrical threat environment, represents a substantial return on the security cooperation investment in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility. It also presents an enormous opportunity for the evolution of strategic and operational approaches to combined and multinational integrated operations with developing partner nations. The U.S. Southern Command exercise program has been a particularly effective security cooperation tool for working within existing regional mechanisms to leverage common security interests and develop or enhance collective capabilities for multinational integrated

operations geared toward the current regional and international environment. USSOUTHCOM humanitarian assistance/disaster relief missions, peacekeeping operations, and counterterrorism exercises, in particular, have provided opportunities to train both U.S. and international forces and organizations for the stability and security mission.

Partner Nation Preparedness

Fuerzas Aliadas Humanitarias (FA-HUM), or Humanitarian Allied Forces, is a regionally oriented disaster relief command post and staff exercise, involving military and civilian agencies from throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. These agencies include the Coordination Center for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America (which falls under the umbrella of the Central American Integration System) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, two organizations with a long history of participation in the U.S. Southern Command's Humanitarian Assis-

tance Program and disaster relief exercises. The participating nations and these sub-regional organizations are exceptionally well developed for multinational integrated operations, providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The FA-HUM exercise paid significant dividends during 2005, when hurricanes and tropical storms affected millions of people in Mexico and Central America.

In Guatemala, Hurricane Stan affected 960 towns, leaving over 1,500 dead or missing and 390,877 displaced. Immediate relief included support to 647 operational shelters for 108,183 occupants, delivery of 331.5 tons of relief supplies, and search and rescue. Joint Task Force Stan, charged with executing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in Guatemala, achieved seamless integration with U.S. and Guatemalan interagency efforts, working closely with local and national government officials, Guatemala's national disaster coordination agency, and



2003, *Cabañas* focused on operational and tactical level tasks. The discontinuation of this exercise represents its success in having enhanced partner nation unit capabilities to train national forces and maintain proficiency in UN peacekeeping tasks.

Current *PKO North* and *PKO South* exercises focus on operational and strategic level planning and execution of multinational integrated operations, with emphasis on UN integrated logistics, communications interoperability, information flow, decision-making, and directives within a UN multinational peacekeeping framework. Thirteen nations, all of which have participated in USSOUTHCOM exercises, contribute military and/or police personnel in 14 of 17 UN peacekeeping operations around the world, comprising almost 10 percent of the total number of peacekeepers operating under a UN mandate. Nine of the 20 nations that make up the MINUSTAH force in Haiti are from Latin America and the Caribbean, comprising over half of the total manpower. The CFAC nations are working together to form an integrated peacekeeping battalion for future participation in multinational operations. Coalition participation in Operation *Iraqi Freedom* by the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua (and continued support by the El Salvador contingent) have demonstrated not only the value of peacekeeping exercises to prepare partner nation forces for future operations, but also their value in training the U.S. interagency community and forces to integrate with diverse nations and capability sets. Regional forces have brought a high level of multinational integrated operations experience to the USSOUTHCOM exercise program, where lessons learned in real-world operations are incorporated and exchanged among participants.

Security Operations

Tradewinds and *Panamax* are integrated multinational exercises designed to improve regional interoperability for contingencies that may involve terrorist attacks on symbolic targets or key infrastructure. They represent a trend toward operationalizing multinational exercises while more fully incorporating interagency and nongovernmental entities. Caribbean nations have participated in the *Tradewinds* exercise for 20 years, demonstrating a long history of cooperation. This exercise trains and prepares maritime and ground

the Guatemalan military, police, and first responders.

The success of multinational integration was a direct product of partner nation preparedness resulting from opportunities to train and operate together as a part of FA-HUM exercises and other regional initiatives such as the Humanitarian Assistance Program sponsored by USSOUTHCOM. The FA-HUM exercise began showing tangible benefits in 1998, when the drill's scenario simulated a hurricane in the region. The exercise allowed the Guatemalan interagency, local nongovernmental organizations, and private organizations to meet (in some instances for the first time), share contact information, and discuss organizational capabilities in a humanitarian assistance/disaster relief scenario. Shortly thereafter, Mitch, the second deadliest hurricane on record, followed the track of the exercise storm and made landfall in Central America. The Guatemalan president cited the FA-HUM exercise as being a significant factor in his government's ability to respond.

Since Hurricane Mitch, the FA-HUM exercise has incorporated efforts of U.S. Southern Command's Humanitarian Assistance Program to review National Emergency Operations Center humanitarian and disaster plans and establish prepositioned supplies throughout the hemisphere. A semiannual Central American Disaster Preparedness Seminar was conducted in Guatemala City and focused on national and regional plans.

The program has also funded software for national and regional coordination center connectivity and information-sharing to come online in June 2006. This year, FA-HUM (April 2006) will include inter-agency policymaker-level participants from 21 countries—as well as regional disaster coordination centers, the Coordination Center for Natural Disaster Prevention in Central America, and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency—to improve regional crisis response procedures, humanitarian information-sharing, and coordination with the international community.

Keeping the Peace

Participation in peacekeeping operations (PKOs) is a source of immense national pride in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility and a testimony to the capabilities return on investment in peacekeeping exercises in the region. The command has sponsored multinational peacekeeping exercises in the form of situational and field training exercises and staff and command post exercises since 1996, when the first *Cabañas* exercise was executed with a multinational peacekeeping focus. *PKO North* (Central American and Caribbean nations) and *PKO South* (South American nations) have been held since 1997, alternating each year between situational and field training and command post formats and including up to 23 nations and 7 international, regional, and nongovernmental organizations. Last held in

forces to coordinate with civil authorities in response to man-made or natural disasters. In 2005, the exercise was operationalized by linking it to a real-world event. During 3 years (2005, 2006, and 2007), the exercise is being used to train and prepare specific regional forces for security operations in support of the 2007 World Cup of Cricket. This multinational event will test the region's collective ability to conduct security and disaster response operations. *Tradewinds* also integrates joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational participants, including 19 countries, the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and Caribbean organizations, such as the Eastern Caribbean Regional Security System.

Panamax, an integrated multinational exercise focused on maritime interdiction and security of the Panama Canal, is designed to exercise the interoperability of nations with a critical interest in the Panama Canal. Chile, the fourth largest user of the canal, has taken an active leadership role in developing the exercise, which includes military and security forces from at least 15 nations. The exercise scenario posits a terrorist threat from sea and land to the canal's critical infrastructure, whereby the Panamanian government requests international assistance through the United Nations. Formed under the authority of a UN Security Council resolution, a combined joint task force of 14 nations is led by the commander, U.S. Navy South (a component of USSOUTHCOM), and a Chilean deputy commander. Subordinate combined joint task forces, operating within the territorial waters and landmass of Panama, are commanded by Peru, Colombia, Panama, and the United States. The *Panamax* exercise, like *Tradewinds*, provides tangible benefits to the United States and the region through the enhancement of collective capabilities for multinational integrated operations applicable to a wide variety of contingencies within the region and around the world.

Security threats in the U.S. Southern Command area of responsibility have generally been considered unconventional or, in some cases, nonmilitary. Ranging from insurgency, drug and illicit trafficking, and natural disasters, to the more recent recognition of

transnational terrorism, these threats have necessitated close interagency coordination for many of the command's activities in the region. Building on its inherent interagency experience, USSOUTHCOM is the first combatant command to incorporate fully the Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) into its operational exercise program. Through participation in a 3-year series of command exercises, the office (as well as the combatant command staff) has been able to gain experience, knowledge, and lessons learned that will impact integrated operations development. The USSOUTHCOM partnership with S/CRS has been at the forefront of developing planning and execution procedures within the U.S. Government for future multinational integrated operations. Through this cooperation, the two partners have been implementing the

Panamax is designed to exercise the interoperability of nations with a critical interest in the Panama Canal

principles and guidance set forth in the recently published National Security Presidential Directive 44, *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*, and the related Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, *Military Support of Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations*.

The U.S. Southern Command theater security cooperation and exercise programs have greatly enhanced regional partner nation capabilities for combined and multinational integrated operations in real-world contingencies. They have also been tailored to incorporate the unique integrated operations experience of partner nation regional and global experience from coalition operations for peacekeeping and reconstruction. This focus—combined with the forward-looking inclusion of the S/CRS and other agencies into the command's exercises, theater security cooperation, and operations—offers significant contributions and relevance for further development of combined and multinational integrated operations to meet the needs of today's security environment.

The examples described above offer models for other combatant commands and suggest the likelihood of similar experiences in other regions. The next step in this evolution is to expand the effort across

geographical combatant commands and the international interagency community, much in the way the Joint Staff-sponsored Multilateral Planning Conference for Coalition Operations has brought together potential coalition partners from around the world. A similar forum for multinational development of doctrine and training would present an opportunity for collective approaches to the development of future multinational integrated operations. Current and emerging 21st-century threats will demand increased global cooperation not only for stability, security, transition, and reconstruction in a postconflict environment, but also for conflict prevention. The United States must therefore continue to cultivate partnerships and capabilities for joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ These terms are defined by Richard D. Downie, "Defining Integrated Operations," *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (3^d Quarter 2005), 10.

² Unofficial translation of the statement of the President of El Salvador, Elías Antonio Saca, to the United Nations General Assembly, 59th Session, New York, September 22, 2004. Original in Spanish available at <www.un.org/webcast/ga/59/state-ments/elsspa040922.pdf>.

³ Information provided by U.S. Military Group, San Salvador, El Salvador.

⁴ Minister of Defense Federico Breve Traveso, "Honduran Security: Central American Challenges and Opportunities," keynote address to the *Hemispheric Strategic Objectives for the Next Decade Conference*, sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean Center of Florida International University, U.S. Southern Command, and the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College, March 17–19, 2005.

⁵ See Summit Declaration dated February 1, 2005, available at <www.sgsica.org/busqueda/busqueda_archivo.aspx?Archivo=decl_5034_3_06122005.pdf>; and Summit Declaration dated December 2, 2005, available at <www.sgsica.org/busqueda/busqueda_archivo.aspx?Archivo=decl_3158_1_10102005.pdf>.

⁶ Unofficial translation. See CFAC Mission Statement (in Spanish), available at <www.cfac.mil/ni/mision.htm>.

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