
Security in the Americas: Challenges and Opportunities

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[The following is a reprint of Mr. Gelbard's statement before the Inter-American Defense Board, Washington DC on 9 October 1992. The original text was printed in the U.S. Department of State *Dispatch*, 9 November 1992.]

It is a great pleasure and honor to be here with you today to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the Americas. I am also pleased to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) and the 50th anniversary of the Inter-American Defense College.

This is a time of extraordinary opportunity for the world. The Cold War is over. The threat of nuclear engagement has diminished greatly. The sense of promise and possibility, of palpable relief and hope for lasting peace felt by peoples the world over, has particular meaning for the peoples of the new world.

In this hemisphere, the year began with the news of a peace agreement in El Salvador, and, in recent weeks both El Salvador and Honduras have welcomed the settlement of their territorial disputes. Just two months ago in Surinam, a historic peace agreement between the government and the insurgent force was reached. Today, the OAS (Organization of American States) is present in that country with a team of observers who are assisting in the implementation of the agreement, and it has witnessed the first turning in of weapons by the jungle command in August and September.

The will to put long-standing conflicts behind us and work together has rarely been stronger. The welcome of Guyana and Belize into the OAS was made possible by reform of the OAS Charter stimulated in part by the friendship developed between the two countries and their neighbors.

Just two days ago, a historic event took place when the trade ministers of Canada, Mexico, and the United States initialed the North American Free Trade Agreement, another major step in making a reality of our dream of creating a truly hemispheric free trade zone and (of) genuine economic integration of the Western Hemisphere.

Meanwhile, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, through MERCOSUR (Southern Cone Common Market), are working to create a common market in the Southern Cone. Ecuador and Colombia have just begun free trade between themselves, Bolivia and Peru between their countries, and the Andean region as a whole is moving toward greater trade liberalization.

The nations of CARICOM (Caribbean Community and the Caribbean Common Market) are not part of the Inter-American Defense Board, but the efforts of the Caribbean states toward integration should be noted, as well as the formation of a regional security force, the RSS. Canada is another country which is not a member of the board. But since becoming a member of

the OAS 2 years ago, it has been an active participant, raising the profile of arms and security issues at the OAS General Assembly in Santiago in 1991 and, in the previous General Assembly in Asuncion, proposing the creation of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy.

As I speak, the OAS democracy unit is at work in Paraguay, Peru, and Surinam. In each case, the member country has invited the unit to help, and, while its mission differs from one setting to another, its goal is the same: the consolidation of democratic institutions. In its short existence, the unit has enjoyed repeated success, observing and thus contributing to free, fair, and peaceful elections in six countries.

These are new times, and there is progress on problems which seemed intractable to some.

The aura of invincibility that seemed to surround the drug traffickers has faded. The individual and joint efforts of our countries have succeeded in making major inroads against this transnational threat.

Our countries have adopted—at the OAS—the major elements of a framework which will enable (us) to maximize our cooperation to rid our hemisphere of the drug scourge. Tough OAS standards on precursor chemicals combined with tough OAS money laundering standards make it possible to squeeze the traffickers at both ends of the production cycle: denying them the raw materials needed to produce their drugs and the proceeds of their illicit and deadly trade.

Lastly, we are seeing that political crises need not lead to systemic breakdown. The way in which the current governance problem in Brazil is being handled—through the established constitutional process of impeachment—shows that these kinds of crises can be managed peacefully and through the application of the rule of law. In the United States, it was the possibility of impeachment under our Constitution which, many argue, occasioned a lawful transition of government in the wake of the Watergate break-in.

But this is not a time of unbounded optimism. Problems continue. Insurgencies remain active in Peru, Colombia, Guatemala, and Bolivia. Indeed, one of the most violent terrorist groups in (the) world operates in Peru and, despite the recent capture of Abimael Guzman, *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) remains a potent threat.

The drug traffickers have not been routed. They have found ways to evade and to adapt to some of our best efforts to disrupt their trade.

Although it is true for this hemisphere that democracy is the rule, not the exception, the sobering events in Haiti and Peru have shown the need for peaceful mechanisms to rally our countries to the defense of democracy when it is threatened by forceful and extra-legal means.

And, extreme poverty is a critical problem, by any statistical measure one takes.

Problems like insurgency, poverty, and drug-trafficking continue, and progress in the consolidation of democracy is marked by setbacks. But even the great good news of our time brings in its wake a critical challenge and the need for major adjustments in thinking and practice.

The demise of the Cold War means that we must revamp our strategies, which had been predicated on containment. The old assumptions are obviously no longer valid.

This is certainly the case for the United States. For 40 years following World War II, U.S. military assumptions were geared to the threat of a massive, quick-thrust Soviet invasion into

Western Europe, involving perhaps 100 divisions. Such a conflict could quickly become global and could, perhaps, involve the use of nuclear weapons. These were the among the key assumptions that led to the force structure we maintained in the past.

A changed global and regional situation has inevitably affected our decisions on force levels, force structures, and military missions. Likewise, the demise of the Soviet bloc, capable of projecting its power in various regions of the world, confronts military planners everywhere with (the) need to reassess.

No military organization in this region can remain tied to old thinking about itself and hope to make a positive contribution to (the) peace and security of the region.

Security, of course, is not the exclusive province of the military. First and foremost, governments must face the security challenges of a new and transformed world.

Responding to the new international situation requires that governments look at the way they conduct their international relations. It demands that we strengthen our common political institutions for what my President called "collective engagement." Most important, however, is what the changed global—and especially the changed regional—situation allows us: namely, to fashion a strategic vision based on the positive value of promoting democracy.

For the United States, the promotion of democracy is an overriding foreign policy goal. Representative democracy is a keystone in the architecture of the inter-American system. Democracy is also inherently a national security matter, as stable democracies provide the people of the Americas with the greatest possible protection of their rights within secure borders.

We prize democracy as the only system consistent with the rights and freedoms of our peoples. We also recognize that no single factor has been more important to the progress our countries have made together—from promoting trade and development to combating the drug threat—than the advance of democracy in the Americas. It is our shared commitment to democratic values that makes our combined actions toward common objectives possible.

The future of democracy in the Americas means building a democratic ethos on a foundation of respect: for elected authority, for the rule of law, and for human rights. It also means accountability, the responsiveness of governors to the governed. A democratic and free market system cannot truly function with corruption by public servants at any level.

The sweeping, peaceful movement toward democratically elected governments in the Americas over the last decade and a half came with the support of the militaries of the region. That support remains critical, however, as democratic government is consolidated and strengthened. Improved civil-military cooperation requires opening new debates and lines of communication—and demands the attention of civilian policymakers as well as their military colleagues. History has shown us again and again that deviation from the democratic path exacts a high cost on nations and on military organizations. There is, today, a common awareness that political differences must be taken to the ballot box and that democracy contains within itself the means for its reformation and improvement.

Internationally, cooperative security efforts in a variety of areas strengthen the prospects for democracy in this region. Cooperation is the name for democracy put into practice among countries.

One example of cooperation is the Inter-American Defense Board-coordinated de-mining project in Central America. Responding to requests from the OAS Secretary General and the

concerned governments, the Board has brought the collective expertise of the militaries which belong to this organization into play. The de-mining project has already made it possible to identify the scope of the problem and establish the need for resources adequate to do the job. The first steps toward undertaking the training phase have been taken with the call of the Board president for volunteers who will acquire and then impart the skills needed to remove mines initially in Nicaragua.

The de-mining project is a cooperative effort that taps the combined expertise of our countries' military organizations to assist in a project with significant humanitarian benefit to the peoples of the region. It is, in our judgment, a model for the cooperation among the militaries of the region.

The Board has long recognized the potential of our militaries to use their professional skills, training facilities, [and] organizational and logistic abilities to serve the needs of the countries we serve. IADB studies on disaster relief reflect the recognition that our military organizations, with their logistic resources, training, command structure, and rapid response capability, can make a concrete contribution to planning for and, with the necessary policy decision, carrying out disaster relief efforts.

IADB possesses the assets to make a positive and substantive contribution to the changed regional security situation.

- The IADB is now open region wide to all militaries. The requirement that the IADB members be from countries which are state parties to the Rio Treaty has been removed. Thus, the IADB is capable of becoming the matrix for inter-military cooperation throughout the hemisphere.
- We have considered, as well, the wealth of professional experience that the 22 militaries bring to the organization, plus the repository of experience and skill in the staff.
- It is clear to us, too, that the IADB is actively seeking to find its place in the changed regional, international situation. The IADB committee on initiatives began its evaluation of the role and mission of the board before the comparable NATO exercise was complete.

So there is great potential in the IADB in this year when it marks 50 years of existence. We see no signs of a middle-aged crisis and hope to work with you to realize the board's potential to the fullest.

But let me turn to what are, for some, difficult issues which go beyond the Board and have generally to do with the military. These could interfere with our cooperation, if we are not frank and say what we mean.

One misconception is that my country would prefer to see the militaries of the region disappear. So long as we are a community of sovereign nations and so long as threats to security remain, there can be no talk of eliminating military forces. Another sensitive issue regards use of the military in combating the drug menace.

A second misconception—even though it contradicts the first—is that my country would prefer to see this problem taken over by the military.

The U.S. Secretary of Defense (Cheney) expressed clearly, about a year ago, to the conference of American armies our views on this. He said that in the war against illicit drugs, all resources must be brought to bear. While counter-narcotics operations are primarily a law enforcement mission, military organizations can provide unique skills to complement law enforcement efforts. Military forces can provide transportation, security, and logistics; control rivers, coast lines, and national airspace; and move directly against major concentrations of traffickers and their laboratories. We would be pleased, Secretary Cheney said, to lend our expertise to support your operations.

We celebrate today an event, 500 years ago—an "encounter of two worlds"—that led to the evolution of a "new world," to a hemisphere called the Americas. The sweep of the historic event we commemorate today prompts us to look at the place of the "new world" in the "new world order" and of our region in a changing global community.

The record shows that the militaries of our region are prepared to accept the challenges of a post-Cold War world. Latin American countries joined the world in the condemnation of the brutal Iraqi attack of Kuwait and, with the sole exception of Cuba, supported the worldwide coalition's landmark victory to restore Kuwait's independence. Your countries contributed through oil production, offers of military personnel and equipment, and participation in regional peacekeeping operations after the liberation of Kuwait.

For example, Argentina sent ships to the Persian Gulf during DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM; and Chilean helicopters and crews, and military personnel from Argentina, Uruguay, and Venezuela have served with UN forces in Kuwait. These countries and others from the hemisphere are now serving in other UN-sponsored peacekeeping forces, including in Cambodia. These and the contributions of other Latin American countries to this successful example of international cooperation are deeply appreciated.

In his remarks to the UN General Assembly last month, President Bush said, "With the Cold War's end, I believe we have a unique opportunity to go beyond artificial divisions of a first, second, and third world to forge instead a genuine global community of free and sovereign states." With this vision expressed, he went on to discuss three challenges: keeping the peace, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and prosperity.

On the first of those challenges, the militaries of the Americas have shown their willingness to participate and contribute across the globe in the Middle East and Cambodia. As for proliferation, the governments of this region have been second to none in supporting the goal of non-proliferation, with 32 of the 35 OAS member states joining as cosponsors of the chemical weapons convention so far. Argentina's and Brazil's recent accession to the Treaty of Tlatelolc signals again the region's seriousness about the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

And finally, the response of your governments and others in the hemisphere to President Bush's vision of hemispheric free trade, the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative, indicates that this hemisphere is ready to lead the world in embracing the challenge of prosperity.

These are exceptional times. Although no amount of enthusiasm can diminish the enormity of the problems before us, there is no rhetoric that can exaggerate the opportunity which history gives us to build a safer, a more secure, and a more prosperous world starting—but not stopping in the Americas.