
Threats, Concerns, and Other Challenges to the Americas

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The topic of this seminar “Threats to Hemispheric Security” is a timely subject since next month the Summit of the Americas will meet in Mar Del Plata, Argentina. The Summit will be an opportunity to build upon the *Declaration on Security in the Americas*, adopted at the Organization of American States’ (OAS’) Special Conference on Hemispheric Security in Mexico City. This Declaration essentially a comprehensive hemispheric security charter for the 21st century recognizes the diverse and multidimensional threats that challenge our democracies and undermine the security and prosperity of our citizens in too many states. Yes, traditional border disputes in the Hemisphere still exist, and we must continue relentlessly to resolve them. But we also face new forces that threaten our security and that of our neighbors that are not always easy to identify, isolate, and target. Among the challenges the Declaration on Security in the Americas identifies are the following:

- Terrorism; transnational organized crime;
- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their access, possession, and use by terrorists;
- Illicit drugs;
- Corruption; illicit trafficking in weapons;
- Trafficking in persons; and
- Money laundering.

In addition, it notes such non-conventional threats as extreme poverty, environmental degradation, natural disasters, and health pandemics including human immunodeficiency virus and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and other diseases.

I would like to focus on three particular threats of a diverse nature that we face in the Americas:

- Threat from terrorism,
- Threat from illicit trafficking of arms including Man-portable Air Defense System (MANPADS); and
- Threat to our collective socio-economic well-being from natural disasters.

I would also like to conclude with some comments about the importance of this college and the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) to our common security architecture.

The Treat of Terrorism

On September 15, 2005 at the United Nations (U.N.), the world’s leaders affirmed,

We strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whom ever, wherever and for whatever purposes, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

Just two months ago, we observed the fourth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and reflected on a great turning point in our history. We recognized that, far from an isolated

incident, the evil of that day has reappeared in other places, including Mombasa, Riyadh, Jakarta, Istanbul, Madrid, London, Sharm el-Sheikh, and, once again, in Bali. Our region is no stranger to terrorism. The Western Hemisphere has known acts of terrorism such as the 1994 Buenos Aires Jewish Community Center (AMIA) bombing in Argentina and the 2002 Nogales bombing in Bogota. Just this month a bombing occurred in Trinidad and Tobago.

To face the threat of terrorism we must prevent attacks of terrorist networks before they occur. In this Hemisphere, this implies working with our allies to track possible terrorist travel and funding and exposing organized criminal networks that could facilitate terrorist activity. We must also redouble efforts to deny weapons of mass destruction to outlaw regimes and to their terrorist allies. Several states in the hemisphere have joined the Proliferation Security Initiative to stop any possible shipments of suspected weapons technology. Third, we must deny radical groups support and sanctuary. In this Hemisphere, Cuba is considered a state sponsor of terrorism for its unwillingness to cooperate in the war on terror and its willingness to harbor those who are terrorists.

It is also crucial to deny militants control of any territory that they could use as a home base and a launching pad for terror. In this Hemisphere, we have successfully worked with Colombian President Uribe to regain his country's national territory from the control of narcoterrorists. We remain vigilant to narcoterrorists use of neighboring countries as well.

We must deny the terrorists future recruits by replacing hatred and resentment with democracy and hope across the Middle East. In the Western Hemisphere, this implies vigilance against any possible recruitment efforts, as well as a continued strong commitment to work with nations to empower people through economic opportunity and political inclusion.

Here in the Americas, the OAS was the first organization to condemn the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Since then, the countries of the Hemisphere have worked to increase their ability to handle security threats through training programs sponsored by the Inter-America Committee on Terrorism (CICTE). The Hemisphere has also developed the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism that is now entered into force. Working together we can defeat terrorism.

Threat from Illicit Trafficking in Arms

The destabilizing accumulation and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons has proven a major obstacle to social peace, economic development, and progress in many societies. Terrorists, drug traffickers, gangs, and other criminal organizations acquire arms primarily through illegal diversion, theft and smuggling, rather than through legitimate transfers. The United States supports comprehensive steps to address the illicit trade of small arms. We believe that measures by individual countries and collective steps by regional and sub regional organizations go a long way toward establishing norms and practices that can defeat this threat to our common security.

The OAS has made important contributions towards reducing the problem of illicit weapons proliferation and the U.S. encourages the Organization of American states and its member states to continue to make progress in this area. The entry into force of the *Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives* (CIFTA) in 1998 made the OAS a leader in multilateral efforts to address the problem of illicit weapons trafficking. As a CIFTA signatory, the U.S. supports the Convention and OAS states parties' efforts to aggressively implement it.

Effective export and import controls and their enforcement are the cornerstones of any successful effort to mitigate the problems of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The adoption by the OAS of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) model regulations on the control of transnational movement of firearms is an important step forward. However, these regulations must be adopted and enforced by member states in order to be effective.

Unregulated arms brokers are additional sources of weapons for the black market. As the January 6, 2003 OAS report on the *Diversion of Nicaraguan Arms to the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia* investigation demonstrated, licensing and regulating arms brokers is central to combating illicit arms trafficking. Both exporting and importing countries also need to exercise due diligence in authenticating end-user certificates to ensure that exported arms are destined for a legitimate end-user.

The Threat of Man-portable Air Defense Systems

Strict import and export controls are particularly important in regards to man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS). It is no surprise that MANPADS are attractive to terrorists because they are relatively inexpensive, widely available, easy to use and lethal to aircraft. A MANPADS attack in the hemisphere or an attack with MANPADS originating in or from any of our states of the hemisphere would have devastating consequences for all of us. International and domestic public confidence in the safety of air travel, the airline industry, and the hemisphere's economy would be seriously impacted. The unsuccessful MANPADS attack on a commercial airline in Kenya in 2002, resulted in an almost 25 percent drop in tourism to this country. Just imagine what the impact of a successful attack would have been.

Given the number of MANPADS in worldwide inventories, the inadequate control of stockpiles and their availability on the black arms market, we need to aggressively seek to deny these weapons to terrorists. As highlighted by the January 2005 arrest of its traffickers and the confiscation of MANPADS in Nicaragua, the ease with which terrorists can acquire MANPADS is an alarming reality today in our hemisphere. This threat has not gone unnoticed by the international community. Last year, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the United Nations highlighted the threat to civil aviation posed by MANPADS by adopting resolutions calling on states to ensure that they are taking all steps necessary to protect our citizens and our air travel from unauthorized use of these weapons. The OAS has added its voice to the chorus of international organizations working to address this pressing threat. On June 7, 2005 the OAS General Assembly adopted the *Recommended Guidelines on MANPADS Control and Security*, which identifies concrete measures that member states should take to ensure that MANPADS do not fall into the hands of terrorists. Full implementation of the OASGA resolution by our countries will be critical in addressing this threat.

The Threat of Natural Disasters

The recent devastating hurricane season that has caused such great destruction to our neighbors and the United States reminds us of the continuing susceptibility of the region to natural disasters, striking developed and developing countries alike. The recent disasters have caused not only death and suffering on a massive scale, but also severe damage to economic and social infrastructure and already fragile ecosystems.

In this region, the United States is working through the OAS, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Pan-American Development Foundation and private sector partners to respond to storms and to volcanic eruptions in Mexico and Central America, which have caused widespread flooding that have killed hundreds of people and affected millions more. These steps build on efforts that began last year to promote greater cooperation between and among inter-American bodies such as the Inter-American Development Bank, Pan-American Health Organization, and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

We strongly support the OAS' renewed efforts to address the natural disaster threat. This year, the General Assembly called for the creation of a joint consultative body, which will harness the efforts of the both the Committee on Hemispheric Security (CHS) and the Permanent Executive Committee on CICDI (CEPCIDI). It is my hope that this new body will help OAS member states enhance their responses to natural disasters and focus on the importance of domestic mitigation

strategies, enhanced monitoring and alert, emergency preparedness and response, risk management, effective disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts, mutual assistance, and technical cooperation.

Hemispheric Security

The October 2003 Special Conference on Security concluded that our concept of hemispheric security is multidimensional that the threats, concerns, and other challenges facing the Americas include military, political, economic, social, and environmental facets. Adapting to the realities of the 21st century is a challenging proposition that merits the full resources and attention of the Inter-American system.

Today, the challenges mentioned in the *Declaration of Security in the Americas* require coordinated, cooperative, and multilateral responses by our governments. These threats spawn crosscutting problems that require multifaceted responses by the whole range of state institutions each playing their appropriate role, with full respect for democratic principles and human rights. In short, security cooperation within and among our states must be more coordinated and intensified.

The United States is committed to an inter-American security agenda that promotes prosperity and equity within our countries and that promotes cooperation and stability among them. We are committed to this agenda because it is in our national interest that the Americas are democratic, stable, and prosperous. While the *Declaration* embodies our common approach to hemispheric security, success will only come when we move forward with implementation of the *Declaration* on a national, sub-regional, and regional level. The task ahead is to make our security architecture even more relevant and effective.

The need to clarify the juridical and institutional relationship between the Inter-American Defense Board and the OAS is part of the modernization process identified in Mexico City and reaffirmed by our Ministers of Defense in Quito at the Defense Ministerial of the Americas. In June, 2005, at the OAS General Assembly in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, our governments established December 31, 2005, as the date by which we must modernize the IADB, college and clarify the juridical link between these bodies and the OAS. Fulfilling this mandate is essential because this college is an integral component of the Inter-American security architecture. It bolsters security and democracy by bringing together defense and security experts from throughout the Hemisphere to hone your professional capabilities and contemplate the defense and security challenges to your nations. I am pleased to see that the college expanded both its curriculum and student body to respond to the new realities of the Hemisphere. The increased civilian enrollment at the college is an important development that recognizes the growing nexus between traditional defense and emerging security issues.

The Board likewise must respond to the call for transformation. The defense and security expertise provided by the Board and its staff to the OAS is invaluable. Unfortunately, despite the growing need for expert counsel in this specialized area, the OAS and other Inter-American bodies have not made adequate use of the Board. The Board should be in position to provide the OAS and its member states with the technical, advisory, and educational expertise in both defense and hemispheric security matters of a non-operational nature. The OAS and its member states need this expertise if they are to effectively respond to the threats of the 21st century.

It is simply not productive for some to say that the Board should modernize, but that member states should not be able to ask it directly for assistance. It makes little sense to modernize an institution only to create additional hurdles and obstacles that will undermine its ability to respond to the needs of those who its serves our governments. The Board must be treated in the same way as other entities of the OAS anything less would be unfair and counterproductive. If we do not find a way of modernizing and employing this unique resource, frankly, we run the risk of losing it. After an exhaustive review of the Inter-American security architecture, the special conference agreed unanimously on a cooperative

and multidimensional approach to security. The Board and the college must also embrace this focus and mandate.

The OAS cannot support an Inter-American Defense Board that is not comprised of all OAS members and responsive to their needs. I am confident that the OAS will agree to strengthen the college and the Board so that they are better able to respond to the needs of the member states and provide the defense and security expertise needed by all.