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**POSTURE STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE 116<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 7, 2019**



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**Introduction.** I want to thank the Congress, and especially this Committee, for your support to United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). The men and women of our team work every day to earn the trust of partners in Latin America and the Caribbean. We are friends and neighbors, bound together by shared values and a shared stake in our common future. The nations of this neighborhood are connected in every domain—sea, air, land, space, and cyberspace. Our partnerships are vital to security and prosperity in this hemisphere, and to our collective ability to meet complex global challenges. We recognize that the success and security of future generations depend on how effectively we build trust with allies and partners in the hemisphere today, working with and through interagency partners like the Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Department of Justice (DOJ). Ultimately, we want enemies to fear us, friends to partner with us, and the Western Hemisphere to shine as a beacon of peace, prosperity, and potential.

The strengths and opportunities of our hemisphere—democracy, respect for human rights and rule of law, and military-to-military relationships rooted in education, culture, and values—are matched with a troubling array of challenges and threats to global security and to our homeland. These include natural and man-made disasters, weak government institutions, corruption, under-resourced security organizations, violent crime, criminal organizations, and violent extremist cells. China has accelerated expansion of its Belt and Road Initiative at a pace that may one day overshadow its expansion in Southeast Asia and Africa. Russia supports multiple information outlets spreading its false narrative of world events and U.S. intentions. Iran has deepened its anti-U.S. Spanish language media coverage and has exported its state support for terrorism into our hemisphere. Russia and China also support the autocratic regimes in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua, which are counter to democracy and U.S. interests. We are

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monitoring the latest events in Venezuela and look forward to welcoming that country back into the hemisphere's community of democracies. Where threats are transregional, multi-domain, and global, the United States must renew focus on our neighbors and our shared Western Hemisphere neighborhood.

**Partnerships.** Modest, smart, and focused investments in U.S. forces and security assistance continue to yield meaningful returns in the form of partners who are ready to address threats shoulder-to-shoulder with us. Strengthening partnerships is at the heart of everything we do. USSOUTHCOM's mission is about the smart, focused use of force—not economy of force.

Working from a foundation of mutual respect and shared interests in regional cooperation and interoperability, we are enhancing our partnerships with Brazil, Colombia, and Chile, which are forces for regional and global security. Argentina has reinvigorated military-to-military interaction, and co-hosted our annual South American Defense Conference. Peru continues a tradition of strong liaison officer exchanges with USSOUTHCOM and recently conducted training with a Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF). We reinitiated security cooperation with Ecuador, and are moving forward with a renewed military-to-military partnership.

In Central America, partners like El Salvador and Panama have stepped up cooperation in the area of counter-narcotics (CN); in addition, El Salvador co-hosted our Central American Security Conference last year. Honduras hosts our Joint Task Force (JTF) Bravo at Soto Cano, providing a regionally-based security cooperation platform, the presence of which allows a rapid response capability. Our support to Guatemala's defense institution building efforts has helped its Ministry of Defense increase efficiency, transparency, and sustainability of its investments.

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Across the Caribbean, our partners continue to look at USSOUTHCOM as their security partner of choice. Trinidad and Tobago co-hosted our annual Caribbean Nations Security Conference, and thwarted a terror attack with the support of U.S. special operations forces (USSOF). Jamaica has stepped up its CN efforts, recently purchasing a maritime patrol aircraft that will support regional drug interdiction operations.

We continue to expand our cooperation with allies and partners in humanitarian assistance/disaster response (HA/DR) missions and counter-threat efforts, such as drug detection and monitoring, and support to interdiction operations in Central America and the Caribbean. Allies and partners contributed to nearly half of the successful drug seizures credited to Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) last year. In addition to continuing cooperation in traditional areas like peacekeeping and drug interdiction, we are building interoperability for high-end expeditionary operations and in the space and cyber mission sets. In the past year, Brazil became the first Latin American country to sign a Space Situational Awareness Agreement, Colombia became NATO's first global partner in Latin America, and Chile led the maritime component of the world's largest international naval exercise, Rim of the Pacific—a first for a Latin American sea power. Later this year, Brazil will send a Major General to serve as U.S. Army South's next Deputy Commander for Interoperability, the first Brazilian officer to serve in this role.

The majority of nations in this hemisphere share democratic values—including respect for human rights and adherence to the rule of law—and interests in advancing democracy and countering radical ideologies. These shared values and interests are the foundation of our military-to-military relationships. We reinforce and build on these shared values and interests through institutional capacity building efforts, information and intelligence sharing, education,

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personnel exchanges, and exercises. In the past year, we have improved the quality, depth, and frequency of information and intelligence exchanges with partners, producing joint products on transnational issues of mutual concern.

We also build on those shared values by working with our partners to elevate and integrate all elements of professionalism as a foundational component of every security conference we conduct. The professionalism of U.S. armed forces is the bedrock of our legitimacy, both as a fighting force and in our ability to build trust with our own people. Professionalism encompasses human rights, jointness, gender integration, and non-commissioned officer development.

Education and training—funded by the Department of Defense’s William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and the Department of State’s International Military Education and Training (IMET) program—and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) purchases made possible by Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants are force multipliers. Our partners prefer U.S. education and training, and these exchanges facilitate mutual understanding of values, doctrine, and culture that enable us to operate together more effectively. Our participation in multinational exercises like UNITAS (a naval integration exercise), PANAMAX (defense of the Panama Canal), and Brazil’s CRUZEIRO DO SUL (regional air exercise) is another important way we increase mutual understanding, interoperability, and collective readiness.

In the absence of an enduring U.S. military presence in most of Latin America and the Caribbean, recurring rotations of small teams of USSOF, soldiers, Marines, and National Guard personnel<sup>1</sup> play central roles in building trust and enabling the exchange of critical expertise. By

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<sup>1</sup> The State Partnership Program (SPP) links a unique component of the Department of Defense – a state’s National Guard – with the armed forces or equivalent of a partner nation, leveraging National Guard capabilities for engagements that build enduring relationships and advance mutual defense and security goals. 24 of the SPP’s 75 partnerships worldwide are in the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility, including a partnership with Venezuela that is currently inactive.

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carefully tailoring these rotations, we ensure they build the readiness of U.S. forces as well as building partner nations' capabilities. On any given day, small USSOF teams conduct over 30 missions in support of about 12 partner nations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Many live and work alongside regional forces, building the trust, confidence, and lasting relationships that reinforce our status as the partner of choice and enhance our ability to respond quickly to contingencies.

Humanitarian support efforts like medical engagements, civil affairs activities, and the recent deployment of the hospital ship USNS COMFORT demonstrate our enduring solidarity and friendship with neighbors, while countering negative messaging by adversarial nations. The international medical team aboard COMFORT treated more than 26,000 patients in Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Honduras. This team conducted more than 100 training engagements, relieving pressure on regional health systems caused by the Venezuelan migration crisis and giving local medical providers more flexibility to deliver care. The integration of more than 100 military and non-governmental organization (NGO) personnel from 10 other nations helped us build trust, tell our story effectively, and enhance regional perceptions of the United States. The U.S. military medical and command staff also returned from the deployment more ready, able to operate with foreign partners, and prepared to provide critical care to U.S. warfighters. These impacts will far outlast COMFORT's 70-day deployment.

Strengthening our partnerships is our best bid for addressing regional and global threats. We work by, with, and through partners to enhance the security of both the United States and our partners, and to help grow bilateral security relationships into regional and global security initiatives. Our networked approach to countering threats recognizes that nothing happens without robust and enduring partnerships across the U.S. interagency, region, and civil society.

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Our ultimate advantage is using the power of our ideals, ideas, and people to build trust with friends and create dilemmas for competitor nations. This is the primary dimension in which we expand the competitive space.

**Threats.** Six state actors (Russia, China, Iran, and their authoritarian allies in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela) and a system of interrelated threats challenge the security of our partners and the region. Threats like natural and man-made disasters and criminal networks feed and fuel drivers of instability, including weak institutions, poverty, corruption, and violent crime. Addressing these challenges requires whole-of-government efforts, led by partner nations at a pace they can sustain, to strengthen democratic institutions and expand economic opportunity. Often, improving security is the first step.

**Nation State Competition and Malign Actors.** Russia and China are expanding their influence in the Western Hemisphere, often at the expense of U.S. interests. Both enable—and are enabled by—actions in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba that threaten hemispheric security and prosperity, and the actions of those three states in turn damage the stability and democratic progress across the region. As the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world, Iran’s activities in the region are also concerning.

Russia continues to use Latin America and the Caribbean to spread disinformation, collect intelligence on the United States, and project power. Russia’s deployment of two nuclear capable bombers to the Western Hemisphere was intended as a demonstration of support for the Maduro regime and as a show of force to the United States. Russia has also deployed intelligence collection ships to the region, as well as an underwater research ship to Latin America capable of mapping undersea cables—information it could use to cut critical lines of communication during a future crisis. Additionally, Russia is establishing joint space projects

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with partners in the region, which it could eventually leverage for counter-space purposes in the event of a global conflict.

China utilizes the same predatory, non-transparent foreign lending practices it has implemented around the world to exert political and economic leverage in certain countries. China has pledged at least \$150 billion in loans to countries in the hemisphere,<sup>2</sup> and 16 nations now participate in the Belt and Road Initiative. However, many countries are beginning to recognize the long-term consequences of mortgaging their future to China, as we've seen in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Sierra Leone, Djibouti, and the Maldives. In the future, China could use its control of deep water ports in the Western Hemisphere to enhance its global operational posture. Particularly concerning is China's effort to exert control over key infrastructure associated with the Panama Canal.

China's presence and activities at Argentina's deep space tracking facility is also concerning. Beijing could be in violation of the terms of its agreement with Argentina to only conduct civilian activities, and may have the ability to monitor and potentially target U.S., Allied, and partner space activities. Additionally, Chinese firms like Huawei and ZTE have aggressively penetrated the region, placing intellectual property, private data, and government secrets at risk. If governments in Latin America and the Caribbean continue to gravitate toward using Chinese information systems, our ability and willingness to share information over compromised networks is likely to suffer.

Russia and China aggressively court students from Latin America and the Caribbean to attend their military schools, offering free training in cyber, policing, and CN. Since 2012,

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<sup>2</sup> Gallagher, Kevin P. and Margaret Myers (2017) "China-Latin America Finance Database." Washington, DC: Inter-American Dialogue

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security officials from nearly all Central American countries and nearly half of South American countries have received Russian CN training. These engagements, combined with Russia's Counter Transnational Organized Crime Training Center (CTOC) in Nicaragua, potentially provide Moscow with a regional platform to recruit intelligence sources and collect information.

Russia and China also support their authoritarian partners in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua, often through propaganda and other information-related tools. Moscow, for example, provides positive media coverage of its authoritarian allies, papering over repression and socioeconomic inequity in Nicaragua. Moscow also seeks to undercut U.S. policies and regional relationships through information operations and intelligence collection, and by influencing political systems, public opinion, and decision makers. Russia published hundreds of articles last year in its Spanish and Portuguese-language media that deliberately distorted our defense engagements.

The linkages between these malign actors are negatively reinforcing. Emboldened by Russian and Chinese<sup>3</sup> support, Venezuela is engaging in increasingly provocative actions, threatening Guyana's sovereign rights and jurisdiction and providing sanctuary for National Liberation Army (ELN) fighters that threaten Colombian stability. Russia and Cuba are both complicit in Venezuela's descent into dictatorship, but Cuba is particularly influential in supporting Maduro. Following the Cuban government's advice and assisted by its intelligence machinery, Maduro is adhering to the autocratic blueprint Cuban leaders have ruthlessly executed for over six decades. Nicaragua appears to be going down a similar path following Cuba's playbook, with Cuba, Russia, and Venezuela enabling President Ortega's repression of

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<sup>3</sup> For example, China is Venezuela's single largest state creditor, saddling the Venezuelan people with more than \$50 billion in debt, even as their democracy vanishes.

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his political opposition. These relationships give Russia, in particular, a foothold close to our homeland. As tensions increase with Russia in Europe, Moscow may leverage these longstanding regional partners to maintain asymmetric options, to include forward deploying military personnel or assets.

Iran is also looking to reenergize its outreach after reducing its efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years. It has deepened its anti-U.S. influence campaign in Spanish-language media, and its proxy Lebanese Hezbollah maintains facilitation networks throughout the region that cache weapons and raise funds, often via drug trafficking and money laundering. Last September, Brazil arrested a Hezbollah financier in the tri-border area near Paraguay and Argentina, and in recent years Paraguay, Peru, and Bolivia have arrested multiple Hezbollah-linked suspects.

**What we're doing.** We are increasing cooperation with partners to better understand, expose, and counter the malign activities of Russia, China, and their authoritarian allies. We are also working more closely with other U.S. combatant commands and the Joint Staff to ensure that globally integrated plans and operations are informed by threats and opportunities in this hemisphere. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's globally integrated planning is exactly the right approach for addressing the transregional, transnational nature of today's threat environment.

Within the region, we have to be on the playing field to compete. The same presence that strengthens our partnerships sends a powerful signal to Russia, China, Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua (the six negative state actors) that the United States is committed to the region and to the security of our neighborhood.

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Strong partnerships—founded in effective and transparent institutions, intelligence and information exchanges, institutional capacity building, education, exercises, and presence—are our primary bulwark against the influence of malign actors in the hemisphere and are bolstered by our work together on military professionalism. Our work with partners to reinforce the hemisphere’s substantial, but incomplete, progress in human rights is even more critical in light of Russia and China’s own disregard for human rights. USSOUTHCOM’s Human Rights Initiative—which just celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary—has conducted more than 200 human rights engagements that have enhanced the ability of partner nations to build professional forces that have legitimacy in the eyes of their populations.

As I told this Committee during my confirmation hearing, the Department of State’s security assistance programs—like IMET and FMF—are strategic game changers. Since 2009, IMET has provided opportunities for over 55,000 students from the region to attend schools like the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), the Inter-American Air Force Academy (IAAFA), and the Inter-American Defense College (IADC). These numbers aren’t just seats in a classroom. They represent lifelong relationships with future leaders<sup>4</sup> who trust us, understand our culture and doctrine, and are prepared to work with us on a range of challenges.

In addition to strengthening partnerships, we support interagency efforts to hold individuals accountable for supporting the activities of negative actors. For example, in collaboration with the Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), we provided information that supported the development of sanctions against Venezuelan

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<sup>4</sup> IMET has trained numerous individuals who have gone on to serve in key leadership positions, including the former President of Chile, Trinidad and Tobago’s Chief of the Defense Staff, and Argentina’s Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who helped foster our reengagement with the Argentine military after the political dynamics changed.

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government officials involved in drug smuggling, money laundering, corruption, and serious human rights abuses.

**Drugs and Transnational Criminal Organizations.** Drug trafficking threatens our national security and that of our regional partners. Drug overdoses killed more than 70,000 Americans last year, and nearly half a million people across the world in 2017.<sup>5</sup> Fueled by drug demand—especially ours—drug traffickers transported enough metric tons of cocaine (that we know of) from South America by air, land, and sea last year to cover four football fields—and the majority of it was headed for our streets. Upon landfall, this bulk cocaine is broken down into multiple smaller loads and smuggled into the United States, making large interdictions exponentially more difficult. In addition to cocaine, traffickers also transport heroin, synthetic opioids like fentanyl, and precursor chemicals from China. While Mexico remains the primary source for heroin smuggled into the U.S. (and China the prime source of fentanyl), the Dominican Republic is emerging as a regional transit point for opioid trafficking into major U.S. cities like Philadelphia, Boston, and Miami.

Established drug trafficking routes and techniques provide opportunities for the illegal movement of other commodities and people—including terrorists. Several years ago, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) dedicated an article to a scenario in which its followers could leverage established trafficking networks to make their way to our border. This remains a potential vulnerability we watch as closely as we can.

Drug trafficking comes with significant costs, in more ways than one. After marijuana,

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<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control, National Health Statistics; United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *2018 World Drug Report*. Geneva.

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cocaine remains the second most valuable commodity in the global drug trade,<sup>6</sup> generating dirty money that flows directly into the hands of criminal groups. In many cases, these groups are better funded than the security organizations confronting them. Dirty money fosters corruption and insecurity that tear at the fabric of communities, erode institutions of governance, and drain the region's potential. The vicious side effects of illicit trade also cost American taxpayers billions of dollars every year. This is more than a national security threat; it's also an economic one that affects every nation in our neighborhood.

**What we're doing.** Leveraging capabilities like information-sharing, network analysis, and the Department of Defense Rewards Program, we support operations by DHS and the DOJ's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to interdict drug shipments and disrupt transnational criminal networks. For example, our intelligence support—enabled by our Army Military Intelligence Brigade—to operations by Homeland Security Investigations and other interagency partners helped dismantle one of the largest maritime illicit smuggling networks in Central America last year.

At the tactical level, JIATF-S continues to deliver steady returns on investment and improve its efficiency in targeting drug movements. Last year, it helped keep the equivalent of 600 minivans full of cocaine off U.S. streets. But even this isn't enough to keep pace with the increasing demand and the volume of drugs flowing north through the Eastern Pacific and Caribbean. While improving efficiency, we still only successfully interdicted about six percent of known drug movements.<sup>7</sup> Doing more would require additional ships and maritime patrol aircraft and greater participation by interagency and international partners that form the

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<sup>6</sup> Global Financial Integrity, "Transnational Crime and the Developing World." March 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Figure based on JIATF South utilization of Consolidated Counterdrug DataBase (CCDB) data.

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backbone of JIATF-S. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) provide the bulk of JIATF-S's maritime and air capabilities. The United Kingdom, Canada, France, and the Netherlands lead multiple interdiction operations in the Caribbean, while we focus U.S. assets on the Eastern Pacific. Last year, 17 international partners conducted nearly half of the interdictions supported by JIATF-S. U.S. Northern Command remains our closest and best Department of Defense partner and we continuously look for ways to enhance our teamwork, recognizing that threats exploit our geographic combatant command boundaries.

Our capacity-building activities, whether at the tactical, operational, or institutional level, play a key role in this fight. For example, after years of USSOF training, Guatemala's Fuerzas Especiales Navales (FEN) is now among Central America's most competent and responsive maritime interdiction units. U.S. training, equipment, and interagency teamwork have also enabled Costa Rican and Panamanian forces to partner seamlessly with the USCG in interdiction operations. Partners are also working with us to address their ability to sustain capabilities that we have developed together. For example, Colombia has increased its eradication and interdiction efforts while also conducting increased operations against the ELN.

**Drivers of Migration.** Violence, unemployment, corruption, poverty, and impunity for gangs and transnational criminal organizations are some of the main drivers of insecurity that fuel migration to our southern border. 14 of the top 20 most violent countries in the world are in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>8</sup> Migration challenges are exacerbated by weak institutions, corruption, violence and instability wrought by authoritarian governments. Migration from Venezuela is on track to approach the scale of the Syrian refugee crisis, straining the capacity

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<sup>8</sup> Igarapé Institute (Regional think tank), "The World's Most Dangerous Cities." March 31, 2017 (available at <https://igarape.org.br/en/the-worlds-most-dangerous-cities/>)

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and resources of its neighbors. The United Nations estimates that 5.3 million Venezuelans will have fled their country by the end of 2019—with over 2 million leaving this year alone.<sup>9</sup> Last year, thousands of Nicaraguans fled to Costa Rica and other neighboring countries to seek protection, a number that will likely grow as President Ortega keeps a tight grip on power. Many Haitians continue to leave their country in hopes of finding economic opportunity elsewhere.

**What we're doing.** We are working closely with Central American and other partners to share information and provide training and equipment that enhance their ability to secure their borders. We assist partners in developing strong institutional foundations needed for legitimate, effective, and sustainable defense sectors through organizations like the William J. Perry Center<sup>10</sup>, the Center for Civil Military Relations, and the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies, which help our partners build trust and confidence with their citizens. Through collaboration with the Department of State, USAID, and non-governmental partners, our civil affairs teams execute low cost, high impact civic action projects that help partner nations and extend governance to vulnerable communities.

**Terrorism.** As Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan recently noted, transnational terrorism poses an immediate threat to the Western Hemisphere.<sup>11</sup> Groups like Lebanese Hezbollah, ISIS, and al-Qaida operate wherever they can garner support, raise funds, and pursue their terrorist agendas. ISIS and other groups have demonstrated their ability to inspire and recruit violent extremists to plan attacks in South America and the Caribbean. While the travel of foreign fighters from Latin America and the Caribbean to Iraq and Syria has diminished, the

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<sup>9</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM), December 14, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> The Washington, DC-based William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, one of DoD's five regional centers, develops and engages the Western Hemisphere's community of defense and security professionals to seek mutually supportive approaches to common challenges in order to develop effective and sustainable institutional capacity, and promote a greater understanding of U.S. regional policy.

<sup>11</sup> Remarks at the Western Hemisphere Ministerial on Counterterrorism, December 11, 2018.

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potential return of battle-trained extremists remains a threat. Another potential threat is posed by smuggling networks that move Special Interest Aliens from East Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia through the hemisphere to attempt entry into the United States.

**What we're doing.** USSOUTHCOM leads several annual exercises with interagency partners and partner nations to improve interoperability, preparedness, and response for a possible terrorist attack. Our neighbors are taking increasing steps to address the threat of terrorism in the hemisphere, as evidenced by the Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) development of a regional counter terrorism strategy in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State and USSOUTHCOM. In addition to these efforts, we work with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency to help regional partners build their capacity to combat weapons of mass destruction, another issue of growing interest to several partners.

We work closely with lead federal agencies and regional partners to detect and disrupt terrorist activity and strengthen counter-terrorism (CT) legislation. Trinidad and Tobago recently strengthened its CT legislation (including the creation of several new terrorism-related criminal offenses), and other countries are also updating theirs. In collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), DHS, and other interagency partners, we work with Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Chile, and others to share information and strengthen regional capacity to manage extremist threats. U.S. training and biometrics equipment are improving the ability of partners to control their borders, and in the past two years, we've helped interagency partners stop individuals with known or suspected ties to terrorism. Additionally, our small civil affairs teams work closely with U.S. embassies and USAID to counter radicalization and recruitment and amplify moderate voices in local communities.

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Detention operations also play an important role in the global fight against violent extremism by keeping enemy combatants off the battlefield. The medical and guard teams at Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO) continue to conduct safe, legal, and humane detention operations. In line with Executive Order 13823, we are examining ways to address medical support, capacity, and infrastructure issues associated with continued detention operations.

**Natural disasters.** Our ability to respond rapidly in crisis is an important aspect of USSOUTHCOM's mission. Our neighborhood experiences approximately 50 natural disasters every year, of almost every type—from hurricanes to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, mudslides, and more. Protecting citizens before and after disaster strikes is a core mission for every military in our hemisphere. The question is not whether, but when, we will face the next disaster, and we must be ready.

**What we're doing.** Last October at the Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas in Cancun, Mexico, the U.S. Secretary of Defense and his counterparts from across the hemisphere committed to strengthening regional military cooperation on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief in support of lead civilian agencies. In support, USSOUTHCOM works closely with partner nations, Department of State, USAID, NGOs, and multinational organizations like CARICOM's Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the Regional Security System (RSS) to build national and regional response capacities. Our training, exercises, and low-cost humanitarian projects have helped our partners to be more prepared to respond to emergencies in their own countries, and more able to assist their neighbors in crisis. As an example, last year the Jamaican Defense Force deployed a team to Dominica for 60 days to provide medical aid and other emergency assistance in the wake of

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Hurricane Maria. We are assessing our authorities to ensure we can provide the necessary support for our partners to take on increasing responsibility for disaster responses.

When U.S. military support is required, our forward-deployed JTF-Bravo in Honduras, along with our annual SPMAGTF deployment, provide operational flexibility and agility. I'm proud to note that last year we integrated Chilean and Colombian officers into the SPMAGTF leadership team for the first time. Brazil will join the SPMAGTF this year, in addition to co-leading our UNITAS AMPHIB multinational naval exercise. This iteration of UNITAS will practice the establishment of a multinational task force to support humanitarian response, a capability we haven't employed since the Haiti earthquake in 2010. Building on this initiative, we are working with allies and partners to develop a concept for a scalable multinational task force that works within existing security cooperation frameworks to enhance our collective ability to respond rapidly to crises.

**Congressional support for USSOUTHCOM's mission and this neighborhood.** I invite you to visit our neighbors and reinforce the message that we value this region—the only region that is tied to our homeland by all domains—and the role our partners play in keeping our neighborhood safe.

I also thank the Congress for providing the Department's FY 2019 appropriations prior to the start of FY 2019, which minimized the impacts of the current partial government shutdown to the Department of Defense. As we look ahead, confidence in stable budgets and ensuring all of our U.S. government security partners, like our USCG, are open for business will reassure friendly nations that we are reliable security partners.

**Support for our people.** After several years of running the detention facility at JTF-GTMO as a temporary mission, we have been directed to keep the facility open. Much of the

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current infrastructure used by the JTF has long outlived its useful lifespan. We are undertaking a comprehensive review of the existing facilities to determine requirements for mission success, the safety of our forces, and operational efficiency. Closer to home, we are working to find ways to better support our personnel, including exploring ways to mitigate the limited military support services in the Miami area. I will keep this Committee informed of our progress.

**Capabilities to defend our homeland.** We appreciate the support of the Congress to ensure the continued operations of the USCG, which provides the majority of U.S. maritime assets supporting JIATF-S operations. The new National Security Cutters have proven very effective in the drug detection and monitoring mission, leveraging increased intelligence collection capability and on-scene endurance. Maritime patrol aircraft are also crucial to detection, monitoring, and interdiction by the USCG and partner nations. Continued congressional support for the new Offshore Patrol Cutter will enable the USCG to maintain its capacity in the hemisphere. While those new ships are beginning construction, maintenance funding is essential to keep the aging Medium Endurance Cutters—some of which are close to doubling their planned 30-year service lives—hard at work supporting JIATF-S. We also appreciate the support of the Congress to resource our intelligence capabilities like human intelligence (HUMINT) and innovative analytic tools utilized by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency's (DTRA) Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization (JIDO) that allow us to exploit publicly available information and intelligence.

Thanks to congressional support, we contracted a Multi Mission Support Vessel (MMSV) to help fill capability gaps. True to its name, the MMSV was used for SOF training exercises and will now be employed to support U.S. and partner nation law enforcement in CN and CT operations. Increased U.S. joint and naval presence in regional operations and exercises will

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encourage partner forces, to include navies, to participate in regional security efforts such as HA/DR, CN, and CT. The Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) is mission fit for this region and we welcome its deployment this year. We are also leveraging our growing science and technology portfolio—including innovative projects like small-satellite and aerostat surveillance programs—to mitigate our intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance gaps, and help the Services to test new capabilities that hone the U.S. military's technological advantage.

**Capabilities to strengthen our partnerships.** We appreciate congressional support for initiatives that streamline security cooperation processes and help ensure we remain the security partner of choice. Your continued support to programs and capabilities that help build trust and long-term relationships with partners enhances our ability to defend the homeland by providing more capacity for defeating threats and sending a visible signal to our partners (and our competitors) about the depth of our commitment.

**Conclusion.** Partnership goes a long way in this part of the world. The right focused and modest investments in this hemisphere yield a solid rate of return for the United States and our partners. Our competitors benefit when we don't invest in our neighborhood.

Our partners share our vision of a hemisphere that is a beacon of peace, prosperity, and opportunity. They want to work with us to achieve this vision. It is in our national interest to work with them. Thank you.