



WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Defense and foreign policy aides
FROM: George Withers, WOLA Senior Fellow
DATE: March 28, 2005
RE: **Enduring Friendship: Is an “Armada de las Américas” a good idea?**

Overview

Operation Enduring Friendship is a concept that the Department of Defense and its Southern Command have been pursuing for the past few years. At its inception it was a proposal to coordinate maritime operations throughout the nations of the Western Hemisphere, and indeed to become a “Maritime Force of the Americas,” led by the United States. Currently, the initial phase of implementation would be less ambitious at the outset, but with plans to broaden its scope as the program evolves. A coordinated “Latin American Navy” is necessary, say its proponents, because of a growing series of threats to the hemisphere. Some of these threats are military; many are not.

A program such as Enduring Friendship – at any level of implementation – that seeks a multilateral military solution to a complicated set of transnational problems deserves careful scrutiny.

Background

The descriptions of Enduring Friendship in Department of Defense documents have varied significantly since it was first discussed. At first, the United States was to lead an “on-call” theater-wide, multinational naval force throughout the waters of the Western Hemisphere, capable of conducting operations to “prevent the use of the high seas to support and/or conduct acts of terrorism or other asymmetrical threats, suppress illegal arms and other illegal trafficking, protect legal trade, and enforce internationally recognized maritime rights, to include Coast Guard and Navy actions to guard the environment and living maritime resources.”ⁱ

It was described as an intelligence-cued operation run by Naval Forces South (NAVSOUTH) of the Southern Command and would work day-to-day under the operational control of the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South.

After the attacks of 9/11, the Operation Enduring Friendship concept paper was revised. It was noted that “up to 85 percent of U.S. detection and interdiction assets have been removed from areas of operations.”ⁱⁱ As such, the need for Central and South American support was seen as even more crucial.

But even as the available assets dropped off, the vision of the mission continued to grow. The revised Department of Defense paper described the operation as “intended to provide a range of response and preemptive options.”ⁱⁱⁱ These included, “...operations to address natural disasters, humanitarian relief, environmental mishaps (such as oil spills), hazards to navigation, narcotrafficking, terrorism, piracy, uncontrolled migration and illegal arms shipments.”^{iv} Operational units were envisioned in the Caribbean, the Eastern Pacific and another in the Equatorial Eastern

Pacific. Countries considered to be candidates to participate were those who already had been a part of the annual, U.S.-led UNITAS naval exercise including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. The Pacific unit might include Canada, Mexico, Chile and Peru.

Latin America's Cool Reception

In November of 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld addressed the Defense Ministerial of the Americas in Santiago, Chile. He made an argument for Enduring Friendship, describing it as an "...initiative to foster naval cooperation" and that "it could potentially include cooperation among coast guards, customs, and police forces."^v Yet apparently no Latin American nation endorsed it and there was no mention of it in the conference's concluding statement.

But in 2004, the concept still had life. General James T. Hill, former Commander of Southern Command, said in testimony to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees as recently as March and April of 2004, "The Enduring Friendship initiative will help synchronize all maritime activities in the Caribbean, deny terrorists access, protect legal trade, and suppress illicit trafficking."^{vi}

Again, in November of 2004, Secretary Rumsfeld addressed the Defense Ministerial of the Americas in Quito, Ecuador, and said, "Nine countries of this region recently participated in the PANAMAX exercises concerning the security of the Canal, and I am told that a larger number will participate in the next exercise. This is an important step forward in the maritime cooperative initiative that we launched in Santiago and that we now call 'Enduring Friendship.'"^{vii} This statement gives the impression that the participating countries had endorsed the concept as a result of the Ministerial in Santiago, and it marked the regular, pre-existing naval exercise as an integrated part of the newer concept. Yet, in the Declaration of Quito that resulted from the conference, while there were several references to multidimensional threats to the Americas, there was no specific mention of support for Enduring Friendship to address maritime threats.^{viii}

Enduring Friendship Revised: A "Start Small" Approach

To some U.S. officials, Operation Enduring Friendship has already been under way for some time. Secretary Rumsfeld and others refer to regular exercises and to ongoing maritime interdiction programs as part and parcel of an existing Operation, although there has not, until now, been any specific line item funding for the program. In this year's presidential budget request, however, there is a \$5 million request for Foreign Military Finance support for Operation Enduring Friendship through the State Department, in order to "enhance homeland security in the Caribbean and improve regional capabilities to fight transnational criminal trafficking in aliens, narcotics, arms and other contraband."^x

Simultaneous with that request, the Department of Defense's Southern Command has renewed and downsized its view of the scope of the current Operation. It is still meant to be a maritime security strategy to counter transnational and asymmetrical threats, but now it would be located only in the Caribbean and with only the Dominican Republic as a participating nation other than the United States. The Southern Command sees this as a "start small" approach, and then, once the concept has been proven and it shows success, expand it to include more waters and more nations.^x

In this iteration, the Southern Command concept also sees Enduring Friendship as eventually merging with several other ongoing initiatives and structures, including the Western Hemisphere Security Strategy, the Third Border Initiative, the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Organization of American States Declaration of Security in the Americas, and support for the Department of

Homeland Security. As each of these initiatives increasingly benefit from Enduring Friendship operations, the program will grow appropriately, according to the Southern Command.^{xi}

Areas of Concern

Some officials privately question whether or not there would be any “value added” by the implementation of Enduring Friendship. There is a belief that the maritime detection, monitoring and interdiction regimes that are in place now could scarcely be enhanced by the assets of, for instance, the navy of the Dominican Republic. While military-to-military contact may yield some advantages in future missions requiring interoperability, these goals may be just as easily obtained through the experience gained from the kinds of exercises that are already ongoing, such as UNITAS and PANAMAX.

The U.S. Coast Guard is bringing on line its Integrated Deepwater System (IDS) program to provide the means to extend a “layered maritime defense from our ports and coastal areas hundreds of miles to sea.”^{xii} In their mission statement they say they will: “Protect America's maritime borders from all intrusions by: (a) halting the flow of illegal drugs, aliens, and contraband into the United States through maritime routes; (b) preventing illegal fishing; and (c) suppressing violations of federal law in the maritime arena. The deepwater assets carrying out these operations on the high seas are critical to our national security strategy and the assertion of our national sovereignty.”^{xiii} In the case of national security, the mission statement further declares that the Coast Guard “defends the nation as one of the five U.S. armed services and enhances regional stability in support of the National Security Strategy, utilizing the Coast Guard’s unique and relevant maritime capabilities. Whether in times of peace or military conflict, the service’s deepwater assets serve on the front lines, providing general defense operations, maritime interception operations, deployed port security and defense operations, environmental defense operations and peacetime military engagement.”^{xiv} Given these statements, it would appear that much of Operation Enduring Friendship’s missions would be redundant to those of the Coast Guard, and in some cases less appropriate, especially in the field of law enforcement.

Perhaps most important is the need to strengthen, not weaken, the lines between the appropriate use of the military and the appropriate use of law enforcement. During his speech to the most recent Defense Ministerial of the Americas, Secretary Rumsfeld said, “Since September 11, 2001, we have had to conduct an essential reexamination of the relationships between our military and our law enforcement responsibilities in the U.S. The complex challenges of this new era and the asymmetric threats we face require that all elements of state and society work together.”^{xv}

Of concern is the increasing lack of distinction between those problems that require a civilian law enforcement response and those that lend themselves to a military solution. As the concept papers on Enduring Friendship have evolved, the range of issues that are targeted to be within the Operation’s scope have always included several non-military threats. Since 1989, the Department of Defense – some would say inappropriately – serves as the single lead agency of the Federal Government for the detection and monitoring of aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the United States. That said, law enforcement detachments are still supposed to do the end-game police work.

Enduring Friendship as conceived would usher in not only U.S. military involvement in a wider variety of non-military threats, but it would also encourage Latin American nations to use police and military authorities interchangeably.

Luis Lauredo, former U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States, said in an address to the Inter-American Defense College, “...we must guard against defining every challenge as a security issue, lest the concept become meaningless. As a region, we must be careful about labeling problems that are primarily economic or social as security issues or else we may find

ourselves using the wrong tools to fix real problems.”^{xvi} Invoking military might against oil spills, fish poaching and the smuggling of illegal immigrants, for instance, would be to use the wrong tools for the problems at hand. Further, to export to Latin America a model of using the military for police functions is a contradiction to our own principle of *posse comitatus* and may serve to further weaken cultural and legal prohibitions that exist between police uses and military uses in participating countries. This is even riskier considering that many countries in the region have legacies of authoritarian regimes that originated when the armed forces intervened in domestic matters; Operation Enduring Friendship would undermine the efforts those countries have taken to prevent their militaries from carrying out law enforcement roles.

On the face of it, enhanced maritime security and multilateral cooperation are two laudable goals. Maritime coordination has already taken place through exercises such as Tradewinds, UNITAS, PANAMAX, and programs run out of the Joint Inter-Agency Task Force South (JIATF). However, for a variety of reasons, the nations of Latin America have chosen not to sign on to Enduring Friendship. There should be a greater effort to reach out to these countries in a cooperative way and join in the mutual fight to reduce crime in the hemisphere. But these problems are complex and many do not lend themselves to military solutions. As such, the solutions to non-military problems should not be led by the military, but should be addressed by the appropriate civilian agencies. Operation Enduring Friendship would dangerously blur those important distinctions.

ⁱ U.S. Southern Command, “Enduring Friendship Concept (U),” undated, document available in WOLA archives.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Southern Command, “Draft Concept Paper on Operation ‘Enduring Friendship’,” Revised 2 January 200[2], document available in WOLA archives.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v U.S. Department of Defense, “Remarks By Secretary Rumsfeld Plenary Session - Defense Ministerial of the Americas” (Quito: 17 November 2004). Available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20041117-secdef1607.html>

^{vi} U.S. Southern Command, “Testimony of General James T. Hill,” United States Army, Commander in Chief, United States Southern Command, before the House Armed Services Committee, United States House of Representatives (Washington, DC:, 24 March 2004). Available at: <http://www.house.gov/hasc/openingstatementsandpressreleases/108thcongress/04-03-24hill.htm>

^{vii} U.S. Department of Defense, “Remarks by Secretary Rumsfeld...” op.cit.

^{viii} Sixth Conference of Ministers of Defense of the Americas, Declaration of Quito, 21 November 2004. Available at:

<http://vicdmaecuador2004.org/espanol/documentos/otros/DECLARACION%20DE%20QUITO%20INGLES.pdf>

^{ix} U.S. Department of State, FY 2006 International Affairs (Function 150) Budget Request: Summary and Highlights of Accounts by Appropriations Subcommittees, “Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs (Foreign Operations): Military Assistance” (Washington, DC: 7 February 2005). Available at: <http://www.state.gov/m/rm/rls/iab/2006/html/41795.htm>

^x U.S. Southern Command, “Enduring Friendship: A Maritime Security Strategy for the Caribbean,” unclassified slide, undated, available in WOLA archives.

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} U.S. Coast Guard, “Before the Gathering Storm,” Remarks by Admiral Thomas H. Collins at the National Defense University Distinguished Lecture Program (Washington, DC: 1 December 2004). Available at: http://www.uscg.mil/Commandant/speeches_Collins/1201%20AD%20NDU.doc

^{xiii} U.S. Coast Guard, “Transforming America’s Shield of Freedom: Integrated Deepwater System,” webpage, updated 26 January 2005. Available at: <http://www.uscg.mil/deepwater/program/missions.htm>

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} U.S. Department of Defense, “Remarks by Secretary Rumsfeld...” op.cit.

^{xvi} U.S. Department of State, “New Approaches to Hemispheric Security,” Remarks by Luis Lauredo, Ambassador to the Organization of American States and U.S. Summit Coordinator, Address at Inter-American Defense College (Washington, DC: 31 January 2001). Available at: <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/rm/2001/575.htm>