REGIONAL SECURITY: UNITED STATES SECURITY INTERESTS AND CONCERNS IN LATIN AMERICA

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The purpose of this presentation is to share some perceptions of our interests and problems in Latin America. At no time in recent years has the United States focused more attention on that region, and this increased attention is fully warranted and long overdue. The challenges which confront the United States are enormous, but so are the opportunities for cooperation. Latin America is an area with which we are intimately joined by virtue of the common border with Mexico, the Gulf Coast, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Those links are more than geographical, however, for they are based on history, culture, language, trade, investment and immigration. If Latin American is insecure, the United States is affected; if Latin America is threatened, we are threatened.

Before discussing perceptions, interests and problems in the region, it is necessary to address an important and essential facet of power that is of concern to all of us—national will. The United States, under the leadership of President Reagan, is determined to demonstrate a constancy of purpose in its domestic and foreign affairs. We must restore through our action, a credibility which has been sorely lacking. We intend to assist in the development of a reasonable division of labor and responsibility among friends and allies, strengthen our military posture, deter Soviet and Cuban expansionism and reduce regional sources of instability.

Understandably, there has been criticism directed towards the disparity between the official expression of commitment to the security of traditional friends in Latin America and the lack of credibility that has grown in the wake of the Vietnam War. This has been compounded by the shift in the United States-Soviet power balance and uncertain political actions, such as the withdrawal of troops from Indochina, the indecision and vacillation surrounding our policy toward the withdrawal of United States forces from Ko-

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rea, and the fall of the pro-American government in Iran. This Administration is dedicated to meeting and strengthening the global and regional commitments of the United States. Working with our friends, we do not intend to allow the Soviet Union, Cuba or any other Marxist regime to impose its system of government on other peoples of this hemisphere.

I. GENERAL DEFENSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective in the Western Hemisphere is to maintain the security of the North American Continent, the contiguous Caribbean Basin and the vital sea and air approaches to the Panama Canal. To achieve this objective, we must: (1) counter Soviet and Cuban supported terrorism, military intervention and destabilizing actions in the Caribbean Basin; (2) broaden regional military-to-military contacts and seek the active cooperation of the countries of the region for regional, territorial and air defense of the Caribbean and South Atlantic sea lines of communication; (3) maintain, or acquire as needed, operational facilities, transit, and overflight rights; (4) maintain access to strategic raw materials, including energy sources and processing facilities; (5) help create a favorable security environment in which economic, political and social development can take place in a rational manner; and, (6) maintain the capability to neutralize Soviet and Cuban military assets in Cuba and elsewhere in the Caribbean which would impede, in time of war, United States power projection and strategic retaliation.

This is obviously not going to be an easy task, given the enormous challenge which confronts the region today. Part of the challenge stems from deeply rooted political, social and economic problems, which cannot be solved immediately. Their resolution will require a dedicated, long-term commitment. In addition, these conditions have been aggravated by Soviet and Cuban destabilization efforts. Their ultimate goals have not changed and are designed to: (1) discredit the United States; (2) obtain a dominant influence over politico-military developments in the area; (3) assist like-minded elements within the radical left to obtain power; and, (4) eventually establish totalitarian governments under their influence and domination.

Historically, the Soviet Union employed state-to-state relations, almost exclusively through its diplomatic missions, to further its objectives in the area. However, following the Sandinista vic-

tory in Nicaragua, both the Soviet Union and Cuba, convinced that the times favored the leftist revolutionaries, began to provide more active support to other revolutionary movements, especially in El Salvador. Since 1979, the Soviets have supported efforts to collect funds, arms and supplies from the Communist Bloc and other like-minded nations for the Salvadorian guerrillas.

II. PARTICULAR SECURITY CONCERNS IN THE CARIBBEAN BASIN

Soviet presence in Latin America, excluding their diplomatic missions, consists of approximately ten thousand military and civilian technicians in Cuba, about two hundred military and civilian specialists and technicians in Peru, and numerous military advisors in Nicaragua. The Soviets have more military and civilian technicians in Peru alone than the United States has in all of Central and South America. Yet the Soviets are not the only problem. They rely principally on Cuba in Latin America since both countries' objectives closely coincide (at least in the case of Central America). To shed some light on this problem, it is necessary to discuss the magnitude of Cuban involvement in Nicaragua, Grenada, Costa Rica and El Salvador.

A. Nicaragua

Cuba has dedicated itself to the survival of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and to the continued leftward movement of that regime. Four to five thousand Cubans have been brought in to assist, in addition to fifteen hundred military and security advisors who are directing the formation of intelligence and counterintelligence groups, and assisting the transformation of the Sandinista guerrilla forces into the largest conventional armed force in Central America. The Sandinista government is organizing a fifty thousand man army which is approximately four to five times the size of Somoza's National Guard. Additionally, the Sandinistas have plans to form a militia of 250,000.

B. Grenada

In Grenada, Cuba remains the primary supporter of the Maurice Bishop government.[1] Under increasing Cuban assistance,

1. On March 13, 1979, the government of Grenada, headed by Eric Gairy was ousted by Maurice Bishop, head of the New Jewel Movement (NJM). NJM considers itself socialis-

Prime Minister Bishop has slavishly followed a pro-Soviet foreign policy line. Cuba has advisors on the island offering military, technical, security and propaganda assistance to the Bishop government, and there are some three hundred Cuban civilian advisors working largely with Soviet equipment on construction of a new international airport on the South Coast. Many questions have been raised concerning the economic justification of the airport which, with its 9,800 foot runway, will allow the operation of every aircraft in the Soviet and Cuban inventory.

C. Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, while there is no immediate revolutionary threat, Cuba has been taking advantage of that country's open democratic society since 1978 to establish and coordinate a covert network for guerrilla operations elsewhere in Central America. A minimum of five hundred tons of arms were moved to Costa Rica from Cuba and elsewhere during the Nicaraguan Civil War, according to a report of a special Costa Rican legislative commission created in June 1980.[2] Most important, the commission also estimated that a substantial quantity of these weapons remained in Costa Rica after the fall of Somoza in July of 1979.

D. El Salvador

El Salvador, of course, is a major focus of Cuban efforts. After the fall of Somoza, Cuba began intense efforts to help pro-Cuban guerrillas obtain power in El Salvador by providing overall direction, planning and support for the insurgents. It has worked closely with the Soviet Union on international shipment of arms and training of guerrillas in Cuba and Nicaragua. Guerrilla training increased sharply in 1980 as Cuba concentrated on building an army able to mount major offensives. A typical three-month training program included courses in guerrilla tactics, marksmanship and weapons, field engineering, demolition, field fortifications, land navigation, and the use of artillery and mines. Also, groups approaching battalion size (250-500) have been observed receiving instruction, suggesting that some Salvadorian guerrillas have been trained as integral units. Cuba also provides political, organiza-

tic. *See Economic and Political Future of the Caribbean 1979: Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Inter-American Affairs*, 96th Cong., 1st Sess. 15 (1979) (statement of John A. Bushnell, Dep. Assist. Sec. of State for Inter-American Affairs.)

2. COSTA RICAN LEG. COMMITTEE, RESOLUTION-ARMS MOVEMENT 6 (1980).

tional and propaganda support to the Salvadorian guerrillas. Cuban diplomatic facilities worldwide help guerrilla front groups with travel arrangements and contacts. The Cuban press agency, *Prensa Latina*, handles communications for guerrilla representatives abroad. Cuba and the Soviet Union have pressed communist parties and radical groups to support the insurgency, both directly and through solidarity organizations, with propaganda and facilities. With Soviet assistance, Cuba has generated propaganda to distort the realities of the Salvadorian conflict and the goals of the revolutionary government junta.

In El Salvador, the events of October 15, 1979 were revolutionary. Middle-grade officers deposed the oligarchs and the officers who supported them, and formed a civilian government with a broad spectrum of representation to include several communists. The government's goals are political democracy, land reform and nationalization of the banks. The difficulty was that this developed in a country where a few families had ruled for generations. Following the revolution, the old ruling class and extreme right army generals went into exile, where they organized death squads and assassination teams to kill those Salvadorians supporting the junta and implementing reforms. At the same time, communist leaders met in Havana and agreed on a unified military organization to fight the revolutionary government. Thus, the junta is beset with violent opposition from the extreme right and extreme left. The counterrevolutionary strategy of the left is to force the government into violent reaction and exploit this through a widespread and efficient propaganda network. Therefore, in El Salvador, there is a moderate revolution under violent attack from two small groups of extremists who are killing people and destroying the country's infrastructure.

Moreover, these facts are being twisted in a highly efficient manner through the use of a sophisticated worldwide disinformation campaign by the Soviets and their Cuban surrogates to undermine the United States and other governments that are not pro-Soviet. Often, seemingly isolated demonstrations and protests throughout the world are linked by a common purpose.

These Soviet and Cuban activities pose serious problems for the United States and its Latin American friends. The United States has a vital interest in maintaining the security of the Caribbean Basin sea lines of communication, through which pass approximately 45 percent of our crude oil imports, and through which

would move 50 percent of the military supplies for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in time of war. Since 1975, Cuba has conducted a massive arms buildup. The strength of its armed forces is second only to Brazil which has eleven times more people. Recently Cuba received a Soviet Koni class frigate, Mig 23 fighters and Foxtrot submarines. In 1981, military shipments from the Soviet Union increased dramatically to over sixty-six thousand tons. Cuba's massive arms buildup poses a threat to our ability to keep the Caribbean sea lines of communication open in wartime, and if Grenada were to become a Cuban staging area, the threat would be compounded. Similarly, the Panama Canal continues to be a vital and integral part of the Caribbean Pacific sea lines of communication. Its closure would eliminate the principal transit route between the Pacific and the North Atlantic.

III. LONG-TERM SECURITY OBJECTIVES

It is important to note that the Caribbean Basin is not the only concern. We also have significant security interests on the East Coast of South America and its contiguous waters. The South Atlantic sea lines of communication carry some two-thirds of West Europe's petroleum and nearly half the oil imported to the United States. In 1970, Soviet naval vessels spent approximately two hundred ship days in the South Atlantic. In 1980, its ship days increased to about 2,600. This thirteen-fold increase has given the Soviets the potential to threaten these vital western sea lanes.

The United States also has important security interests on the West Coast of South America and its adjacent waters. This subregion would take on vastly increased significance if the Panama Canal were closed or shipping through the canal slowed.

We recognize that the best way to further our security interests in Latin America is through long-term economic, social and political development. However, we must also recognize that this will take time and cannot take place without a sense of security which is a fundamental precondition for such development. That sense of security is currently lacking, particularly in Central America.

To achieve our objectives, a number of difficult steps will have to be taken. One Administration spokesman summed things up rather well with the following observations. First, the politics of Latin America, the alternatives to existing governments, the degree and type of assistance and the time that would be required to improve the lives and expand the liberties of the people should be

thought about more realistically. The choices are frequently unattractive. Second, the impact of various alternatives on the security of the United States and on the autonomy of the other nations of the hemisphere should be assessed realistically. Third, the globalist approach which has denied the realities of culture, character, geography, economics and history should be abandoned and replaced with a foreign policy that builds on concrete circumstances.

The preceding goals clearly require ample resources. In addition to the necessity for national will to resist aggression, there must exist the military capability to respond to a wide range of possible scenarios. To ensure stability, the United States must be prepared to sacrifice in terms of increased resources. Also, it cannot provide these resources alone; therefore, it must seek the support of friends and allies to share the burden for the defense of the West. It should be stressed that this effort must be performed on a long-term basis. Security interests demand that current attention must not be a temporary aberration, which has, all to often, been the fact in the past. This interest and commitment must be sustained.

IV. ARMS TRANSFERS

One element of this commitment involves security assistance, which has been one of the poor stepchildren in our outlook on defense. This has been a grievous error. A quick look at our geostrategic position vis-a-vis our Soviet adversaries indicates that it has been very costly to our nation's defenses.

The rationale for the new conventional arms transfer policy of the Reagan Administration is simple: "The United States cannot defend the free world's interests alone." Unfortunately, there are those in the United States and abroad who dispute that conclusion and its implications.

There are those who believe, or say they do, that the free world does not need defending. The Soviet threat is merely a figment of our defense partners' imaginations and a product of our own hyper-sensitivity. They do not dispute the size of the Soviet military build-up. They simply argue that the build-up is a response to our defense structure or to longstanding fears of inferiority or history-based paranoia. In essence, it is argued that if only we would give up our efforts to defend our interests, the Soviet Union would give up its efforts to destroy our interests.

Such logic leads to some bizzarre conclusions. For example, it leads to the conclusion that the reason the Soviet army is in Af-

ghanistan is to protect the Soviet Union from United States imperialism. Indeed, one prominent South Asian leader recently accused the United States of preventing the Soviets from withdrawing from Afghanistan.

At the same time there are Americans who address the question differently. In an exemplary display of evenhandedness, they refuse to make value judgements on either side of the dispute. They fail to condemn their own country and avoid praising the Soviet Union. This group begins with the simple assumption that both the Free World and the Communist World are overburdened with unnecessary arms. They insist that if the Free World nations disarm, the Communist World would follow their lead. If the Soviets will not disarm first, the United States should take the unilateral initiative to do so. Someone must set the example.

This is an interesting proposition. It speaks to the courage of the United States and offers the opportunity to show real sincerity when declaring the desire for a world at peace. Regrettably, historical evidence points to a different world reality. Ten years ago, the Nixon Administration unilaterally stopped developing and stockpiling biological weapons. The Soviets, however, continued preparing for offensive chemical and biological warfare. There is tragic evidence that the Soviet Union or its surrogates have already developed these weapons to include "yellow rain" mycotoxins, and are using biological weapons today in Afghanistan, Laos, and Cambodia. So much for unilateral disarmament.

Other concerned groups advocate withholding the foreign sale of weapons arguing that the resources of other countries would be better spent on internal development needs. However, it has been consistently demonstrated that the countries of Latin America and elsewhere are going to satisfy what they consider to be their legitimate defense needs, whether it be from the United States or other supplier countries. A major case in point is our policy decision in the 1960s not to sell the F-5 aircraft to any Latin American countries. This resulted in the introduction of higher performance French and Soviet aircrafts, and a variety of other third country aircrafts. Our restraint did not even delay their arrival. It only succeeded in weakening United States' security relationships with an area of vital interest to us.

Such policies have also motivated the development of indigenous defense industries in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Their leaders decided that if the United States could not be depended on as a

reliable source of arms, equipment and training, then the best alternative was to become as independent as possible. Fortunately, the indigenous arms industries are not necessarily detrimental in that they open opportunities for cooperation and standardization through co-production.

There are also those who assert that the way to secure freedom and to forestall communist in-roads into the Third World is to help eliminate the underlying conditions that make communism attractive. Instead of arming our friends, we should feed them and improve their quality of life. However, this can only occur in an environment of stability and security. Communism is not chosen; it is imposed. It is imposed on those nations which lack the strength to defend themselves and which lack the protective umbrella of other free countries. It is remarkable that those who insist that the United States has vast responsibilities toward the social and economic well-being of others are prepared to be equally adamant against assisting countries in defending against external aggression.

Finally, there are those who say, "Yes, I agree in principle with providing security assistance, but in practice, we are extending it to governments that do not measure up to our moral standards, which is not good." We saw reflections of such conviction in the policy of the previous administration which was anchored on a universalistic view of human rights; a view which owed more to theology than to reality.

This Administration and the Department of Defense are committed to human rights also. Let there be no doubt. Upon assuming my duties with the Department of Defense, I was struck by the commitment to human rights by our uniformed members. These are the men and women who have risked their lives throughout the world to preserve human rights; not in the abstract, but in very practical real terms. While striving to improve human rights and human dignity, we must, as realists, recognize that sometimes we are faced with a choice among imperfect alternatives. For instance, while the Thieu Regime in South Vietnam left much to be desired, it was far superior to what has replaced it. There were no boat people fleeing South Vietnam during the war, even at the height of the bombing. In tiny Cambodia, following the so-called liberation, more people may have died than were killed on all sides throughout Indochina in thirteen years of war.

The Shah of Iran is another example. Several human rights organizations have observed that the situation under the present

regime is substantially worse than pre-revolutionary Iran. Under the so-called Breshnev Doctrine,[3] once a state has become communistic, its people have no right to select a different system. Moreover, Moscow claims a legal right to repress them if such an attempt is made.

Our own experience has shown that when we try to translate morality into foreign policy, the standards involved often tend to be a little ambiguous, highly subjective and unworkable. For example, Hanoi's penchant for conducting wholesale slaughter throughout Southeast Asia has been seen as a post-war aberration brought on by nervous excitement; while El Salvador's efforts to institute agrarian reform, nourish pluralism and elect a government do not quite measure up. The United States has focused concern on the failings of friends and has not given sufficient thought to the consequences of our adversaries gaining power.

Let us look now at what we are providing in security assistance to this vital region. The foreign military sales credit allocation to Latin America for fiscal year 1981 was $33.3 million—1 percent of the worldwide total. Latin America is not only at the bottom of our regional priorities; we are also not offering these countries any real bargain because these credits have a minimum impact on the United States budget. These guaranteed loans are negotiated at the same rate of interest as those which the United States Government must pay on the commercial market. Moreover, they are used to purchase goods and services from the United States. Security assistance in all its forms has a vital role to play in furthering our national ojectives and should be employed as a key asset in furthering our security interests.

This Administration has begun to redress many of the errors of the past, but much more is needed. In the area of security assistance, for example, we have requested $81.5 million in foreign military sales credits for fiscal year 1982, of which we hope at least $15.5 million will be in the form of grants or concessional credits. Even this increase will amount to less than 2 percent of the worldwide total.

The most recent significant development affecting Latin

3. Breshnev Doctrine: States in the Soviet sphere of influence possess "limited sovereignty" and are subject to Soviet intervention when the socialist systems of these countries are threatened. *See* Baroch, *The Breshnev Doctrine*, 57 A.B.A. J. 686 (July, 1971).

America was the Caribbean Basin Initiative.[4] In July, 1981, Canada, Mexico and Venezuela joined with the United States at Nassau to pledge themselves to a cooperative effort to promote the development of the Caribbean Basin. Meetings of the "Nassau Four" have been followed by multilateral and bilateral consultations with the basin countries and others. Our security assistance will compliment this important economic initiative. It is our firm belief that improved economic health in the area is essential to western security.

In Central America, the majority of assistance has been targeted towards increasing economic vitality and developing a defensive capability against externally supported insurgencies. To date, the limited United States assistance to El Salvador has enabled the moderate revolutionary junta to resist the radical left extremists and curb attacks from the far right. Modest training assistance to the Central American countries will increase their capability to patrol their borders and interdict illegal arms traffic to insurgent groups. Without these programs, the United States will surely incur greater future costs to maintain the security of our increasingly vulnerable southern flank.

As for our overall arms transfer policy, the United States is committed, both by long-standing policy and by the Rio Treaty, to join with our Latin American allies in "mutual assistance and common defense of the American Republics." In the President's words, the United States "will accord high priority to requests from its major alliance partners and to those nations with whom it has friendly and cooperative security relationships." We are also committed to pursue that objective prudently, with full regard for the guidelines and caveats established by legislation and in President Reagan's directive itself. Latin America traditionally has not been a heavily armed region of the world. With the exception of Cuba, it is not heavily armed today. Military expenditures were only 1.6 percent of the region's gross national product (GNP), and only 10.2 percent of central government expenditures from 1976 to 1978. Comparable figures for the developing world, as a whole, are more than 5 percent of GNP and more than 20 percent of government expenditures. Latin America's arms imports from 1976 to 1978 were only 7 percent of all developing countries' arms imports. United States arms sales to Latin America constitute only about 2 percent of our

4. Joint communique between Canada, Mexico, United States, and Venezuela on Caribbean Basin Development, Jul. 11, 1981. *See* 81 DEPT. OF STATE BULL. 68 (Sept. 1981).

arms sales worldwide, and only about 3 percent of our sales to developing countries.

In making its arms transfer decisions, this Administration will try to avoid telling the Latin Americans what is in their best interest. We believe they can decide that for themselves, especially when free of outside pressures and intervention. We will instead concentrate on determining what is in our interest concerning the security and economic development of the region, the political stability and reduction of international tensions and the furtherance of basic human rights.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing are examples of the initiatives this Administration has undertaken to revise past policies and respond to current challenges. More still needs to be done, however, and some specific recommendations are offered. First, remove the Congressional constraints on sales to friendly governments by reexamining, and where appropriate, lifting the prohibitions. At the present time, we are prevented in some cases from selling them any articles of military equipment, including such safety related items as pilot ejection cartridges for the planes we sold them previously. In the case of Argentina and Chile, we cannot even permit them to finance the attendance of their students at our professional military education courses and, thereby, let them experience first hand our system and values. Second, provide grant assistance or, at a minimum, concessionary military assistance to strategically important, friendly countries which have a demonstrated need, particularly in the Caribbean Basin. Third, implement multiyear military planning and financing to insure security. Fourth, revise the Congressional prohibition on security assistance to constabulary forces. Many of the small states of the Caribbean do not have armed forces and the constabulary forces must fulfill the security function. Fifth, increase the amount of grant training or International Military Education Training (IMET).[5] We have, through a variety of cutbacks and restictions in IMET, virtually lost our influence with an entire

5. IMET enables the United States to maintain contact and influence with junior officers who will be the future leaders of Latin America; regarded as "the most important security assistance program in Latin America." *See Foreign Assistance Legislation for FY 1982 (part 7): Hearings Before the Subcomm. on Inter-American Affairs*, 96th Cong., 1st Sess. 12 (1980) (statement of Franklin D. Kramer, Prin. Dep. Assist. Sec. of Defense on International Security Affairs).

generation of Latin American officers. There is no better way to spend our money than by bringing these officers to the United States to experience first hand our goals, aspirations and training.

We no longer have the luxury of using Latin America as a test bed for social experiments with the objective of modeling the region in our own image. The stakes are simply too high. Our policy must build on concrete circumstances and we must think realistically about what can and cannot be done, while at the same time assessing the impact of various alternatives on the security of our country.

VI. CONCLUSION

In summary, it is extremely important that our current attention to Latin America continue over the long range. It cannot be merely another surge which has too often characterized our policy toward the region in the past. Similarly, this is a most imperfect world and some of the political, economic and social problems will never be solved to everyone's satisfaction. Yet, we cannot give up. We must undertake a long range commitment to improve the deeply rooted political, economic and social imbalance. In addition, while the best way to further our vital security interests within the hemisphere is through long term political, economic and social development, we must recognize that this cannot take place without a sense of security—a fundamental precondition for such development. The Soviets and Cubans are dedicated to undermining that sense of security through their export of terrorism and subversion. This must be stopped. Moreover, security assistance, while not the principle element in our policy toward the region, is an essential component.

Finally, there exists within this hemisphere immense agricultural, mineral, technological and human resources in sufficient quantities to sustain a very comfortable level of life for all of its people. Have we not overlooked this potential in the past? Certainly, there is ample reason for sharply raising the priority which we attach to this region of vital United States interest, for unless we devote more attention to hemispheric security, all of our peoples are threatened. The United States, in cooperation with our friends, can reverse the Soviet and Cuban intervention and attempts to establish communist regimes. Maybe this is the sort of cooperation which Simon Bolivar had a glimpse of when he exhorted in Angostura in 1819, "Unity, unity, unity must be our motto in all things."