

THE WATCH

MEXICO,
THE CARIBBEAN,
AND HOMELAND
DEFENSE

STRONGER
TOGETHER

v5

INFORMATION WARRIOR

Q&A WITH JAMES RUBIN, GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT CENTER

BAHAMAS

RBDF COMMODORE KING INTERVIEW

MEXICO

TRAINING U.N. PEACEKEEPERS

THE WATCH // STRONGER TOGETHER



Global alliances and partnerships based on mutual trust and interoperability provide the United States and our allies with a distinct advantage over our competitors... USNORTHCOM's relationships with military partners in Mexico, Canada and the Bahamas boost our ability to operate, communicate and share information for common benefit and are integral to homeland defense.”

— **GEN. GREGORY M. GUILLOT**

Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command
and U.S. Northern Command

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v5



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ABOUT THE COVER

The chain link illustration depicts the strong defense partnerships that protect Canada, the Caribbean nations, Mexico and the United States as well as the approaches to the North American homeland.

DEAR READERS:

Welcome to The Watch Volume 5, “Mexico, The Caribbean and Homeland Defense.” The Watch is a professional military journal on homeland defense published by U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM). The goal of The Watch is to strengthen U.S. security partnerships and provide an international forum to address global homeland defense issues and challenges. The publication is produced for our allies and partners, including foreign senior military leaders, high-ranking government officials and academic professionals.

Homeland defense is a global endeavor. Allies and trusted partners are integral to United States homeland defense efforts. The 2022 National Defense Strategy states that mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships are our “greatest global strategic advantage.” Since its founding on April 25, 2002, USNORTHCOM has enhanced its strong alliance with Canada and cultivated trusted long-term security partnerships with Mexico, the Bahamas, and the British Overseas Territories of Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands. These partnerships are built on a foundation of trust and mutual respect for sovereignty while working together to counter common threats and collaborate on important issues that support the defense and security of North America.

The Watch V5 is divided into three sections. Section 1 begins with Rear Adm. Scott Robertson, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and USNORTHCOM/J5, and Col. Michael Jones, NORAD and USNORTHCOM/J59, discussing the importance of trusted defense partners to USNORTHCOM’s homeland defense mission. This is followed by an interview with Commodore Raymond E. King, Commander, Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF). This section continues with a Q&A with James P. Rubin, special envoy and coordinator for the U.S. Department of State’s Global Engagement Center highlighting how the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) are working together to reshape the global information environment. The final articles in this section examine Russian and PRC influence in the Bahamas and Mexico.

Section 2 begins with articles on the Mexico and U.S. defense partnership, the Bahamas and U.S. bilateral security cooperation, the Canadian Armed Forces and the Caribbean, and Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) as a means to outpace our competitors. This section concludes with articles from our U.S. Department of Defense regional centers: the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Section 3 features articles by our allies and partners. This section begins with an article on the Mexico-U.S. military relationship followed by articles from the Mexican Secretariat of National Defense. It concludes with articles from Caribbean partners including the RBDF, the Royal Bermuda Regiment, and the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment.

We invite you to join the Watch community at Contact Us – The Watch (thewatch-journal.com).

Thank you for your support and partnership.

Regards,

Robert D. Davis

Brigadier General, USAF
Director of Operations, NCJ3
USNORTHCOM



THE WATCH

Homeland Defense

Volume 5 2024

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The Watch is a professional military journal published by United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) for foreign partners and allies to include senior military leaders, government officials and academic professionals. The goal of the publication and website is to strengthen U.S. security partnerships and provide an international forum to address global homeland defense issues and challenges.

The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the policies or points of view of USNORTHCOM or the United States government. The Secretary of Defense has determined that publication of this journal is necessary for conducting public business as required by the Department of Defense by law.

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REAR ADM. SCOTT F. ROBERTSON became the director of plans, policy and strategy, J-5, for the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command in March 2022. A third-generation naval officer, Robertson holds a master's degree of science in systems engineering from George Mason University.



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COL. MICHAEL JONES is the chief of the Security Cooperation Division, Strategy, Policy and Plans Directorate for the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command. He is responsible for shaping and managing USNORTHCOM's security cooperation activities with the Bahamas, Canada and Mexico.



10
COMMODORE RAYMOND E. KING was appointed to lead the Royal Bahamas Defence Force in October 2019. After enlisting in 1987, he served on board the HMBS Exuma and David Tucker before accepting an appointment as midshipman, making the transition from Marine to naval officer in November 1989.



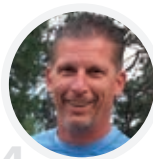
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DR. R. EVAN ELLIS is a research professor of Latin American Studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute. He focuses on the region's relationships with the People's Republic of China and other non-Western Hemisphere actors, as well as transnational organized crime and populism in the region.



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DR. ANTHONY CLAYTON is the Alcan Professor of Caribbean Sustainable Development at the University of the West Indies. His research is based on policy analysis, futures studies and strategic planning.



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JOEL PEDERSEN is a 26-year U.S. Navy veteran who is Caribbean desk officer responsible for the United States Northern Command military-to-military engagements with the Bahamas, Bermuda and the Turks and Caicos Islands.



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DR. HOLLY PEIRCE is a United States Foreign Service officer with the U.S. Department of State and formerly served as the J5 deputy foreign policy advisor at the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command. She is a Joint Staff-certified gender advisor.



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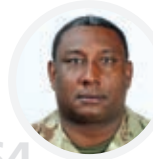
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DR. INIGO GUEVARA MOYANO is managing director of Janes Strategic Services and an adjunct professor at Georgetown University's Security Studies Program. He is a former director of Mexico's Office of the National Security Council/ Office of the President of Mexico.



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LT. COL. BENJAMIN L. BEASLEY became the commanding officer of the Royal Bermuda Regiment in June 2020. He previously served as a training officer and adjutant. He was commissioned into the Royal Air Force in February 2006. He has a bachelor's degree in military history and is an experienced rugby player.



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LT. COL. ENNIS GRANT was appointed in June 2020 as commanding officer of the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment. He holds a master's degree in maritime security from Coventry University and a postgraduate diploma in business administration from the University of Leicester, both in the United Kingdom.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW



THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUSTED DEFENSE PARTNERS

'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts'
- Aristotle

REAR ADM. SCOTT F. ROBERTSON AND COL. MICHAEL JONES/U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND

The global security environment is changing at a scale not seen since World War II and at an unprecedented pace. With the change comes a renewed urgency to form deeper alliances and partnerships to counter common threats and collaborate on mutual interests, all built on a foundation of trust. Partnerships that address mutual interests and common threats are usually aligned with shared values. Forming trusted partnerships takes time and effort — resources that frequently seem scarce with so many global instances of instability and insecurity. The importance of trusted partnerships cannot be overstated.

The Department of Defense understands it cannot achieve its global missions acting alone. The National Defense Strategy states, "Mutually beneficial Alliances and partnerships are our greatest global strategic advantage." Within the boundaries of its Unified Command Plan, U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) partners closely with the Bahamas, Canada and Mexico to bring about significant and lasting security benefits to North America and the region. USNORTHCOM's leadership and staff recognize the need to connect on a personal level to increase military-to-military operational compatibility and trust while always respecting the sovereignty of our partners. In this endeavor, USNORTHCOM regularly teams up with the leaders in the Canadian Joint Operations Command, the Mexican Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA), the Mexican Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR), and the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF).

The relationship between the U.S. and Canada is a strong alliance. One of the most prolific ways this alliance is manifested is through the binational command known as the North American Aerospace Defense Command

Within the boundaries of its Unified Command Plan, USNORTHCOM partners closely with the Bahamas, Canada and Mexico to bring about significant and lasting security benefits to North America and the region.



(NORAD) established in 1957. Built over time and through shared experiences, NORAD stands as a testament to national leadership efforts to establish a mature partnership to address mutual threats.

The U.S. and Canadian military-to-military relationship allows the countries to work together to address mutual threats to the homelands and emphasizes our shared prioritization of the rule of law and human rights. Additionally, the U.S. and Canada maintain a bilateral Civil Assistance Plan addressing military support, cooperation and interoperability along the 8,892 kilometers of our shared border. The U.S. and Canada conduct military exercises, military exchanges and professional military education and collaborate in defense technologies. Together the U.S. and Canada address challenges in a manner that would be more difficult to confront alone, especially in the Arctic region. Working together also strengthens the signals of deterrence



A CF-18 Hornet flies over the Labrador region of Canada during a North American Aerospace Defense Command operation. The binational command stands as a testament to the strong bond between the Canadian and U.S. militaries.

MASTER CPL. KRISTA BLIZZARD/NORAD

projected to would-be adversaries and counters malign influence activities.

Mexico is a U.S. partner nation. As our neighbor, Mexico is deeply tied to the U.S. and Canada economically, socially and through military dialogues that strengthen North American defense cooperation. One prime example of official dialogue occurs when USNORTHCOM co-chairs the Bilateral Military Cooperation Roundtable with the Mexican military branches of SEDENA and SEMAR to identify mutual interests and provide guidance to stakeholders. The U.S. and Mexico work together to increase

regional security, address challenges impacting both countries, improve operational compatibility and provide aid in times of need through mutually agreed objectives and goals found in the roundtable framework.

Professional military education, exchanges, exercises and tactical units working side by side are only some of the activities strengthening our relationship from the ground up. The relationship and trust between the U.S. and Mexico continue to strengthen. A noted historical demonstration of friendship came in September 2005, after the southern U.S. experienced a catastrophic natural disaster in Hurricane Katrina. Mexico sent personnel from SEDENA and SEMAR to the U.S. to help those most in need. Then-President Vicente Fox's spokesman, Ruben Aguilar, said, "This is just an act of solidarity between two peoples who are brothers." The help was reciprocated. In September 2017, the United States sent a team of search and rescue specialists, along with equipment and medical supplies, to Mexico City to assist with recovery efforts after a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Mexico. Furthermore, in June 2021, Mexico sent rescue specialists to the United States to aid in the search for survivors after the Champlain Towers South collapsed in Surfside, Florida.

Mexico recently took a leading role in a trilateral disaster response exercise with Canada and the U.S. facilitating further participation in a Central American disaster response exercise. The U.S. and Mexico understand the importance of maintaining a strong relationship built on trust and respect to ensure the progress of both countries. Working together, the U.S. and Mexico



U.S. and Mexican Soldiers transport a simulated casualty to a rescue helicopter during Exercise Fuerzas Amigas 2023. Mexico and the U.S. strengthen their military partnership with regular exercises and exchanges.

CPL. LUIS AGOSTINI / U.S. MARINE CORPS



U.S. Navy Command Master Chief James Timmerman, right, boards the HMBS Nassau during a base tour of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force Coral Harbour Base in June 2023. The Bahamas is a key strategic partner of the U.S.

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER DARREN M. MOORE/U.S. NAVY

seek continued development, training and compatibility that improves regional security.

The Bahamas is also a U.S. partner nation and a geo-strategic partner on the southeastern coast, at its closest point almost 65 kilometers from the U.S. Strong economic and social ties necessitate effective security and defense ties between the two countries. The Royal Bahamian Defence Force is the primary partner for USNORTHCOM and through the Bilateral Security Cooperation Framework, mutual interests are designed, planned and programmed for execution. USNORTHCOM coordinates with the U.S. Coast Guard and the RBDF to bring unique capabilities and expertise to further the overall combined efforts.

As the RBDF continues its planned growth in size and presence throughout its territory, the U.S. and the Bahamas work together to build capabilities and improve capacity in key areas that will lead to strengthened security and domain awareness. Recent efforts have focused on exercises related to humanitarian assistance and others on defense topics. Additionally, the Bahamas' connection to the Caribbean improves regional security and impacts the shared interests of both countries. The relationship between the U.S. and the Bahamas highlights the importance of partnering with partner forces of all sizes, since working together provides mutual benefits.

In today's global threat environment, mutual recognition of the threats faced by one nation impacts regional neighbors and encourages leaders to come together in pursuit of strategies to counter malign actors. Whether the threat is environmental, criminal, biological, or a



Members of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force prepare to move during move, shoot, communicate training with the Rhode Island Air National Guard. The guard is in a state partnership program with the Bahamian military.

MASTER SGT. JANEEN MILLER/ U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD

malign state actor or terrorist, if the people working together know one another, know the environment and share information about the threat, there is a higher probability of effectively countering or responding to the threat. USNORTHCOM invests in relationships and strives to work with defense partners within the assigned area of responsibility to defend the homelands, improve regional security, strengthen military ties, and expand operational compatibility and interoperability. The combined efforts of USNORTHCOM and its partners allow for long-term significant benefits to North America's shared security built on trust. ▣



THE WATCH INTERVIEW

Commodore
Raymond E. King,
Commander,
Royal Bahamas
Defence Force

THE WATCH STAFF

Commodore Raymond E. King became the commander of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) in May 2020. As a critical U.S. partner in the Caribbean, the force protects its own homeland while helping guard critical approaches to the U.S. King agreed to discuss his goals for the force in areas ranging from workforce development and gender optimization to international peacekeeping missions.

THE WATCH: As the eighth commander of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, what is your vision for the RBDF and what changes have you made over the last three years?

COMMODORE KING: Our vision is to develop a high-performance, professional workforce focused on excellence. We want to create an organization with certified professionals who are research-focused and results-oriented to create and sustain the organizational agility required in a dynamic security environment.

In terms of restructuring, we have decentralized our operations with organizational branches and regional commands. We have established a Crisis Risk Management Unit with emphasis on mass casualty incidents and internal crisis and a Health and Safety Unit to address occupational safety concerns. We also have created a Morale, Welfare and Recreational Unit, established the Veterans Affairs Office, and incorporated the Junior Rates Mess, a program that provides social and recreational activities for personnel.





To improve operational efficiency, we have continued to develop the Drone (UAV) Academy as a regional center of excellence and are working toward accreditation for our legacy leadership and training programs into a Maritime and Military Academy (center of excellence). We are also developing a Search and Rescue Coordination Centre (potential center of excellence) and are digitizing our processes.



Members of the U.S. 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) observe Royal Bahamas Defence Force members as they display their marksmanship skills on a range in Nassau, Bahamas.

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND NORTH

As for policy implementation, we are striving to achieve gender optimization by making sure the principles of the Women, Peace and Security program are institutionalized. We also are implementing policies for uniform accessories worn by RBDF reserves, veterans and retirees.

Infrastructure upgrades and fixed asset acquisition are areas of continued focus. We are installing marine surveillance systems on HMBS Coral Harbour and HMBS Gunn Point at Ragged Island and are establishing a Cybersecurity Unit. The RBDF is also procuring four Safeboats, simulators for damage control and firefighter training, and we are working on infrastructure development plans at several bases.

THE WATCH: What led to your decision to join the RBDF and serve your country?

COMMODORE KING: I was influenced by an uncle who was a member of the RBDF at the time of the unfortunate attack and sinking of HMBS Flamingo on May 10, 1980. That solidified my interest, determination, and drive to join the RBDF.

THE WATCH: What are the biggest threats to the Bahamas and how is the RBDF countering these threats?

COMMODORE KING: Transnational criminal networks (illicit drug trafficking; small arms and light weapons trafficking; illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing; irregular migration; people trafficking, etc.). In particular, the proliferation of illegal weapons is linked to more than 90% of the homicides and violent crimes in the Bahamas.

Climate change and natural disasters (frequency and intensity of hurricanes due to the impact of climate change) have caused billions of dollars in infrastructure losses and many deaths.

Cybersecurity risks have emerged as a major threat to our economy due to the increasing use of cyber and digital technologies for most transactions crossing multiple industries, government agencies, public and private sectors. Countermeasures include strengthening security cooperation relationships with regional, hemispheric and international partners as force multipliers while building internal capacities and military capabilities. For instance, our security cooperation with U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) and the U.S. State Department includes key leader engagements, subject matter expert exchanges, equipment donations and multiagency amphibious exercises.

Likewise, the use of bilateral and multilateral agreements with regional partners like Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos (OPBAT) involving the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands and the U.S., is guided by the Northern Caribbean Security Summit/Framework and helps the Bahamas' response to illicit drug trafficking and unsafe migration.

Our vision is to develop a high-performance, professional workforce focused on excellence.

THE WATCH: How do you view the military relationship between the Bahamas and the United States? What are its strengths? In what areas can we work better together?

COMMODORE KING: The security cooperation relationship between the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the United States remains strong and vital to the national security of both countries. In fact, deepening the relationship remains a national security objective of the government of the Bahamas as articulated to the RBDF and sister law enforcement agencies.

Moreover, the Bahamas is considered a third border of the United States along with Mexico and Canada. Border control and protection is critical to the safety, security, stability and prosperity of all concerned nations, particularly the United States. Specifically, the strength of the existing relationship lies in our bilateral relations. This relationship is further strengthened by trilateral and multilateral agreements with neighboring countries toward safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all concerned.

THE WATCH: The Bilateral Security Cooperation Framework (BSCF) between the United States and the Bahamas identifies areas of mutual interest. What are the key successes of this initiative?

COMMODORE KING: Success indicators of the BSCF consist of the enhancement of existing military capabilities and expanding capacities of the RBDF. For instance, under the domain awareness line of effort, the organization's communications capabilities have been enhanced significantly, led by the installation of strategic maritime surveillance systems (coastal radar) on Ragged Island in support of HMBS Gunn Point operations.

This, along with improved satellite-based communications systems, affords critical redundancies to meet the organization's primary, alternate, contingent, and emergency requirements for ongoing maritime operations, search and rescue (SAR) operations and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) events.

Similarly, improved intelligence and cybersecurity capabilities are being achieved through mission effectiveness and operational efficiencies. More importantly, the continued implementation of cyberspace countermeasures and professional development of our staff in the Cyber Security Department is deeply valued.

Additionally, under the domain control line of effort, the upgraded SAR capabilities through the donation of SAROPS technology, hardware, installation and training with available support will assist tremendously toward the realization of the joint (maritime and aviation) SAR Rescue Coordination Centre and the Centre of Excellence for the Caribbean region.

Under the institutional capability-building effort, the continued emphasis on improved HADR capabilities through the National Emergency Management Agency and the RBDF cannot be overstated given the frequency and intensity of tropical storms.

In summary, the RBDF by means of its security cooperation relationship with the U.S. has during the past four years stemmed the flow of irregular migration to our shores, deterred illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing on its major fishing banks, and mitigated the flow of illicit drugs and associated small arms and light weapons smuggling at sea.

Regional forces employ an average of 14-16% female employees; the Royal Bahamas Defence Force has a ratio of 18.5%. We have worked on an effort to recruit at least 30% women over the past three years.



Marine Naja Brown beams with pride after receiving the Marine of the Year award in January 2024. ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE

The strategic vision for the RBDF is a military establishment led and staffed by a team of expert officers and Marines who are highly productive and who emphasize the application of best practices using advanced technology while continuously improving military capabilities and processes toward refined mission effectiveness and operational efficiency.



A Royal Bahamas Defence Force Honor Guard welcomes U.S. Maj. Gen. Constance Jenkins when she visited Coral Harbour Base in January 2024. Jenkins visited to oversee the handover ceremony for disaster response equipment donated to the Bahamas. ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE

THE WATCH: How has the acquisition of Maritime Surveillance Systems throughout the Bahamian (Lucayan) archipelago improved overall domain awareness?

COMMODORE KING: The installation of the Maritime Surveillance Systems (coastal radars) in Great Inagua (HMBS Matthew Town) and at New Providence (HMBS Coral Harbour) has translated into significant gains and operational successes particularly against illegal migration toward Nassau and Great Inagua/Turks and Caicos Islands.

The coastal defense systems have eradicated the flow of Haitian migrants to New Providence, which is a problem that had plagued the country for decades with unbearable socioeconomic effects. Likewise, evasive traditional migration toward the Turks and Caicos and migration movements west off Great Inagua toward Castle Island and Crooked Island has forced such vessels westward to the Old Bahama Channel and the northern coast of Cuba in efforts to avoid detection and eventual detention.

THE WATCH: Why is it important to decentralize the RBDF's forces? How will decentralization make your forces more resilient? What are the challenges and opportunities to decentralization?

COMMODORE KING: Decentralized operations are essential for the Bahamas and the RBDF given the nation's archipelago (wide expanse of inhabited and remote islands), extensive maritime domain covering 342,990 square kilometers, and often unguarded ports of entry.

More specifically, the economic efficiency and operational effectiveness of decentralized operations cannot be overstated versus centralized operations accompanied by logistical challenges. Hence, the opportunity to realize extended operational endurance (surface and aerial patrols) and area of operations coverages will undoubtedly afford enhanced domain awareness and domain control capabilities with efficient/economical operations. However, challenges are expected with sustained logistical supply constraints at remote locations away from HMBS Coral Harbour and Grand Bahama.

THE WATCH: The Bahamian government has publicly pledged forces for peacekeeping in Haiti. How is this effort progressing?

COMMODORE KING: The RBDF continues its planning and preparation for the eventual deployment to Haiti. Thus far, theoretical classes have been conducted by Canadian Forces, and integrated training will follow in Jamaica.

Additionally, train-the-trainer peacekeeping training for instructors took place in Argentina and Chile in April 2024. Likewise, equipment, materials and supplies have been carefully identified and requested from the United States to ensure mission success in Haiti.



Members of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force conduct an open-water interdiction of migrants portrayed by 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Green Berets during their culmination exercise as part of Joint Combined Exchange Training in Nassau, Bahamas.

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND NORTH

THE WATCH: The RBDF has fully endorsed gender integration under the Women, Peace, and Security program. What is the RBDF doing to transform the force to be 30% female?

COMMODORE KING: The Royal Bahamas Defence Force has been deliberate in demonstrating gender equality organizationally via policies, procedures, and processes. For example, conscientious efforts are made to ensure that decisions on promotions, advancements, appointments, training and development, decision-making (participatory management) among others reflect at a minimum the percentage of women employed in the workplace.

Whereas regional forces employ an average of 14-16% female employees; the Royal Bahamas Defence Force has a ratio of 18.5%. We have worked on an effort to recruit at least 30% women over the past three years.

THE WATCH: What is your vision for the future of the RBDF? How can the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) support this vision?

COMMODORE KING: The strategic vision for the RBDF is a military establishment led and staffed by a team of expert officers and Marines who are highly productive and who emphasize the application of best practices using advanced technology while continuously improving military capabilities and processes toward refined mission effectiveness and operational efficiency.

To accomplish this vision requires critical levels of security cooperation assistance from the U.S. Department of Defense to ensure that as a third border of the United States, the RBDF is professionally trained, equipped and continually developed as a force multiplier to its DOD efforts thus ensuring the security, safety and prosperity of both nations. ▣



INFORMATION WARRIOR

Global Engagement Center envoy fights growing wave of disinformation

THE WATCH STAFF

The Watch recently discussed with James P. Rubin, special envoy and coordinator of the U.S. Department of State’s Global Engagement Center, issues of importance to our readers. The Watch featured the Global Engagement Center in a February 2021 article, “Fighting for Truth,” but many things have changed since then.

THE WATCH: Special Envoy James Rubin, thank you for joining us today to discuss your important work at the Global Engagement Center.

RUBIN: Thank you, I’m excited to be here.

THE WATCH: With over 35 years of experience in foreign policy, what are some key milestones in your career that led you to your current role as special envoy and coordinator for the Global Engagement Center?

RUBIN: My previous work as the assistant secretary of state for public affairs and chief spokesman for Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright was particularly formative. My direct involvement in the Balkans peace process was difficult, but the U.S. government and our NATO allies made a positive difference in the lives of so many in that region that stands to this day. Since then, I’ve been in and out of government and media but have always remained

involved and in the know regarding foreign affairs. A year or so ago, Secretary [Antony] Blinken invited me back to the department to lead the Global Engagement Center in our effort against a growing threat to our national security — foreign information manipulation.

THE WATCH: What is the mission of the Global Engagement Center and how does the organization work with allies and partners?



JAMES P. RUBIN

RUBIN: Our congressionally mandated mission is “to direct, lead, synchronize, integrate, and coordinate U.S. federal government efforts to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the policies, security, or stability of the United States, its allies and partner nations.” That’s a mouthful but in essence, we are the part of our government that’s ringing the alarm bell on information manipulation as a critical national security issue, and something that is being leveraged by our adversaries and competitors. Through our work, which spans across our government and those of our allies and partners, we are finding, exposing and disrupting foreign state exploitation of the open information environment abroad. We are also convening and galvanizing an international community of



PILLARS OF RUSSIA'S DISINFORMATION AND PROPAGANDA ECOSYSTEM



Official Government Communications

- Kremlin or Ministry statement
- Official Russian social media post
- Statement or quote by Russian official



State-Funded Global Messaging

- State-funded, foreign-facing media
- State-funded, domestic-facing media
- Foreign-based, Russian state-funded media
- International Russian sociocultural institutions



Cultivation of Proxy Sources

- Russia-aligned outlets with global reach
- Local language-specific outlets knowingly conveying Russian narratives
- Unwitting proliferators of Russian narratives
- Foreign state narrative amplification



Weaponization of Social Media

- Infiltration of domestic conversations
- Campaigns to undermine faith in institutions
- Amplification of protests or civil discord



Cyber-Enabled Disinformation

- Hack & Release
- Site capture
- Cloned websites
- Forgeries
- Disruption of official sources or objective media

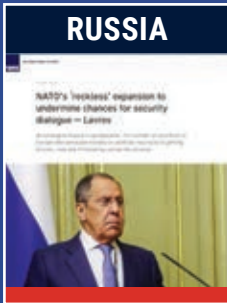
Connection to Russia

Visible

Obscured

Denied

PRC AMPLIFIES RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION ABOUT MOSCOW'S WAR IN UKRAINE



May 2023
Russian
Disinformation
Regarding
Moscow's War in
Ukraine

July 2023
PRC state
media falsely
portray NATO
as endangering
peace.



PRC



August 2023
Russian state
media quote PRC
state media's
claim that NATO is
preventing peace
in an attempt to
validate its own
false accusations.

like-minded allies and partners to push back, collectively and forcefully, through targeted policies, capacity building and multilateral engagement.

THE WATCH: Since 2020, what has been the impact of increased propaganda and disinformation from Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) on U.S. diplomatic relations and global perceptions of the U.S.?

RUBIN: I can tell you it hasn't been good for the United States. I can't stress enough how much our adversaries are investing in this information manipulation, disinformation and propaganda space and creating an asymmetrical advantage for themselves. I would also say that there is no U.S. foreign policy objective or goal that isn't susceptible to foreign malign influence and information manipulation to its detriment. There is an imbalance to how the U.S. is approaching this national security threat, because where some on our side see a "communications issue," our adversaries are treating this as information warfare, and they see their information operation's importance, as arguably more outcome determinative than operations in the traditional physical domains of air, land, sea and space. As we used to say on the Hill, "budget is policy," and countries resource what is deemed important, and information manipulation capability is being greatly resourced by both Russia and the PRC.

THE WATCH: Since its establishment in 2017, what has been the role of the GEC in countering the propaganda, disinformation and misinformation from Russia and the PRC?

RUBIN: The GEC has a number of important roles and functions, but I think the most critical two are 1) exposing and disrupting foreign information operations and their hidden exploitation of the open information environment, and 2) convening and galvanizing a like-minded collective to strategize and take collaborative action to push back against the purveyors of disinformation undercutting our interests abroad.

THE WATCH: The groundbreaking GEC report "Pillars of Russia's Disinformation and Propaganda Ecosystem" in August 2020 succinctly described complex, malign Russian activity in the information environment. Have U.S. allies and partners adopted the report's findings in their own strategies and plans to combat Russia's propaganda and disinformation?

RUBIN: There have been many positive outcomes across U.S. and allied governments and their civil societies resulting from the public release of this report. At that time, we were able to model, map and categorize what appeared to be disparate and chaotic amounts of Russian information warfare activity on the surface into distinct but connected groupings and to publicly share that with the world. This

As with our Russian pillars release, our PRC-focused report publicly lays out the U.S. government's understanding of how the PRC does its industrial-scale information manipulation operations to the detriment of democratic ideals and freedom of expression.

—James P. Rubin

report has equipped our partner governments, as well as the free media, to see Russia's disinformation and propaganda ecosystem for the threat to democracy it is and how they use it to undermine democratic ideals and institutions. As just one example, this GEC report, and subsequent reporting, ultimately resulted in sanctions against media organizations that had been operating as proxies of Russian intelligence. This report has allowed our allies and us to speak with common vernacular and work collectively against our common Russian threats.

THE WATCH: *The GEC published another significant report on “How the PRC seeks to Reshape the Global Information Environment” in September 2023. Can you summarize its findings on the PRC’s tactics, techniques and procedures that are used to manipulate the information environment? How does this align with the PRC’s broader strategic objectives?*

RUBIN: As with our Russian pillars release, our PRC-focused report publicly lays out the U.S. government's understanding of how the PRC does its industrial-scale information manipulation operations to the detriment of democratic ideals and freedom of expression. The report distills the PRC's global information manipulation ecosystem into five elements, which taken together enable the PRC to gain overt and covert control of media content and platforms, suppress global freedom of expression and support an emerging community of digital authoritarians. As with our Russia report, we leveraged our coordinating role across the interagency to combine open-source information with U.S. government information to shed light on previously non-public tactics and actors in the PRC government's information manipulation apparatus. Overall, the report argues that in addition to its long-standing focus on presenting positive views of the PRC to external audiences, Beijing is now increasingly relying on disinformation to undermine other governments, particularly the United States, and works hard to conceal

the origin of its messaging by leveraging proxies such as influencers and deploying pay-for-play coverage in key regions around the world.

THE WATCH: *To what extent have Russia and the PRC been coordinating their messaging efforts and meta-narratives on issues such as COVID-19, the Ukraine war, Taiwan and the Arctic to influence the global information environment?*

RUBIN: At the public level, I'd describe what we're seeing between Russia and the PRC as a mutual supporting activity where Russian narratives are seen and find their way onto PRC communications and messaging platforms and vice versa. It is a parroting or amplification of each other's anti-U.S. or anti-West content that isn't particularly sophisticated, but it is getting quicker. The time between the initial release by one adversary to the time it is regurgitated by the other into target language aimed at targeted audiences is getting faster. I think they each are also interested in reliable source feeds of anti-U.S. and anti-West content, and they become another reinforcing proxy for the original corrosive disinformation narratives.

THE WATCH: *How will adversarial messaging from Russia and the PRC evolve over the next decade? What are the implications for global diplomatic relations?*

RUBIN: Adversarial messaging, like every other facet of daily life — good and bad — is going to be recast by advancements in AI technology over the next decade. In the information space, AI has the potential to strengthen democracy by advancing resilience, openness, civic engagement and participation, and access to government services and information. But AI can also be used as a tool to undermine democracy, including through voter suppression, information manipulation and curtailment of civic engagement. One of our biggest concerns is the



inevitability of our adversaries and competitors using current and emerging technologies to better obscure their authorship and dissemination of AI-generated materials to conduct influence and information operations at scale that are more convincing, precise and compelling than anything we're seeing right now.

As it is, adversarial messaging is already evolving to be more realistic with generative AI technology. This content will threaten national security, public safety, trust, democratic institutions and human rights with greater intensity as the enabling technologies improve. The ability to identify and collectively oppose faster and farther-reaching information manipulation campaigns — and connect them to their hidden hands — also gets more challenging over time.

While access to accurate and authentic information will remain essential to the health of a democratic society and the well being of its people, a key step in reducing the risks and harms posed by AI-generated media is for all countries to share our commitment to responsible government procurement and use of AI systems.

President [Joe] Biden's Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence captured the challenge very well, I think, noting that "AI holds extraordinary potential for both promise and peril." The order added that U.S. leadership on AI and the unlocking of technology's potential to solve our most difficult challenges will require, among other things, "investments in AI-related education, training, development, research and capacity."



A participant in the International Youth Festival in Sochi, Russia, walks by an anti-Western propaganda exhibition in March 2024 that decried NATO as having a “history of deception.” The U.S. Global Engagement Center fights anti-Western propaganda efforts by the People’s Republic of China and Russia. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

THE WATCH: How do the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Defense (DOD) currently work together to counter propaganda, disinformation and misinformation? Does combating adversarial messaging require a whole-of-government approach?

RUBIN: The Department of Defense is a great interagency partner to the GEC. It is similarly foreign focused, like the Department of State, and active around the globe protecting U.S. interests and enforcing our security commitments. I find it particularly helpful to consult with the range of DOD stakeholders, including the Office of the Secretary of Defense Policy and combatant commanders, when we take on regional work with our U.S. ambassadors and their embassy teams. We often find that they may have similar interests, objectives and supporting activities

with resources they’ve already committed. It is always best to share information, coordinate efforts and harness action across government entities toward reaching our nation’s foreign policy objectives. DOD continues to be an excellent partner in that work.

THE WATCH: What is your vision for the future of the GEC and what new initiatives are you going to introduce to combat adversary propaganda and disinformation?

RUBIN: The GEC developed the Framework to Counter Foreign State Information Manipulation to 1) create a shared understanding of this threat, and 2) encourage interoperable solutions with our partners. The framework is a tool to build a global coalition of like-minded countries that are committed to working together to confront foreign disinformation. We believe that developing greater resilience to this threat is critically important since disinformation is very difficult to counteract once it takes root. So, the framework encourages a whole-of-society approach that focuses on capacity building in key areas including national policies and strategies, government institutions, human and technical capacity, civil society and multilateral engagement.

Since we launched the framework in the fall of 2023, we’ve had nine countries endorse it, including countries with more experience or resources dealing with disinformation, such as Germany and Japan, and less experienced or resourced countries such as Albania, Moldova and Northern Macedonia. The framework allows countries to evaluate their own counter-disinformation capabilities and then partner in areas where they need help. We plan to meet these needs with resources from the State Department as well as the collective tools and experience of the U.S. government and our allies and partners. The framework is a mechanism for collective action.

I was recently at the Munich Security Conference, where I held a discussion with our British, Canadian and German counterparts on foreign information manipulation as a national security threat. We each noted how countries such as Russia and the PRC are using information warfare to undermine our societies and our national security interests. We also spoke about the need for collective action, and we highlighted tools including the framework to build our shared capabilities and coordinated responses. Looking ahead, we hope to bring dozens of additional countries into this coalition to expand our outreach to areas like Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Russia and the PRC are investing heavily in spreading disinformation and deceptively supporting proxies in these regions, where countries are much less equipped to deal with this threat. Ultimately, we all need to work together to strengthen our societies so that we can protect our sovereignty in the information domain in the same way we protect it in the physical domain. ▣



STRATEGIC ADVANCE

PRC forging deep economic ties with Mexico

DR. R. EVAN ELLIS/U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López Obrador "AMLO" publicly reached out to Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in March 2023, asking for help to manage the flow of fentanyl from the People's Republic of China (PRC) into Mexico. The appeal officially, if indirectly, acknowledged the PRC's role in the flow of narcotics through Mexico responsible for the deaths of over 100,000 residents in the United States per year, as well as the multidimensional fashion in which the PRC's licit and illicit engagement in Mexico impacts U.S. security, according to ABC News.

Mexico's shared border with the U.S. and the integration of the U.S. and Mexican economies in the framework of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) make it strategically vital. Its cooperation with the U.S. on matters of transnational organized crime and migration across the 3,111-kilometer shared U.S.-Mexico border is also vital to U.S. national security.

While Mexico is not bound to the PRC by the ties of geography, commerce and family that it shares with the U.S., its ties to China are far greater and more longstanding than are commonly recognized. From the 16th century, the Mexican port of Acapulco served as a hub for the famous Manilla Galleons exchanging the new world's silver and other treasures for Asian goods. In 2003, Mexico was one of the first countries to be recognized by the PRC as

a strategic partner in the region.

The AMLO government has shown a strong interest in engaging with the PRC. Mexican Prime Minister Marcelo Ebrard made a high-profile trip to China in July 2019. And Mexico — as head of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) — played a key role in hosting the 2021 China-CELAC summit, including the three-year plan developed there for deepening the PRC's relationship with the region, according to the Mexican and PRC governments.

Although Mexico has had limited success in exporting to China, its imports from the PRC of a broad array of consumer products and intermediate goods caused its overall trade to balloon from \$117 billion when the PRC was admitted into the World Trade Organization in 2001 to \$137 billion by 2022, with its \$126 billion in imports from China more than 11 times its \$10.9 billion in exports to China that year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Over the past two decades, PRC-based companies have also expanded their presence in retail, manufacturing and other sectors in Mexico, often with an eye to access the U.S. market through USMCA. Between 2000 and 2021, the Mexico-based China-Latin America and Caribbean Academic Network identified 110 individual Chinese investments in the country totaling \$16.9 billion, almost 10% of total PRC investment in the region during



Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador shakes hands with Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping in November 2023 at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in San Francisco. The People's Republic of China has been expanding commercial and political ties with Mexico. REUTERS

the period. Chinese automotive manufacturers present in Mexico include Foton, BAIC, JAC, Chang'an, and BYD, among others. As Chinese companies maneuver to preserve access to the U.S. market amid the move toward "nearshoring," PRC-based companies have become the most significant new investors in Mexican U.S. border states such as Nuevo Leon.

From the beginning, much of that Chinese investment has had a strategic intent. Examples include control by Hong Kong-based Hutchinson Port Holdings of seven strategic Mexican port and logistics operations on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts; rights acquired in 2016 to a Mexican oilfield in the Perdido basin in the Gulf of Mexico adjacent to U.S. waters; a key PRC role in building AMLO's signature infrastructure project, the \$7.4 billion Maya

tourist train; and the PRC-linked company Ganfeng's role in the Bacanora lithium deposit in the Sonora desert, one of the largest such lithium deposits in the hemisphere.

In November 2020, China State Power Investment Corp. acquired Zuma Energy — one of the most important renewable energy producers Mexico — a striking contrast to the general AMLO propensity to privilege Mexican companies over private foreign producers.

In the digital domain, the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei, which has come under scrutiny for its PRC-linked ownership and related security concerns, is the leading candidate to supply 5G in Mexico, capping an effort over two decades to achieve a dominant position as a provider of telecommunications equipment and infrastructure in the country, alongside other Chinese



ABOVE: China-based Huawei is the leading contender to supply 5G internet service to Mexico and is a dominant provider of telecommunications equipment in the country.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BELOW: In the security sector, surveillance camera maker Hikvision has captured a large portion of the Mexican market.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

providers. Huawei has also aggressively marketed its cloud computing services to Mexican technology startups, according to techcapital.com, an online news platform.

In the security systems sector, China-based Hikvision has captured a significant portion of the Mexican market. In online commerce, Alibaba has a dominant position as a business-to-business supplier, while during COVID-19, China's Didi Chuxing overcame resistance from Mexico's traditional taxi drivers and advanced significantly to capture a dominant position in Mexico's ride-booking market, besting rival Uber. In finance, Chinese banks such as HSBC, ICBC and Bank of China play an expanding role in the country, according to Reuters and Digital Trend, an online tech news organization.

In support of deepening Mexico's ability to engage with China, the PRC has established six Confucius Centers in the country and provides scholarships for Mexican students to study in the PRC.

As AMLO's government has pursued policies that privilege state companies and caused discontent among private investors, the PRC's leverage has arguably expanded. Ganfeng's position in lithium has already





U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration officials say the People's Republic of China is a key source of the precursor chemicals coming into Mexico for the opioid fentanyl. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

led AMLO to back off early declarations on nationalization, according to the news site Mexicobusiness.com.

In the security sector, Mexico has long sent a limited number of military personnel to the PRC for professional military education, and Chinese and Mexican military institutions periodically exchange visits. In the context of Mexico's close military relationship with the U.S. under the prior Felipe Calderón and Enrique Peña Nieto presidencies, the country has not acquired significant military hardware from PRC-based defense companies or conducted large-scale training exercises with the PRC, according to the globalamericans.org, a Latin American think tank.

The expansion of PRC commercial ties with Mexico has also facilitated illicit ties. Although denied by its government, the PRC is a key supplier of fentanyl and precursors for other synthetic drugs to Mexican cartels

such as Sinaloa and Jalisco Nuevo Generacion. The penetration of Mexico's financial system by PRC banks and the expansion of trade has also helped Chinese institutions to play an important role in laundering bulk cash by Mexican criminal organizations, according to reports by The Associated Press and Yahoo News.

The U.S. continues to respect Mexico's right as a sovereign state to conduct legitimate commercial and political interactions with the PRC and its companies. It strongly advocates, however, that it do so within a framework of transparency, good governance, rule-of-law and an equal playing field for all. While some in Mexico may always question Washington's intentions, close Mexico-U.S. ties of geography, commerce and family give Washington a strong interest in Mexico's prosperity, the health of its democratic institutions, and a relationship of trust, whether on China or other matters of mutual interest. ▣



MEXICO TARGETED

BY RUSSIAN INFORMATION OPERATIONS AFTER UKRAINE INVASION

UNITED KINGDOM MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Russia is deliberately targeting Mexico with information operations (IO) since the Ukraine invasion with the goal of sowing distrust toward NATO states and influencing Mexicans to support Russia's actions. The campaign cannot generally be considered successful so far. Most Mexicans blame Russia, and Mexico usually supports Ukraine in the United Nations. However, Russia is becoming increasingly aggressive in Mexico, where apathy about the war is high.

METHODS

Russia has a sizeable Spanish-language media enterprise, which includes channels banned in the European Union and the United States. This is bundled with cable packages in Mexico including RT en Español/Actualidad, Sputnik Mundo and TASS, in addition to official and unofficial social media sites.

One study shows that the highest viewership outside Russia for state-owned RT International, formerly Russia Today, is Spanish speaking, and that 11% of RT en Español content mentions Ukraine. The Brookings Institution says the Russian Embassy in Mexico and independent journalists are the most popular sources on Twitter/X

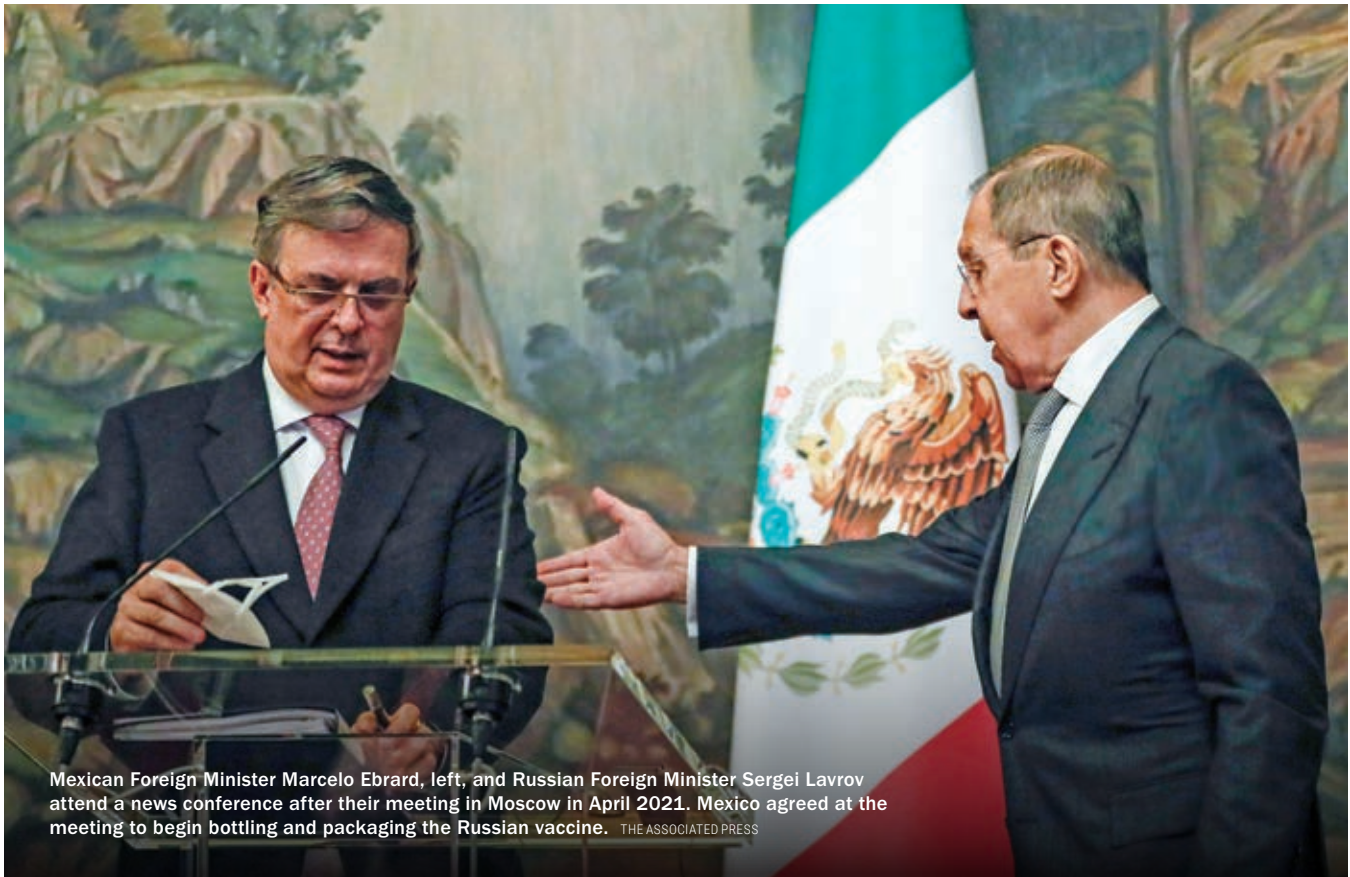


for pro-Russian content. Research by the Oxford Internet Institute examining disinformation posts from Russian embassies globally found the embassy in Mexico to be one of the most prolific.

So-called diplomats are another source of disinformation. Since the invasion, Russian "diplomatic" accreditations have skyrocketed, with a 60% increase. Despite having few economic or cultural ties with Mexico, Russia has nearly twice as many diplomats as the U.S. IO themes include victimhood, warnings of nuclear war, blaming the West for the invasion, falsely attributing atrocities, questioning NATO's motives, and highlighting tensions between the U.S. and Mexico on issues such as immigration and drugs. Russia pushes back on damaging stories like claims that Putin is ill or that the Sputnik COVID-19 vaccine, issued to Mexicans, is ineffective.

INTENDED AUDIENCES

There are numerous audiences. One that stands out is the grouping of left-wing political actors, such as the Morena Party Youth Wing. (The Morena Party is the incumbent government party.) On March 4, 2022, the Morena Party Youth Wing publicly expressed "moral and political sup-



Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard, left, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attend a news conference after their meeting in Moscow in April 2021. Mexico agreed at the meeting to begin bottling and packaging the Russian vaccine. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

port” for Russia’s decision to invade Ukraine — a statement later rejected by the main party. Also, in the month after the invasion, a Russia-Mexico Friendship Group involving left-wing Mexican politicians was established, indicating Russia’s probable intent to co-opt decision-makers and influence the Mexican government.

THE PLAYBOOK

Russian disinformation in Mexico is self-reinforcing and trades in conspiracy. It typically identifies existing rifts in society and attempts to widen fissures. In some cases, complete fabrications are created. Russia may identify a socioeconomic or political issue it wishes to exploit, like fentanyl abuse. It may then use social media accounts to amplify, edit or construct misinformation. Then a state-owned “news agency,” such as RT, will report on the issue and the Russian ambassador or minister may comment on the story.

For example, on May 31, 2023, RT twisted the words of a Mexican reporter to suggest U.S.-supplied antitank weapons from Ukraine had been sold to Mexican cartels. A fake article in a Mexican newspaper also appeared regarding the number of Ukrainian arms now in Mexico City. The Russians repeated the lie in person (via diplomats) and virtually (via social media), thereby exploiting Mexican government fears about arms control. Russian IO is not only dangerous for Mexicans, but it also can

have an indirect effect elsewhere if echoed.

In September 2022, the Russian Embassy in Mexico posted a picture of a U.S. helicopter and suggested it was spotted over the Nord Stream pipeline just before the gas explosion. This claim was picked up by Russian Spanish-language programs, online platforms and independent Mexican journalists for comment and further dissemination to sow distrust in U.S. motives toward Ukraine.

When analyzing the effectiveness of Moscow’s campaign, it is easy to focus on the fact that Russia isn’t popular, or that its claims are unbelievable. However, Russian IO is more about negatively affecting an enemy and unstitching the fabric of truth rather than making friends.

CONCLUSION

More should be done to combat Russian IO in Mexico because apathy about the war remains high and the government often presents itself as neutral, which provides fertile ground for Russian lies.

While respecting Mexico’s sovereignty, more effort is needed on education, counter-disinformation and persuasion. This will require greater resources and more engagement with Mexico. Most importantly, this should be a combined, multipartner effort with Mexico, synchronizing our collective voices and embracing individual expertise. Russian Spanish-speaking media also must be held to account before it is too late. ■



PRC INFLUENCE IN THE BAHAMAS

A developing threat to homeland defense

DR. ANTHONY CLAYTON

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has vastly increased its presence in the Bahamas over the last two decades. The regime has been steadily investing in the nation – acquiring infrastructure, land and assets – with increased emphasis on investments, notably in fisheries. The PRC also is developing political influence with deep and sometimes ethically controversial engagement of local politicians and journalists, extending economic influence, building its image with COVID-19-related assistance, developing high-level access to security forces, and greatly increasing its footprint along the so-called third border of the United States. This PRC program is now well advanced in the Bahamas.

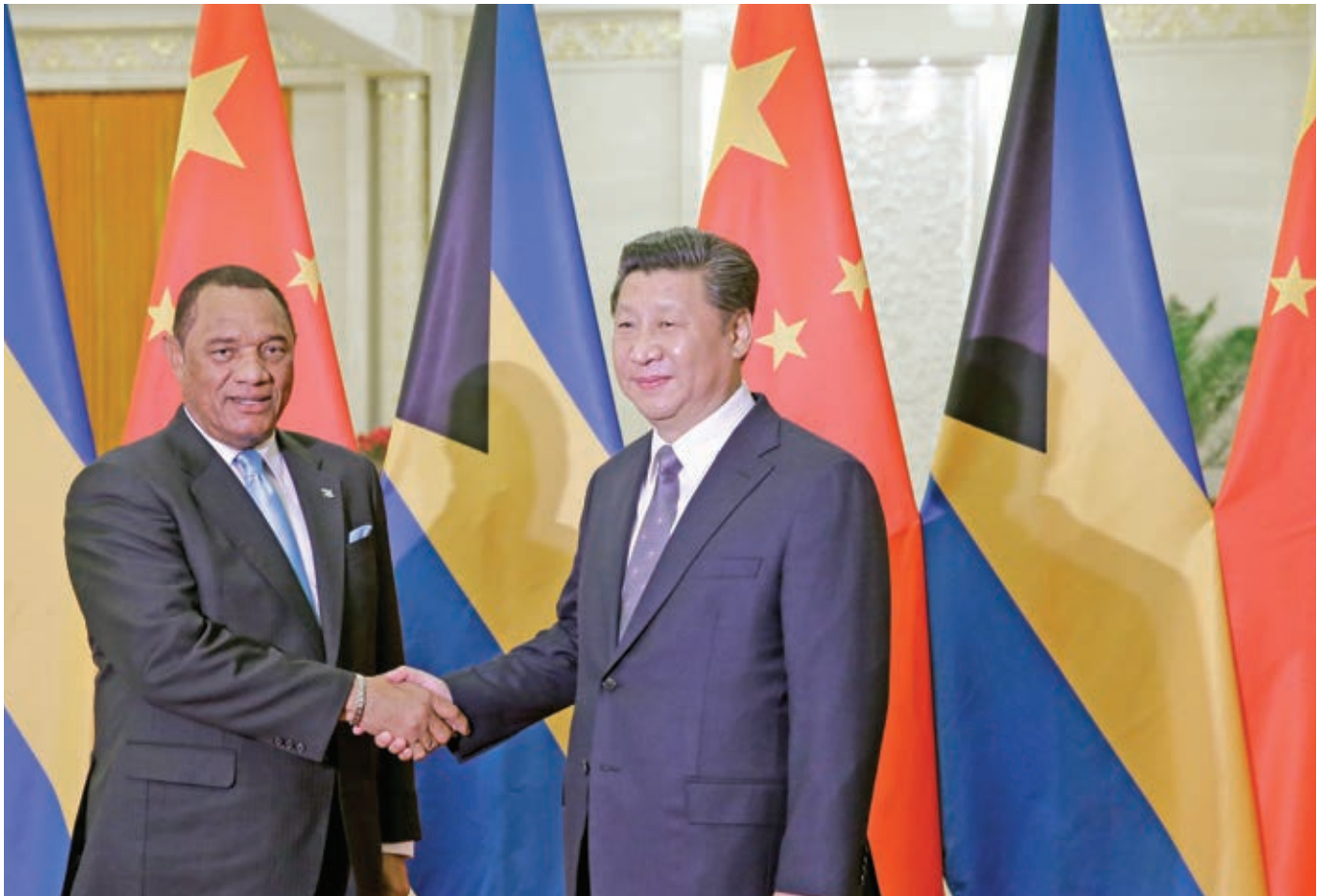
One face of this active multidimensional public diplomacy strategy in the Bahamas was China's former ambassador to the Bahamas, Dai Qingli. Dai Qingli is energetic and young, a highly skilled foreign policy expert and a seasoned communicator. Her strategy was to influence Bahamian public opinion and convince people the country's ability to accelerate its development and attract investment can be achieved through an enhanced relationship with the PRC.

Concurrently, the PRC has steadily worked to increase its influence over the Royal Bahamas Defence Force. Training courses for RBDF officers, initially in disaster management and humanitarian relief operations, mirroring similar training offered by the United States, were offered by the PRC. In 2016, Capt. Samuel Evans of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force participated in the 9th Seminar of Senior Defence Officials from the Caribbean and South Pacific in China, the first step toward a more permanent relationship. In 2015, the PRC made a direct

approach to the Bahamian government, offering military aid and asking the country to list its requirements. As a result, the Bahamas received \$1.2 million in aid, two armored vehicles and riot-control equipment.

While much of the PRC's investment in the Bahamas has been economic, several projects could be construed as dual purpose and potentially exploitable by the PRC's military. Through concessional loans, the PRC helped build the Nassau Airport Gateway and North Abaco Port. By way of commercial development projects, the Chinese built Baha Mar and The Pointe resorts, and now Baha Mar is the largest private employer. The Port in Grand Bahama, the biggest container port in the Caribbean region, is also a significant Chinese commercial development project.

The PRC's interest in gaining a foothold in the Bahamas' agriculture and fishing is tied to its ambition to strengthen its security operations in the Caribbean region, and more specifically in the Bahamas, due to its proximity to the United States and U.S. military operations, with a major proposed development in a strategic location beside the U.S. Navy's Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEC), which was established on Andros Island after an agreement in 1963 with the United Kingdom and with the concurrence of the Bahamian government. Before being voted out of office in 2017, the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) had seriously considered a Chinese agriculture and fisheries deal on Andros. This would have given the PRC the ability to closely monitor all developments in submarine warfare and technology at the AUTEC facility. This deal is currently in abeyance but may yet be resurrected as the PLP is now back in power.



Then-Prime Minister Perry Gladstone Christie of the Bahamas, left, is greeted by Chinese General Secretary Xi Jinping before a bilateral meeting in January 2015 at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Then-Chinese Ambassador Dai Qingli during a visit to the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce. Dai actively pushed for Chinese economic development projects in the Bahamas.

BAHAMAS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

While it is unlikely that any of these projects will pose a direct military threat to the U.S., the proximity of Chinese intelligence and surveillance assets to the U.S. mainland is a potential security risk, and U.S. citizens may find themselves the targets of Chinese monitoring, including cellphone traffic. In December 2020, a Guardian newspaper article reported allegations from a senior mobile security executive that China appears to have used mobile phone networks in the Caribbean to surveil U.S. mobile phone subscribers. The expert alleged that U.S. citizens traveling abroad were targeted with messages indicative of surveillance of mass movement patterns and communication through two Caribbean operators: Bahamas Telecommunications Co. and Cable & Wireless Communications in Barbados. State-owned Chinese providers China Mobile and China Unicom were identified as the major source of these alleged attacks, and the original report suggested that BTC and other Caribbean communications providers may have unwittingly facilitated the surveillance by selling or leasing network addresses to Beijing-controlled entities.

U.S. Homeland Security agencies should therefore be concerned about the extent of Chinese engagement in the Bahamas. A sustained campaign of engagement and cooperation with the Caribbean nations is needed to counter the spread of PRC influence. ▣

ENGAGEMENTS



BUILDING CAPACITY

Mexico-U.S. Bilateral Military Cooperation Roundtable

CAMRYN HOELLE/U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND

The Mexican Armed Forces and United States military participated in the seventh Bilateral Military Cooperation Roundtable in August 2023 to fine-tune their strategic vision and enhance cooperation between the militaries. Lt. Gen. A.C. Roper and Rear Adm. Scott Robertson of U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) hosted two delegations of members of the Mexican Armed Forces in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for the executive session.

The roundtable is a bilateral event involving USNORTHCOM, the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) and the Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR) of the United Mexican States. It provides a forum to establish military cooperation and formulate a common strategic vision. The tri-chairs validate the Annual Plan of Activities (APA) to strengthen the bilateral partnership and advance cooperation to achieve greater operational compatibility. Through the roundtable, senior leaders guide bilateral security cooperation and produce military training and exchanges throughout the year.

The roundtable, first instituted in 2016, brings

together the chiefs of staff of SEDENA, SEMAR and the deputy commander of USNORTHCOM to establish the goals of bilateral security cooperation and programs. The roundtable began with a focus on setting mutual strategic priorities while increasing the effectiveness of coordination and cooperation through combined training and combined exercises. Throughout the

“It is already apparent the military-to-military relationship between the United States and Mexico is robust and expanding as both nations address the challenges posed by common threats to our citizens and shared interests.”

~ Gen. Gregory Guillot, Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command

seven years of meetings, delegates have established service staff talks (SST), integration boards (IB) and working groups (WG) to facilitate cooperation among SEDENA, SEMAR and USNORTHCOM. These binational groups meet throughout the year to ensure steady communication between the Mexican and U.S. mili-



U.S. Marines exit a Mexican military helicopter during Exercise Phoenix/Aztec Alligator in July 2023. The exercise demonstrates the increasing interoperability between the Mexican and U.S. militaries.

CPL. WILLOW MARSHALL/U.S. MARINE CORPS

The meeting was guided by the mutual strategic vision to “achieve greater operational compatibility as defense partners, enhance cooperation in protecting North America, and promote regional security and leadership.”

taries. The SSTs, IBs and WGs establish short-term, mid-term and long-term goals to guarantee that collaboration efforts are progressing.

The tri-chairs, Lt. Gen. Roper, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Trevilla Trejo of SEDENA and Adm. José Barradas Cobos of SEMAR, along with senior officers from each of their respective delegations attended the seventh roundtable. The meeting was guided by the mutual strategic vision to “achieve greater operational compatibility as defense partners, enhance cooperation in protecting North America, and promote regional security and leadership.” To do so, resources are focused on three lines of effort: domain awareness, domain control and institutional strengthening. During the executive session, the generals and



Members of U.S. Northern Command welcome the Mexican Secretariat of National Defense and Secretariat of the Navy to the Seventh Bilateral Military Cooperation Roundtable.

U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND

admirals received briefings covering the work that each of the SSTs, IBs and WGs accomplished in the previous year and their plans going forward. Some of the topics included command and control interoperability, information sharing, logistics coordination, military education and training, and strategic communications.

The roundtable framework includes an assessment, monitoring and evaluation group that provides feedback to the roundtable’s leaders on the value and effectiveness of the objectives.

The seventh roundtable established that operational compatibility among the U.S. military, SEDENA and SEMAR is paramount. The countries continue to improve upon our operational compatibility in



Lt. Gen. A.C. Roper, deputy commander of U.S. Northern Command and second from left, leads a discussion at the seventh Bilateral Military Cooperation Roundtable. U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND

The latest roundtable concluded with each of the tri-chairs expressing gratitude and commitment to the bilateral defense relationship.

the maritime, air and land domains and have demonstrated an increased ability to communicate and work together. Moreover, the defense cooperation exposes the Mexican Armed Forces to USNORTHCOM and North American Aerospace Defense Command strategic principles of global integration, all-domain awareness, information dominance and decision superiority. Such collaboration greatly advances regional security and helps build a robust partnership to enhance the layered defense of North America. “It is already apparent the military-to-military relationship between the United States and Mexico is robust and expanding as both nations address the challenges posed by common threats to our citizens and shared interests,” Gen. Gregory Guillot, commander of USNORTHCOM and the North American Aerospace Defense Command, said in March 2024 congressional testimony.

Another major development resulting from the seventh roundtable was to change the cycle of activities from 12 to 24 months, which will allow for further collaboration and progression of the security cooperation. The original 12-month cycle consisted

of an annual executive level meeting; in the future, the 24-month cycle will include one executive level meeting in the first 12 months, followed by a visit the subsequent year to a joint exercise or training that lets the leaders observe the progress of roundtable objectives. A group visit to a combined exercise, training or other roundtable-related activity will let leadership observe the Mexican and U.S. militaries’ operational compatibility and preparedness to respond to diverse situations. This is a significant change that demonstrates the dynamism of the military relationship and commitment to the defense of North America.

The latest roundtable concluded with each of the tri-chairs expressing gratitude and commitment to the bilateral defense relationship. Participants from each delegation highlighted that the roundtable showed clear and identifiable steps toward progress and communicated their intent for expanding cooperation in domains such as cyber and space. The roundtable is central to strengthening this longstanding defense relationship and is critical to a globally integrated cooperative defense. ■



ACHIEVING INTEROPERABILITY

The Bahamas-U.S. Bilateral Security Cooperation Framework

JOEL PEDERSEN/U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND

Cooperation between the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the Bahamas supports the development of maritime security throughout the Bahamas' archipelago of 700 islands and cays and 466,000 square kilometers of ocean.

The strategic goal is for the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) to become interoperable with the U.S. military and capable of sharing information and intelligence on security threats to protect North America. This includes three main objectives: 1) Integrate a near real-time operational picture of sovereign territory and approaches to detect, identify, track and share information and intelligence on potential threats. 2) Strengthen interoperability to conduct joint and combined interdiction operations. 3) Establish institutional capability to identify, prioritize and resource sustained strategic security and defense capabilities and improve readiness.

USNORTHCOM and the RBDF developed the Bilateral Security Cooperation Framework to synchronize security cooperation with the RBDF and allow senior leaders to build relationships and provide multiyear oversight and guidance. The most recent annual meeting was held in April 2024 in Rhode Island.

The framework is modeled after the successful USNORTHCOM Mexico Bilateral Military Cooperation Roundtable, which synchronizes security cooperation with the Mexican military and provides senior leaders with a recurring forum for oversight and engage-



U.S. Navy Lt. j.g. Victor Cooper gives members of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force a tour of the USS Wasp when it visited Nassau in June 2023. PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS ERIC MOSER/U.S. NAVY

ment. The relationship with the RBDF has matured to the point where a roundtable-like forum benefits both militaries.

In an October 2023 interview, Commodore Raymond E. King of the RBDF described the framework as a "life-saver" for identifying areas of mutual interest. "The first effort is our maritime domain awareness, where we are seeking to strengthen certain capabilities, intelligence, cybersecurity and communications," King told *Diálogo Americas*, a publication of U.S. Southern

“The first effort is our maritime domain awareness, where we are seeking to strengthen certain capabilities, intelligence, cybersecurity and communications.”

~ Commodore Raymond E. King, Royal Bahamas Defence Force

Command (USSOUTHCOM). “We also have efforts that deal with maritime domain control, where we’re getting assistance with our decentralization program, being equipped with the necessary technology to ensure that we can maintain awareness of who is in our domain.

“The third one has to do with institutional capacity building, where we’re seeking to professionalize the RBDF to ensure that our structure is designed based on a force design, structure, objectives and capabilities we need to accomplish our mission. The fourth one has to do with subject matter expert exchanges with mobile training teams coming to the Bahamas to conduct them.”

Key components of the framework include:

- 1. Integration with USNORTHCOM:** The framework mirrors the successful USNORTHCOM-Mexico partnership. Regular meetings, including the session in April 2024, are instrumental in driving this collaboration.
- 2. Counteracting Strategic Competitors’ Influence:** An ancillary focus is to counter strategic competitors’ growing influence in the region, especially after Hurricane Dorian and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3. Maritime Surveillance System Radars:** The installation of radars across the archipelago significantly enhances maritime domain awareness and bolsters defenses against illicit activities.
- 4. Coordination with USSOUTHCOM:** The RBDF has effectively coordinated with USSOUTHCOM for multiple missions, including a significant contribution to a United Nations mission in Haiti in 2024.
- 5. Military Equipment and Training:** The signing of letters of request for tactical vehicles, weapons and supplies exemplifies the DOD’s support in equipping the RBDF. Training and capacity-building initiatives are also ongoing.
- 6. Strategic and Human Resource Management:** The Defense Security Cooperation University’s Institute for Security Governance assists in comprehensive strategy development and force management for the RBDF and the Ministry of National Security.
- 7. Military Justice and Ethics:** Development of a military justice system and an ethics policy is underway, ensuring compliance with international standards and enhancing operational integrity.

8. Policy and Procedure Development: Formalizing maritime security policies and procedures is critical for operational effectiveness and legal compliance.

9. Cybersecurity and Intelligence: Establishing robust cybersecurity capabilities and improving intelligence procedures are essential. Increased information and intelligence sharing with regional partners is a focus area.



The Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the U.S. Coast Guard intercepted a vessel carrying 275 Haitian migrants in Bahamian waters in July 2023. Enhancing interdiction efforts is a key element of the Bilateral Security Cooperation Framework.

ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE

10. Domain Control Improvement: Efforts to expand maritime operations, strengthen regional command structures, enhance interdiction capabilities and improve search and rescue operations are in progress.

11. Institutional Capacity Building: Long-term initiatives aim to strengthen the institutional capacity of the RBDF, its leadership and the Ministry of National Security.

The partnership under the bilateral framework is a testament to the commitment of the DOD and RBDF in securing the Bahamas’ maritime domain, countering external influences and strengthening regional security. Through continuous collaboration and strategic developments, this alliance aims to achieve a more secure and resilient maritime environment in the region. ▣



VITAL PARTNERSHIPS

Canadian Armed Forces foster Caribbean partnerships to defend North America

CANADIAN JOINT OPERATIONS COMMAND

The defense of Canada and the rest of North America are the top priorities of the Canadian government and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). As a geographical approach to the continent and home to numerous allies and partners, the Caribbean is a region of particular importance. It is one with both opportunities and challenges in security, commerce, immigration, tourism, investment and strategic competition. We continue to see malign and non-state actors engage in illegal, destructive activities and remain concerned regarding episodic and enduring humanitarian crises that continue to impede development. The ongoing partnerships between the CAF and our Caribbean regional partners remains of critical importance.

Canada's defense policy reinforces the CAF's commitment to work collaboratively with partners throughout the hemisphere to develop regional capabilities, encourage operational flexibility and foster deeper military-to-military ties while learning from each other. Continuous cooperation and engagement are critical to meeting the security and defense challenges of the region, which include humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR); the illegal movement of drugs, people, weapons, and money; and other transnational organized crime activities.

The CAF has a long tradition of security cooperation and humanitarian assistance in the Caribbean. During the past eight decades, the CAF has participated in many exercises such as Exercise Tradewinds, which focuses on countering threats, building partnerships and improving HADR capabilities. The Global Affairs Canada-funded Operation Ackee and its annual capstone Exercise Tropical



A member of the Canadian Naval Tactical Operations Group demonstrates techniques on how to secure a ship's perimeter to Dominican Navy personnel during Exercise Tradewinds 19.

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Dagger aims to consistently enhance the existing skill sets of Special Forces in the region in their attempts to disrupt organized crime and gang-related activities. Moreover, the CAF has conducted more than 50 operations spanning HADR, stabilization and security efforts, and the restoration of critical infrastructure within the region. The CAF has also contributed to capacity building under the Military Training and Cooperation Program (MTCP) by helping to establish the Caribbean Military Academy School of Aviation, the Caribbean Counter-Terrorism Training Centre and the Caribbean Military Academy School of Maritime Studies.

Beyond professionalization efforts and responses to natural disasters and other emergencies, the CAF collabo-



Canadian Armed Forces members carry orphans from a helicopter at Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 2010. The children were being adopted by Canadian families after an earthquake devastated Haiti.

CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

rates with partners throughout the Caribbean to counter the illegal movement of narcotics. The region is a major transit area for illicit drugs that enter Canada and the U.S. and generate \$100 billion to \$130 billion for transnational criminal organizations. Canada's contribution to the U.S.-led counternarcotics operations in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific Ocean is called Operation Caribe. Since November 2006, the CAF has deployed maritime surveillance and air assets on a rotational basis to support the multinational campaign against illicit trafficking under Joint Interagency Task Force South.

Operation Caribe missions nest within a multinational and interagency framework. For example, in November 2022, members of the Royal Canadian Navy, along with members of the Canadian Coast Guard, helped the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime conduct training to help Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago to strengthen their maritime domain awareness capability through sharing knowledge and expertise on the use of unmanned aerial systems for reconnaissance of the maritime domain.

To enhance Canada's presence in the region and improve stability and security, the CAF established an operational support hub for Latin America and the Caribbean in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2016. This hub enables rapid response to missions in the area, including the rapid deployment of CAF and allied forces, in addition to the provision of effective operational support to HADR opera-

tions. The hub continues to strengthen the relationship between the CAF and important regional security actors, such as the Jamaican Defence Force.

The CAF's most recent Caribbean initiative is the Framework for Western Hemisphere Allied Collaboration (F-WHAC). The F-WHAC aims to synchronize and coordinate allied efforts to improve regional stability and align strategic goals throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Building on previous allied coordination efforts, the F-WHAC was established as a mechanism to serve as a standing multinational, cross-functional, consultative body focused on identifying strategic responses to regional problem sets.

Canada's commitments in the Caribbean facilitate international partnerships, information sharing, training opportunities, cooperative security, and increase collective understanding of the risks in the region. The evolving threat posed by strategic competitors in the Caribbean, as well as the destabilizing impact of illegal activities, transcend national borders and undermine continental defense. Countering these global threats demands active engagement with our partners abroad. Whether conducting Operation Caribe, HADR or building partner capacity through the MTCP and other ventures such as Operation Ackee and the F-WHAC, Canada and the CAF are committed to their allies and partners. A strong and secure Caribbean is essential to a strong and secure North America. ▣



STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

Women, Peace, and Security program

DR. HOLLY PEIRCE/U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT AND TIFFANI PHILLIPS/U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND

U.S. President Joe Biden’s 2022 National Security Strategy states, “the challenges of our age, from strategic competition to climate change, require us to make investments that sharpen our competitive edge and bolster our resilience.” The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) program is a tool to do exactly that.

From a U.S. perspective, WPS exemplifies America’s core strategic advantages and positions the nation to outmaneuver its geopolitical competitors. In the words of Gen. Glen D. VanHerck, former commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), “In today’s extremely complex strategic environment, we are vying for allies and partners — our asymmetric advantage. Women, Peace, and Security is a part of strategic competition. Our global competitors seek to exploit, to undermine our shared values in democracy, human rights, self-reliance and self-determination. Yet, like-minded nations who embrace Women, Peace,



and Security are able to create a golden thread between allies and partners which shores up our beliefs in democracy, sovereignty, and freedom which our competitors seek to erode.” Gen. Laura J. Richardson, commander of U.S. Southern Command, stated in her congressional testimony that “women play an important role in increasing readiness and sustaining regional stability, security, and prosperity, and so we must redouble our efforts to integrate and institutionalize Women, Peace, and Security initiatives internally and among all our partners.”

USNORTHCOM’s approach to Women, Peace, and Security is based on the related United Nations Security Council resolutions, the U.S. National Strategy on WPS, the WPS Act of 2017 and the 2020 Department of Defense WPS Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan (SFIP). The SFIP compels the DOD to exemplify a diverse organization that allows for women’s meaningful participation across the development, management and employment of the joint force. It ensures that women in

partner nations meaningfully participate and serve at all ranks and in all occupations in defense and security sectors, that women and girls are safe and secure, and that their human rights are protected, especially during conflict and crisis.

In 2020, Gen. VanHerck released WPS implementation guidance and identified WPS as a command priority, instructing USNORTHCOM staff and its components to “integrate WPS principles into their strategies, plans and operations to better defend the homeland, strengthen partnerships, and provide flexible responses to civil authorities.” That same year, the NORAD deputy commander appointed the first Canadian Element NORAD Gender Advisor. Together, the commands have more than 40 trained gender focal points and gender advisors embedded across the staff, components, regions, subordinates and in U.S. embassies in our areas of responsibility to ensure a gender perspective is applied

“Women play an important role in increasing readiness and sustaining regional stability, security, and prosperity, and so we must redouble our efforts to integrate and institutionalize Women, Peace, and Security initiatives internally and among all our partners.”

Gen. Laura J. Richardson,
commander of U.S. Southern Command



U.S. Marines assigned to the Female Engagement Team with 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, escort an evacuated Afghan woman at Fort Pickett, Virginia, on September 24, 2021. Comprised of female volunteers, the Female Engagement Team helped build trust with the displaced Afghan guests to see to their needs. CPL. COREY A. MATHEWS/U.S. MARINE CORPS



A 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division Soldier interacts with young Afghan evacuees at Fort Bliss' Doña Ana Complex in New Mexico on August 31, 2021. DAVID POE/U.S. ARMY

Women assigned to Task Force Female Engagement Team 4 discuss an overview of their first visit of the day at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, on December 23, 2021. The female team included two interpreters, two Soldiers and a gender advisor. SGT. YESENIA BARAJAS/U.S. ARMY



across functions and our missions of homeland defense, defense support of civil authorities and theater security cooperation. The NORAD and USNORTHCOM WPS team also is part of the larger DOD network of more than 500 joint staff trained personnel.

Also, USNORTHCOM is fortunate to have strong, reliable WPS partnerships with Canada, Mexico and the Bahamas, as well as strong regional partnerships with

the Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security, the Western Hemisphere Institute of Security Cooperation, the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies and the Inter-American Defense Board, which also support WPS implementation. North America is uniquely positioned to lead the way in WPS implementation.

WPS is an area where we, together with our partners, are significantly outpacing our competitors. The contrast could not be more profound. While our competitors embrace an over-masculinization of their militaries and face accusations of deliberate acts of gender-based violence, in North America we are legislating WPS, developing and implementing national action plans and leading with feminist foreign policies and gender-optimization policies. Of note, none of our competitors has created



WPS national action plans or benefit from a focus on human security. This gives us an advantage. We recruit, train and employ differing teams. These teams are better positioned to address complex challenges, reflect and serve the populations they interact with and build trust and resilience within our teams and nations.

Evidence conclusively supports that inclusive, diverse organizations and societies that leverage and respond to diverse population strengths, capabilities and needs are more effective and resilient during and after times of crises. Additionally, when populations experience conflict and crisis, it is critical to understand the different needs of the population to tailor our response and support.

USNORTHCOM did this recently in support of the resettlement of vulnerable Afghans during operation Allies Welcome. USNORTHCOM conducted the first deployment of gender advisory support during a DOD and defense support of civil authorities operation to provide tailored assistance to Afghan guests and facilitate their successful resettlement. The lessons learned from this unique deployment continue to shape the future of the DOD gender advisory workforce and expand the operational contexts considered for the implementation of WPS across the department and interagency.

An Afghan interpreter, left, speaks with Afghan guests while U.S. Army Spc. Sandra Lara, center, assigned to the 372nd Engineer Company, Transportation Company, Pewaukee, Wisconsin, and Pfc. Keyara Branch, right, assigned to the 652nd Multi-Role Bridge Company, Ellsworth, Wisconsin, listen during a Female Engagement Team visit to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, on December 23, 2021.

SGT. YESENIA BARAJAS/U.S. ARMY

In keeping with the National Security Strategy, investing in and leveraging the talents of all our people strengthens our democracy and partnerships with like-minded nations. Modeling diversity and inclusion and prioritizing protection of vulnerable populations bolsters our national resilience. This enhances our credibility on the world stage and ensures our competitive advantages.

According to the United States 2023 National Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security, “The implementation of the WPS agenda is both a moral and a strategic imperative for U.S. foreign policy and national security. Research shows that the status of women and the stability of nations are inextricably linked: higher levels of equality make countries more prosperous, secure, and democratic; conversely, lower levels of gender equality result in greater instability, corruption, and conflict.” ☐



TRUSTED PARTNER

The William J. Perry Center

DR. PAUL J. ANGELO

Threats to hemispheric security are myriad: trafficking in people, weapons and drugs; illegal fishing and mining; climate change and environmental fallout; corruption; cybercrimes and digital disinformation; predatory violence and extortion; and targeted challenges to international law, including human rights violations. Countering the threat networks responsible for this alarming panorama requires a strong network of dedicated security and defense practitioners working collaboratively across the Americas to uphold the rule of law, preserve democratic governance and safeguard security. Building and empowering this community is central to the work of the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies.

When the Washington, D.C.-based center was founded in 1997, North America was poised for deeper cooperation. Bringing together senior security and defense leaders to analyze and strategize in a multilateral fashion was a high priority for the revitalized democracies of Latin America and the Caribbean. In the intervening 27 years, the Perry Center has become the premier hemispheric security and defense forum for advancing sustainable institutional capacity in democratic institutions and promoting greater understanding and trust among the countries of our shared neighborhood.

First and foremost, the Perry Center is a hub — a trusted partner with the ability to convene a community of professionals in ways that promote dialogue, strategic thinking and shared solutions to common challenges. With partners and alumni in more than 50 countries, the center's strength lies in its ability to attract top talent and create opportunities for one-on-one conversations between uniformed and civilian leaders in a not-for-attribution classroom setting.

Perry Center alumni — among them presidents, ministers, senior policymakers, military and police commanders, and civil society leaders — work at all levels throughout the Americas to improve citizen protection, bolster defense institutions, shape policy, export security and advance partnerships. The Perry Center alumni network is more than 10,000 strong and growing. Their success is our collective success and vital to cultivating capable security and defense sectors that embody democratic values.

U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) has been the Perry Center's strategic partner since its activation in 2002. The Perry Center supports USNORTHCOM's homeland defense mission and enduring objectives by developing and strengthening security cooperation in its geographic area of focus, where the Perry Center has strong institutional links and where 25% of our alumni is based. In addition to the governance, human rights and transnational threats portfolios that have been central to our work since the beginning, the Perry Center has increasingly prioritized the meaningful integration of women, interagency interlocutors and private sector partners into security and defense activities. After all, multidimensional security requires whole-of-government and even whole-of-society inputs.

As part of a multilateral partnership that includes USNORTHCOM, U.S. Southern Command, Canadian Joint Operations Command, Mexico, Caribbean nations and other partners, we work to bolster humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts and counter illicit trafficking networks operating in the southern approaches to the U.S. We also collaborate with USNORTHCOM on Women, Peace, and Security program initiatives in the Caribbean and Mexico. And every year the Perry Center sponsors a national security decision-making course for doctoral candidates at our Mexican Navy partner institute, the Center for Advanced Naval Studies (Centro de Estudios Superiores Navales). In the coming months, the Perry Center's faculty will work with our Bahamian partners on national strategies for critical infrastructure protection in cyberspace and armed violence reduction.

Our newest in-residence course offerings at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C., include Cyber Policy Development and Artificial Intelligence Applications for Defense, Maritime Security Policy, Civil-Military Relations in Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention, and Climate



A class engages in discussion during the Perry Center's inaugural Climate Change and Implications for Defense and Security course in May 2023. THE WILLIAM J. PERRY CENTER

Change Implications for Defense and Security. Due to high interest from governments in the Americas, we added an additional module of our climate change course last year and welcomed participants from other regions of the world to underscore the universal nature of the problem set and the need for global solutions.

Although the Perry Center is tacking in new thematic directions, fostering positive civil-military relations remains foundational for the center. It gets to the heart of why we are a credible convening agent and why our partners have the democratic legitimacy to act on behalf of their citizens.

Yet good security and defense governance requires that institutions be both effective and accountable — two qualities that were top-of-mind for our namesake, former U.S. Secretary of Defense William J. Perry, and that are, regrettably, at great risk today.

Authoritarianism and populism are once again on the rise, homicide and extortion rates in Latin America and the Caribbean remain among the highest in the world, and the diffusion of disinformation and misinformation is undermining confidence in elections and democratic governance. In some corners of our hemisphere, security and defense forces are deployed not to help citizens exercise their rights or rebound from extreme weather events but instead to attack, silence and repress them.

One lesson we can take away from the last 26 years is just how fragile the democratic order we have built truly is. And what helps us withstand, persist and suc-

ceed as a community of democracies are institutions that persist despite shifting political winds or changes in national leadership — be they ministries of defense and security, legislatures and judiciaries, newspapers and nongovernmental organizations, or the Perry Center.

Given emergent, and in some cases resurgent, security challenges in the Americas, the need for the Perry Center and its vast alumni network is unmistakable. We must build on the momentum we have created together. With support from our interagency and regional partners, the Perry Center will remain a trusted space for intellectual openness and exchange. Together we will analyze complex challenges, develop strategic mindsets and devise whole-of-hemisphere approaches to regional security. We will double down on our efforts to empower a network of individuals and institutions committed to making the Americas safer, stronger and more resilient. And together we will be better positioned to confront and counter the threats we face. ▣

ABOUT THE WILLIAM J. PERRY CENTER

The Perry Center supports the community of security and defense professionals in the Americas to pursue collaborative approaches to mutual opportunities and challenges. Through academics, research, and outreach — including ministerial-level consulting — we advance sustainable institutional capacity, strengthen the rule of law and democracy, and promote greater understanding of U.S. policy throughout the Western Hemisphere. Located at National Defense University, the Perry Center is a U.S. Department of Defense regional center for strategic studies. The center grants full scholarships to individuals selected to attend resident courses. For course schedule and registration information, please visit wjpcenter.org.



WHINSEC

PAVES WAY FOR SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

ADELA GARCIA DUNCAN/WHINSEC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) has emerged as a premier security cooperation tool that delivers information-sharing techniques, joint training exercises and intelligence cooperation to counter a multitude of shared challenges. A U.S. Department of Defense institute with the Secretary of the Army designated as the executive agent, the institute helps identify and promptly address emerging security threats.

WHINSEC, based in Fort Moore, Georgia, facilitates capacity building and professional development for security forces in the Western Hemisphere. Through a combination of classroom and field training exercises, countries enhance their border security; counterterrorism; drug and human trafficking interdiction; and maritime security capabilities. By educating and training the capacity of rising leaders, WHINSEC contributes to the overall security and stability of the region.

WHINSEC also supports efforts to combat transnational organized crime. The WHINSEC curriculum provides best practices with intelligence sharing and joint operations to disrupt criminal networks involved in drug and human trafficking; arms smuggling; and money laundering. Targeting these illicit activities helps partner forces prevent the destabilization of countries and protects the well-being of citizens.

Furthermore, it promotes democratic values and good governance. By encouraging cooperation among countries, WHINSEC reinforces shared democratic principles and respect for human rights. It supports initiatives to strengthen the rule of law, promote judicial reforms, combat corruption and improve governance structures. Every class at WHINSEC adds a mandatory minimum of 10



WHINSEC has become an integral part of security collaboration to counter threats such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling and money laundering. MILTON MARIANI RODRIGUEZ/WHINSEC



Students in the Command and General Officer Course work as a team during exercises on military decision-making.

MILTON MARIANI RODRIGUEZ/WHINSEC

hours' instruction on the value of human rights, the rule of law, due process, civilian control of the military and the military's role in a democratic society. These efforts contribute to creating stable and democratic societies in the Western Hemisphere, and that correlates with the WHINSEC mission statement to train, educate and develop ethical leaders to strengthen democratic partnerships.


The institute enables countries to work together to address security challenges collectively. Educating, training and promoting mutual understanding, transparency, enhanced coordination and cooperation builds trust and lifelong relationships among participating countries. The goal is to foster democratic values, respect for human rights, and appreciation for both the United States and participating partner nations' customs and traditions.

WHINSEC contributes readiness to the region's safety and stability for U.S. Northern Command and Southern Command, aligning with their line of effort goals.

WHINSEC, a leading academic institute for peace and security in the Western Hemisphere, has hosted USNORTHCOM's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) symposium for the past seven years. Initially, the symposium had a limited audience of students who were command and general staff officers. However, it has expanded to include the entire student body at WHINSEC and global remote students. The symposium covers various topics, such as gender inclusion in military operations, the role of men in promoting gender inclusion, mentorship and

sponsorship. Since the percentage of men in leadership positions is higher than women, WHINSEC emphasizes their crucial role in advancing WPS initiatives.

WHINSEC aims to promote collaboration and coordination among countries to address common security challenges. The future leaders trained at WHINSEC foster a shared understanding of security challenges and enhance regional cooperation to prevent and respond to security incidents effectively.

To ensure mutual comprehension at WHINSEC, it is crucial to understand that Spanish is the predominant language spoken in most countries in the Western Hemisphere. As a result, all courses at WHINSEC are taught in Spanish. For instance, the Command and General Staff Officer Course provided at Fort Leavenworth and the Captain Career Course at Fort Moore have identical curricula but are exclusively taught in Spanish at WHINSEC. 

ABOUT WHINSEC

The Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Moore, Georgia, provides professional military education and training to eligible U.S. and partner nation personnel. Since 2001, WHINSEC has championed human rights and democracy by developing a new generation of ethical leaders to confront the uncertain and complex security challenges of the Western Hemisphere. Its education and training promote innovative critical thinking built on a fundamental respect for human rights. It encompasses education at all levels, from tactical training to advanced theory on applying military doctrine in nationally and regionally accredited graduate-level master's degree programs. For course schedules and registration information, visit https://armyuniversity.edu/whinsec/en/course_catalog.

TRUSTED PARTNERS



— NEIGHBORS BY CIRCUMSTANCE, — **PARTNERS BY CHOICE**

Mexico, U.S. work on bilateral solutions to mutual security threats

DR. INIGO GUEVARA MOYANO/JANES STRATEGIC SERVICES

Mexico and the United States share much more than a 3,219-kilometer border and a complex history. Both nations share mutual problems and threats, but more importantly, they now share a common will on how to implement bilateral solutions.

While the militaries of both nations have traditionally had significantly different roles and missions, both aim to contribute to a more secure North America. The U.S. military has been primarily a globally focused, multipurpose, conventional/nuclear force. Mexico's Armed Forces have traditionally focused on a variety of nation-building and humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) missions.

The last time the two militaries fought side by side was during WWII, when the Mexican Expeditionary Air Force embedded with the 58th Fighter Group of the U.S. Army Air Forces to fight the Axis powers in the Pacific. While Mexico's conventional contribution arrived in the latter part of the war, the Mexican state had taken up a series of structural and constitutional reforms to support the Allied war effort.

During the past 20 years, as the U.S. military transformed to support the global war on terror, Mexico's Armed Forces adapted to take on a somewhat similar enhanced, countertransnational organized crime role. During this time, the militaries grew closer than they had in the previous 70 years.



A Mexican Blackhawk helicopter flies over a military parade for the 198th anniversary of Mexico's independence at Zocalo Square in Mexico City on September 16, 2008. The Blackhawk is among several U.S.-supplied aircraft procured by the Mexican Armed Forces. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Fifteen years ago, as the Merida Initiative began to take form, the Mexican and U.S. militaries scrambled to identify shared requirements and channels of communication that could enhance their understanding of each other. Enacted in December 2008, the initiative — a security cooperation agreement among Mexico, the countries of Central America and the U.S. to combat drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and money laundering — formed the basic framework for this enhanced cooperation. But soon after, both militaries found new points of connection.

As the global security context shifts following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Mexico and the U.S. are better coordinated to face external threats from encroaching competitors.



Soldiers from Mexico and the United States transport a simulated casualty from a U.S. Army HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter during exercise Fuerzas Amigas 2022 at Campo Militar Reynosa, Mexico, on October 18, 2022. 1ST CLASS PETTY OFFICER MICHAEL H. LEHMAN/U.S. NAVY



While the pre-Merida relationship existed, it was mostly limited to HADR and border issues, with the latter dominated by counternarcotics. The relationship that has evolved during the Merida time frame is cemented on mutual trust, close communication and information sharing, from the strategic to the operational and tactical levels.

Mexican naval and military foreign liaison officers (FLO) have been posted to U.S. Northern Command since 2006 and 2008, respectively, and this paved the way for similar FLOs at a myriad of U.S. and U.S.-based agencies in what has been an unprecedented endeavor for Mexico's previously inward-looking Armed Forces. Furthermore, Mexico-U.S. bilateral training exercises have led to airborne jumps and amphibious assault scenarios.

To harmonize these training exercises, processes and operations, Mexico's Armed Forces have favored U.S.-supplied equipment over traditional European materials. U.S.-built Northrop Grumman AN/TPS-78 ground-based 3D radars form the backbone of the National Defense Secretariat's (SEDENA) Aerospace Surveillance Integrated System, which is now being absorbed and expanded into a broader national aerospace surveillance system. The Mexican Army and Marines acquired several thousand High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV), while both the Mexican Air Force and Naval Aviation procured the Beechcraft T-6C Texan II and UH-60M Black Hawk as their standard tactical trainer and medium helicopter respectively, procuring over 70 of the former and 35 of the latter.

The Mexican Navy Secretariat (SEMAR) selected a European design for its next-generation frigate, known

A Mexican *Infantería de Marina* AS-565 Panther helicopter lands to disembark U.S. Marines during insertion and extraction training as part of Exercise Phoenix/Aztec Alligator 2023 on Santa Margarita Island, Mexico, July 15, 2023. CPL. WILLOW MARSHALL/U.S. MARINE CORPS

as the Long-Range Ocean Patrol program. The ship is armed with Boeing RGM-84L Harpoon Block II surface-to-surface missile launchers, Raytheon RIM-116 RAM Block II surface-to-air missiles and MK 54 Mod 0 torpedoes. It was selected in close cooperation with the United States. SEMAR also has aligned coastal and exclusive economic zone patrol craft and aircraft with those used by the U.S. Coast Guard and Border Patrol. It also added to its inventories the SAFE Boats Defender, Textron Motor Lifeboat, Damen Stan Patrol 4207 fast response cutter, Beechcraft King Air 350ER (MC-12), Airbus CN-235MPA Persuader (HC-144) and Airbus Helicopter AS565MBe Panther (MH-65).

As the global security context shifts following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Mexico and the U.S. are better coordinated to face external threats from encroaching competitors. While its security posture remains purely defensive, since September 2022, the Mexican Army and Air Force reintegrated phases 4th (Combined Arms) and 5th (Joint Operations) to their annual training curriculum at the Santa Gertrudis National Training Center, according to SEDENA documentation. These phases had been suspended since November 2006 as the Mexican military drifted away from large unit conventional operations.

This latest development foresees that the military mindset is aligned with that of the threats and common defense requirements facing North America. ▣



TRAINING U.N. PEACEKEEPERS

Mexican Joint Training Center for Peacekeeping Operations

SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

Mexico for decades has voiced its commitment to multilateral institutions that work to ensure international security and peace. Mexican military personnel participated in some of the first United Nations peacekeeping operations by contributing four military observers to the Balkans from 1947-1950 and six officers to operations in Kashmir in 1949.

Although internal politics made Mexico reluctant to participate in foreign conflicts after that, the U.N. announced on September 24, 2014, that Mexico would officially resume its contributions to U.N. peacekeeping operations. Mexico received support from other countries and offers of cooperation and training from countries with extensive experience in peacekeeping.

The objective of the first deployments in 2015 was to train and develop Mexican military personnel in peacekeeping protocols and methods of operation. Members of the Mexican Army and Air Force were sent to take courses at peacekeeping training centers in partner and friendly nations such as Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Finland, Germany, Guatemala, Paraguay, Spain, Uruguay and others. In 2016, deployment rotations took place and preparations began to establish the Mexican Joint Training Center for Peacekeeping Operations (CECOPAM).



Mexican military personnel participate in courses at the Mexican Joint Training Center for Peacekeeping Operations.

DIÁLOGO AMÉRICAS

CECOPAM began its activities at the National Defense Joint Headquarters Staff, 5th Section, on January 16, 2018. It later moved to temporary installations at San Miguel de los Jagüeyes Military Camp, while construction of its installations began. Those facilities were inaugurated on January 8, 2020, by the president of the United Mexican States and commander in chief of the Mexican Armed Forces, along with the United Nations undersecretary-general for peace operations.



The United Nations announced in 2014 that Mexico would resume its participation in U.N. peacekeeping operations.
SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

The center has an administrative building, academic building, lecture hall, lodging (national and foreign), officers' club, dining hall, gymnasium, sports fields, medical service, and a shooting range simulator. Its mission is to provide the Mexican Armed Forces pre-deployment training for individuals, units, or contingent organizations, as well as members of different Mexican agencies, and foreign military and civilian personnel.

Its vision is to be a model peace operations training center in Latin America. It provides United Nations courses for military staff officers, police officers and military observers. It also provides U.N. courses in the protection of civilians, pre-deployment basics, civil-military coordination, and French language with a focus on peacekeeping operations terminology.

A total of 1,638 women and men (nationals and foreigners) have been trained at the center, which has certifications in U.N. courses for staff headquarters officers and military observers. It is awaiting certification on courses dealing with the protection of civilians and French language with a focus on peacekeeping terminology.

In 2024, 13 in-resident courses are scheduled; Mexico will participate in the annual assemblies of Latin American Association of Peacekeeping Operations Training Centers and the International

Association of Peacekeeping Training Centers to be held in Brazil and Kenya, respectively. CECOPAM has been a full member of these organizations since its creation; these activities represent an opportunity to promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge in training peacekeepers.

In coordination with other government agencies, U.N. agencies and organizations related to peacekeeping operations, CECOPAM will continue to position itself as a regional and international source for pre-deployment training, optimizing human resources, materials and infrastructure necessary for peacekeeping missions.

Meanwhile, Mexican peacekeepers have garnered praise from the U.N. for their extraordinary efforts. In March 2023, the U.N. issued a news release lauding Mexico for its peacekeeping efforts in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. "Mexico's contributions to U.N. peacekeeping over the years testifies to its strong commitment to preserving peace and building a better world," said Jean-Pierre Lacroix, U.N. undersecretary-general

for peace operations. "I look forward to continuing to strengthen our partnership in the years ahead. We are grateful to peacekeepers from Mexico, who serve with distinction and courage often in complex environments, and I thank them for their service and sacrifice." ▣

"Mexico's contributions to U.N. peacekeeping over the years testifies to its strong commitment to preserving peace and building a better world."

~ Jean-Pierre Lacroix,
U.N. undersecretary-general
for peace operations.



TRUSTED PARTNERS

EYES IN THE SKY

The National Center for Airspace Protection and Surveillance

MEXICAN SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

PHOTOS BY SGT. MATTHEW TEUTSCH/U.S. MARINE CORPS

Drug trafficking is a global problem that affects all societies, including Mexico, where the geography includes large mountainous terrain and remote areas. That combination makes the airspace one of the most frequently used routes by organized crime to transport illegal substances.

Airspace offers logistical advantages for drug traffickers, resulting in more direct and virtually obstacle-free routes that let criminals avoid road checkpoints and seaport inspections. In response to this challenge, Mexico's Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) implemented a series of measures designed to protect the sovereignty of the nation and contribute to the fight against drug trafficking.

First was the integration of an Air Operations Coordination Center, which was commissioned on February 16, 1992. It included an operations room to monitor illicit

flights. The coordination center on August 1, 1996, became an Air Interdiction Subsection to receive and disseminate information on illicit air trafficking.

At that time, aerial surveillance was conducted through information obtained from visual reconnaissance flights by Mexican Air Force aircraft and was enhanced by data provided by military radar. The military did not have the human resources, computer and communications infrastructure necessary for a coordinated effort with surface forces.

The Integrated Air Surveillance System (SIVA) was created in December 2004 with a Command, Control, Computer, Communications, and Intelligence Center (C41) to optimize the results of the General Strategy for Drug Control. SIVA increased its capabilities in 2018 by upgrading its Command Center to a C4ISR (Command, Control, Computers, Communications,



A U.S. Marine watches a Mexican Hawker Beechcraft T-6C Texan II aircraft practice interdiction operations during Tradewinds 2022 at Chetumal Bay, Mexico.



A Mexican Sikorsky UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter scans a lagoon for enemy vessels during exercise Tradewinds 2022 in Belize. The Mexican military uses Black Hawks in its efforts to interdict drug traffickers.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Center) level, with ground detection assets deployed in the southeast area of the country, airborne (surveillance platforms), unmanned aerial systems, and other support aircraft fulfilling their aerial surveillance missions.

The systems let authorities support and use real-time information on unauthorized aircraft movements flying over the Mexican territory. To prevent transnational criminal organizations from violating the national airspace sovereignty, SEDENA lobbied for the Mexican Airspace Protection Law to form a legal framework to inhibit this crime. The law was approved by the Mexican Congress and went into effect on March 2, 2023.

Mexico's government said the new law was necessary, noting that in 2019, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency reported 118 tons of cocaine entered the U.S. by air. This legislative act led SIVA to become the National Center for Airspace Protection and Surveillance (CENAVI), a significant leap forward in the surveillance and protection strategy for Mexican airspace. This change focuses on implementing an interinstitutional strategy with human, material and technological resources from the Secretariat of National Defense; Secretariat of the Navy;

Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection; Secretariat of Infrastructure, Communications, and Transportation; and Secretariat of the Interior, by designating CENAVI as the coordinating body of the efforts of each agency for the surveillance and protection of Mexican airspace.

The objectives of the interinstitutional strategy are to strengthen the state's capabilities to carry out airspace surveillance over national territory; track and detect illicit aircraft and vessels; increase coordination and cooperation with other countries in the fight against drug trafficking; levy administrative sanctions; and apply penalties on those who allow illicit activities.

This change shows a continuous commitment and an adaptive response by Mexican authorities to address the complexities inherent in drug trafficking and other illicit activities in the country's airspace, and the combination of advanced technology and highly skilled personnel has generated positive results in the interception of organized crime aircraft.

Through its technological equipment, CENAVI can carry out national airspace surveillance, contributing to the protection of national security and guarantee internal security to achieve peace and prosperity for the nation. ▣



CELEBRATING TRADITION

**Heroic Military
Academy Marks
Bicentennial**

MEXICAN SECRETARIAT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

PHOTOS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO

Mexico's Heroic Military Academy is an educational institution founded in October 1823 by Gen. José Joaquín de Herrera, minister of war and Navy, who by decree ordered the creation of an Army officer training facility. Now 200 years later, this historic institution has maintained its purpose of educating and preparing cadets to effectively fulfill their missions.

The origins of the institution were derived from Spain and other European countries, where the term "cadet academy" was used. Its purpose was to gather students who had the qualifications to learn and provide meaning and direction to the Armed Forces.

The academy moved four times in its first two decades before finding its permanent home at Chapultepec Castle, Mexico City. When founded on October 11, 1823, it was at the San Carlos Fortress in Perote, Veracruz, and was considered the first military education headquarters. In 1829, it moved to the former Convent of the Bethlemitas,

and in 1837, it relocated to the Convent of the Recogidas. By October 1842, it was moved to Chapultepec.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the supreme commander of the armed forces and the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA), returned to the academy's original location in October 2023 to celebrate its storied history at San Carlos Fortress. "Veracruz is one of those few places that preserves buildings from all times and tells stories through struggles of resistance: independence, liberalism, revolution and transformation," said Gov. Cuitláhuac García Jiménez, according to a report in The Yucatan Times newspaper. The interventions during Mexico's early history, the governor said, shaped the character of the institution but never broke the spirit of Mexicans.

Over many decades, the curriculum of the academy became more advanced. Under the guidance of Brig. Diego García Conde, engineering was added in 1823, and in 1827

The origins of the institution were derived from Spain and other European countries, where the term "cadet academy" was used. Its purpose was to gather students who had the qualifications to learn and provide meaning and direction to the Armed Forces.



For 200 years, the Heroic Military Academy of Mexico has given young military leaders the tools to accomplish their missions.



Honor guards and spectacular aerial displays marked the bicentennial celebration of Mexico's Heroic Military Academy. For 200 years, the academy has trained the Armed Forces to be respectful of civil authorities while maintaining the independence and sovereignty of the country.





The Heroic Military Academy is considered the institution with the most tradition and is deeply rooted in society. It houses generations of men and women leaders who have served and offer their lives for their nation, displaying loyalty and successfully fulfilling its slogan “For Mexico’s Honor.”

the technical artillery specialty was incorporated, marking the beginning of specialized training for officers. The instruction was more technical and more advanced than those taught in Mexico at the time.

During the presidential administration of Gen. Porfirio Díaz from 1884-1911, education was a catalyst for social change; therefore, courses such as English, personal defense, small arms training, attack and defense of forts, drawing as a planning tool, and report writing were included in the curriculum.

After the Mexican Revolution, academic activities resumed and a modern study program was established to increase professionalism in the military. In modern times, the academy’s level of instruction has progressed from an associate degree to a bachelor’s degree in military administration and military sciences, giving graduates the necessary tools for decision-making in leadership positions.

Starting in 2007, equality in education was promoted, provided and applied without gender distinction. As a result, the first women entered the military and now have

access to equal opportunities in infantry, cavalry, artillery, combat engineering, armor and military policing. Bachelor’s degrees in military administration and public security are complemented with ethics and the theory of values training.

To improve safety conditions in Mexican society and guarantee justice and peace, the academy opened its doors to build National Guard leaders with specialized technical skills. Currently, the Heroic Military Academy is considered the institution with the most tradition and is deeply rooted in society. It houses generations of men and women leaders who have served and offer their lives for their nation, displaying loyalty and successfully fulfilling its slogan “For Mexico’s Honor.”

Secretary of National Defense Gen. Luis Crescencio Sandoval González spoke at the Veracruz ceremony about the academy’s commitment to training young people to serve their country. “To talk about the college,” he said, “is to talk about the dream of many young people, turned into reality through their training with a common goal: to give everything for the honor of Mexico.” ▣



TRUSTED PARTNERS

DEFENDERS OF THE 'THIRD BORDER'

COMMODORE RAYMOND E. KING/ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE

The Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF), the sole military institution in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, is tasked with the defense, security and protection of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The RBDF maintains law and order in conjunction with law enforcement agencies and is responsible for border protection against transnational criminal threats, the provision of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and search and rescue operations. Armed with a force of 1,800 members, an airwing branch, and a fleet of ocean, coastal and inshore patrol vessels, the RBDF is proficient in the air, land and sea domains.

The security environment in the Bahamas is volatile, uncertain, complex and dynamic. Because the country straddles the crossroads of the Americas, it regularly confronts complex geopolitical and security issues. Moreover, its vast expanse of islands and cays makes it a potential target for transnational criminal activities, including illegal migration; small arms, light weapons and ammunition smuggling; illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing; and illicit drug trafficking.

These nefarious activities threaten the region's stability and prosperity and pose significant challenges to global security. Due to the uptick in threats, the RBDF continues to develop and implement robust counterstrategies and proactive measures to address these security challenges and improve its maritime and aerial domain awareness.



A group of 145 Haitian immigrants was intercepted in August 2023 during a joint engagement by Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, and officials from the Turks and Caicos Islands.

ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE

The Bahamas is important to U.S. homeland defense due to its strategic objectives such as counterterrorism and counterinsurgencies, cybersecurity and routine border security. Recognized as a critical "third border" buffering the United States along with Canada and Mexico, its security directly affects the U.S. To address these concerns, the RBDF established primary and secondary communications centers that disseminate intelligence to national and regional authorities concerning maritime activities in Bahamian waters.



The RBDF is making noteworthy strides in elevating its maritime domain awareness (MDA) through its robust Maritime Security Strategy, fortified by a meticulous operational approach underscored with an emphasis on intelligence-driven, decentralized and joint maritime interdiction operations. The implementation of the operational architecture has been impressive, notably in the areas of command, control, communications, computers, cybersecurity, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and, finally, the Skylight program to collect, process and disseminate maritime domain awareness information. Pioneering the use of coastal radars provided by U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), the force has expanded its horizon of surveillance. Drone operations and aerial ISR patrols amplify their reach, ensuring persistent and overlapping watch over Bahamian waters. This comprehensive system, integrated with satellite-based communication systems, lets the RBDF maintain a vigilant and modern maritime security apparatus. The RBDF's maritime domain awareness initiatives and

increasing use of satellite-based communications systems are a significant step forward in the force's efforts to protect the Bahamas from maritime threats.

Security cooperation and regional partnerships are also essential for the Bahamas to protect its security. RBDF collaborates with local and regional entities, leveraging the advantages of mutual compatibility and cooperation. The Bahamas has several existing security arrangements and memoranda of understanding with other countries and organizations. These include the Caribbean Community Market Access System, the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre, the Regional Security System, the Joint Regional Communications Centre, Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Bahamas-U.S. Mutual Defense Agreement, the U.S.-Caribbean 3P Initiative (Partnership, Prosperity, and Peace), Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment and Police Force, Guyana Defence Force's shiprider programs, and Bahamas-U.K. Defense Cooperation Agreement.



The Royal Bahamas Defence Force has 1,800 service members in units that include ocean, coastal and inshore patrol vessels and an airwing branch. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



During Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos in 2023 the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, the U.S. Coast Guard and officials from the Turks and Caicos Islands intercepted a group of Haitian immigrants. ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE

These arrangements provide a framework for cooperation on security issues, including maritime security, drug trafficking and terrorism. The Bahamas also participates in intelligence- and information-sharing networks, such as the Caribbean Counter-Terrorism Cooperation Network, Regional Information Management System, Caribbean Law Enforcement and Security Cooperation Network, National Counterterrorism Center, and the United Kingdom National Counter Terrorism Security Office. By fostering these ties, the RBDF elevates its security capabilities and contributes to a cohesive, collective defense strategy for the entire region.

The RBDF's maritime domain awareness initiatives and increasing use of satellite-based communications systems are a significant step forward in the force's efforts to protect the Bahamas from maritime threats.

The Bilateral Security Cooperation Framework between USNORTHCOM and the RBDF exemplifies a robust partnership fostering regional stability and both nations' defense. This strategic alignment strengthens the RBDF's capability and capacity with a focus on discrete lines of efforts, namely maritime domain awareness to enhance the organization's intelligence, communications and

cybersecurity capabilities; maritime domain control to strengthen the entity's all-weather terrain detection capabilities, decentralized operations and search and rescue capability; and institutional capacity building to ensure a capability-based force structure with professional members to maximize operational efficiencies and mission effectiveness.

Moreover, the relations between the RBDF and entities like USNORTHCOM, U.S. Southern Command, Special Operations Command North, Rhode Island National Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard deepen this commitment, collectively enhancing regional security and cooperation against threats in the maritime and aerial domains.

The RBDF has demonstrated its commitment to enhance its maritime domain awareness and countering transnational criminal networks. The RBDF is undertaking several initiatives to achieve this goal, including the Sandy Bottom Project, which targets harbor dredging and the development of docks and quay walls across the Bahamas, enhancing its bases, and operation of its fleet and aircraft. Alongside upgrading existing vessels, the RBDF is procuring new patrol boats and aircraft to fortify the security of Bahamian waters. The project also underlines a strategic decentralization of air, land and sea operations to ensure prompt threat responses.

Similarly, significant investments in drones and unmanned vehicles and establishing a drone academy have boosted maritime surveillance capabilities. Collaborative endeavors, like the three-year service agreement with Damen Shipyards, will train personnel in vessel maintenance, establish a system for maintenance management, offer technical guidance, and create a logistics framework that aids in inventory management, further solidifying the Bahamas' resolve in these arenas.

Security cooperation partnerships are essential for the safety and security of the Bahamas and the United States. By working together, the two countries can leverage their strengths and resources as force multipliers in mutually beneficial ways to address common security threats. Such security partnerships afford several benefits, including increased maritime domain awareness,

enhanced capacity building, enhanced cooperation on intelligence sharing and disaster relief.

The Bahamas and the U.S. have a long history of security cooperation. By continuing to work together, the two countries can build on this foundation to enhance their security and ensure the defense, security, peace and safety that both countries envision. ■



SAFEGUARDING BERMUDA

The Royal Bermuda Regiment

LT. COL. BENJAMIN L. BEASLEY/COMMANDER, BERMUDA REGIMENT

At 54 square kilometers, Bermuda inhabits an isolated yet geostrategic location 1,022 kilometers off the North Carolina coast. It played an outsized role for the United Kingdom during the 18th and 19th centuries as a staging point on the way to the U.K.'s New World colonies, and for the United States, from World War II until the 1990s as a base for Cold War anti-submarine operations.

Bermuda has been self-governed since 1620 and has the functions of a state with defense retained by the U.K. government, exercised by the governor, who is also the commander in chief.

Britain's responsibility for local defense is executed in the first instance by the 360-strong Royal Bermuda Regiment (RBR), primarily a reserve force that is part of the British Army's Order of Battle but is locally raised and funded. The RBR's mission is to provide military resources to protect Bermuda's interests. It is principally focused on three areas: maritime security, force protection and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. It also has a limited but frequently used expeditionary capability.

RBR COAST GUARD FORMATION

In 2021, legislation created the RBR Coast Guard, assigning the unit responsibility for the safety

and security of Bermuda's inshore waters. The legislation combined the RBR's Boat Troop and the Bermuda Police Service Marine Section.

The RBR Coast Guard provides a 24-hour search and rescue capability covering Bermuda's 22 square-kilometer territorial waters. It serves as an operational platform for other agencies and holds responsibility for operational diving.

The RBR Coast Guard is a unique amalgamation of best practices from long-standing relationships with the Royal Navy, His Majesty's Coast Guard, U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Marine Corps, molded by local experience.

U.K. PARTNERSHIP

Bermuda's deep military history, and the RBR's extensive relationships with His Majesty's Forces, set up the Coast Guard for significant initial success. Training engagements with the British Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ships as they transit Bermuda on the way to the Caribbean for counternarcotics and contingent humanitarian assistance and disaster response operations have allowed for exchange and joint working. These include boarding and winch exercises with both RFA Argus (2020) and RFA Tideforce (2022).



Intelligence sharing with the U.K. Maritime Management Organisation is increasing situational awareness of Bermuda's 321-kilometer exclusive economic zone (EEZ) using data from satellites and shipboard automatic identification systems to predict future locations of boats. This effort is supported by the Bermuda government, Government House, the U.S. Coast Guard 5th District, which has an area of responsibility overlaying Bermuda, and coordination with the Caribbean Community Implementation Agency for Crime and Security, all sharing intelligence on illegal fishing between Bermuda and the Caribbean to the south.

The RBR Coast Guard is regularly visited by the U.K.'s Ministry of Defence and maritime organizations, which conduct audits and evaluations.

U.S. PARTNERSHIP

As a result of a relationship between the RBR and U.S. Marine Corps forces stationed in Bermuda, the RBR has conducted its annual camp at the Marines' Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, since the 1970s, allowing access to real estate and facilities unavailable in Bermuda. For the RBR Coast Guard, this has meant routinely attending the U.S. Coast Guard's Special Missions Training Center in Courthouse Bay at Camp Lejeune, where it has undertaken tactical coxswains and port security courses since the early 1990s.

In 2022, a trilateral memorandum of understanding was signed by the governments of Bermuda, the U.K. and the U.S. to allow for increased joint work and U.S. support to Bermuda in the event of a crisis.

Later in 2022, the U.S. Coast Guard commenced operations out of Bermuda on its Sentinel-class fast response cutters, conducting a series of patrols with Bermuda fisheries, customs, police and RBR personnel that targeted illegal fishing and drug smuggling outside of Bermuda's territorial waters and extending to the fringes of Bermuda's EEZ.

The RBR Coast Guard continues to benefit from U.K. and U.S. best practices for delivering local security.

U.S. engagement has also facilitated regional interoperability with the RBR's participation in the Tradewinds exercise led by U.S. Southern Command. This has been an opportunity to gain specialist training and for the regiment to demonstrate its public order training. Engagement with U.S. Northern Command also has facilitated training that enhances the RBR's capabilities.

The RBR Coast Guard continues to benefit from U.K. and U.S. best practices for delivering local security. ▣



Coast Guard vessels return to port after an offshore exercise in April 2022.

CPL. ANDRE PLACE/ROYAL BERMUDA REGIMENT



FIGHTING ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING

The Turks
and Caicos
Islands
Regiment

LT. COL. ENNIS GRANT/TCI REGIMENT

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) occupy a vast expanse of shallow water and comprise 40 islands — eight of them populated — spanning 948 square kilometers. This British Overseas Territory has 45,000 residents and plays an increasingly important role in maintaining the rules-based order of the Caribbean region and the southeastern approaches to the U.S. homeland.

TCI's defense and security are the responsibility of the United Kingdom, but much of the power for the operations of the security forces has been shared locally.

The interdiction of drugs, weapons and people has been on a significant upward trajectory and is the primary focus of the TCI security forces. The Bahamas, Bermuda and the United States are TCI's primary allies in the fight against illegal trafficking. U.S. agencies including the FBI and the U.S. Coast Guard conduct training with TCI security forces.

The archipelago of low-lying islands is home to the third-largest barrier reef system in the world. Tourism, the export of seafood and offshore finance drive TCI's economy.

Like many of its Caribbean neighbors, TCI has significant security challenges. In recent years, illegal vessels entering the territory have increased dramatically, carrying illegal migrants, firearms

and drugs. Drugs and weapons have a direct link to internal security challenges in the TCI. Over the years, the government has funded the bolstering of the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force and the recently established Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment, a dedicated military force partly funded by the U.K. Ministry of Defence.



TCI Regiment Soldiers conduct surveillance during a training exercise in defense of the Turks and Caicos Islands. TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

The Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force is responsible for maintaining law and order, preventing and detecting crime, and arresting offenders. The Turks and Caicos Islands Customs Department and Immigration Department have merged to become the Ministry of Immigration and Border Services, bearing responsibility for border security, customs enforcement, and regulating the import and export

The Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force is responsible for maintaining law and order, preventing and detecting crime, and arresting offenders.



The Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment guards 40 islands in the Caribbean and the southeastern approaches to the U.S. homeland. TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

of goods. The ministry also oversees immigration and visa-related matters as well as border control to ensure the legality of individuals residing in or visiting the islands. The TCI Regiment, established in 2020, began operations in 2021. The regiment has responsibility for humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and border protection. Since its inception, it has provided significant support to the police and Ministry of Immigration and Border Services in border protection.

The regiment works to provide surveillance, logistics, reconnaissance and technical support to the police in securing the islands' territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Joint operations among the police, immigration and the regiment have resulted in the detention of more than 3,000 illegal migrants within the TCI territorial waters from January 2023 to October 2023 and the interdiction of controlled drugs, weapons and ammunition. Interoperability forms part of the robust and broader security support for the islands.

The Bahamas, Bermuda, the U.K. and the U.S. are significant strategic partners of TCI. One of the key aspects of this partnership is the U.K.'s

role in providing support and assistance to the TCI in matters of national security and disaster relief. The U.K., through its defense attache in Kingston, Jamaica, has trained the TCI Regiment's first six commissioned officers at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and has offered training in leadership, security and seamanship. Also, the U.K. provides more than \$200,000 in equipment and training by British Army instructors.

During the past three years, the Royal Navy has provided training for the TCI Regiment in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The Royal Navy has also conducted extensive maritime security patrols with the police and the regiment and helped with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in the TCI, the most recent being in response to Hurricane Fiona in 2022. The U.K. provided overwhelming support for the TCI's COVID-19 response through technical expertise and the delivery of thousands of vaccine doses. TCI was one of the first territories in the Caribbean region to receive COVID-19 vaccines and the first territory to reopen for business with more than 85% of the population vaccinated.



Turks and Caicos Island Regiment Soldiers clear fallen debris after Hurricane Fiona in July 2022. TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS GOVERNMENT



Hurricane Fiona struck Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos Islands in 2022, drawing personnel from the TCI Regiment for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Haitian immigrants await deportation at a community center in Salt Cay, the Turks and Caicos Islands, after they were apprehended in January 2019. People-smuggling is a major focus of the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The Turks and Caicos Islands do not have a dedicated Coast Guard, but the Royal Navy aids in maritime security and search and rescue operations, mostly in disaster situations like hurricanes, in which British naval assets are dispatched after a storm's landfall. The TCI Customs and Border Protection Agency plays a crucial role in securing the islands' borders and ports in collaboration with the U.K. Border Force.

Although the United States does not have a direct role in the TCI's defense, it engages in collaborative efforts to address common security challenges in the region. The U.S. has provided training through the FBI for members of the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force. The U.S. Coast Guard plays a significant role in enhancing maritime security in the Caribbean, including the TCI. Coast Guard units have conducted patrols, surveillance and joint operations with TCI personnel to combat illicit activi-

ties. The U.S. shares intelligence with TCI through its maritime domain awareness operations. Such operations have yielded significant successes in areas of illegal migration; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; and organized transnational criminal activity. To combat the latter, efforts are spearheaded by Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos (OPBAT), which includes U.S. government agencies such as Customs and Border Protection and the Drug Enforcement Administration. This involves a coordinated effort to detect, disrupt, monitor, deter and interdict drug trafficking operations. The Commonwealth of the Bahamas is also a significant partner in OPBAT.

The Turks and Caicos Islands in 2022 signed a shiprider agreement with the Bahamas. The agreement is aimed at suppressing human smuggling and organized transnational crime. While the agreement is still new, it netted more than 300 illegal migrants in 2023.

The partnership with the U.K. and the U.S. supports the regiment's capacity to respond effectively to security challenges. This partnership, the TCI government hopes, will be further enhanced and sustained in the future as the regiment continues to advance in its growth and productivity. It is important that the partnership continues to provide the necessary tools to be ready, prompt and efficient in securing the land, sea and people of the TCI. ▣

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