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Perimeter Defense and Regional Security Cooperation in North America: United States, Canada, and Mexico

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INTRODUCTION

*"If we lose freedom here [in America], there is no place to escape to.
This is the last stand on Earth."*

- President Ronald Reagan, October 27, 1984¹

The term “perimeter defense” has come back into vogue recently, with regard to security strategies for North America. The United States’ concern with the terrorist threat to its homeland subsequent to September 11th, 2001, is generating this discussion with its immediate neighbors of Mexico and Canada (and to some extent some Caribbean nations – the “third border”). The concept is simply that by pushing defenses out to the “perimeter” nations, United States security will be enhanced, since the United States visions itself as more vulnerable to international terrorism than Mexico or Canada.

This paper examines the concept of “perimeter defense” within the context of the security challenges the United States, Mexico, and Canada, face today. The focus will primarily be on U.S. perspectives and threat perception in a post 9/11 security environment. Questions to be addressed in the paper include: Do all these nations share the same “threat” perception? Where exactly is the “perimeter?” What security arrangements have been tried in the past? What are the prospects for the future for increased security cooperation? Sources for analysis include a review of historical precedents for security agreements in the Americas (to include an overview of the Defense Ministerial of the Americas process on cooperative security measures throughout the region); however the main focus is at the sub-regional level in North America and multilateral and bilateral security approaches between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Historical Background on Mexico, Canada, and U.S. Security Cooperation

In 1942, the United States was engaged in its largest military commitment to date – World War II – with combat operations occurring in multiple theaters of operation, from Europe, to North Africa, to the Pacific. The threat was from the Axis imperialist powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan, seeking to expand their empires and spheres of influence through military conquest. The Allies were all those nations united against the German-Italian-Japanese alliance, who took an active part in defeating, or at least opposing, the Axis advance throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and even the Americas.

What allowed the United States the security and freedom of action to commit such large military forces to two major theaters of operations, simultaneously, was the providence of history, geography, and politics that provided safe borders to its north and south and the lack of an internal threat that would have required a large home-

stationing of combat-ready forces committed to the internal defense of the nation. Due to the technology available at the time and the limited ability of an already stretched adversary to create a third operational theater in the Americas, the United States, Canada, and Mexico were spared from the conflict internally, yet all three countries contributed military forces to fight their mutual adversaries “over there.”

As early as June 1940, Mexican President Lazaro Cárdenas sent word to Washington, advising President Roosevelt that Mexico stood ready to take its position alongside other nations of Latin America, "that in the event of any act of aggression against the American continent which brought the United States into war, the U.S. could count on full military and naval cooperation from Mexico in addition to the use of Mexican territory and Mexican national bases for American forces."² It is of interest to note that Cárdenas went as far as to express a willingness to join in a military alliance with the United States. For Roosevelt, this was vindication of the success of the Good Neighbor Policy, implemented in 1932, which sought to change the fundamental nature of U.S.-Latin American relations, in general, and security relationships in particular.³

The early war years brought the United States and Mexico together in a number of ways which influenced the security of the two nations. The political costs to Mexico, however, were always an issue. As John Childs notes,

For Mexico, there were economic, political, and military dangers in too long a sustained intimate relationship with the U.S., and there was a special sensitivity to the issue of U.S. troops on Mexican soil. The Mexican-U.S. bilateral relationship was thus characterized in World War II by an extra-ordinary delicacy in which every military decision was fraught with political implications. Negotiations, joint planning, and even discussion were protracted, sensitive, and almost unnatural in contrast with the easier Brazilian-U.S. military relationship.⁴

In terms of joint military cooperation within Latin America, the wartime relations between the U.S. and Mexican militaries were second only to Brazil.⁵ The formation of the Joint Mexican-U.S. Defense Commission (JMUSDC) in 1942, the April 1941 Treaty of Reciprocal Military Transit Rights, Mexican participation in the Inter-American Defense Board, lend-lease, and a number of other bilateral agreements for radar installations and use of air fields testified to the increased contact and cooperation between the Mexican and U.S. militaries on security issues in light of a common threat.

However, sensitivities remained on just how close the security alliance could be, given Mexican nationalist sensitivities. For example, the Mexican government demanded that all U.S. military personnel serving in Mexico be under the command of Mexican officers. The Mexicans were also sensitive to the mere appearance of U.S. troops in Mexico, requiring Army Air Corps personnel utilizing Mexican air fields to wear Pan American airline uniforms. Through lend-lease, the Mexican military gained over \$50 million in military supplies, mostly small caliber weapons and ordnance. They also received training and educational assistance, both in the United States and Mexico. While Mexico would not accept a U.S. military mission, military technical experts were allowed to man radar sites and airfields, training Mexican nationals to operate much of the equipment themselves.⁶

Direct Mexican participation in the war was initially outlawed by President Avila Camacho in February 1943; however, in July 1943, Foreign Secretary Padilla and U.S. Ambassador Messersmith began discussions over the involvement of a Mexican air unit in combat operations. The subject was not brought up at the JMUSDC until September

1943 by General Cárdenas, who was now serving as Secretary of National Defense in Mexico.⁷ Although the Mexican military may have supported a more active role in the war effort much earlier, it is evident that in terms of policy-making, the military had to defer to the national government before proceeding with actual negotiations.

Cárdenas supported Mexican efforts to participate militarily in World War II in at least two significant ways. In June 1944, a combat aviation squadron traveled to the United States for training. In April 1945, *Escuadrón de Pelea 201* of the Mexican Expeditionary Air Force arrived at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, armed with twenty-five Republic P-47 Thunderbolts. Thirty-two Mexican pilots flew over 700 combat missions in the Pacific theater, suffering seven casualties.⁸ Also, based on a January 1942 agreement, 250,000 Mexican nationals living in the United States were inducted into the U.S. military. Approximately 14,000 saw combat, suffering over 1,000 casualties.⁹

The impact of World War II on the Mexican military was significant, not so much for what was accomplished, but rather for what was not. Although the doors were opened for increased dialogue between the United States and Mexico on security issues, they were not creating a funnel, channeling a large amount of resources and influence south of the border. While the rise of U.S. military power over the European powers created a significant change in influence over the Brazilian military after World War II, no such transformation occurred in Mexico. The influence of French, German, or other European militaries had always been marginal in Mexico and historical relations between Mexico and the United States dictated that U.S. influence remain checked. Mexico's refusal to accept a U.S. military mission characterized the desire of the nation's political leaders to prevent the Mexican military from becoming an independent actor in the future, tied to foreign influence. The Mexican military needed to remain subordinate to the regime and tied to the institutional goals of the Mexican Revolution, for which a strong sense of nationalism and xenophobia were important.

With regard to Canada's security relationship with the United States during World War II, the two nations already had significant military ties, having fought together in World War I and having shared security cooperation from intelligence agreements with the "five-eyes" English-speaking countries to military training and schooling exchanges.¹⁰ The United States and Canadian militaries shared similar doctrine and tactics, military equipment, and schooling, having both emerged from the British military-school model. With regard to security cooperation, sharing a common language, as well as a common lexicon and cultural heritage, made the relationship between the two nations much more "natural" than the often strained relationship between the United States and Mexico.¹¹

Prior to WWII, the United States and Canada formed a bilateral security relationship in 1940, through the Ogdensburg Declaration with the formation of the Permanent Joint Board of Defense (PJBD). Through the PJBD, U.S and Canadian senior military officials co-chair the Board, offering advice to both the Prime Minister and the President on "the defence of the northern half of the Northern Hemisphere."¹²

Following WWII, the United and Canada also entered into a number of multilateral and bilateral security relationships. The most comprehensive security agreements between the two countries began with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, further solidifying their mutual security relationship in light of the post-WWII threat of Soviet communism. Canada and the United States expanded security

cooperation in 1958 through the formation of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD), providing for the territorial defense of the Northern Hemisphere from ballistic missiles and other air-borne threats to both nations. Today, Canada and the United States are party to “over 80 treaty-level defence agreements, more than 250 memoranda of understanding between the two defence departments, and approximately 145 bilateral forums in which defence matters are discussed.”¹³

While Mexico and the United States came together following WWII to participate in the formation of the Rio Treaty of 1947 (Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance), Canada did not participate and has never been a signatory to this agreement. In fact, Canada did not join the Organization of American States (formed in 1948) until 1989, nor did it join the Inter-American Defense Board (formed in 1942) until 2002. Therefore, while there has been precedence for a number of bilateral security agreements between the United States and Mexico and the United States and Canada, there is little historical precedence for regional security cooperation between all three nations.

The Defense Ministerial Process

In December 1994, the United States hosted the First Summit of the Americas in Miami, Florida. This was the first gathering of heads of state in the hemisphere since the Punta del Este Conference in Uruguay in 1967. The goal was to take advantage of the significant political changes that had occurred throughout the hemisphere with expansion of democratic governments and transition away from authoritarian regimes. It also sought to further expand economic cooperation through the formation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by January 2005, expanding on the initial successes of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the United States, and Mexico, which had gone into effect in January 2004.

The U.S. Secretary of Defense, William Perry, suggested that what was missing in the broadening political and economic relationships between nations in the region was the “third leg” of the stool: increased security cooperation. To this end, Secretary Perry proposed a meeting of secretaries and ministers of defense from all thirty-four democratic nations in the hemisphere to continue the “Spirit of Miami” by joining in a Defense Ministerial of the Americas (DMA). Perry intended the DMA to offer a structure to discuss means to enhance security relationships that would reinforce the expanding political and economic ties that were occurring in the region. The first DMA occurred in Williamsburg, VA in June 1995. There have been six subsequent meetings (Argentina 1996, Colombia 1998, Brazil 2000, Chile 2002, Ecuador 2004, Nicaragua 2006). The next meeting is scheduled for Canada in 2008. At the first DMA, Mexico did not officially attend, citing Mexico’s long-standing policy of avoiding any appearance of participating in a formal military alliance with the United States or other nations in the region. Instead, Mexico sent Ambassador Silva Herzog and his defense attaché in an “observer” status.¹⁴

The DMA process established a biennial mechanism for routine meetings between defense ministers throughout Latin America. It also fostered discussions on topics ranging from commitments to fight environmental disasters, to fighting narco-terrorism. While specific agreements and programs were often missing, what was occurring was a cultural shift in many Latin American military institutions, recognizing that a key democratic principle being invoked by the United States was military

subordination to civilian authority. It was not enough that all nations participating in the DMA had democratically-elected heads of state. The United States was also promoting the notion that civilian control should go much further and include civilian heads of the Ministries of Defense.¹⁵ This idea was solidified by the formation of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS), under the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. The CHDS actively promoted the process of “civilianizing” Ministries of Defense by offering courses designed to develop Latin American civilian defense workers by educating them on defense planning, programming, and budgeting issues.¹⁶

The DMA process was successful in this regard in “converting” Latin American militaries to the U.S. model with one civilian minister (or secretary) of defense overseeing the individual armed services. By the time the fourth DMA occurred, all Latin American countries, except Mexico, had a minister of defense (or equivalent), and all but six were civilian.¹⁷ By the time of the fifth DMA, Mexico continued to be the lone stand-out, maintaining its separate cabinet-level military organizations, with the military officer-run secretary of defense and secretary of the navy directly falling under the president, rather than a civilian minister of defense. For this reason, Mexico’s participation in the DMA process has been limited to symbolic gestures or behind-the-scene bilateral discussions, yet no official proclamations of support for broader hemispheric security cooperation through strictly military organizations. Rather Mexico has chosen to pursue discussions on regional security cooperation through other established venues, such as the OAS Conference on Hemispheric Security or through its military advisory component of the Inter-American Defense Board.

The DMA process continues to foster a commitment to the broad goals and objectives of hemispheric security cooperation originally envisioned by Secretary of Defense William Perry in 1995. However, it has failed to establish the institutional structures of a NATO-like security organization with all nations in the region equally committed to the same concepts of “security.” Ironically, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld’s opening comments at the fifth DMA in Chile in 2002 came immediately before his departure for Prague and participation in the NATO summit. Rumsfeld noted similarities between the processes both NATO and the DMA faced: “consolidate the democratic progress of the region; set military priorities in our democratic societies; identify the new threats of the 21st century; and transform our capabilities to meet those emerging threats.”¹⁸ However, that is where similarities ended. While NATO created a formidable military alliance, credited with maintaining peace and stability in Europe throughout the Cold War, the DMA has produced no such equivalent security agreement in the Americas.

For the United States, Mexico, and Canada, security relationships throughout the previous century have remained primarily bilateral relationships, either between the United States and Mexico, or between the United States and Canada. NATO further provided a structure whereby the United States and Canada operationalized military doctrine, tactics, and equipment through a number of Standardization Agreements (STANAGs), as well through training and exercises. This relationship, forged in combat, has grown through further military cooperation in places like Bosnia, Kosovo, and most recently in Afghanistan. Canada and Mexico have only recently come together on the “perimeter” of security discussions, primarily through the formation of the NAFTA in 1994 and their growing economic interdependence with the United States. It was only through the tragic events of September 11, 2001 that these three nations would be

transformed by the new security challenges of global terrorism and realize that their futures – politically, economically, and physically – were indelibly linked by this new reality, since an attack on the economic infrastructure of the United States would have significant repercussions throughout the Northern Hemisphere.¹⁹

THE POST 9-11 SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

"To defend this nation, we have to defend as far out as possible. Therefore we need the support of Canada and Mexico to be able to defend our interests."

- General Ralph "Ed" Eberhart, USAF Former Commander, U.S. Northern Command²⁰

The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 occurred on the same day that foreign ministers from throughout Latin America were meeting in Lima, Peru to sign the Inter-American Democratic Charter. This OAS-sponsored event was precipitated by the "undemocratic" practices of former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori and his usurping constitutional procedures to maintain himself in office, as well as a recent military coup in Ecuador to overthrow a democratically-elected leader. The goals of the September meeting were therefore to gain a commitment from the nations throughout the hemisphere to support continued democratic governance and to work together to put pressure on regimes that seek to undermine these principles.²¹ On that day, the "threat" to democracy in the region was not international terrorism.

Since September 11th, the United States has reshaped its security strategy and institutional structures in order to respond to the new threat of international terrorism specifically targeted against U.S. interests at home and abroad. This fundamental shift in U.S. policy directly impacted U.S. security relations with nations around the globe, primarily with regard to what has been referred to a "preemptive" military action in Afghanistan and Iraq. While many nations echoed support for U.S. and Coalition forces' action in Afghanistan, specifically targeted against the Taliban regime and known terrorist bases in that county, they did not join in U.S. efforts against Saddam Hussein and military action in Iraq. In fact, two nations in Latin America, Mexico and Chile, both Security Council members at that time, voted against U.S.-sponsored action in the United Nations seeking an international sanction for military action. Even Canada, a staunch Cold War ally, refused to support U.S. military action in Iraq, instead, limiting its military support for the Global War on Terrorism to Coalition actions in Afghanistan.

While the Canadian and Mexican governments took public stands against the United States on Iraq, behind the scenes both countries were moving forward in accommodating the United States' new view of the threat of terrorism in the Northern Hemisphere. On the military side, both Canada and Mexico began to take on new security relationships with their U.S. counterparts, even challenging some old taboos. For example, after September 11th, the United States military stood up a new command to specifically support the Homeland Defense role of the military in support of Homeland Security.²² U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) was carved out of the existing U.S. Space Command structure, located at Peterson AFB, Colorado Springs, CO, which also housed the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). The first NORTHCOM Commander, Air Force General Ralph "Ed" Eberhart, took off his U.S. Space Command hat one day and put on his U.S. Northern Command hat that same day.

He never relinquished his NORAD hat in the process. Canada continued to provide personnel to NORAD even as the new U.S. command group stood up the NORTHCOM structure, with its focus on supporting the U.S. government's new Homeland Security organizational structure. Defense planners in the Pentagon were also considering overtures to Mexico, based on the new Unified Command Plan architecture that "placed" Mexico and Canada both under the operational area of responsibility (AOR) overview of the NORTHCOM Commander.²³ In the past, Mexico opposed any efforts by the Department of Defense to "assign" their nation to any U.S. military organization. In fact the Mexican secretary of defense (an Army general officer) traditionally preferred to work all U.S.-Mexican "army" contacts directly through the U.S. Army chief of staff, who was a uniformed officer, rather than the civilian U.S. secretary of defense. Yet, with the formation of NORTHCOM, Mexico's secretary of defense at the time, General Clemente Vega, initially indicated a willingness to open channels of communication to this new command structure and not be constrained by past relationships.²⁴

On the political side, there were also changes in Mexico with regard to that nation's view toward security and relations with the United States. Prior to September 11th, Mexico appeared to be moving in the direction of recommending that the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty of 1947) and the Inter-American Defense Board be revoked in their entirety since these structures lacked validity due to the fundamental change in the security relationships between nations in the hemisphere.²⁵ Yet, after September 11th, Mexican President Vicente Fox took the complete opposite position, citing the need for a "second Chapultepec Conference" in Mexico City in 2003, to discuss hemispheric security issues. Although he was careful not to allude to the formation of any new formal military alliances and insisted that the real "threat" to the hemisphere was still poverty, Fox was clearly falling more in line with U.S. interests and desires to expand the security relationship in the Northern Hemisphere.

Canada and the United States are making significant progress in the realignment of their security relationships. In December 2002, the Bi-national Planning Group (BPG) was stood up, after exchanging formal diplomatic notes and terms of reference through diplomatic (secretary of state and ministry of foreign affairs) channels. The BPG has an ambitious agenda, seeking to expand the current NORAD agreement to include maritime and land-based approaches to the Northern Hemisphere. Other topics to be addressed include enhanced intelligence and information sharing, inter-agency cooperation, better situational awareness, and border security. The BPG completed their preliminary recommendations in 2005 and a renewed NORAD agreement, to include a maritime component, was signed in August 2006.

On the U.S.-Mexico side of security cooperation, progress has been much slower. After Mexico's initial show of support for U.S. security concerns after September 11th, 2001, political reality set in, with a retrenchment of Mexican nationalism and public concern over Mexico's involvement in any new formal military alliances. The Mexican press ran a number of articles condemning the formation of the new U.S. Northern Command in 2002 and the "assigning" of Mexico to its AOR, arguing that Mexico would soon be "occupied" by the U.S. military. Secretary of Defense Vega also came out with public comments condemning U.S. actions, insisting that the Mexican military would not be subordinated to such a new regional security system. He was adamant that he would not work through a U.S. regional combatant commander, insisting that his

relationship with the U.S. military would still be directly with the secretary of defense (whom he considered his equivalent cabinet-level officer) or the chief of staff of the Army.²⁶

On the political side, there were additional obstacles in furthering U.S.-Mexican security cooperation. The State Department, still reeling over Mexico's failure to back the United States in the U.N. Security Council vote to authorize force in Iraq, continued to play hard-ball with the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The State Department also blocked the Department of Defense's desire to increase its Foreign Military Financing Program (FMFP) budget for Mexico to \$57 million in FY05, reducing it to a meager \$2.4 million. Although the Mexican military has traditionally shunned Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programs with the United States using FMFP credit (preferring instead to purchase any weapons systems or military equipment from Direct Commercial Sales, thus avoiding the "logistics tail" of being tied directly to the U.S. government for support) DoD still saw the symbolic significance of expanding FMFP money to Mexico as a "regional partner" in the Homeland Defense mission.²⁷ Mexico received \$11 million in FMFP funds in FY06.²⁸

Within the Department of Defense itself, there were additional impediments to an expanded U.S.-Mexico security relationship through the NORTHCOM structure. The Pentagon office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Western Hemispheric Affairs traditionally served as the conduit for U.S.-Mexico defense relationships since Mexico had been "unassigned" with regard to a Combatant Command's Area of Responsibility (AOR). Although U.S. Southern Command had made overtures to change the UCP and place Mexico under its AOR, the DASD's office balked at placing Mexico under any combatant commander.²⁹ With a change in leadership in the office, under the new DASD Stephen Johnson it appears that opposition has waned.

For U.S. Northern Command and NORAD officials seeking to accomplish their assigned mission of providing for the homeland defense of the continental United States and Canada, the prospect of expanding the "perimeter" of defense beyond the borders of these two nations, to include Mexico, continues to be problematic. Overtures continue to be made to Mexican defense officials through low-level contacts, or through established working relationships, such as Fifth U.S. Army-sponsored Border Commanders Conferences; however, the prospects of an expanded security relationship that would bring Mexico into either the current NORAD structure or the proposed expanded NORAD agreements is not likely to occur any time soon.³⁰

DEFINING THE THREAT AND THE PERIMETER

If the United States, Canada, and Mexico are to form a new security relationship in the North American Hemisphere, given the large number of impediments previously discussed, another approach may be necessary. In other words, it may be worthwhile to readdress the security concerns of each nation, in a post September 11th world, by reexamining the nature of the "threat" that each nation perceives and the context of "perimeter" with regard to the security concerns of each.

For the United States, the "threat" of global terrorism, primarily from fundamentalist Islamic groups, is very high. The U.S. State Department current lists forty-two Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO), of which twenty-nine are Islamic groups.³¹ Some of these groups (Hezbollah, Hamas, etc.) are know to operate in Latin America, but other than Hezbollah's implication in an attack on the Israeli Embassy in Argentina in 1992,

they have not actively targeted Latin American or U.S. interests in the region, to include Canada.³² Some terrorist groups, such as the Irish Republican Army, have been identified operating in Colombia with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), possibly providing demolitions training. But again, there is no evidence of any of these identified FTOs specifically targeting U.S. interests in the region.

The United States still considers illegal drugs a “threat;” however, it would be difficult to say the country continues to fight a “war” on drugs. In Latin America, primarily Colombia, U.S. policy under the Bush Administration has shifted, allowing the United States to help fund counterterrorism as well as counter-narcotics efforts of the Colombian military and the National Police. In the month of October 2004, the United States further increased the number of military and contractors authorized to operate in Colombia to 1,600 (800 each). The link between narcotics trafficking and terrorists groups such as the FARC is documented and the U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) has made a number of public service announcements reinforcing the connection between drug trafficking and terrorism. ONDCP also notes that Mexico is still the major transit zone for cocaine entering the United States, approximately 70 per cent coming over the land bridge, as opposed to air, or maritime routes.³³

For Mexico, the “threat” is not terrorism, but rather Mexico’s internal political and economic situation. Mexican President Felipe Calderon realizes that Mexico faces increased instability due to the growing power of drug cartels and political violence if economic hardship were to escalate and the “pressure value” of the U.S. border were to be closed off over U.S. fears of illegal immigration and terrorists crossing the border. If the United States were to attempt to close the border, the impact on both nations’ economies would be enormous, primarily in Mexico, which has seen its trade with the United States grow exponentially in the last ten years under NAFTA (est. of \$174 billion annually). The economic impact on Mexico would also be staggering should the United States attempt to limit the amount of foreign remittances sent to Mexico from Mexicans working in the United States (an estimated \$16 billion annually, second only to oil as Mexico’s major export-earning commodity.)³⁴ Viewed in this light, Mexico “can’t afford” another terrorist attack on the United States, particularly if it appears that the terrorists used Mexico as their route into the United States.

For Canada, the “threat” of a loss of sovereignty to the United States appears to be the greatest stumbling block to increased security cooperation. Under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, Canada refused to support the United States and the War in Iraq. Under Prime Minister Paul Martin, Canada further refused to support the American National Missile Defense plan. Conservative Party Prime Minister Stephen Harper (elected in 2006) has attempted to draw Canada closer to the United States on security cooperation and undo some of the hostility encountered during the previous administrations, such as supporting Canada’s involvement in the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP). The SPP, signed in Waco, TX in 2005, is viewed skeptically by Canadians and Americans; both believe it is a cover for ushering in a North American Union (NAU) under a shroud of secrecy.³⁵ Ironically, Canadians view involvement in the SPP as a loss of sovereignty to the United States, while American citizens view it as a loss of sovereignty to Mexico.³⁶

The three countries have witnessed an increase in security cooperation in two areas: the “threats” of natural disasters and pandemic influenza. After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in September 2005, both the Canadian and Mexican militaries sent uniformed

personnel to the United States to aid in disaster relief. For Mexico, the sight of Army convoys, traveling north across the U.S.- Mexican border signaled a new era of security relations with the United States and a new role for the Mexican military, operating outside its borders.³⁷ For Canada, it was a routine deployment, providing humanitarian assistance – this time to its southern neighbor.³⁸ In September 2007, the U.S. Northern Command hosted a conference on pandemic influenza, which brought together public health, military, and government officials from the United States, Canada, and Mexico to discuss cross-border cooperation in the event that such a pandemic should occur.³⁹ The fact is that many border towns (such as the communities of Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico) have already established linkages and have begun to plan for pandemic flu-related events.

THE ROAD AHEAD

"The values and principles we share, in particular democracy, the rule of law and respect for individual rights and freedoms, underpin our efforts in building a more prosperous and secure region.

- Joint Statement by President George W. Bush, Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and President Felipe Calderón, Montebello, Canada, August 21, 2007⁴⁰

Perimeter defense and regional security cooperation will remain a key component of the trilateral relationship between Canada, Mexico, and the United States for many years to come. Even with changes in government in each country, successors have been quick to embrace the process of dialog and cooperation, regardless of party affiliation or domestic political agendas. The stakes are too high not to do so. A catastrophic terrorist incident at the border, pandemic flu, or even a major natural disaster is not an isolated event which impacts only one nation. Each poses a series of challenges to the region as a whole and recognition that the growing interdependence between countries (which is still primarily economic) has created a security dimension of its own, whereby a threat to any one of the three countries has to be considered a threat to all three.

Yet, there remain significant hurdles to developing a broader sense of security cooperation, the most pressing being immigration. Most Americans are opposed to open borders, with over 70 percent in favor of building a fence and increasing border security.⁴¹ Nor do they want a “North American Union” or merger with Canada and Mexico, along the lines of the European Union’s emergence at the expense of national sovereignty. Cultural affinity and nationalism run deep in all three countries and any proposed security agreements which imply a loss of national identity or sovereignty will not pass muster.

The most successful security agreements have been those shaped by shared threat perceptions and the imminence of attack. The more distant the adversary, the less likely the “home team” is willing to play. Perimeter defense implies that the threat remains “out there” and there is a need to keep it from coming “in here.” Clearly, the focus on homeland security and homeland defense in the War on Terrorism conveys this point of view. However, by taking an “all-hazards” approach to homeland security and including the threats from both man-made and natural disasters in the equation, the concept of perimeter defense takes on an internal dimension as well as an external focus. In other words, the threats that Canada, Mexico, and the United States face, now and in the future, are of such significance to economic security and domestic policy considerations

that the response to disasters (whether man-made or not) must also serve to “contain” the damage and prevent a spillover effect beyond the “perimeter” of each country and into its neighbors.

Richard J. Kilroy, Jr. is currently professor of International Studies and Political Science at Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, VA. He retired from the U.S. Army in 2004, after twenty-three years of active duty service as a military intelligence and Latin American foreign area officer. He was also involved in standing up the U.S. Northern Command as the military’s response to 9/11 and supporting the homeland defense mission. Dr. Kilroy is also the editor of Threats to Homeland Security: An All Hazards Perspective, published by J. Wiley and Sons (2007). Dr. Kilroy holds a PhD and an MA in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia and a bachelor degree in Political Science from Santa Clara University, CA.

¹ U.S. Northern Command website, http://www.northcom.mil/index.cfm?fuseaction=s.who_homefront.

² Raymond Estep, *United States Military Aid to Latin America* (Maxwell AFB: Air University Press, 1996), 207.

³ Robert Holden and Eric Zolov, *Latin America and the United States: A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press), 141.

⁴ John Childs, *Unequal Alliance: The Inter-American Military System 1938-1978* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), 56.

⁵ Estep, *Aid to Latin America*, 112.

⁶ *Ibid*, 196-211.

⁷ Childs, *Unequal Alliance*, 58.

⁸ Adrian English, *Armed Forces of Latin America* (London: Jane’s, 1984), 318.

⁹ Childs, *Unequal Alliance*, 58.

¹⁰ “Five eyes” refers to the five English-speaking nations of Australia, Canada, Great Britain, the United States, and New Zealand. Intelligence-sharing agreements between these five countries allow certain classified documents to be released to the “five-eyes” parties.

¹¹ Although Canada is officially a bilingual nation with both French and English as official languages, all military units in Canada are required to conduct military operations in English, in order to facilitate Canada’s alliances with the United States and the other “Commonwealth” nations.

¹² Canadian Armed Forces, *Canada-United States Defence Relations*, BG -03.009- January 8, 2003, http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=836.

¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴ I had the opportunity to attend the first DMA in 1995, as a military escort to the Colombian delegation. While there, I had the opportunity to meet with AMB Herzog informally. At the time, I was serving in U.S. Southern Command in Panama as the Mexico country desk officer, involved with supporting U.S. security assistance programs in Mexico, administered through the U.S. Military Liaison Office in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. At the time, the office was manned by one Air Force Colonel, and Air Force Captain, and an Air Force Senior Master Sergeant. The reason this office was manned by all Air Force personnel was due to the establishment of the Peace Aztec program in the mid 1980s, when Mexico purchased ten F-5E jet aircraft from the United States.

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- ¹⁵ The procedural mechanics of this process were fostered at the first DMA by the configuration of the main meeting room, where there was one seat at the table for the chief of delegation, with two seats behind that person, and then four seats in the third row. This was problematic for nations like Brazil, which did not have a civilian Minister of Defense, but rather three Chiefs of the Armed Services, all Cabinet-level officials. If Mexico had participated, it would have faced the same dilemma since the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of the Navy are both Cabinet-level officials, and both military officers.
- ¹⁶ John T. Fishel, *The Organizational Component of Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: The Role of the Ministry of Defense*, paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association, Miami, FL 16-18 November, 2000. Copy provided by the author.
- ¹⁷ The six countries still with military Ministers of Defense in 2000 were the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela (see Fishel, *Organizational Component*).
- ¹⁸ Donald Rumsfeld, *Defense Ministerial of the Americas: Opening Remarks*, Santiago, Chile, 19 November, 2000, <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2002/s20021119-secdef.html>.
- ¹⁹ Canadian Lieutenant General Rick Findley, deputy NORAD commander used the analogy of a fire, where your house may survive while your neighbor's house is destroyed. You may survive, but you have no water or no power, etc. You can chose to wait until after the disaster and then help your neighbor recover, but it would have been better to have helped them prevent the fire in the first place, or at least assist in putting it out, since your home is also at risk. It is also interesting to note that on September 11th, 2001, Lt. Gen. Findley was the acting commanding officer in NORAD's Cheyenne Mountain Operations Center, "commanding" the aerospace defense of the United States. He commented that except for the Canadian and U.S. flags on each other's uniforms, no one could tell the difference in command and control relationships between the two countries as they worked together to defend America (comments offered at the U.S. Northern Command-sponsored 2004 Homeland Defense Symposium, Colorado Springs, Colorado, October 14, 2004.)
- ²⁰ U.S. Northern Command website, http://www.northcom.mil/index.cfm?fuseaction=s.home_neighbors.
- ²¹ Organization of American States, *Inter-American Democratic Charter* (2001), <http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/csh/english>.
- ²² The Department of Defense distinguishes between homeland defense (what the military does to protect against attacks against the United States emanating from outside the territorial boundaries) and homeland security (what all other federal government agencies do to protect the United States). In other words, military forces used for domestic homeland security-related roles and missions will be in support of lead federal agencies performing their homeland security roles. The exception is the use of the National Guard, which the state governors can activate to meet specific security-related functions deemed necessary by the governor. Recent examples have been in line with traditional Guard missions such as disaster relief and consequence management (sealing off public access to Ground Zero in New York City was one such example).
- ²³ The Unified Command Plan is the document that lays out geographic and operational boundaries for each of the Unified Commands. Prior to stand-up of NORTHCOM, both Canada and Mexico were "unassigned" to a regional Combatant Command, for political reasons. Security Assistance programs for Mexico were administered through the U.S. Southern Command, which had moved its headquarters from Panama to Miami commensurate with the turnover of the Panama Canal in 1999. Canada, as part of NATO, was essentially part of U.S. European Command's "Area of Responsibility" for all intents and purposes, with the exception of Canada's involvement in NORAD, which came under SPACECOM, which was functional, rather than geographic Combatant Command.
- ²⁴ Author's discussions with U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) officials.
- ²⁵ Juan Pablo Soriano, "El 11 de septiembre y la redefinición de la seguridad interamericana," *Observatori de la Política Exterior Europea*. Working Paper No. 24 (Institut Universitari d'Estudis Europeus, 2002).

²⁶ Author's discussions with DoD officials

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Summary and Highlights: International Affairs Function 150* (2007), <http://www.fas.org/asmp/resources/110th/Function150.pdf>.

²⁹ In 1996, General Wes Clark, Commander U.S. Southern Command, attempted to make the case for Mexico's integration into the SOUTHCOM AOR, but was rebuffed by the Secretary of Defense, at the urging of the DASD's office. The irony is that the SOUTHCOM emblem (shield) shows Mexico as part of the command's AOR still to this day.

³⁰ As one member of the Bilateral Planning Group commented, "we expect an agreement with Canada in the next year. For Mexico, it may take 10 years, if at all."

³¹ U.S. Department of State, Fact Sheet, *Foreign Terrorist Organizations* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Counterterrorism, October 11, 2005), <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/37191.htm>.

³² Hezbollah was indicted by the Argentine Supreme Court in September 1992 and an arrest warrant was issued for its leader, Imad Mughniyah by the Argentine authorities, <http://www.ict.org.il/spotlight/det.cfm?id=318>.

³³ U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy, *Source Countries and Drug Transit Zones: Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: 2004), <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/international/mexico.html>.

³⁴ Author's discussions with DoD officials.

³⁵ Laura Carlson, *Extending NAFTA's Reach* (Center for International Policy, 2007) <http://americas.irc-online.org/am/4497>.

³⁶ Security and Prosperity Partnership, "Myths and Facts" (2007), http://www.spp.gov/myths_vs_facts.asp.

³⁷ For residents of south Texas, it was a further sign on an "invasion" and Mexico's attempt to reclaim the territory it lost in the Mexican-American War in 1848.

³⁸ One Canadian naval officer commented that the Canadian navy actually began deployment even before official approval from the Canadian government. The reason he stated was that if it had been Canada that experienced such a disaster, they knew the Americans would be there to help them.

³⁹ U.S. Northern Command, "U.S. Northern Command hosts Canada, Mexico at Pandemic Influenza Conference," (September 6, 2007), <http://www.northcom.mil/News/2007/090607.html>.

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Joint Statement by Prime Minister Harper, President Bush, and President Calderon," August 21, 2007, <http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/prsrl/07/q3/91320.htm>.

⁴¹ Polling Report on Immigration, <http://www.pollingreport.com/immigration.htm>, accessed October 1, 2007.