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Research Report

STRATEGIC ESTIMATE FOR CENTRAL AMERICA

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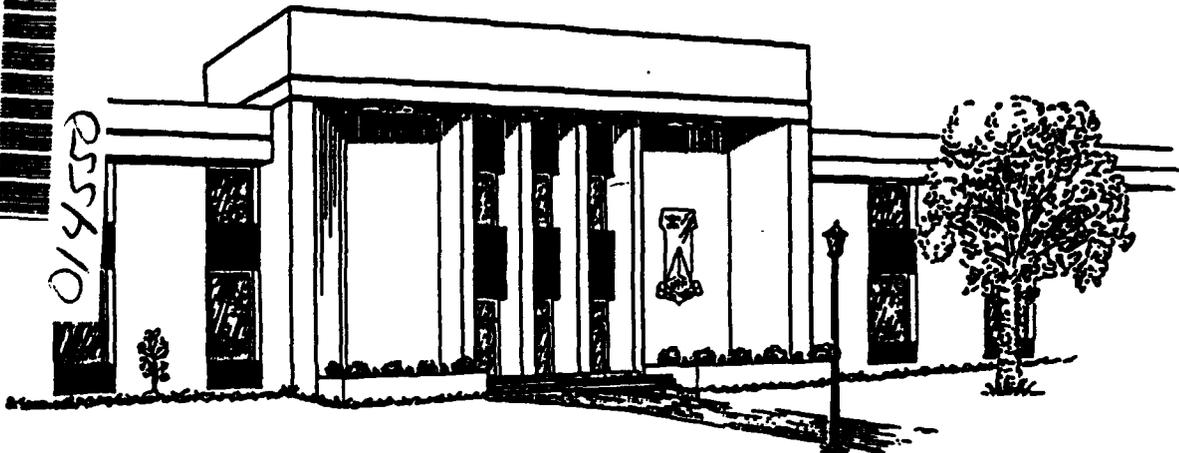
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AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC ESTIMATE FOR CENTRAL AMERICA

by

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FS-01, Department of State

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

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Professor: Dr. Steven Metz

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mr. Frost is a Foreign Service Officer who joined the Department of State in 1975 as a Consular Officer. In addition to Consular tours of duty in Liverpool, England (1975-76), Lagos, Nigeria (1976-78), Lyon, France (1978-81) and Tijuana, Mexico (1986-88), he has served as Assistant Country Officer for South Africa in the Department (1981-83), Political/Economic Officer in Maseru, Lesotho (1983-85), and Deputy Chief of Mission in Conakry, Guinea (1988-91). Following graduation from Air War College, Mr. Frost will assume the position of Principal Officer at the American Consulate in Hermosillo, Mexico.

Mr. Frost is a distinguished graduate of the Mid-Level Foreign Service Officer Course and holds B.A. (Honors and Highest Distinction) and M.A. degrees in French language and literature from the University of Kansas (1973) and Washington University, St. Louis (1975). He has also studied at the Sorbonne and the University of Bordeaux and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

1. Strategic Direction.

a. Major Components of National Security Strategy

(1) Global Components.

--Assure survival of the U.S. as a free and independent nation by protecting America's values, institutions and people.

--Promote a healthy and growing U.S. economy.

--Foster healthy, cooperative, and politically vigorous relations with allies and friendly nations.

--Work for a stable and secure world where political and economic freedoms, human rights and democratic institutions flourish.

(2) Regional Components.

--Secure the southern border and approaches of the United States against threats posed by armed conflict, international terrorism, and narcotics trafficking.

--Promote sustainable economic growth and prosperity through free market reforms, expanded trade, increased investment, reduced debt burdens, and heightened environmental protection.

--Strengthen fragile democratic regimes and institutions, promoting support for elected

civilian governments and respect for human rights.

b. Major Components of National Military Strategy

(1) Global Components.

--Downsize forces substantially to reflect sharply reduced global threat due to demise of Warsaw Pact and dissolution of Soviet Union.

--Reconfigure remaining forces to provide flexible options for rapid response to a variety of regional contingencies and crises.

--Reduce forward presence, relying increasingly on periodic visits, training missions, exercises, and access agreements to sustain U.S. interests and project power.

--Enhance base force mobility by sustained and expanded investment in airlift, sealift and prepositioning.

(2) Regional Components.

--Maintain the security of the Panama Canal and its southern approaches to the United States.

--Help host country militaries combat narcotics trafficking, guard against terrorism, and be ready to counter insurgencies against democratically elected governments.

- Reverse Cuban and other residual hostile influence and deter any outside attempts to destabilize the democratic process.
- Enhance U.S. military influence, strengthen cohesion with and among our allies, and be prepared to conduct joint operations in consonance with U.S. interests.
- Promote military professionalism, support for civilian authority, and respect for human rights.

c. Other National Sources

- The region's close proximity to the U.S. and its history of dependency and close relations with the U.S. combine to inject numerous domestic political issues and involve many governmental and private sector stakeholders normally peripheral to the foreign policy and national security process. The growing political power of U.S. Hispanics is likewise an important factor.

d. Alliance or Coalition Components

- The U.S. and the nations of the theater are all signatories of the Rio Treaty, which has a provision for common defense in the event of aggression against a member state, but it is increasingly difficult to envision a scenario which would trigger the invocation of this pact.

2. Theater Strategic Situation.

a. Characteristics of the Theater (AOR)

--The theater comprises the entire Central American isthmus. It is circumscribed on the north by Mexico's boundary with the CONUS (California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas) and on the South by Panama's border with Columbia. Topography is extremely varied, ranging from desert plains and lowland jungles to high plateaus, rugged mountains and snowcapped volcanoes. Climatic conditions are also diverse, and are generally more closely related to altitude and rainfall than to latitude. Bounded on the west by the Pacific Ocean and on the east by the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, the theater possesses excellent sea lines of communication with the CONUS and beyond, with the Panama Canal linking the two approaches. Access by land ranges from excellent to nonexistent, varying as a function of topography and population distribution. Air links are generally good but mountainous terrain is a limiting factor. Seaports, roads and airfields are generally inferior to U.S. standards both in quality and capacity. The theater's nearness to CONUS and the presence of SOUTHCOC assets in Panama help optimize time and

space relationships for deployment and sustainment of all types of forces.

--Geographical proximity combined with cultural and historical factors makes the theater important, if not crucial, to U.S. national security. Over the years, the U.S. has been more closely involved in Central America than anywhere else in the world. Principally motivated by a simple desire for a stable and secure environment for U.S. trade and investment, U.S. policy in the region has been characterized by a long tradition of heavy-handed paternalism, mutual misunderstanding, reflexive support for repressive civilian and military elites, and outright unilateral military intervention. This history complicates and impedes the accomplishment of U.S. goals and objectives in the region today.

b. Intelligence Estimate.

There are no special problems, as the theater's host nations are open societies offering good access to civilian and military officials, generally free presses, and other extensive sources of information. Embassies, USDAOs and MILGROUPS have extensive networks of contacts, maintain appropriate liaison relationships, and provide more than adequate flow of open and other source reporting and analysis.

c. Global Implications.

(1) Conditions.

The end of the Cold War has decreased the strategic importance of the region by eliminating its former role as an arena of superpower competition and confrontation.

(2) Circumstances

As the U.S. the forward presence shrinks and overall force levels decline, the theater will compete for increasingly scarce resources with others commands and regions.

(3) Influences

The countries of the theater will continue to seek to diversify their foreign relations and decrease their dependence on the U.S. through cultivation of closer political and military ties and increased trade and investment with other hemispheric partners and with the countries of Europe and the Pacific Rim.

e. Logistics Estimate.

The theater's proximity to CONUS and SOUTHCOM HQ, excellent lines of communication, and overall fair to good infrastructure by and large make the AOR easily accessible and currently pose few special logistics problems. However, if not replaced by a

forward presence elsewhere, the closure of U.S. bases in Panama could prove to be a serious LOG obstacle in a major regional contingency.

f. Command, Control, and Communications Estimate

While the theater is relatively compact and close to CONUS and SOUTHCOM HQ, C3 is an important problem requiring constant attention. This is primarily due to two factors: the fact that the AOR borders on the territory and requires extensive support and cooperation from three other unified commands (JCS, CINLANT, and CINCPAC), and the multinational character of the drug trafficking problem along with the complex interface of the many USG military and civilian agencies involved in antinarcotics efforts (DOD and all services, State, DOT and USCG, CIA, DEA, Customs, etc.)

g. Personnel Estimate

In-theater resources consist primarily of SOUTHCOM assets based in Panama, and currently include a light infantry brigade, a Special Forces battalion, half a squadron of close apr support aircraft and a Naval special boat unit of nine vessels. These personnel are supplemented by MILGROUPS in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador and TDY operations such as JTF BRAVO, and seem adequate for the current

mission. If antinarcotics efforts are to substantially increased or if a regional crisis should occur, additional forces would be required and would likely be drawn from the Atlantic, Pacific, and/or contingency force packages. The current downsizing and reconfiguration of the force structure and the ongoing U.S. withdrawal from Panama to be completed by the year 2000 will have a serious negative impact on the personnel situation, with the new contingency force package probably taking up the slack.

3. Strategic Concepts.

a. Military Dimensions

(1) Nuclear, chemical, and biological.

None of the theater's nations possesses or is working to acquire a nuclear, chemical, or biological capability, nor is there any likelihood that such forces will be introduced from outside the theater.

(2) Space.

None of the theater's nations possesses or is working to acquire a space capability. Appropriate U.S. space assets are available to support U.S. and friendly forces in the theater.

(3) Conventional.

A U.S. entry into conventional warfare in the region (except possibly Mexico) would likely involve in the first instance conventional SOUTHCOM forces on permanent station in Panama or temporarily based elsewhere in the theater, supplemented by forces coming from CINCLANT, CINCPAC, and JCS commands. Despite varying levels of U.S. military assistance, host country militaries are small, poorly equipped, and generally ill-suited for full scale conventional operations. No country or combination of countries poses a serious threat to the U.S., nor are they individually or separately capable of providing significant conventional assistance to U.S. forces.

(4) Low-intensity conflict.

Virtually the entire history of conflict in the theater, from the colonial wars of independence through numerous interventions to the just-concluded Salvadoran insurgency, falls under the rubric of LIC. The U.S. provided sustained assistance to the Salvadoran Armed Forces against the FMLN insurgency, and lent sporadic support to the "Contra" rebels fighting

against the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. With the major exception of the simmering Guatemalan situation and the ongoing drug war, the recent trend has been toward peaceful resolution of these disputes, although it is uncertain whether the Salvadoran settlement or Nicaraguan democracy will endure, much less if a peaceful solution can be found in Guatemala. Nevertheless, as long as the underlying causes of instability and conflict persist (e.g. poverty, human rights abuses and the skewed distribution of wealth and power) and the demand for drugs continues in the U.S., the theater is likely to remain an arena for LIC. We must be prepared for the whole spectrum of LIC contingencies, and can expect to participate extensively in a range of activities and operations related to narcotics interdiction.

(5) Logistic.

In the event of a major regional contingency, additional U.S basing rights and capabilities would almost certainly have to be sought and established in theater.

(6) Security assistance.

Security assistance remains a major tool for U.S. influence and achievement of U.S objectives in the region, but will remain, except for antinarcotics support, primarily political in nature. Given the collapse of the Soviet Union and the retrenchment of Cuba, the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and the peace settlement in El Salvador, all major external and internal threats to stability and U.S. interests in the theater have disappeared or receded. The primary purpose of U.S. security assistance, which will remain limited and circumscribed by budgetary and human rights factors, will therefore be not to enhance host country operational capabilities, but rather to strengthen civilian control, promote military professionalism and support for democracy, and encourage respect for human rights.

(7) Host-nation support.

Host nation support is generally good to excellent, although the negative historical baggage of U.S. interventionism, the suspicion and enmity of Sandinista and FMLN remnants in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and civilian and

military dissatisfaction due to conditionality and perceived inadequacy of U.S. assistance will be continuing impediments to optimal host nation support. Corruption will also be a serious and permanent obstacle to successful prosecution of antinarcotics efforts.

b. Diplomatic Dimensions

The primary focus of U.S. diplomacy in the region will be on solidifying and institutionalizing the new status quo established by the fall of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the peace settlement in El Salvador, while continuing to foster host nation political support for cooperative anti-drug efforts and other U.S. objectives in the theater along with healthy, cooperative relations among all the states of the region, economic reforms, and support for democratic institutions.

c. Economic Dimensions

Central America will remain prone to conflict as long as extensive material deprivation and skewed distribution of wealth remain. Levels levels of U.S. development assistance extended through programs and initiatives such as the Partnership for Democracy and Development in Central America will necessarily be limited, and U.S. efforts will be

specifically targeted at encouraging sustainable economic growth through such measures as free market reforms to increase domestic and foreign investment, export incentives, and promotion and negotiation of the NAFTA.

d. Sociopsychological Dimensions

While the ideological appeal of Communism seems to have ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire, the socioeconomic realities which made Marxism attractive to Latin Americans remain, while historical and cultural factors work against the easy establishment of democracy and the rule of law. A tradition of military rule and civilian subservience to the military are likewise adverse factors.

e. Other Dimensions

None

4. Course of Action:

The past several years have seen the definitive unraveling of a loosely but unmistakably bipolar world order in which a fundamentally hostile rival superpower possessed the willingness and the ability to project its power and influence worldwide. With end of the cold war, Central America is, unequivocally and for the first time almost 50 years, neither an actual nor a potential theater for global

conflict. Indeed, the overall likelihood of any global conflict is now so remote that the national security strategy now declares that we will not retain the forces required for such a war, relying instead on reconstitution to counter any reemergent threat.

With the global Soviet menace gone, national security strategy and its military component are naturally assuming a much more regional focus. The uncertain, ambiguous, and unconventional array of threats which do remain nevertheless require the continued ability to deter and fight a major regional war. In addition to deterring the residual Russian\CIS strategic threat, the new force structure will be tailored to achieve this objective. It will do so through a combination of forward presence and crisis response. This base force will be increasingly CONUS-based, and configured into Atlantic, Pacific, and Contingency force packages. It is primarily the latter that would be called upon to provide the crisis response to reinforce SOUTHCOM's very small forward presence should a major regional conflict erupt in the Central American theater.

That said, it is extremely unlikely that a major regional conflict will arise in the Central American theater in the foreseeable future. No nation or group of nations in the area possesses the capability, much less the intention, to launch a major conventional military operation against its

neighbors, the U.S., or other friendly nations, and none is likely to emerge. As a Soviet surrogate with extensive influence in the region, Cuba once acted as a troublesome catalyst for conflict in Central America. Now, however, the collapse of Communism in the U.S.S.R. and the withdrawal of his Soviet support have synergistically combined with major internal political, social and economic problems to force Fidel Castro to turn inward away from his overseas mischiefmaking. At least partially as a result of the changed international environment, all of the long-running conflicts of the last few decades suddenly seem to have ended or are winding down: a settlement, however tenuous, has been reached in the bloody Salvadoran civil war; Nicaragua has embarked, if somewhat tentatively, down the path of democracy, and Guatemala is evidently feeling its way toward an accommodation with an all-but-defeated insurgency.

Nevertheless, Central America remains, in many important ways, an inherently unstable and volatile region with a relatively high potential for internal conflict short of major regional war. With the veneer of Cold War rivalry and outside meddling stripped away, the deep roots of conflict in the region have been laid bare. The endemic poverty and highly skewed distribution of political and economic power within most Central American societies have long been major sources of internal and external conflict, and remain

enduring impediments to economic prosperity, truly democratic institutions, social peace, and human rights. Other intractable problems, such as alarming degrees of environmental degradation and exponential population growth, pose additional daunting obstacles to the stability and security of the region and to the "flourishing of the political and economic freedom, human rights, and democratic institutions" which we have declared to be a fundamental objective of our national security policy. While there have recently been many relatively encouraging developments in the region there nevertheless remains much to consolidate those gains: inter alia, cementing the fragile Salvadoran peace settlement, ensuring the durability of Nicaraguan democracy, and putting a definitive end to the festering Ladino-Indian conflict in Guatemala.

Notwithstanding the military weakness and relative homogeneity of the countries of Central America, there nevertheless remain important sources of bilateral friction among them. Old hatreds and jealousies such as those engendered by the bitter historical conflict between El Salvador and Honduras, lingering Sandinista resentment of Honduras' role in the "contra" war, persistent guerilla sanctuary disputes along the Guatemalan\Mexican border, and ill will accruing from Guatemala's old claim to Belize are but the most obvious of the serious tensions which simmer

beneath the surface. While a major intraregional conflict is highly unlikely, factors such those above will conspire to foster a level of disunity and discord sufficient to keep levels of cross-border cooperation in the region considerably below the optimum, to the detriment of the enhanced political, economic, and social integration from which all would benefit. The U.S. should nevertheless work unstintingly to encourage a regional approach to problem solving and support multilateral institutions and initiatives wherever possible.

With the important exception of Mexico, the strategic economic significance of the small nations of Central America is utterly marginal to an economic giant such as the U.S. From the Central American point of view, however, the economic, cultural and psychological importance of the U.S. to the governments and people of the region cannot be overstated, and the U.S. is almost universally viewed, for better or for worse, as a crucial determinant of the region's future. We have always wielded a great deal of influence in this region, and will continue to do so in the future by virtue of our very existence, regardless of the volume of our voice or the size of the stick we carry. Disengagement is simply not an option; the real question is what, if anything, we seek to achieve through the use of that influence. In any event, both sides of the love-hate legacy which history and

geography have created between the U.S. and its closest hemispheric neighbors has been and will remain a key factor in the relationship which we ignore at our peril.

In contrast to the countries of Central America, Mexico, by virtue of its size and thousand-plus mile land border with the United States, is almost by definition of critical importance to our national security. Its abundant natural resources and impressive record of political stability and economic growth fundamentally distinguish Mexico from its neighbors to the south, causing us to take the country almost for granted and obscuring the very real problems it faces. The prospect of a major upheaval in Mexico arguably represents one of the greatest direct threats to overall U.S. national security short of global war. However unlikely its unraveling may be, Mexican society clearly suffers from much the same dysfunctional and potentially destabilizing political, economic, and social legacy of Spanish colonialism, and the massive scale of its environmental and population problems is made more worrisome by their proximity and direct impact on the U.S. homeland. Having once fought a major war with Mexico and annexed a large portion of her territory deepens the already profound political, economic, and cultural chasm which separates the U.S. from its "distant neighbor" to the south, and Mexico's hypersensitivity over

issues of sovereignty and national pride will continue to constantly complicate the relationship.

Panama, the current site of SOUTHCOM HQ and the primary U.S. forward presence in the theater, is another special case. Having virtually created the country in the first place, built the Canal and run it for three quarters of a century, and most recently disarmed the country's defense force, it will be difficult for the U.S. to gracefully disengage from Panama, even though the diminishing strategic importance of the Canal argues for it and our treaty commitments require our definitive departure by the year 2000. Symbolism aside, a major U.S. military presence in Panama can no longer be justified by the strategic environment or the new national military strategy and force structure, and we can and will be gone by the end of the century: to paraphrase Ronald Reagan, "We built it, we paid for it, and we ought to give it up." The canal can be efficiently operated by the Panamanians and defended against any conceivable threat by a crisis response team from the CONUS.

In terms of tangible issues and realistic threats, the foregoing should make clear that political, economic, and social questions such as trade and investment, immigration-related problems, environmental concerns, and the production and transit of illegal narcotics combine to

constitute the crux of tangible U.S. interests and challenges in Mexico and Central America. The CINC must continue to fulfill his primary responsibility of planning and preparing for major regional war. However, it is evident that the existing threats to U.S. interests, goals, and objectives in the theater are overwhelmingly nonmilitary in nature, and that the military instrument alone will be of only limited value in dealing with them. While it is increasingly difficult to envision a conventional armed conflict or traditional insurgency in the region in which the U.S. national strategy will require large-scale major U.S. intervention, historical, cultural and geographic pressures will keep combine to keep even a neoisolationist America keenly interested in its own backyard; the drug trafficking threat alone will mandate a significant continuing major U.S. civilian and military role. Furthermore, the almost organic U.S. relationship U.S. with the peoples and countries of the region guarantees that they will inevitably look to us in times of crisis; our status, however reluctant, as sole superpower, regional giant, and hemispheric referee of last resort requires that we develop a broad strategy linking and integrating political, economic, and military resources with the objective of defusing nascent crises before they occur and managing sources of conflict to prevent escalation beyond the lower end of the spectrum.

The strategic framework which we shall use to develop an overall course of action and concept of military operations in the theater is the new rubric of "peacetime engagement." This emerging concept combines diplomacy and support for diplomacy, pre-crisis and post crisis activities, and force projection and crisis response. It emphasizes a joint, interagency, and combined operational approach to attack the root causes of conflict. An appropriate, well thought out military component is essential to the successful execution of such a strategy, although Central America is conceived as an "economy of force" theater in which the military will rarely take the lead and the overall U.S. role will most often be one of encouragement and support for host nation efforts and initiatives. In accordance with the National Military Strategy, the small and decreasing U.S. forward presence, supplemented if and when necessary by crisis response elements from the contingency force, will conduct operational training and temporary deployments, carry out security assistance programs, protect U.S. citizens in theater, combat drugs, and render appropriate humanitarian assistance. The overall strategic concept is to play an active, indirect, low-profile and low-cost but high value-added role in the region so as to obviate the necessity of more direct, noisy, costly, and possibly counterproductive interventions in the future.

5. Decision:

The recommended course of action comprises three distinct but interdependent components: political, economic, and counterdrug. Following are the the main objectives and the essential elements of the military's day to day supporting role in each:

--Support for civilian rule, representative democracy, popular institutions, increased citizen participation in government, and greater respect for human rights:

Broadly speaking, this is the "political" leg of our course of action. Flowing directly from a principal stated objective of our national security strategy, the promotion of democracy is the key to a peacetime engagement strategy for the AOR, and the military will have an important part in supporting and sustaining this effort. As in most other aspects of this strategic concept, however, the military will play a non-traditional and somewhat unfamiliar role. In this case, it will center on diplomacy, representation, and leadership by example, rather than more conventional operational activities. U.S. military representatives in theater must see themselves as the embodiment of the kind of civilian\military\citizen relationship which we wish to encourage on the part of host nations, and carefully nurture that concept in both word and deed throughout the entire range of their programs, activities and host-nation military

and civilian contacts. Given the authoritarian cultural traditions ("caudillismo") prevalent in much of Latin America and the history of political meddling by the military establishments of a number of host nations, this will be a far from easy task. Nevertheless, Costa Rica and Mexico stand as in-theater examples or even models of what can be established in the Latin context--the former has no military to speak of, while the latter has an increasingly professional and traditionally apolitical military establishment military under firm civilian control. Revamping IMET programs to emphasize the role of the military in a civilian society and extending such training to civilian national security officials are concrete steps to be taken in this process. U.S. MILGROUP and DAO members will need to broaden their circle of host country contacts and "customer" base to include appropriate key civilians; they should envision their programmatic and representational activities as a venue for the kind of host country military\civilian joint and interagency interaction which is represented by our own Country Team process. (Which itself needs to be strengthened!) We need to foster and enhanced military\civilian dialogue and relationships within host nation power structure which will eventually lead to the kind of integration and democratic control and orientation which we seek. As a bottom line, a thorough review of the

framework for security assistance is needed to assure that we are properly targeting the level and type of resources to ensure a reasonable chance of success in this effort. We cannot, and should not, provide the budgetary resources which host governments are no longer willing or able to devote to their military establishments. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that security assistance programs and levels and will be both appropriate and sufficient to adequately address the more limited "political" objective, so SOUTHCOM, MILGROUPS and DAO's should closely coordinate all of their programs and activities with those of key civilian agencies such as USAID and USIA, attempting to piggyback and synergize where possible, above all avoiding the kind of "stovepipe" approach which stands in direct contradiction to what we are trying to accomplish.

--Promotion of free-market economies, sustainable economic growth, and a more equitable distribution of wealth:

This objective dovetails with, yet to an important extent may also conflict with, the "political" objective of promoting democracy discussed above. Our national security strategy, indeed our entire culture, presumes the complementarity of democracy and capitalism, ignoring the inherent practical and theoretical tensions which can exist between the two, particularly in the third world context

where the cultural and experiential underpinnings of both are extremely weak. The politically authoritarian context in which the free-market "Asian Tiger" economies have developed and prospered has demonstrated that sustainable capitalistic growth is indeed achievable outside the framework of participatory democracy. Furthermore, it can be argued that the politically unpopular, painful, and even destabilizing measures decisions that economic austerity and structural adjustment programs will be unpalatable and cannot occur in a democratic environment. Without abandoning either of these two key objectives, we must nevertheless remain be conscious of their somewhat contradictory nature and be prepared to prioritize or even choose between them wherever they may come into serious conflict. It will be both in our interest and tactically more advantageous to generally let the IFI's (IMF, IBRD, IADB, Paris Club) take the lead in the painful structural adjustment and debt reduction fields.

Through a free trade agreement with Mexico and its extension to its neighbors to the south, it is hoped that much needed jobs will be created in the U.S. and exports to Mexico will increase, while at the same time spurring greater economic opportunities and a new prosperity in Mexico which will benefit both countries by decreasing the "push" factor which motivates many of Mexico's most talented and enterprising citizens to seek illegal employment in the U.S.

While the military is largely peripheral to this effort, as the top U.S. priority in the region it merits support where possible.

As stated above, U.S. "political" assistance alone will be insufficient and inherently incapable of assuring progress toward increased democracy. Likewise, the level and type of development assistance provided to the region in an era of tight budgets and domestic resentment of "foreign aid" will, frankly speaking, have a relatively marginal impact. Nevertheless, programs such as CBI I and II and the new Enterprise for the Americas initiative have provided and will continue to furnish incentives and encouragement for the adoption of the kind of sound economic measures and policies which are the only guarantee of economic progress and sustainable growth. We should also work to establish a symmetry and an interdependence between our political and economic objectives and which will find an echo in host country thought and strategy. For example, we need to simultaneously work the issue of a more equitable distribution of the economic pie along with efforts to increase the overall size of that pie. At least in the Latin context, pervasive statism is a virtual guarantee of economic stagnation, while unbridled capitalism may increase short-term political instability and social turbulence. We need to assist host nations in reaching a delicate equilibrium

between an excessive, counterproductive government interventionism and a "slash and burn" capitalism which can be as harmful to the polity as deforestation is to the ecology.

The military has an important, if purely supporting, role to play in the economic sphere. "Nation building" and civic action type activities by the U.S. military in Latin America are not new. In the past, however, they have been conducted too singlemindedly as training exercises with insufficient regard for their political impact or economic significance to the host nation. While such activities rightly will remain secondary to and supportive of the the CINC's core mission of planning and preparing for conflict, they nevertheless must be viewed in the proper political and developmental context as well, and should be closely coordinated with the country team and integrated into the overall development strategy. The scope of such activities cannot, and should not, attempt to substitute for the responsibilities of host governments to provide, to the extent which their limited means allow, the schools, roads, and other infrastructural facilities which their people need; neither should military compete with or duplicate projects more appropriately executed by civilian USG agencies (USAID), multilateral donors (UNDP), or private sector charities (CARE). Rather, military nation assistance and civic action type projects should concentrate on areas

which combine real or symbolic developmental impact and a comparative advantage provided by military execution, with U.S. military value added in terms of training benefits, area familiarization, and host nation goodwill. Such undertakings should also be tailored to involve host nation military elements, appropriate civilian entities, and concerned citizens working side by side with their American counterparts, thus adding useful concensus-building and self-help aspects to the equation.

--Reduce the flow of illegal drugs into the United States:

While this estimate will not attempt to provide a strategic blueprint for the "drug war," a few pertinent observations are in order. The national drug strategy calls for simultaneously attacking the production, transit, and consumption of narcotics. Priority is given to combatting the growing and processing of coca\cocaine in the Andean Ridge countries of South America, with an emphasis on Colombia; this area will be the scene of the main effort, calling for economy of force elsewhere. The Central American theater, with the exception of some significant opium\heroin and marijuana production in Mexico, serves principally as a transit pathway for South American cocaine flowing into the U.S. by land, sea and air. The economic incentives and ingenuity of the traffickers and the size and complexity of

the AOR combine to make total interdiction a pipe dream; nevertheless, a serious interdiction effort is important to the overall strategy and must be sustained and enhanced.

Furthermore, it must be recognized that the drug trade, if left unchecked, has serious negative ramifications for our other key objectives of promoting democracy and economic growth in the region. Drug money corrupts the political system, distorts the economy, and infringes on national sovereignty and the ability of any government to control its territory and manage its economy. The fates of Colombia and Peru are illustrative of the destructive influence the drug trade can have if it is able to dominate a country and ravage its political, economic, and social structure.

In its execution, a strong counterdrug effort involving U.S. and host country military establishments can also have the collateral benefit of providing a credible mission and otherwise unobtainable U.S. assistance for moribund Central American armed forces in an era when the local and international Communist threat no longer seems to require the level of resources and force structure previously demanded, and when the erstwhile internal security role of the region's armed forces has been seriously called into question with the increased emphasis on human rights concerns and civilian democratic rule. The Mexican Army, long the most redundant military establishment in the region, seems to have embraced

the counterdrug mission with particular relish and professionalism. Furthermore, the joint, interagency, and combined nature of our counternarcotics strategy has the additional "fringe benefit" of promoting the kind of civilian\military cooperation and regional approach to problem solving which we seek across the board as a partial remedy to the theater's chronic political instability and economic underdevelopment. As the countries of the region increasingly realize the very real long-term threat that narcotrafficking poses to their own security (particularly their sovereignty and territorial integrity, which we should ceaselessly emphasize), there is a chance that our counterdrug alliance with our regional partners might begin to erode some of the legacy of distrust and bad feeling which have for so long clouded U.S. relations with the region, especially military to military ties. To convince our friends of the seriousness of our commitment to the "drug war," we must commit, and be clearly seen to be committing, more effort and resources to the task of drug enforcement and decreasing demand at home; otherwise, our involvement in interdiction efforts outside our borders will likely be seen as just the latest face of the traditional "Yankee imperialism."