

## "U.S. Policy and Latin America"

Dr. Richard Downie

15 September 2009

**Dr. Downie:** Good morning. I can't tell you what an honor it is to be introduced by General Dunn, and I'm one of his biggest fans. I did work for General Dunn. After you work for somebody you know all about them, so for me to say I'm one of his biggest fans tells you a lot about General Dunn.

I am delighted to be here with you this morning. What I'd like to do is talk a little bit about some of the challenges that are going on in Latin America. How many of you have actually been to Latin America? Good, a good portion of you. How many of you speak Spanish? And of course Spanish isn't the only -- Good. It helps a lot to be able to speak the language wherever you go. As I'll show you, Spanish is not the only language, but it really does help a great deal. I'll give you an example, a story that does kind of paint that picture for you.

Some of you may have heard about this. It was back in the '20s and '30s. There was a Texas Ranger by the name of Walker -- Not Chuck Norris, but his name was Walker. There was a bandit from Mexico and his method of operation was he'd come into Texas and he would rob a bank, by the name of El Diablo, rob a bank and then he'd hightail it back across the border into Mexico. He did that a number of times, but you know, Texas Rangers, they always get their man. Ranger Walker, not caring, it was not going to matter to him whether he crossed into -- this is the '20s, '30s, crossed into another country or not. So he goes down and he finds El Diablo in a small little one-horse town in Mexico. He finds him in this little cantina.

He walks up, and the problem is that Ranger Walker does not speak Spanish and El Diablo does not speak English. So the bartender says I will translate.

So Ranger Walker says, all right. You tell El Diablo if he doesn't tell me -- He will tell me where he hid the gold. And the bartender says, El Diablo, Ranger Walker says you must tell him where you hid the gold. And so El Diablo says, you tell Ranger Walker I will never tell him where I hid the gold. The translator says, Ranger Walker, El Diablo says he will never tell you where he hid the gold.

So Ranger Walker, being that kind of a guy, he walks over, takes his six-shooter, puts it up against El Diablo's head, and says, you tell El Diablo that if he doesn't tell me where he hid the gold, I will blow his brains out right now. That was sort of his MO, so everybody kind of knew he would do that.

The bartender says, El Diablo, Ranger Walker says that if you don't tell him where you hid the gold right now, he is going to blow your brains out.

El Diablo thinks about it for a second. He says, all right, tell him that I hid the gold in the well behind the cantina. So the bartender says, Ranger Walker, El Diablo says he is not afraid to die. [Laughter].

So it helps to speak the language sometimes.

What I'd like to do is really give you a few challenges that are going on in the region and hopefully some things that impact you, certainly issues we're dealing with that you read about in the paper. Mexico, Central America, what's going on with Chavez in Venezuela. Certainly this issue of, you've probably heard about and may be involved in it, U.S. involvement -- it's really not bases in Colombia, but people talk about it that way. Ex-regional actors, and where are we going with our policy in the region?

Again, I'd like to cover these very briefly and then respond to your questions about this.

Before I do that -- next slide please, sir. Many of you have been there, but some of you may not recognize the diversity that you find in the region.

Up in the left corner, that's Santiago, Chile, that General Dunn was talking about. About 16.5 million people. Very advanced. They're economically probably in the lead in the region. Doing very very well.

Yet down in that bottom right corner, that's Belize. Anybody been to Belize? A great country. If you want to go for a vacation -- Mayan ruins, diving, it's a wonderful country. But there are only about 308,000 people there. They speak English. It's on the Caribbean.

Then up in Brazil, on the top, the picture on the right, about 199 million people and they speak Portuguese. Again, doing very well economically. They've really taken off and they're on their way to becoming a regional power.

Yet you've got, and it's actually cleaned up a bit now, but in that bottom left corner is a picture of Haiti. And about nine million people on an island where 80 percent of the population lives on under \$2 a day. It's a really poor country. It's cleaned up a bit since the UN has been there, but it's really, they've got a long, long ways to go. But they speak Creole, which is a dialect of French. Just to show you the diversity that people don't really think about in the region.

Next slide, please.

Before I talk about this, the Mercator Projection that we always see -- the United States looks pretty big, but just as another little data point for you to think about, put in the back of your head, you can look at the country of Brazil here, that big, this part right there. A big country. You may not be aware that you could fit the continental United States inside of Brazil. It's a big country. But just to show you the size we're talking about of this region.

But the point of this is that the region has gone through a series of waves of democracy, and the red implies authoritarian regimes and the green is democratic regimes.

What you see from these 20 year cycles here essentially is that right now you've gone through a wave of authoritarian governments, but right now it looks like all governments with the exception of Cuba are democratic. But when you look at little closer at each of those countries, you see a different story. Many of these countries, yes, there are elections. But the pillars of what we think of as democratic society are really crumbling in many ways in several of those countries. Chavez, for example, and his Alba Group, are really chipping away at gaining control over their congresses, the supreme courts, the electoral infrastructure, machinery, the economy, and those sorts of things. We'll talk a little bit about that.

But where is it going? There are a lot of countries, there's nine countries in that Alba 21<sup>st</sup> Century socialist camp right now with Chavez. So it's really where is the region going here in the future?

Next slide, please.

Let's talk first, go south, to our immediate south, our neighbor Mexico. Last year, some of you may have seen this, that joint operating environment, that report that came out from Joint Forces Command. In that report they talked about

Mexico and Pakistan. They lumped them together and said potential failing states. Weak and failing states. And every Mexican that has come to NDU or to any of our courses or conferences we do throughout the region, the first thing that a Mexican will ask is -- This has been since October, November of last year, but that's the first thing. Well, why do you think Mexico is a failing state?

Well, it really, as you look at the violence, that's what they're looking at. The possibility of descending into chaos and the U.S. having to go in to do something about it, raised up obviously, as you would imagine, a great deal of angst in Mexico with our neighbors. But there's a tremendous amount of violence going on.

You see body bags, in the past two years there have been about 12,000 people killed just in the last two years, 12,400. It's a terrible kind of violence. Actually Imogene Guben Rodriguez, my assistant, who's back here somewhere, she convinced me not to use the pictures of literally beheading. There's a picture of three heads just off on the floor somewhere. I didn't think it was very appropriate either, but thank you, Imogene for that. But it's great violence.

Next slide, please.

But the truth of the matter is, that violence is very isolated in key parts. The darker areas are where you see the most violence is. That area that really looks like dark brown is Chihuahua, the state of Chihuahua, right on the border with the United States, El Paso, it's really a very violent place. That's where most of this violence has been going on. Although Tijuana on the left hand side there, Baja California, has been very high. You can see the other ones, Sina Loa there in the red, to the north; Guerrero, which is where Acapulco is, by the way, in the south; then that really dark cluster there is in Mexico. It's a lot of violence. It's centralized. It's not that the government is going to go through, but the violence is really kind of interesting in that it's directed, most of the people that have died, 90 percent of them have been related to drugs. Drug violence.

Next slide, please.

Who's doing it? Those are the kind of people you see doing it. They don't look like anybody special. These are cartel members. But they are very heavily armed. You can see, that's a 50 caliber sniper rifle down there. With the resources that the drug cartels have available to them, it's

amazing. The military and the police forces, certainly the police forces, are outgunned.

What President Calderon, the current President of Mexico has done -- next slide, please -- is to use the military. He's got 45,000 military forces out now to take over as, to confront the drug traffickers. They're having success, but you ask why doesn't he use the police? In Mexico the police are very corrupt. They're trying to work on this issue but they're very very corrupt. If you get robbed in Mexico, the last person you will call is the police, because if you do your house is robbed. The policeman comes over and says wow, you've still got a TV. How do you like that? Within the next week your TV will be gone. The police are more involved in the kidnappings and all this than anybody else. So he's used the military, and it's not a good, long term solution, but it's the only solution they've got right now.

What's happening, the bad part about this -- next slide, please -- is that the military is certainly having an impact but there are increased human rights violations, and there's an impact on the society.

What the narco-traffickers are really trying to do is psychological warfare against the state to say look, just stop, stop the effort.

What happened, this rise in violence is because the government of Mexico in the past just tolerated their criminal activity, just turned a blind eye to what they were doing. They said look, we'll leave the police off you and let you do what you do, but you just keep the violence down. And they did. But President Calderon who is the gentleman there shaking hands with President Obama, said no, we're going after these narco-traffickers. They've really gone after it. That's why it's gotten so bloody with beheadings and just trying to, this psychological effort to convince the government look, it's in your best interest to just let us do our thing. Let us have violence here. Just don't bother us and we won't be after you again. But so far President Calderon has stayed with the course and said no, we are going to take back Mexico. That's his campaign. We're going to clean up Mexico.

The United States for the first time has really taken on the effort to work with the Mexicans to really fight back with Mexico in this Merida Initiative, and it's expanding out to Central America.

But Mexicans have got to understand. This is the first time that they've ever really reached out to work with us. And I'll give you an example of the Mexican mentality. The former Ambassador of Mexico told me this story, but I think it's illustrative. If you can think about the comparison here.

A Frenchman goes back home to his house and he walks in and he sees another man in bed with his wife. So he runs over, gets his pistol and he shoots both of them.

A British man goes home, goes into the bedroom, sees his wife with another man in bed, shoots himself.

A Mexican comes home, goes into his bedroom, sees his wife with another man, runs out of the house, runs down to the U.S. Embassy to start throwing rocks at the U.S. Embassy. That's kind of the philosophy that the Mexicans have about our relationship. Any problem that they have, it's our fault. Their problem, but no, no, we throw rocks at the U.S. Embassy. That's the way it works.

But finally, President Calderon is working with the United States and we've allocated over a three year period \$1.4 billion, which sounds like a lot of money but it really isn't. And so far we've only allocated out of that about \$214 million. So it's for training, it's for equipment, it's for infrastructure building, but we've got a long way to go. And given the fact that this is really the first time that Mexico is reaching out and trying to work with us, we ought to be doing more to help them.

Next slide.

Let me just go on very quickly into the Central America area. Ninety percent of all drugs that come into the United States come through Central America and Mexico. This picture on the right is the Joint Interagency Task Force South. That shows the airborne tracks of aircraft going from the region, carrying drugs, suspected drug trafficker aircraft, going into, that's actually Venezuela. The start point there. There's a few flights from Colombia and so forth, but the majority, as you can see, are going into the island of Hispaniola -- Dominican Republic and Haiti; and going into Central America from there. It's just dominant, the aircraft.

By boat, that's on the other side over here. What's going on on this side, you can see a lot of drugs coming up into Central America and Mexico that way, and they're mostly

semi-submersibles. Anybody heard of that? I'll show you a picture in just a moment.

On the Caribbean side it's mostly go fast, but it's a lot of traffic, and we're not doing very well.

Next slide, please.

On the left here, those are semi-submersibles. It looks like a submarine, doesn't it? But it's actually the hull of a sailboat and they've just taken off the top and they use fiberglass there. The freeboard of this thing -- you guys are Air Force guys -- freeboard is basically the space above the wave top. It's about that high off the surface of the water. It's really hard to track. And these things, you can see when they're floating along in the water, the radar doesn't catch it. The waves are going over. So it just doesn't catch these things.

There are about nine or ten tons of cocaine that go into that thing. They're very primitive inside there. All it is is a sailboat hull with a diesel engine or two, and this really primitive, and a crew of two or three that are in there and all the cocaine is up front. Getting these things is really tough.

But again, money, it's huge. So they're making the effort to do these things. But it's very tough to catch. Usually intel is the best way to do it, but lots of money involved.

One other problem is if you can carry nine tons of cocaine into the region, what else can you carry? That's a big issue. It can be any kind of a nuclear device, and I'll get to that in a little bit, but that's a concern.

Next slide, please.

Maras. We know them here. Anybody live in Northern Virginia? We see it, I live there and we see it there. These are Maras. Crime is very big in Central America. These are one element of it. Maras, you know them because of the tattoos and their symbols. What's interesting, because everybody knows their tattoos, what they're starting to do now, this is in a prison in Guatemala. They're starting to tattoo themselves on their lips because everybody can identify the Maras, and then they can see that tattoo and in many countries they just put them into jail because oh, you're a gang banger, we'll just put you in jail. So what they're doing now is tattooing the inside of their lip so they can't be seen.

But that's one of the elements, and they're linking in with drug traffickers to do lots of things.

To give you an example of the murder rates, crime rates in Central America are huge.

In the United States we have about 5.6 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. Right now in El Salvador there's 61, a very small country, 61 per 100,000 inhabitants. Huge. Honduras -- 58 murder per 100,000 inhabitants per year. In Belize, 37 -- actually per capita, they just crossed the threshold. Huge crime problems.

Next slide, please.

Of course immigration, which you're all aware of. And it's not just boat people. They're coming in, the walls are helping. We'd be happy to talk about that, immigration, but that's certainly an issue that particularly with the economy the way it is and in the region, that's affecting things.

Next slide, please.

How many of you have heard about the issue in Honduras? For those of you who haven't, this fellow on the left, this handsome hat that he has, this is President Manuel Zelaya. He always has that hat with him. He's sort of a populist, charismatic kind of a guy. What happened, he didn't actually, in Honduras, he started off as sort of a rightist kind of a guy. But slowly, over time, he started going into the Venezuela, the Hugo Chavez camp. And what happened was the formula that Chavez used basically is sort of get control of the elements of power of the government, get a referendum so that you can stay in office longer.

Well, the constitution of Honduras actually prevents the President -- it's their constitution, not ours. But their constitution says any act that you make to try to keep yourself in office as President is considered treason. So he went through and got electoral machinery from Venezuela. The court condemned this. The congress condemned these actions. But he was going to do this referendum to see if he could stay in power.

What happened was the supreme court and the congress told the military to take him out of the country. That's what they did. In the middle of the night they picked him up, got him in a plane, took him out of the country. Costa Rica.

So from Honduras' constitution, this is not a coup because the supreme court and the congress, they told the military to take him out of the country.

What it looked like to the rest of us and the rest of the world, essentially, was a military coup. They didn't ask the police to do it, they asked the military in the middle of the night, to take this guy, Manuel Zelaya, in his pajamas and get him out of the country. So it looked like there was zero due process to make this all happen. That in fact was really what's going on.

So now there's an effort to try and say okay, look, most of the countries including the OAS said we need to bring Zelaya back into the country to finish out his term. Elections are in November, and he would have finished by the end of the year. So the issue was okay, well, let's just bring him back, give him amnesty and bring him back. Everyone's trying to push for this solution.

The Hondurans have an interim government now, the second in the succession of power whose name is Micheletti, he's now the President and he says no way. The congress, the supreme court say no way. The U.S. and everybody else is trying to put sanctions on them. By the way, the U.S. is the only country that's left its ambassador in Honduras, trying to help move this along. But everybody defines this as a military coup. But by their laws, they're saying look, we didn't want Zelaya to take this country into Venezuela's camp, and we followed our laws. Why are you guys doing this?

The issue is right now, if the elections go in November, which you would think okay, they're free elections, let the next President have this on and take it on. But the effort is now to say look, we won't recognize your elections, so you'll just be a pariah state until you bring Zelaya back. Right now that's where it is. Sort of where are we going with this thing.

The U.S. has taken a position of just sort of going along with, actually with Hugo Chavez. He was the first guy to step in and say we've got to bring him back. Actually the OAS didn't do anything, but Chavez and Venezuela did. And we found ourselves on the side of Chavez, sort of uncomfortably.

Next slide, please.

That's kind of where it is right now.

But speaking of Chavez, he is a very charismatic guy. Anybody ever seen him or seen pictures of him? A very charismatic guy. He is really out in front of the group. You see him leading waves, and he gets the crowd fired up. He's that kind of guy. He's very charismatic.

What you found in Venezuela was, he was a coup plotter, by the way. In 1992 he tried to do a military coup. He was a lieutenant colonel at the time, Army -- not Air Force. [Laughter]. But he had the support of the Air Force. But the coup failed. So he went in jail, but he got pardoned. He came back out and he became President. Truth be told, democracy was not producing for these folks. It just wasn't producing.

So he started what he calls 21<sup>st</sup> Century socialism. It's very populist. His effort was very closely with Fidel Castro, and was trying to work to get power. The congress, the supreme court, he controls electoral machinery. Basically he controls everything. If you want a job in Venezuela you better not go up against Hugo Chavez. He has your number, he has information, and anywhere you go, if you oppose him you're out. That's why the opposition, there just isn't. They just go. They leave the country. They have no other choice.

You're either on his side or you better leave the country. Now he's got control of the school curriculum, to teach his brand of what he calls 21<sup>st</sup> Century socialism. Nobody really knows what that is, but he talks about it. What that is essentially is it's his power.

He uses his oil money to buy favors. He has this program called Petro Caribe. Mary O'Grady calls it an "oil for obedience" program. He gives oil for very cheap prices, and you pay over 25 years. So if you're a politician, I mean 25 years now you've got to pay off this debt? You're in office how long? Four years, six years, eight years. Whew, I don't have to worry about that. So where are you going? You're following him.

This is kind of a neat picture on top. That's Chavez obviously on the left, the red shirt. That's Abel Morales from Bolivia, which is sort of his acolyte in the middle there. Then that's Correa, who's in charge of Ecuador on the left. You can see them sort of, that's actually at the inauguration of the President of Nicaragua, Ortega, which is this guy right here. That's at his inauguration. That's Zelaya right there.

The fellow that's sort of looking, inclining the other way, that's President Uribe, Alvaro Uribe of Colombia who is the neighbor of Chavez, and they are really at each other's throats with Chavez all the time. Uribe and Colombia are very friendly to the United States, but the Alba Alliance is with Cuba, and that's Raoul Castro down there; Cristina Kirchner, she's the President of Argentina. They're all, with a couple of states in the Caribbean -- Dominica and Antigua Barbuda -- are in this alliance of Chavez.

But bottom line, the philosophy is just take, take, take, until everything collapses, and then it falls.

General Dunn and I actually had -- This was about four or five years ago. We had a conversation about Chavez and General Dunn, my thought at the time was look, we need to keep this guy in a box. General Dunn said this guy is dangerous. We really have to stop him. I've come along to your point of view, by the way. But he really is a dangerous guy. It's all about anti-Americanism. He needs a foil. He needs an enemy. Guess who provides that enemy for him? It's us.

Oh by the way, guess who his biggest client in terms of sales of oil is? Us. Us. Citgo is his gas station, by the way, just in case you're wondering.

But it's not just what he's doing in the region. Even more of concern is what he's doing outside the region.

Next slide, please.

You can see that top picture, that's him with Ahmadinejad, the President of Iran. It's really a concern.

Basically he's got flights now going from Iran through Damascus to Caracas, Venezuela, and there's no control. People come in. The banking system, Iran is setting up banks in Venezuela. Essentially what they're doing is they're circumventing the sanctions on Iran. And worse, Venezuela has a lot of unmined uranium. There's concern that they're mining uranium for Iran. There's shipments back and forth of lab equipment, that are labeled tractor parts and these sorts of things they're catching. So it's a real concern. Hezbollah and others are in Venezuela in a big way, as well as other parts of the region. But where is that going? And these folks having free reign to get into the region and then move out. The concern is there.

That's Medvedev in the middle there, between Ortega and Chavez. The Russians came in last year, did naval

exercises. That's, by the way, a Russian plane down there in Venezuela. It's a TU-160. For exercises. But that was more along the lines of when the Russians were really angry at the U.S. supporting Georgia, remember South Ossetia and all that. That was sort of their way to get back at us, was to go back down to work with Chavez. Although Chavez is buying huge amounts of military equipment-- Sucoy, he's bought 24 Sucoy 30 MK spider aircraft; 50 helicopters; 100 T-72, T-90 tanks. A tremendous amount of armament. Submarines, frigates. Why does he need those? To prepare to defend against the invasion of, guess who? Us. The United States. We think that's ridiculous, but he gets mileage for this. So he's buying all this equipment and nobody challenges him.

China. Again, another entity in the region. But their interests have been more businesslike. And they don't have a foreign corrupt businesses practices, so it's tough doing business against the Chinese. They have this machine. They need commodities. They need all the natural goods to keep their economy going, so they're in the region doing that.

Next slide, please.

U.S. bases in Colombia. All the region calls them U.S. bases. They're really not bases. We've had -- We're in Panama. We used Panama as our drug flight sort of overwatch, our AWACS and surveillance flights from there. When we left Panama we went to Manta, Ecuador, which is just south of Colombia. For the past ten years we've been doing these drug flights in Manta, Ecuador. Well, now what's happening is the Ecuadorians, that's Rafael Carrea you saw next to Chavez in that top picture a few slides back, he said no, we want the United States out. So Colombia said we'll give you access to our bases.

So Uribe who thinks, look, we unfortunately didn't do any kind of a sell job to market what's going on and explain it to people. So Uribe about a month ago, they find that Chavez has sold or somehow transferred anti-tank weapons to the FARC which is the guerrilla group in Colombia. So he's expecting everybody to be outraged that his neighbor, Chavez, is giving these advanced missiles, anti-tank missiles, to the guerilla group. Instead, what does he get? Brazil, Chile -- We're really concerned about you giving bases to the United States in Colombia. So there's a big issue about bases. You'll hear about it if you haven't already. But it's really just access.

I should say, President Uribe, the fellow you saw there sort of leaning the other direction, really has done a

remarkable job in Colombia. Since 2002 he has just literally cleaned up the country. Ninety percent, the murder rate has gone down 90 percent. The kidnappings and violent crimes have gone down by 80 percent. Just a huge effort to make things better. The economy's gone up to about 7.2 percent GDP. This picture here is a rally last year that was against the FARC and it was organized -- by the way it was millions of people all over Colombia. A million in Bogotá and several million around the country. Organized purely by Facebook. Amazing. Facebook only was the way this was done.

General Frasier, that's the Commander of U.S. Southern Command. That's the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Padia, down in Colombia. We have a wonderful relationship with Colombia.

But let me say real quickly about this guy. I'd really like to get some of your questions. Very quickly, our policy, where are we going with our policy? The team really isn't in place yet for Obama's administration, but what you see there, that 5<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Americas, it was in April, so it was early on in President Obama's term that he had an opportunity to get down in the region and meet the leaders, including Chavez, but some of the senior leaders there, and find out what's going on. But the truth of the matter is, and I think the reason that Latin America, this is the first time that Latin America has been discussed in the Air Force Association Conference, is that it has not been a priority for the United States for a long time. It's our neighborhood, we have a lot of interests here. They're growing. But it has not been a priority.

For President Obama, his tone -- What's changed with the Obama administration is the tone. He wants to treat others on a relationship of equals. And actually it's kind of interesting, at the Summit they cheered. Oh, yes, we want to be treated as equals. But then when he would meet with them individually they'd say okay, what are you going to do for us? It was yeah, we want to be equals, but what are you going to do for us?

Just recently, you might have seen it on Honduras. President Obama when he was in Mexico was in a news conference. They said all right, President Obama, what are you, the United States, going to do about getting President Zelaya back into, how are you going to resolve this situation in Honduras so you get Zelaya back? President Obama said wait a minute, the same voices that condemn the United States for interfering in the region are now clamoring for the U.S. to actually do something to interfere

in Honduras to make this happen. How do you want it? You can't have it both ways. But we do have this presumption that it is our region.

Things have changed since the Cold War. With globalization, the diversity of, ability to get out into the region is great. But we'll see where his team goes with the region. The tone is changing, but our focus on democracy and economics looks like it will be holding on.

I have time for a few questions. I'd like to go further into that but perhaps some of you can press me on some of these issues regarding either the administration or anything that's going on in Latin America. Any questions from any of you?

**Question:** I would like to see your opinion on the following. Just recently the President of Iran, Ahmadinejad, was [inaudible] appointing his Minister of Defense. That person was being accused by the government of Argentina for the 1994 bombing of [inaudible]. Any impressions?

**Dr. Downie:** There are some issues, at least from Argentina, because of this relationship. There's a bombing, there were actually two bombings in Argentina in 1994, and it was Iranians, they're pretty sure it was Iranians that perpetrated these really terrible acts of terrorism, and specifically the involvement of the Defense Minister of Iran.

It doesn't stop Chavez. He's been welcoming Ahmadinejad. They're doing all kinds of trade agreements. The just last week made an agreement where Venezuela will provide refined gasoline for \$800 million to Iran, and then they'll pay back to invest in Venezuela and so forth. But these ties are growing.

It's basically Chavez reaching out to anybody who is in the anti-American camp to really try and do what he can do to counter U.S., what he senses is U.S. influence.

Any time anybody says anything about him, his tactic, it's quite interesting. If you press him on something he attacks -- he's got all this weaponry far in advance of any of the neighbors, but you ask him about that, and he's why are you having U.S. bases in there? Why are you trying to attack me? It's a very very clever kind of approach.

But that's a worrisome kind of relationship. Obviously those kinds of things, in spite of the fact that the

concerns of Argentina, it's not stopping him. That will continue on.

Thank you.

**Question:** In regard to Mexico, if the police are corrupt, what recourse does the average, law abiding citizen have down there [inaudible]? Do they suck it up? Do they take the law into their own hands? Is there a conduit between them and the military as these situations develop?

**Dr. Downie:** It is really a sad situation. If you're not in a gang or you're not somehow under the protection of a cartel, you're in trouble. If you don't have somebody being your godfather, kind of watching over you, you're in trouble.

I asked the then Attorney General, just last week they changed out. But how are you going to do this? Having the military do this for the long term is really not the answer. He said yeah, we're going to professionalize the police and it's a long term program, but we're going to do this. Of course it's been two years since I asked him that question, and what's happened since then? Not a lot.

But there's more than 1,600 police forces in Mexico -- state, municipal, and they're not linked. So it's really hard to get quality in the police forces. What happens is if a bad policeman gets fired somewhere in Chihuahua, he can go down to Guerrero or Chapez and get a job somewhere else. They don't have a registry that says oh, this guy's bad. It's an awful situation.

But the violence is so bad, I had a friend tell me. He said what they're doing is the narcos are now holding out banners. They'll put a banner out there and say we're killing John Jones or Jaime Garcia tomorrow. He's probably the assistant police chief or whatever. This friend of mine said that's really a good thing. This banner comes out, that's it. You are dead. If your name comes out on that banner, you're dead. You can't run, you can't hide, you're dead. This friend of mine says that's really a good thing. I said what? What are you talking about? Well, the thing is, they put your name out and they tell you when you're going to die, so it gives you a chance to call all your family and say goodbye and tie up all your loose ends. But this is how people are sort of adjusting to this terrible situation.

Again, the police aren't helping. That's why it's popular to have the military involved, but again, they're

getting so brutal to try and do the psychological warfare against the state to just say back off, back off. We'll reduce the violence if you just back off and let us do our illegal activities. So it's really a tough situation.

**Question:** It's mostly a roomful of majors here, Air Force folks, what are the implications that you've talked about today for Airmen in the next 10, 20 years?

**Dr. Downie:** That's a great question. One of the reasons that you find, again, the fact that I'm the first guy that's talked about Latin America at an Air Force Association conference, I'm honored to be the first guy, but most Airmen don't focus on the region, on Latin America.

Normally the J5 of the U.S. Southern Command, that fellow that you saw, General Frasier, who I pointed out as U.S. Southern Command Commander, he's the very first Air Force commander of U.S. Southern Command. The very first, ever. But the J5 is typically an Air Force officer, Air Force one star. Usually, the same thing on the Joint Staff. The guy that's in charge of the section, the division for Latin America is usually an Air Force colonel. These guys, I've seen this over years, they're always really sharp guys, as Air Force officers and Airmen tend to be. Very sharp guys. And they pick it up quickly. But they will be honest with you generally, if you say hey, do you know anything about Latin America? The most you can hope for is oh yeah, I went to Cancun on spring break, or something like that. That's about the most you can hope for.

I do think with what's going on in Colombia, and now with an Air Force Commander of U.S. Southern Command, I do think you're going to see more opportunities reaching out to the Air Force. But the relationships between the air forces of the region is very important. They all speak English because of the air traffic and all that stuff, almost all speak English, the pilots and what not. So there's a relationship that's established that is I think very good for our country.

I wish I could say this is an area of growth for Airmen, but I would anticipate certainly more of that sort of relationship building, building the capacity of our partners in the region.

**Question:** Sort of like what General White started in '61?

**Dr. Downie:** I'm not familiar with that.

**Question:** Airmen have been down there for quite a while.

**Dr. Downie:** They have. There's a very important conference, the Air Force Chiefs meet every other year. Very important facet of the program.

But I do hope that many of you will have a chance to go down to the region to see it for yourselves, speak the language -- whichever language it is, it helps. But it is a tremendous place to go and there are so many ties with us in the region -- culturally and family now -- that it's of great interest for us.

Thank you.

# # # #