



USNORTHCOM'S INTERACTION WITH THE MEXICAN MILITARY

Congressional Fact Sheet

October 2009

Today, Mexican and USNORTHCOM military officials experience collaborative relationships, based on trust and confidence, which are critically important to future cooperation and mutual support. We are working together with the Mexican military to build long-term partnership capacities and defense strategies to counter shared transnational threats and security concerns that respect the sovereignty of Mexico and the U.S. This cooperation will assist in the battle against extremely violent drug trafficking organizations along the U.S.-Mexico border threatening to undermine the safety and security of the Mexican and American people. – General Gene Renuart, Commander of USNORTHCOM

USNORTHCOM provides command and control of Department of Defense (DoD) homeland defense efforts and coordinates defense support of civil authorities when DOD support is requested. USNORTHCOM's area of focus encompasses the continental U.S., Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Bahamas, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands and surrounding water out to approximately 500 nautical miles, including the Gulf of Mexico and Straits of Florida.

Over the past three years, USNORTHCOM and the Mexican military have worked in partnership to build long-term capacities and a defense strategy to counter mutual security threats. During the past year, USNORTHCOM and the Mexican military have conducted several hundred high-level visits by members of the militaries and interagency communities, including the Mexican Ambassador to the U.S. These visits, conferences, and meetings have worked to improve Mexican officials' understanding of USNORTHCOM's mission in defending North America and USNORTHCOM's understanding of Mexican military requirements. In addition to these top-level visits, numerous outreach programs are ongoing that pave the way for improved coordination in areas such as bilateral planning initiatives, information sharing, and regional security initiatives to combat the flow of illegal weapons and drugs. One example is the USNORTHCOM hosted Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize Cross-Border Collaboration Workshop, facilitated by the Center for Hemispheric and Defense Studies, that brought together leaders from each of the three countries that deal with border security, as well as USSOUTHCOM.

Theater Security Cooperation

Security cooperation is a key element of global and theater shaping operations and involves all DoD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide US forces with peacetime and contingency access to a region.

USNORTHCOM's long-range security cooperation vision focuses on establishing a continental defense architecture where the U.S. works with its neighbors in deterring, preventing, and if necessary, defeating mutual threats. USNORTHCOM theater security cooperation activities, focused on building partner capacity, provide more effective partnerships for achieving this vision.

Military-to-Military (Mil-Mil) Relations

Recent visits from senior leaders from the Mexican Secretariat of the Army/Air Force (SEDENA) and the Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR) demonstrate the improved relationship between the U.S. and Mexico militaries.

The Vice Chiefs of Defense from both Secretariats visited USNORTHCOM in March 2009, each have sent fellows from their respective War Colleges to visit USNORTHCOM annually, and USNORTHCOM hosted senior officers to observe NORAD and USNORTHCOM exercises that dealt with multiple homeland defense missions, such as operations to counter air, maritime, and port threats; protection of critical infrastructure; and maritime interception operations. Also observed during these exercises was civil support consequence management operations from terrorist attacks and natural disasters, venues that are critical in helping our partners understand USNORTHCOM's roles, mission, and capabilities, and strengthen mil-mi relationships.

The defense relationship with SEDENA is more open and effective than ever, and shows continuous improvement. USNORTHCOM and SEDENA are engaged in mil-mil cooperation on exercises, education, training, and equipment. Command engagements have been highly successful in fostering enhanced cooperation and collaboration. The August 2009 addition of the first SEDENA foreign liaison officer (LNO) to HQ, USNORTHCOM has greatly enhanced coordination and cooperation between USNORTHCOM and SEDENA, and a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSoMIA) with SEDENA is expected to be signed very soon. Recent high-level SEDENA visitors to USNORTHCOM include the Secretary of National Defense and the Commander of the Mexican Air Force. These visits focused on expanding areas of security cooperation into key areas of military organization and promoting additional transparency in regard to alleged human rights violations by members of SEDENA as they assist civilian law enforcement agencies in their struggle against multinational drug cartels.

USNORTHCOM has had unprecedented success in establishing a positive relationship with SEMAR, and we view the Mexican Navy as an important partner. The Secretariat of the Navy's key mission areas, such as interdiction of maritime transnational threats, protection of cruise ships and ports used by foreign visitors, as well as the protection of critical infrastructure, clearly demonstrate that the U.S. and Mexico share many areas of mutual interest that are vital to the security of each country and the continent. SEMAR has expressed a willingness to significantly increase its engagement with USNORTHCOM in numerous areas such as: intelligence and information-sharing, education, training, and participation in exercises with the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy. An important element of success in this partnership-building effort is the presence of the Mexican Navy Foreign LNO at USNORTHCOM, now in its third year, which allows continuous communication and coordination with SEMAR on training, planning, and combined operations. The signing of a GSoMIA with SEMAR on 16 Sep 08 provided another important step that is greatly facilitating the information sharing process.

Conclusion

The greatest enabler for security cooperation with Mexico is the focus on defeating violent criminal drug trafficking networks and battle for control of areas in Mexico that are currently ungoverned. This focus provides USNORTHCOM with a unique opportunity to significantly increase military-to-military cooperation, which focuses mainly on building the counterterrorism and counterdrug capabilities of the Mexico Armed Forces.

The success of our mission to protect the U.S. relies heavily on the effectiveness of our neighbors. We have an unprecedented opportunity presented by the Mexican government to help them defeat the growing transnational threat to both of our homelands.

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