Presentation by
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"Security Imperatives for Development and Governance in U.S.–Caribbean Relations"[1]

Panel on
Security, Development and Governance
at the
U.S. Department of State Diplomacy Briefing Series
on
U.S. Policy in the Caribbean
Washington DC, 27 June 2011

The subject for this panel's discussion, "Security, Development, and Governance", recognizes the correlation between three distinct, but linked components in U.S. – Caribbean relations. It is highly unlikely that success can be achieved in any of these three sectors in isolation.

Through discussions like this we hope to advance the dialogue on the potential role of the Caribbean Diaspora in the formulation and execution of US policies and programs in the Caribbean.

My presentation will identify areas in which capacity-building in the security architecture of the Caribbean region are required in response to security-related threats in the relation between the region and the United States, and, what I suggest, are security capacity imperatives for the Caribbean. Both the United States and the Caribbean have vested interests in ensuring that the security agenda is pursued in real partnership and with a clear understanding of the mutual benefits and interests to both sides. The Caribbean Diaspora has an interest in the pursuit of this agenda with alacrity.

Ensuring the security of the Caribbean region provides several advantages both for the United States and for the Caribbean. These include, but not limited to:
- Ensuring that the Caribbean is not used as a staging area for threats against the United States homeland and its citizens;
- Ensuring the integrity and security of the international supply chain;
- Preventing seaborne shipping and air transportation from being used to target the United States with WMDs;
- Providing a safe and secure environment for the billions of dollars of U.S. foreign direct investments in the region;
- Ensuring the safety and security of American business and tourist travel throughout the region;

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[1] *This presentation represents the views of Ambassador Curtis A. Ward and not necessarily the views of the Caribbean Research & Policy Center, Inc.*

- Preventing the trafficking of drugs through the region from South America to the United States;
- Ensuring the safety and security of the peoples of the Caribbean, including through mitigating the aggravating influence of drug trafficking and the illicit arms trade on crime and violence throughout the region, its potential for fostering corruption, and undermining the rule of law and good governance in particular through the vast amount of money linked to the drug trade and money laundering;
- Providing a safe and secure environment for Caribbean economic, social and political development;
- Ameliorating the conditions, which give rise to the marginalization of the large unemployed youth population throughout the region, which also could contribute to their radicalization.

I should note that a Joint WB/UNODC 2007 study highlighted crime and violence as significant impediments to development, and pointed to drug trafficking and the illicit arms trade in the region as significant contributors to the high crime rate. Addressing the lack of security capacity is therefore a critical element in solving the crime problem.

While these issues are subjects for much broader discussions than time allotted, they are important points that must be raised in any discussion about security, development and governance in the Caribbean. Solving these problems requires a true partnership between the governments of the United States and the Caribbean, and there is a role for the Caribbean Diaspora in finding solutions.

In addressing the security imperatives for the Caribbean and the importance of Caribbean security vis-à-vis the security of the U.S. homeland, we should note that prior to the horrendous events of September 11, 2001, and the rise of the scourge of international terrorism, former President George W. Bush, at the Third Summit of the Americas, in April 2001, designated the Caribbean as America's "third border" and announced the so-called "Third Border Initiative" (TBI). The U.S.-proposed TBI was intended originally as a US-led partnership with its Caribbean neighbors,
- that would facilitate and strengthen those nations' institutional capacities to deal with social and economic problems;
- to combat transnational crime, particularly illegal drug trafficking and illicit arms trade; and
- to promote regional security.

While at the time development and security, primarily drug interdiction, were central to the agenda, the paradigm shifted in the post-9/11 period, and U.S. security became even more pronounced in U.S. policy in all regions of the world, including in the Caribbean. Thus, the TBI vision was broadened to include enhancement of the region's capacity for U.S.-Caribbean cooperation in dealing with potential terrorist threats. At the same time, the focus of U.S. attention shifted exponentially to countries and regions from which the greatest threat to U.S. security was most probable. The Caribbean region did not fit that mold.

Nevertheless, Caribbean governments entertained high expectations for the TBI, but those hopes were never realized, and the U.S. government failed to live up to the promises the region were led to believe were forthcoming. The words expressed at the April 2001 Third Summit of the Americas and reiterated at the Americas Summit at Monterey, Mexico in January 2004, were not translated into actionable programs.

Designation as the U.S. "third border" brought with it certain responsibilities, obligations, and the potential for significant benefits to both sides in U.S.–Caribbean relations. The TBI broadly recognized the links between security and development and good governance. Unfortunately, the onus to address the problems fell disproportionately on Caribbean countries with limited resources to carry the burden in this partnership. And, the U.S. government with a far greater capacity to deliver failed to do so.

Senator Barack Obama, during his 2008 campaign as the presumptive Democratic Party nominee, renewed the region's hope for greater cooperation and partnership in dealing with these issues when he stated, quite emphatically, that his policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean will be one which engages the people of the region and not one which dictates terms unilaterally. He renounced what he termed "outdated debates and … tired blueprints on drugs and trade, on democracy and development…" offered by past administrations. He stated further, that it is time for the United States "…to recognize that the future security and prosperity of the United States is fundamentally tied to the future of the Americas."

While many of us in the Caribbean Diaspora, and certainly among the vast majority of the people of the region, were encouraged by these pronouncements, there was a lingering level of skepticism, as oftentimes references to Latin America and the Caribbean meant only "Latin America" with the Caribbean viewed and treated as a mere appendage and afterthought. In other words, the Caribbean had grown accustomed to receiving the crumbs from the policy table. It was time for a change.

At the same time, we should not be so naïve as to believe that, in the scheme of U.S. geostrategic priorities, threats from the Caribbean region falls among U.S. geopolitical and security priorities. On the contrary, the perceived threat from the Caribbean pales in comparison to threats to U.S. security from other regions. However, in the context of the Caribbean as the United States' third border, there is ample rationale for paying attention to the security and development needs of the region.

It is in this context that I, as well as other members of the Caribbean Diaspora and the governments of the region, welcomed President Obama's commitment to the region in his announcement at the Summit of the Americas at Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in April 2009, that his administration had budgeted $45M for the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). This was later followed by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' announcement during his meeting with Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers in Barbados, in April 2010, that the Obama administration would seek an additional $70M in the Fiscal 2011 budget for the CBSI.

As Secretary Gates pointed out at the time, "the initiative has been built with extensive input from Caribbean nations with a central role for the regional security system…", and noted further, that "regional nations will be the ones to help determine how the funding can be most effective." Indeed, this was a welcome change in U.S. policy in the Caribbean.

Targeting of these funds to specific capacity needs determined by Caribbean governments and the region through technical working groups is a welcome dimension of the CBSI.

From available information, based on requests by the Obama Administration, in FY 2010 $45M was appropriated for CBSI and $77M was made available for FY 2011. The Obama administration has requested an additional $73M for Fiscal 2012, but there is no guarantee the U.S. Congress will fund the entire request.

The CBSI, which was officially launched in Washington on 27 May 2010, is a framework of partnership with both the U.S. government and the governments of the Caribbean clearly setting out their respective obligations and commitments to the region's security and development. This framework marked a welcome turning point in U.S. policy in the Caribbean. It is my view that the input of Caribbean Diaspora expertise would greatly enhance and add value to the prospects for success, thus completing the circle of meaningful collaboration and cooperation between the United States, the Caribbean, and the Caribbean Diaspora.

Members of the Diaspora welcome this expression of commitment by the Obama Administration. We also recognize there are some difficulties in moving some of these requests through the U.S. Congress. It is imperative that the Diaspora find ways to partner with the State Department, and vice versa, in seeking approval from the Congress for the full funding of these critical programs. This dialogue challenges the Caribbean Diaspora to continue positioning itself to become meaningful partners in the process and to provide support to these initiatives. I conclude by noting that enhanced information flow from the State Department to the Caribbean Diaspora will contribute greatly to this ongoing process.

27 June 2012

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