

# SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

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(SL1) Cooperation has become the predominant theme in discussions of security in the Caribbean Basin. Whether the specific subject is drug trafficking, migration, money laundering, natural disaster, or trade, the premise is that it is better to work together than to go it alone.<sup>i</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

(SL2) While this statement captures well the tone of the security environment in the Caribbean, the quest for partnership arrangement and regional security cooperation in this region has long been pursued as a preferred option. With respect to the Caribbean, regional security cooperation has its antecedents in the British division of the West Indies into operational zones with the Southern Command in Trinidad and Northern Command in Jamaica as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In the late 1950's The British again encouraged the establishment of the Federation of the West Indies with the concomitant formation of the West Indian Regiment. From its inception therefore, security cooperation has been influenced by extra regional partners/powers. Partnership arrangements in the Caribbean are thus intertwined at both the domestic and international levels.

I have been asked to speak to you this morning on security cooperation in the Caribbean, in particular the English speaking countries. I have also been asked to take as my point of departure the events at the end of the 1970s with special reference to the Grenada crisis that galvanised several small islands in the Caribbean into a cooperative mode of action. I will therefore try to speak to regional security cooperation in the last 26 years in fifteen minutes.

## CONTINUITIES AND CHALLENGES

In the Caribbean Basin there have been several initiatives in respect to finding cooperative solution and partnering for peace and security endeavours. Most of these initiatives have been pre-empted by changes in the security environment within the Caribbean in a kind of cause and effect relationship.

The end of the 1970's was manifested with turbulent political instability that began with the March 1979 revolution in Grenada. The emergence of the Maurice Bishop Government and the attempt at **non-capitalist path to governance** sent shock waves throughout the region, particularly in the Eastern Caribbean. These States, concerned about the spread of the events in Grenada to their small states, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), establishing the Regional Security System (RSS) in 1982. This MOU was upgraded to treaty status in 1996. Article 4. paragraph 1. of the treaty describes the purpose and functions of the System **as promoting co-operation among the Member States** through the integration of military and police units as operational elements of the System (in the prevention and interdiction of traffic in illegal narcotic drugs, in national emergencies, search and rescue, immigration control, fisheries protection, customs and excise control, maritime policing duties, natural and other disasters, pollution control, combating threats to national security, the prevention of smuggling and the protection of off-shore installation and exclusive economic zones.<sup>ii)</sup>)

The 1983 United States intervention in Grenada, the first in an English speaking state, code named "URGENT FURY" provided a significant milestone in the discourse on regional security cooperation in the Caribbean. It provided the catalyst for both

security cooperation and a booster for regional integration as it brought the OECS countries closer. It also highlighted the involvement and reliance on external powers for the security of the Caribbean. The crisis in Grenada also demonstrated the first time that regional security cooperation was effected at the operational level in that troops from the Caribbean were physically involved in the operation, notwithstanding the fact they were used mostly in policing duties. This was a significant step for the English speaking Caribbean since previous attempts at regional security cooperation never involved any commitment of personnel but merely political and at times economic support. Another booster to regional security cooperation in the aftermath of Grenada was the US sponsored Trade winds Exercises that brought military and police units from the Caribbean to Puerto Rico to participate in common training.

The end of the 1980s marked a profound transition in the global environment that magnified the insecurities and vulnerabilities of small states characterised by many uncertainties. During this period there were significant challenges to the traditional view about security. One aspect of this challenge was captured in the 1985 Commonwealth study on small states, titled: *Vulnerability: Small States in the Global Society*. This study argued that small state's security was multi-dimensional in essence and placed into the mix the issue of vulnerability. That is to say that from the perspective of small states the security issue can be approached from two stand points: the elimination of threats and or the elimination of vulnerability. The evolution of the conceptualisation of small state security in the framework of Commonwealth small states is effectively captured when one contrast a follow-up report in 1997 entitled: *A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability*.

In the 1990s two events that impacted positively on regional security cooperation were the coup attempt in Trinidad and Tobago in 1990 and the United States led multi-national force intervention in Haiti in 1994. It is important to note here that unlike the Grenada situation, the crisis in Trinidad and Tobago was handled in the main by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF), with later assistance from Caribbean troops; there were no troops from outside the Caribbean involved in the operation. The coup attempt once again acted as a catalyst that prompted participants at the Conference of Heads of the Government of the Caribbean Community held in Jamaica during the same time, to seriously consider threats to the parliamentary democracy that is a cherished heritage of the English speaking Caribbean landscape. At this conference the Heads agree *inter alia* to pursue the establishment of a regional security mechanism that would assist member states in clearly defined situations.<sup>iii</sup>

(SL3)The Trinidad and Tobago experience influenced the leaders in the Caribbean to adopt a new attitude toward regional security cooperation, which is captured in the following two statements: In 1990 then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, ANR Robinson, who was shot and held hostage in the attempted coup stated: “... **it is becoming increasingly apparent that no single state, large or small can in isolation ensure its own security from subversion or external threat. In this era of interdependence of states and the globalisation of activities relating to almost every sphere of life – economic, politic, cultural and criminal to name a few- the preservation of national security can no longer be seen purely in national terms**”. (Griffith 1993)

(SL4) Another Caribbean statesman, Erskine Sandiford, then Prime Minister of Barbados, echoed similar sentiments: **“The preservation of law and order and national security contribute uniquely to growth and development through the promotion of stability. We must therefore expand our integration effort to include the area of regional security: and we must seek further cooperation with friendly governments in our region and beyond. One thing is certain; no single territory can do it alone. We have to work together if we are to ensure that Caribbean remains a zone of peace, prosperity and democracy”.** (Griffith 1997)

This positive attitude towards regional security cooperation among several Caribbean leaders played a very important part in the decision to send CARICOM troops as part of the United States led Multinational Force that intervened in Haiti in 1994 under operation “RESTORE DEMOCRACY”. This is another milestone that provided an impetus to further regional security cooperation at the operational level. This operation was the first time in the history of the Caribbean that troops from seven countries were deployed under a single command structure referred to as the “CARICOM BATTALION”. This battalion comprised personnel from Belize, Bahamas, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana under the command of contingent commander from Jamaica, a battalion commander and a second in command from Trinidad and Tobago.

It is instructive to note however, that while the battalion was Caribbean in composition, it relied heavily on the United States for logistic support with respect to clothing, vehicles, rations, accommodation, arms and ammunitions. In fact the United States was considered the eighth Caribbean country involved in the operation. The

response from the Caribbean, however, established a working model, the CARICOM Battalion. This battalion represented an actual manifestation of regional security cooperation at both at the operational and tactical level. It is however a model that is certainly worthy of further analysis.

In 1996 there was another situation that highlighted United States/Caribbean relationship. In terms of bilateral arrangements the Ship Riders Agreement is worth mention here as it displayed an example of the core –periphery security relationship and a cooperative approach to dealing with a regional security issue. The United States Maritime and Overflight Agreement commonly referred to as the Ship Riders Agreement, permits land and sea patrols by United States Coast Guard and Navy vessels, maritime searches, and seizures and arrest by United States law enforcement authorities within the national boundaries of the Caribbean countries that are party to the agreement. Similarly, the overflight clause allows a United States aircraft to overfly Caribbean countries and order suspect aircraft to land there. While most of the Caribbean countries signed amended versions of the Ship Riders Agreement, and while most Caribbean countries cooperate with the United States, the Ship Riders Agreement caused both government and public hostility. It was seen in some quarters to interfere with the national security and in particular the sovereignty of the islands.

The fallout from the controversy surrounding the Ship Riders Agreement led to the first time visit to the Caribbean by a US President, Bill Clinton to attend the Caribbean/United States Summit in Barbados in 1997. At the United States/Caribbean Summit titled: “Partnership For Prosperity and Security in the Caribbean” the Heads of State and Governments of the Caribbean and of the United States meeting in Bridgetown,

Barbados May 10 1997, pledged to strengthen cooperation in responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect.

In analysing security cooperation thus far in the Caribbean, it is important to establish the nexus between the integration movement and security cooperation. In 2001 the revised Treaty of Chaguaramas produced CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). To this end the Caribbean Court of Justice has been established as the highest court of appeal in the region replacing the Privy Council in United Kingdom. This court handed down its first judgement in 2006. The widening and deepening of the integration movement in the Caribbean continues to develop as situation presents itself and as the security environments changes. In this regard we have witnessed the formation of the Association of Caribbean States. This establishment changed the composition and paradigm of the integration movement when it incorporated countries beyond CARICOM to include several Central American and South American countries that fall within the Caribbean littoral. While the ACS emphasised regional trade and negotiation mechanisms, it instilled greater cooperation toward the establishment of regional identity that could perhaps pave the way for an expansion in areas such as regional security.

At the level of CARICOM, several institutions were created to broaden the scope of partnership in the region. For instance the CARICOM Regional Coordinating Mechanism for Drug Control was established to coordinate Caribbean drug policy efforts. Institutions such as the Caribbean Financial Actions Task Force (CFATF) was established to develop a common anti-money laundering policy within the Caribbean, and the Caribbean Task Force on Crime and Security was established by the Heads of

Government of CARICOM in July 2001 in response to the increase of crime in the region.

At the meeting of Heads of Government in Trinidad and Tobago in February 2003, CARICOM, agreed to recognize and institutionalise the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP) as an agency of the Community. It was also agreed that this agency would report to a joint Committee of Attorneys-General and Ministers responsible for National Security. The Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC) is another association that is presently spearheading the thrust towards the improvement of border security in the Caribbean in this age of terror.

Within contemporary times the nature of the Caribbean security landscape could be seen as including both traditional and non-traditional concerns occurring side by side. Territorial disputes and hemispheric geopolitics is the core traditional concerns while drugs, political instability, HIV/AIDS, migration, illegal arms trafficking and environmental degradation is the chief non-traditional security concerns.<sup>iv</sup> Given the present international security environment and perhaps the Caribbean geopolitical concerns, terrorism must be included on the list of non-traditional threats. Additionally, with the advent of the United States led war with Iraq in March 2003, oil and petroleum producing Caribbean countries such as Trinidad and Tobago is faced with a new threat to these resources described as energy security. The complexities of the non-traditional security issues suggest that they are best handled from a collaborative and cooperative effort.

As we come to the end of 2006 the member states of CARICOM are focusing on an activity that has brought the community even closer than before. In 2007 The

Anglophone Caribbean will be hosting the third largest sporting event in the world after the Olympics and World Cup Soccer. (SL5-12) Nine host countries operating as a single domestic space will be hosting the games of Cricket World Cup 2007. The hosting of this event has provided the impetus for the Caribbean to focus on security cooperation to the extent that new security architecture has been established under the umbrella of CARICOM. This new architecture includes a role for military, police, customs, immigration and intelligence collaborating in all endeavours.

(SL13) In fact unlike in the past CARICOM has taken ownership of the security cooperation mechanism by appointing a designated Prime Minister with responsibility for security in CARICOM. A Council of Ministers of National Security reports to the PM, based on feedback and discussions/advice from the Security Policy and Advisory Committee (SEPAC) and the Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) formerly the CTFCS. The SEPAC consist of representatives from the Military Chiefs of Defence, the Police Commissioners, Customs Association, Immigration and Intelligence organisations. Additionally a Treaty on Security Assistance among CARICOM Member States has been signed and is presently being given force through the various domestic legislations.

I would argue that for regional security cooperation to be successful it must be intertwined with the integration movement in the Caribbean which must be deepened and widened. A word of caution here however, is that, for regional cooperation to be viable it must aim at more than the traditional model of economic integration to embrace specific projects, increased functional cooperation and a commitment to the principles of regionalism as a mechanism for achieving peace, security and development.<sup>v</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Security cooperation requires a deeper sense of partnership in dealing with the multifaceted nature of contemporary security issues that transcends borders. Traditional partners such as United States, United Kingdom and Canada must continue to work alongside the Caribbean as partners in the region. What is required is a general framework for regional security collaboration. This collaborative effort must be looked at as a process, which depends on the various sub-sets of the region coming together using a sequential approach that begins with an examination of history and establishing conceptual clarity of internal and external dynamics. Recommendations must therefore be based on the reality that regional security cooperation would embrace regional politics, regional economics, and regional history within the geopolitical climate with the United States as a partner in the true sense with shared interest.

In dealing with the traditional and non-traditional threats to the security of the Caribbean, it is recommended that the wider CARICOM institution be established. To this end the structure and associations that have been created for the staging of Cricket World Cup 2007 must remain as legacy institutions and testimonials to improved regional security cooperation in the Caribbean.

Regional security cooperation in this age of terror must utilise the best possible use of institutions, mechanisms, techniques and procedures already at the disposal of the region. It is not enough to prescribe desirable new agencies. Each and every intervention must be required to generate a cumulative flow of new resources for effectively taking operations to higher levels in successive stages.<sup>vi</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The world today consist of interdependence, a world where all things are connected, overlap and interact, therefore regional security cooperation to treat with traditional and non traditional threats must consider the influence of the actors in the environment in which it has to exist and function. Regional security cooperation must not be left to chance but must be as a result of a systemic process that seeks to identify commonalities of interests and threats in a building block approach to treat with the issues.

As the twenty-first century unfolds the Caribbean countries must become responsible for their own security. As the world continues to change dramatically, countries in the Caribbean need to redefine and reconceptualise threats to regional security from a Caribbean perspective and as such be prepared to implement appropriate measures to deal with traditional and non-traditional security issues from within a coordinated and cooperative approach. The vehicle to move this process forward must be the integration movement through CARICOM and the ACS in collaboration with wider hemispheric institutions under the umbrella of the OAS. Within the English-speaking islands CARICOM is the institution that could develop a collective consciousness among the regions politicians to instil the political will required to give legitimacy to the institutions required to pursue regional security cooperation in the Caribbean. The ACS can broaden this endeavour to include all the other countries within the littoral. Together these institutions and associations can support the architecture that is needed for regional security cooperation.

The question of working together to solve security issues in the Caribbean therefore, will always be a fundamental aspect as to how we do business as long as these security issues continue to exist in this form and the people of the Caribbean continue to seek ways of providing a safe and secure environment that is conducive to the development of the region.

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<sup>i</sup> Joseph S. Tulchin and Ralph H Espach, “U.S. – Caribbean Security Relations in the Post-Cold War Era”, in *Security in the Caribbean Basin: The Challenge of Regional Cooperation*. edited by Joseph S. Tulchin and Ralph H Espach. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 2000, chapter 1. p.1.

<sup>ii</sup> Treaty Establishing The Regional Security System, provided to the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force from the Central Liaison Office of the Regional Security System.

<sup>iii</sup> See Rudyard Lewis for the conclusions reached by the Heads of CARICOM on matters of regional security in “Initiatives for Cooperative Regional Security: The Eastern Caribbean Regional Security System” in *Security in the Caribbean Basin: The Challenge of Regional Cooperation* edited by Joseph S. Tulchin and Ralph H. Espach p.178.

<sup>iv</sup> Ivelaw Griffith, “Security, Sovereignty and Public Order in the Caribbean” in *Security and Defence Studies Review. Volume 2 No. 1 Summer 2002*

<sup>v</sup> Anthony T. Bryan, J. Edward Greene and Timothy M. Shaw, *Peace Development and Security in the Caribbean: Perspectives to the year 2000*. edited by Anthony T. Bryan, Edward J. Greene and Timothy M. Shaw. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1990 p.xviii

<sup>vi</sup> Lloyd Best, “Reducing the CARICOM Task to Human Proportions” published in the *Trinidad and Tobago Review*, edited by Lloyd Best, May 2003, p. 3.