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## Public Summary

### U.S. Maritime Security Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean (2015-2019)

Department of Defense  
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

**Background.** The Department of War (DoW) sponsors strategic evaluations of security cooperation (SC) programs and activities pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 383 and DoD Instruction 5132.14, Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise. The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Global Partnerships (ODASW(GP)) and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) initiated regional strategic evaluations to measure strategic effects and implications of maritime security (MARSEC) initiatives by the DoW SC enterprise.

DoW commissioned the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), an independent federally funded research and development center, to conduct this strategic evaluation of DoW MARSEC efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The evaluation, “U.S. Maritime Security Cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Evaluation,” studied MARSEC SC activities conducted from 2015 to 2019. CNA published the final report in June 2020.

**Purpose.** This evaluation focused on two questions:

1. To what degree and how has U.S. MARSEC SC from 2015-2019 contributed to meeting U.S. strategic objectives in LAC at the country and regional levels?
2. What factors have influenced the effectiveness of MARSEC SC delivery and its outcomes in terms of achieving U.S. objectives?

**Scope.** CNA performed the evaluation using a mixed-methods comparative case study approach between August 2019 and June 2020, with a focus on regional counter-narcotics SC activities. DoW selected eight case study countries to ensure the evaluation included regional SC partner nations representing varying degrees of maritime capacity and capability across sub-regions (Caribbean, Central America, and South America) and examined: equipment and materiel transfer; personnel exchanges; and institutional capacity building programs including operational support, education, training, and military-to-military contacts. Through its analysis, CNA developed the following key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

### Findings.

- Effectiveness of U.S. MARSEC-related SC in LAC.
  - DoW MARSEC SC efforts, alone and along with those of interagency partners, had demonstrably positive results across all country cases. Capability building for maritime interdiction operations and improving interoperability were consistently successful.
  - Improved maritime cooperation among partners indicated progress in a long-term DoW effort to promote self-initiated regional SC and the counter-narcotics mission improved U.S. strategic interests in the region.

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- The U.S. military maintained or improved its already strong relations with partner forces across all eight cases.
- Some MARSEC SC programs included equipment that was not well suited to the capacity or capabilities of the partner forces, difficult to maintain or service locally, or otherwise unsuitable to local conditions and factors.
- The sustainability of these improved capabilities remained uncertain, as partners largely were reliant on the U.S. to support operational readiness and maintain assets.

### **Conclusions.**

- U.S. MARSEC SC largely achieved its goals of improving tactical capabilities for counter-narcotics interdiction operations and improved partner capabilities contributed to disrupting regional maritime narcotics shipments, particularly in the east Pacific Ocean.
- Significant risks remained to the sustainment of achieved outcomes as PNs relied on U.S.-provided training, fuel, supplies, infrastructure, and expertise. PN budget and manpower capacities are stretched when the U.S. provides advanced equipment and systems.
- Deficiencies in partner forces' executive and administrative capacities served as the principal limiting factor in program effectiveness but stemmed from broader national factors such as budgetary limitations; the prioritization of non-maritime defense efforts; widespread, institutionalized corruption.

### **Recommendations.**

- Sequence program inputs so that, when new equipment is to be provided, the recipient partner force also receives training and advising in how to integrate, man, deploy, and support that equipment before the equipment is delivered.
- Give preference to technologies that meet critical mission criteria but are relatively simple, easier to deploy with and use, and less costly to use and support.
- Prioritize training, advising, facilities, and other U.S. MARSEC SC in the areas of preventative maintenance, logistics and records-keeping, resource management at the force level (e.g., human resources and accounting), and strategic planning.
- Given Department of State investment in improving capabilities for drug interdiction, focus efforts on longer-term, institutional capacity building objectives.
- Encourage and, when appropriate, condition further U.S. SC on demonstrable partner efforts to improve resource and operational assessments and reporting, the administration and management of maritime security forces, and service-ministry communications and planning processes.