

*March 2013*

**Pushing the Limits of Security and Defense Cooperation  
Pathway to a North American Security Perimeter?**

*Dr. Richard D. Downie*



**Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies**

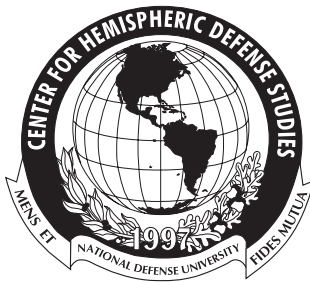
*National Defense University*





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## Foreword

Dr. Richard D. Downie, Ph.D., is the long-term (since 2004), former director of the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS) at the National Defense University. A former Army Colonel who also earned a doctorate in political science/international relations, Dr. Downie is an expert on guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency, and the author of many articles as well as the highly regarded book, *Learning from Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War*. His specializations include Latin America, Central America and the Caribbean, and, especially, Mexico.

In this paper, Dr. Downie examines the possibilities of a North American Security Perimeter. Such a security perimeter would include Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Already these three countries are closely linked through NAFTA, NORTHCOM, and a host of interdependency issues—trade, terrorism, energy, immigration, investment, labor supplies, to say nothing of drugs, gangs, and violence. Dr. Downie, however, seeks to examine the implications of coordination among the three North American countries going beyond our already deep interdependence to include full-fledged strategic, security, and defense cooperation at the very highest levels. His is not an advocacy position but he does set forth, practically and realistically, the steps that might lead to greater security coordination.

With his Army background, his CHDS experience, and his academic expertise on Mexico and Mexico-US relations, there is no one better positioned to examine these issues than Richard Downie. He knows Mexico intimately, knows both SOUTHCOM and NORTHCOM, and for the last nine years has focused professionally on the trilateral relations of Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

In this Occasional Paper, one of many recent and provocative studies published by CHDS, Dr. Downie asks if a North American Security Perimeter is even possible and achievable. He then assesses current North American bilateral and trilateral defense and security relations involving the three countries. Since this is a policy brief as well as a scholarly study, Downie next charts a notional course to a North American Security Perimeter, which involves the gradual, sequential, incremental building of cooperation based on common training, exercises, and threat. He is not Pollyannaish about any of these but sets forth a series of realistic, consensus-building steps to greater cooperation.

Downie does not understate the difficulties ahead. These include not just the complexities of US-Mexican relations but also, perhaps equally complex, US-Canadian and Canadian-Mexican relations. The tasks ahead are daunting but Downie has started an important discussion. I can't think of anyone better equipped than he, by training, background, and experience, to explore these complex and politically sensitive issues.

Howard J. Wiarda  
Associate Director for Research and Publications

# Pushing the Limits of Security and Defense Cooperation: Pathway to a North American Security Perimeter?

## I. Introduction

Is a North American Security Perimeter even possible? Optimism surged in 2005 regarding the possibility of trilateral security efforts. Canada, the US, and Mexico had already made promising efforts toward North American integration. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), established in 1994, had tripled trade and created new jobs at historic rates. The inauguration of the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) in 2005 appeared to be a significant step toward greater alignment among the three countries in the security sector.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the joint statement by then-Presidents George Bush and Vicente Fox and Prime Minister Paul Martin in Waco, Texas, in 2005 highlighted that “our security and prosperity are mutually dependent and complementary.” The academic literature at that time encouraged and boldly set the goal of a North American Security Perimeter—a common security and defense posture—highlighting that the three countries faced common security threats and dangers and shared democratic principles.<sup>2</sup>

Achieving a North American Security Perimeter would entail intense cooperation among the security and defense-related organizations and forces of the three countries. Moreover, given the current political and security-related resistance in Canada, the US, and Mexico,<sup>3</sup> such an undertaking could be a very long-range project. For instance, Mexicans are particularly concerned about sovereignty issues and are loathe to consider any initiative that would result in outside intervention and regulation regarding their domestic affairs.<sup>4</sup> The US also has concerns regarding sovereignty, as well as the impact of illegal immigration, transnational organized crime, and corruption in Mexico.<sup>5</sup> Canada has had a longstanding arrangement with the US in terms of border access and bi-national military relations. Canadians fear that by standardizing rules in a trilateral arrangement, they could lose some of the preferential access to the US market and other advantages they currently enjoy as a result of their long and close relationship with the US.<sup>6</sup> These concerns are certainly valid from the

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<sup>1</sup> On 23 March 2005, the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) initiated cooperative approaches to: secure North America from external threat; prevent and respond to threats within North America; streamline the secure, efficient movement of legitimate and low-risk traffic across shared borders; and promote economic growth.

<sup>2</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, *Building a North American Community: Report of an Independent Task Force* (2005), <http://www.cfr.org/canada/building-north-american-community/p8102>.

<sup>3</sup> This article will use the convention of listing the countries of North America from north to south: Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

<sup>4</sup> Agnes Gereben Schaefer, et. al., “Security in Mexico: Implications for US Policy Options,” The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2009, p. xxiii.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Pastor, “North America or Asia? The 21st-Century Choice for the United States,” *Perspectives on the Americas*, Center for Hemispheric Policy, University of Miami, January 23, 2012. See [https://www6.miami.edu/hemispheric-policy/Perspectives\\_on\\_the\\_Americas/Pastor-NorthAmerica\\_or\\_Asia-FINAL.pdf](https://www6.miami.edu/hemispheric-policy/Perspectives_on_the_Americas/Pastor-NorthAmerica_or_Asia-FINAL.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Joel J. Sokolsky, “Suspenders and a Belt: Perimeter and Border Security in Canada-US Relations,” *Canadian Foreign Policy*, vol. 12, no. 3 (January 2005). See also Rick Kilroy, “Perimeter Defense and Regional Security cooperation in North America: United States, Canada, and Mexico,” *Homeland Security Affairs*, Supplement Number 1 (2007), [www.HSJA.org](http://www.HSJA.org); and Robert A. Pastor, “The Road





Canadian Defense Minister Peter MacKay, center left, meets with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, center right, at the Old City Hall in Ottawa, Canada, January 27, 2011. Gates was in Canada to attend trilateral meetings with his counterparts from Canada and Mexico, but the Mexican defense minister fell ill.

perspective of each country and will take significant time to address.

Perhaps as a result of these concerns, the enthusiasm for trilateral institutions seems to have stalled since 2005. The three countries did not meet within the framework of the SPP in 2010. The trilateral SPP meeting scheduled for February 2011 was postponed in favor of a sidebar between the three heads of state following the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Hawaii in November 2011. That meeting was again postponed until April 2012, when Mexico's president did not attend the APEC Summit.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, from a trilateral perspective, the joint February 2011 announcement by US President Barack Obama and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper of a US/Canadian Security Perimeter appear to dim prospects of progress toward a common approach among the three countries.<sup>8</sup>

Despite this fading optimism for trilateralism, the issue of how best to synchronize and achieve security and defense sector cooperation as a complement to economic and political linkages remains open for discussion. Other works have touched on whether the establishment of a North American Security Perimeter is a good or a bad idea, or whether it is even possible.<sup>9</sup> This article focuses on a topic that other works have not considered in detail: what specific steps would actually be required—over whatever timeline is necessary—to accomplish the goal of a North American Security Perimeter? These steps include the implementation of national, bilateral, and trilateral initiatives designed to build the confi-

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to Washington Runs through Mexico," *The Toronto Star*, 23 January, 2012, <http://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorialopinion/article/1119080--the-road-to-washington-runs-through-mexico>. Robert Pastor holds the contrary view that Canada does not currently have an advantageous arrangement with the United States regarding border access, and that Canada would improve its access to the US border if the rule were "trilateralized." See Robert Pastor, *The North American Idea: A Vision of a Continental Future*, Oxford University Press, June 2011; especially chapters 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> President Calderon did not attend the 2011 APEC Summit because of the death of his interior minister, Francisco Blake Mora, who died in a helicopter crash on November 11, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> "Declaration by President Obama and Prime Minister Harper of Canada—Beyond the Border," Office of the Press Secretary, Office of the President of the United States, February 4, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/02/04/declaration-president-obama-and-prime-minister-harper-canada-beyond-bord>.

<sup>9</sup> See as noted above, the Council on Foreign Relations report, as well as the articles by Joel Sokolsky and Rick Kilroy.

dence, trust, competence, cooperation, and interoperability necessary to realize such a dramatic objective. The first section assesses the current structure of bilateral and trilateral cooperation among the three countries in the security and defense sector. The second section offers a notional pathway to trilateral security coordination and a North American Security Perimeter. This approach proposes incremental actions that could lead toward the increased trust, competence, and interoperability required to create a security perimeter arrangement in which the integrated efforts of the three countries would be stronger than those of any single country. The final section presents concluding remarks.

## **II. Assessing the Status of Bilateral and Trilateral Security and Defense Relations in North America**

To assess bilateral and trilateral relations between Canada, the US, and Mexico, a baseline is necessary. This section offers a spectrum of bilateral and multilateral security and defense relations from conflict to cooperation (Chart 1) as an analytical tool to make that evaluation. Based on the resulting analysis, the following briefly describes the current status of relations between: Canada and the US; the US and Mexico; Mexico and Canada; and finally, the status of the trilateral relationship.

Chart 1 is essentially a double-sided arrow with a scale of actions showing a graduated list of confidence-building measures from conflict to alliance. At the extreme left end of the arrow is conflict. Successive steps toward the right end of the arrow lead to greater cooperation. The highest level of cooperation is denoted by an integrated multilateral alliance structure that includes civilian and military entities. The intermediate steps indicated between the two ends of the spectrum include:

- The establishment of sanctions by one country against another.
- No relationship.
- The establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries.
- Security and defense representatives from one or both countries attend the other country's military schools.
- The countries agree to develop a defense or security working group, or establish a board or commission to address bilateral security and defense issues.
- One country provides support to the other in a crisis (such as a natural disaster).
- The countries exchange liaison officers to facilitate communications between command structures.
- The countries will engage in combined operations that involve security and/or defense representatives or units.
- The countries engage in combined security or defense exercises.
- Bilateral security or military-to-military agreements are established.
- The security and/or defense forces coordinate standard operating procedures (SOPs) to enhance coordination and greater interoperability between their forces.
- The two countries coordinate their operational doctrine to align training, education, and equipment purchases to increase interoperability.

- One or both of the countries participate actively in a security or military command in the other country.
- The countries establish formal security or defense treaties.
- A bi-national security or defense organization is established.
- A bi-national organization is formed that includes and integrates a range of civilian agencies as well as defense and security entities.
- An integrated multinational organization is formed that includes both civilian agencies as well as security and defense elements from each country.

A significant obstacle toward the establishment of a North American Security Perimeter is the belief that the political, operational, and technical measures necessary to achieve this goal are simply too difficult to overcome. Nevertheless, as the creation of the bilateral NORAD command proved, such hurdles could be surmounted. Today, we take for granted that the US and Canada developed procedures respectful of each nation's national security prerogatives involving critical security and defense tasks of both countries. Yet prior to the command's establishment, the bi-national agreements necessary to approve those tasks were considered very difficult, if not unattainable. During the Cold War, the US feared Canada could be lax in preparing for and mobilizing in a crisis to intercept nuclear armed aircraft. The US believed it would bear the burden of a nuclear attack while Canada avoided damage. To address these concerns, the two countries implemented procedures giving NORAD's US Commander and Canadian Deputy Commander operational control over forces assigned to the command from both countries.<sup>10</sup> In short, Canada and the US successfully surmounted sensitive political obstacles by developing the procedures and protocols necessary for NORAD to operate effectively.

Currently, concerns regarding sovereignty evoke lowered expectations toward trilateral integration of national security and defense prerogatives. Nevertheless, we live in a dynamic threat environment. Political considerations can change. The tragedy of 9/11 dramatically shifted our focus and perceptions of our most important security challenges and the actions we were willing to take in response. Following those terrible events, all three nations recognized that an attack on one nation affected the safety, security, economies, and well-being of all three North American countries.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, during the administration of Felipe Calderon (2006–2012), the US and Mexico have advanced dramatically in their cooperation to address transnational organized crime. We cannot rule out the possibility of another security challenge that could once again instantaneously shift our threat perspectives. Correspondingly, our countries might then be willing to adapt policies that now serve as barriers to a North American Security Perimeter.

Clearly, the most successful security arrangements have been those shaped by shared perceptions of imminent threats.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, we could one day very well determine that greater synchronization and integration among the security and defense entities of North America were required. The

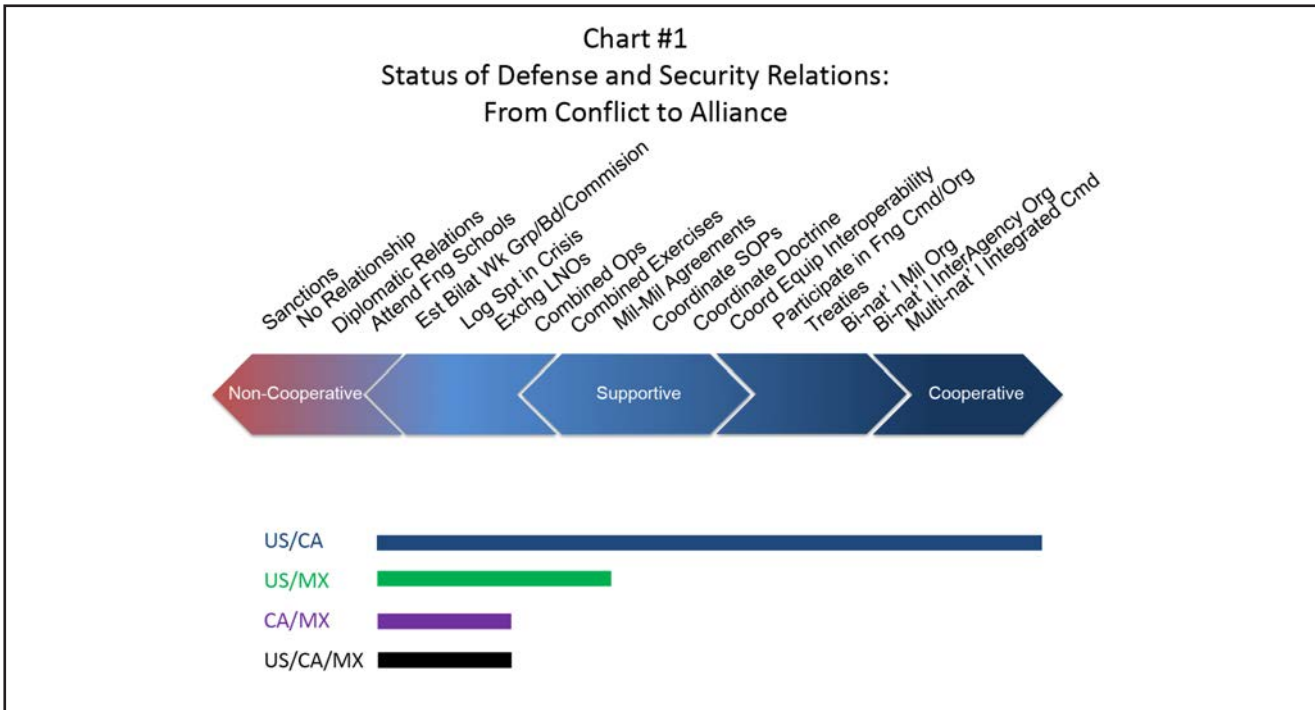
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<sup>10</sup> The command also follows defense plans outlined by the two governments. All other aspects of command of national forces fell to the national components.

<sup>11</sup> *Global Strategic Assessment*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., 2009, p. 349.

<sup>12</sup> Kilroy, p. 10.





author hopes the presentation of this notional pathway toward a North American Security Perimeter may stimulate dialogue regarding the feasibility of whether such a goal could become reality.

### A. Status of the Canada/US Relationship

The line in Chart 1 delineating the Canada/US bilateral relationship indicates a mature, consolidated partnership. The US and Canada have had an established defense relationship since 1940, when President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Mackenzie King formed the Permanent Joint Board on Defense (PJBD).<sup>13</sup> Since then, Canada and the US have signed more than 2,500 agreements to strengthen their joint defense.<sup>14</sup> Following WWII, the US and Canada established the Military Cooperation Committee, and both became founding members of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO). Most emblematic of the close relationship is the North American Aerospace Defense command (NORAD), created in 1957. This bi-national American and Canadian military command provides aerospace warning and control and maritime warning for North America. NORAD has a US commander and a Canadian deputy commander, who have command authority over forces from both countries assigned to NORAD.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, two major Canadian and US joint military organizations, Canada's Joint Operations Command and the US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), function independently but

<sup>13</sup> The PJBD is a senior advisory body on continental defense and a strategic-level military board that considers land, sea, air, and space issues and is composed of military and diplomatic representatives from both nations.

<sup>14</sup> Canadian Forces Canada Command, "Canada Command: The Canada - U.S. Partnership on Security and Defence," March 3, 2011, <http://www.canadacom.forces.gc.ca/nr-sp/bg-do/11-001-canusa-eng.asp>.

<sup>15</sup> For example, a Canadian general was in charge during the response to the hijackings on September 11, 2001, and directed the operations of both US and Canadian aircraft assigned to NORAD.



The Commander of Canada Command, Lieutenant-General Walter Semianiw (left) and the Commander of NORAD and United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), General Charles H. Jacoby Jr., signed military-to-military documents in Ottawa on January 25, 2012, to enhance defense cooperation between Canada and the United States. Photo: Cpl. Kevin Sauvé, courtesy of the Canadian Department of National Defence.

have established close relationships and, when necessary, work together with supporting agencies to ensure timely, coordinated responses to defense and security challenges to Canada and the United States.<sup>16</sup> In 2011, Canada Command assigned a full-time liaison officer to the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).<sup>17</sup> The bar underneath the arrow delineating the US/Canada relationship spans the entire spectrum leading to alliance, given these extensive linkages.

## **B. Status of the US/Mexico Relationship**

The history of the US/Mexico security and defense relationship has been thorny.<sup>18</sup> From the Mexican perspective, sensitivities and tensions between the two countries stem from past US interventions, through which Mexico lost vast stretches of territory. Most in the US consider such facts to be ancient history. However, Mexicans, especially members of the armed forces, have maintained a distant, noncommittal relationship toward their US counterparts.<sup>19</sup> These tensions notwithstanding, the US and Mexico send students to each other's military schools, have had a Joint Mexico-US Defense Commission (JMUSDC) since World War II, and established a bilateral working group in 1996 that

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<sup>16</sup> Canada Command, established in 2006, is the Canadian Forces organization responsible for all routine and contingency Canadian Forces operations in Canada and continental North America, Mexico, and the Western hemisphere. USNORTHCOM, established in 2002, is the US Unified (Joint Force) Command with the mission of protecting the United States homeland and providing support to local, state, and federal authorities.

<sup>17</sup> In a major restructuring of the Canadian Forces in May 2012, Canada Command was merged with the Canadian Expeditionary Force Command and the Canadian Operational Support Command to form the Canadian Joint Operations Command.

<sup>18</sup> For a more extensive discussion, see Alan Riding, *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans* (New York: Vintage Books), 2000. See also Richard Downie, "Critical Strategic Decisions in Mexico: The Future of US/Mexican Defense Relations," Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, Occasional Paper, vol. 1, no. 1, (July 2011).

<sup>19</sup> Mexican "distance" from the US has not been a constant factor throughout US/Mexican history. For example, after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt accepted Mexico's nationalization of the oil industry, Mexico entered WWII. Indeed, the Mexican Air Force Squadron 201, "The Aztec Eagles," provided air cover for US troops in the Philippines during the war.

worked successfully for about three years before the relationship returned to its formerly “distant” status. Mexico and the US have also provided each other logistical support during crises. The Mexican military provided assistance to the US (on US soil) following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. An important improvement in the US/Mexican defense relationship occurred during the presidency of Felipe Calderon (2006–2012), who ordered the Mexican Armed Forces to work with their US counterparts in combating transnational organized crime. Subsequently, the US and Mexican militaries made significant steps toward bilateral cooperation (although public revelations of US diplomatic cables and other issues did strain the relationship over the past year). These included Mexican acceptance of US training and equipment and the deployment of Mexican Army/Air Force and Navy liaison officers to USNORTHCOM. Furthermore, the United States has assisted with information-sharing operations in Mexico. To date, the US and Mexico have not conducted combined military exercises. Accordingly, the bar delineating the US/Mexico relationship spans to “Combined Operations.”

### **C. Status of the Canada/Mexico Relationship**

The Canada/Mexico relationship is nascent, but growing. Mexican students attend Canadian training courses and seminars. Additionally, Mexico has had a part-time liaison officer at Canada Command since 2009. With the recent designation of Canadian Joint Operations Command (previously Canada Command) as the military organization responsible for Canada’s military outreach to all the countries of the Western Hemisphere, defense coordination between Canada and Mexico has increased. Based on a variety of recent contacts, there is great expectation that wider interaction will occur soon. For that reason (which some could consider a generous assessment), the bar delineating the Canada/Mexico relationship goes toward the establishment of working groups to address Canadian/Mexican interaction.

### **D. Status of Trilateral Canada/US/Mexico Relationship**

In spite of NAFTA and initial actions related to the SPP, the three countries are not organized for trilateral relations, particularly in the security sector. This analysis highlights that “dual bilateralism” reigns; Canada, the US, and Mexico give priority to their bilateral relations rather than to the formation of trilateral institutions.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, the most substantial efforts in the security and defense sectors have been bilateral. The most significant trilateral security and defense interaction has been the SPP, which has not been active recently. For that reason the bar underneath the arrow delineating the Canada/US/Mexico relationship ranges to the establishment of a commission that addresses trilateral security issues.

Given this current state of “dual bilateralism,” can these positive bilateral security relationships translate into and help foster the establishment of greater trilateral security and defense relations? To move toward “trilateralism,” the most expeditious and efficacious approach would most likely be for the three countries to build upon existing national and bilateral institutions. The alternative, jumping

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Pastor popularized this term; see, for example, “Invited Testimony of Dr. Robert A. Pastor, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade,” House of Commons, Government of Canada, Ottawa, Canada, February 7, 2002; <http://www1.american.edu/ia/cnas/pdfs/PastorTestimonyCanada.pdf>. See also Robert Pastor, “North America’s Second Decade,” *Foreign Affairs* (Jan.-Feb. 2004), pp 124-135.

immediately to the establishment of trilateral institutions, would not be feasible for many entities due to insufficient current capabilities and a lack of international experience. For example, the US and Canada have extensive background working together in operations conducted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the North American Aerospace Defense Command. On the other hand, Mexico has no real experience in multinational operations or international peacekeeping and has neither the doctrine nor the staff to facilitate coalition-type activities. Hence, there would be a requirement to build and institutionalize Mexico's capability to conduct multinational operations. From that perspective, the following section offers a "building block" approach along a notional path toward trilateralism and the establishment of a North American Security Perimeter.

### **III. Charting a Notional Course to a North American Security Perimeter**

Previous works addressing potential future options for the North American Community have primarily focused on economic and border infrastructure issues.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the most ambitious and difficult goal possible toward trilateralism would be the establishment of a perimeter around the three countries. Such an objective would entail the integration of security and defense force efforts to halt terrorists, transnational organized crime, and weapons of mass destruction and to confront other threats attempting to operate inside North America. What confidence-building measures and other concrete steps could ultimately lead toward the intense level of collaboration necessary to create a viable North American Security Perimeter?

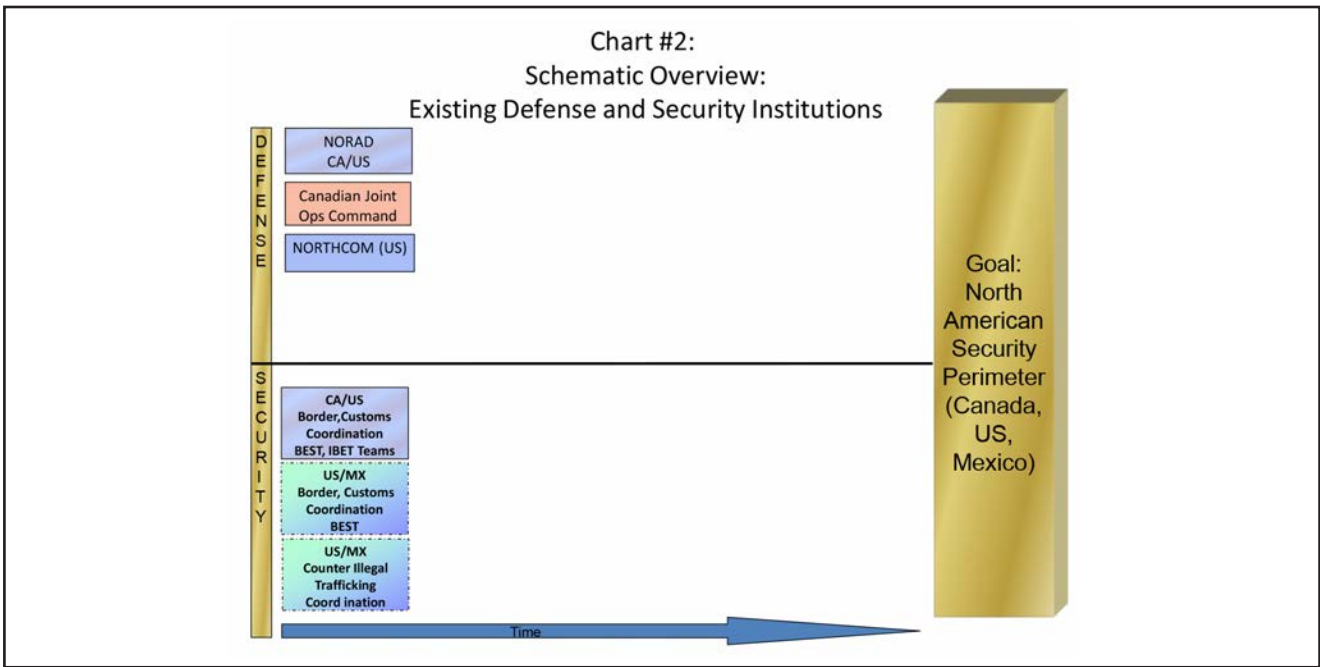
The pathway toward a North American Security Perimeter described in this section is heuristic in nature. These are a set of sequential intermediate actions that could help improve trilateral cooperation, while moving toward the ultimate goal of achieving a North American Security Perimeter. Clearly, each step in this process should serve as a building block for a foundation of trust, competence, and confidence leading toward a high level of interoperability and cooperation. This work presumes that efforts toward integration will result from a gradual and sequential process building on common threat assessments, training, exercises, and combined operations rather than a single bold leap. Each country must achieve certain levels of competence and capacity in specific areas before interoperability can occur. From this perspective it makes sense for the countries to start working together in those areas where bi-national institutions exist, or areas in which significant cooperation, experience, interest, and focus are present. Later, as the foundation of confidence and trust grows among the three countries, other functional areas will be addressed.

The reader may find Charts 2–6 to be helpful in following the sequence of the proposed steps, leading to the establishment of a North American Security Perimeter. Chart 2 depicts the general structure of these charts and denotes existing military and security organizations on which subsequent steps will build. The top half of Chart 2 indicates actions relating to the realm of the defense sector (military-to-military actions); the bottom half of the chart indicates actions that relate to the security sector

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<sup>21</sup> See, for example, the Council on Foreign Relations report cited above and Robert Pastor, "A North American Community Approach to Security," Testimony Invited by the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 9, 2005.





(essentially police and civilian public security activities). On the right side of Chart 2 is a box with the title of the desired end state: “Goal: North American Security Perimeter (Canada, US, Mexico).” The arrow at the bottom of the slide pointing from left to right indicates time moving toward the achievement of the goal. Proposed actions that cross the divide between defense and security sector actions will be on the line that separates the defense and security portions of the chart.

Some defense sector actions will be taken nearly simultaneously with actions in the security sector. However, for ease of presentation, Chart 3 isolates proposed defense sector actions; Chart 4 isolates actions in the security sector; Chart 5 isolates actions that cross the defense/security sector divide. Finally, Chart 6 shows all of the steps on a single diagram; the number indicated for each step corresponds with its proposed sequencing.

### **A. Proposed Defense Sector Actions (see Charts 2–3)**

Existing security and defense institutions would serve as a foundation for steps leading toward a tri-lateral arrangement. As shown in Chart 2, NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canada Command are existing, complementary military organizations on which to build greater trilateral cooperation and interoperability. As indicated above, jumping too quickly to create a tri-national organization from a bi-national institution may be problematic and counterproductive. For example, some analysts have suggested that Mexico should join NORAD because of the benefits of expanding maritime and aerospace coverage in North America.<sup>22</sup> Without the joint service operational experience and sophisticated infrastructure and equipment with which the US and Canada have operated for years, Mexico would join this very mature organization as a junior partner in a de facto subordinate role.

<sup>22</sup> James Jay Carafano, Jenna Baker McNeill, et al (July 27, 2010), “Expand NORAD to Improve Security in North America” Background, no 2443. [http://thf\\_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2010/pdf/bg2443.pdf](http://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2010/pdf/bg2443.pdf).



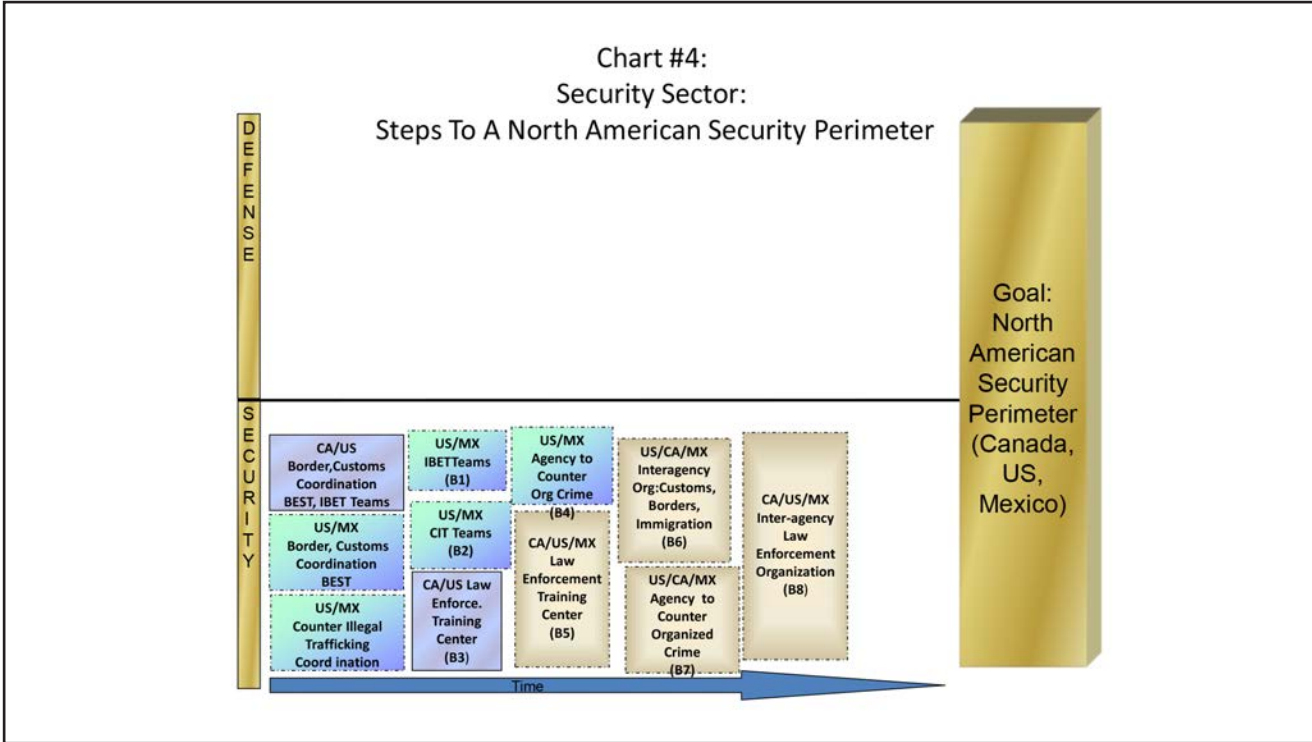
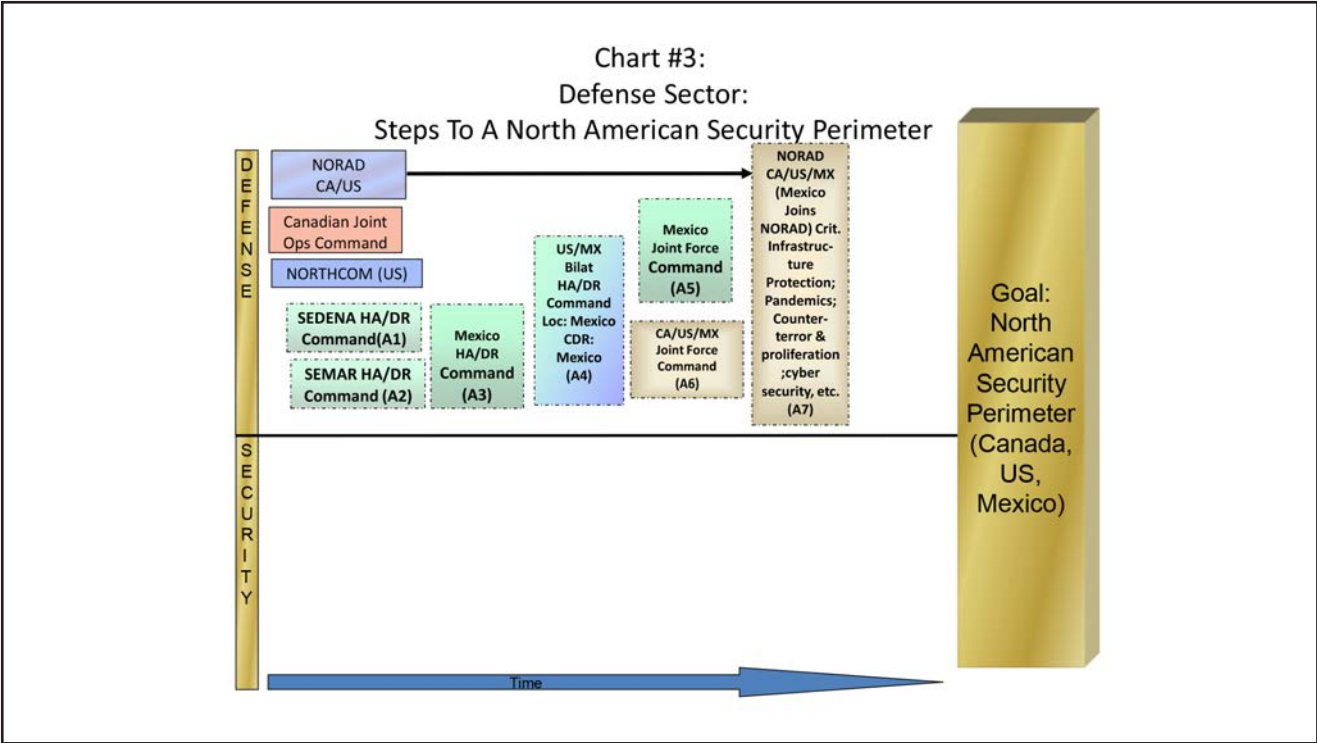


Chart #5:  
Combined Defense-Security Sectors:  
Steps To A North American Security Perimeter

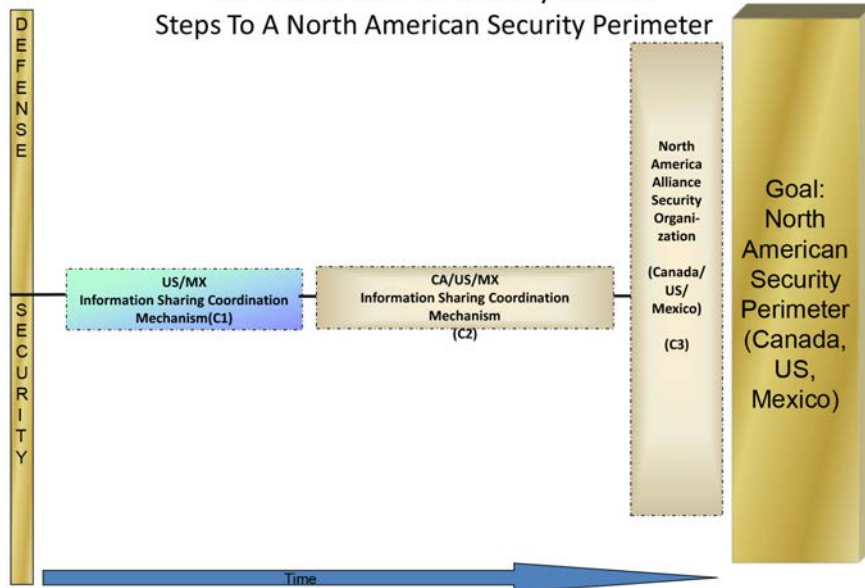
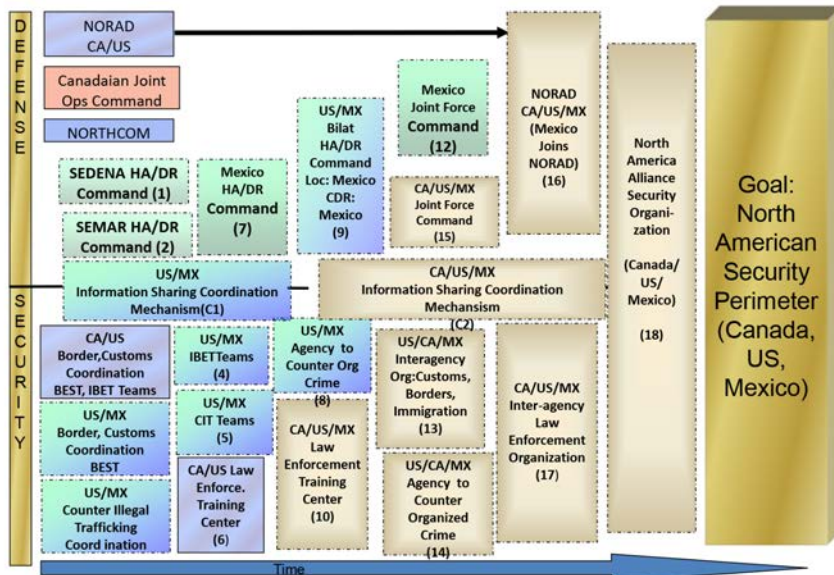


Chart #6:  
Steps To A North American Security Perimeter?



Mexico does not have a specific, permanent command responsible for supporting disaster relief comparable to the roles that Canada Command and USNORTHCOM perform for their respective countries. Furthermore, Mexico does not have a secretariat that corresponds to a civilian ministry of defense, or a Joint Staff structure that coordinates and integrates the efforts of the military services. Mexico has a separate Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) for the Army and Air Force and a Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR) over the Navy and Marine Corps. Accordingly, several measures could be required to move these organizations toward a trilateral institution. Some useful first steps would entail both SEDENA and SEMAR forming permanent commands that address humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, or Mexico's equivalent of what Canada and the US call "Defense Support of Civil Authority" (DSCA).

Certainly, Mexico's entry into NORAD would be very useful. However, a number of confidence and capacity-building measures should be accomplished first. Starting in functional areas in which Mexico has significant experience and interest and where coordination efforts are already under way may be a more productive in advancing toward trilateral interoperability.

***A1. Mexico's Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) Creates a Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Command.*** Disaster relief is an area in which Mexican, US, and Canadian armed forces already have established infrastructure. For decades, Mexican armed forces have been charged with the responsibility to conduct disaster relief operations under what Mexico calls Plan Defensa Nacional-III. The Mexican military is justifiably proud of their success in this area. However, SEDENA does not have a specific command that focuses on the coordination of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. This step envisions the creation of a SEDENA (Army/Air Force) command designed to consolidate the coordination of all Army and Air Force humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations throughout Mexico.

***A2. Mexico's Secretary of the Navy (SEMAR) Creates Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Command.*** As noted above, the Navy in Mexico has a separate command structure from the Army and the Air Force. The Navy is under the command of the Secretary of the Navy, who holds a cabinet-level position. Accordingly, the Navy conducts separate humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations from the Army and Air Force. SEMAR does not have a specific command with the responsibility to coordinate the Navy's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. This step envisions the creation of a command within SEMAR designed to consolidate the coordination of all Navy and Marine Corps humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations throughout Mexico.

***A3. Mexico Creates a Joint Force Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Command.*** Once SEDENA and SEMAR have formed their own separate humanitarian assistance/disaster relief commands, the next step could be the formation of a Mexican Joint Service Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Command. This command would have an integrated SEDENA and SEMAR command and operational structure, whose leaders, staff, and forces would be responsible for the coordination of all humanitarian as-

sistance, disaster relief, and DSCA delivered by a Mexican armed forces. A joint organization of this nature would help Mexican armed forces orchestrate the operations of the forces of the Army and Air Force, as well as the Navy and Marines. Those joint operations would provide experience in coordinating the kind of joint force operations that are common in Canada and the US. The creation of such a joint force command would be a major step for Mexico, placing Mexico in a position to operate in a manner consistent with the joint force structure of Canada Command and USNORTHCOM.

Both the Canadian Joint Operations Command and USNORTHCOM have a significant mission focus on DSCA.<sup>23</sup> Military forces in the US become involved in disaster relief efforts when a crisis situation overwhelms the capabilities of local and state officials. If Mexico established a Joint Force HA/DR command, the three commands could begin to develop similar operating procedures. This action would lay the foundation for a subsequent step allowing all three countries to work in an integrated manner in a crisis. The three nations have worked together before in this area, but were hampered by a lack of standard operating procedures. To wit, Mexican and Canadian Armed Forces assistance in the relief effort in the US Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was symbolically very important. However, the lack of pre-coordinated procedures in this multinational effort engendered problems with US laws and required certifications, such that the much-needed food and medicine brought by the Mexican Military could not be given to the victims.<sup>24</sup>

***A4. The US and Mexico Create a Bi-national Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Command—Located in Mexico with a Mexican Leader.*** With the experience Mexico will have after forming its Joint Force Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Command, there may be a useful opportunity to create a bi-national US/Mexican humanitarian assistance/disaster relief command. This organization would consolidate the coordination of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations for the US and Mexico. This significant step forward will entail the creation of operating procedures, training, and coordination of available resources to deal with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in the US and Mexico.

The location of this new bi-national organization should be in Mexico. The leader of this organization should also be a Mexican. The establishment of such an organization will demand a major socialization process for both countries to learn to work together. Developing bi-national standard operating procedures is sufficiently difficult. Locating this organization in Mexico would also allow both countries to become accustomed to the direction of these functional activities from Mexico. Finally, having a Mexican leader for this organization will provide Mexico great prestige, while simultaneously placing a major burden of authority on Mexico—which would provide useful experience for all involved in this initiative.

***A5. Mexico Creates a Joint Force Command (similar to the Canadian Joint Operations Command***

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<sup>23</sup> For example, the commanders of Canada Command and USNORTHCOM approved a civil assistance plan in 2008 to provide guidance for military-to-military assistance to civilian agencies in the event of disasters. NORAD, USNORTHCOM, and Canada command have completed significant work in bi-national homeland defense and homeland security exercise planning and execution to enhance seamless interoperability among staffs, subordinate commands, and more than 30 federal agencies.

<sup>24</sup> Discussions with US, Mexican, and Canadian military personnel, Washington, D.C., August, 2006.

*and USNORTHCOM*). For Canada, the US, and Mexico to work together effectively, the countries need to achieve a certain level of interoperability. Canada and the US have worked for over 50 years together in NORAD as well as in NATO, but the Mexican forces have focused on internal challenges, and have not engaged in international coalition operations, except to support international humanitarian relief/disaster response efforts. Moreover, as noted, the Mexican armed forces do not have a single ministry of defense or a joint force structure through which to coordinate joint service actions. In other words, there is no single point of contact or staff in Mexico through which to coordinate; international actions must be coordinated separately through SEDENA (for the army and air force) and through SEMAR (for the navy and marines).

Since 1986, the US has had a geographic combatant command system through which a single commander (regardless of branch of service) commanded land, sea, and air forces in an overseas theater. Similarly, Canada's Joint Operations Command is responsible for deploying land, air, and sea forces for operations in Canada and continental North America, Mexico, and the Western Hemisphere. In contrast, the Mexican armed services do not operate routinely as a joint force, so inter-service coordination of operations is not routine. The creation of this joint command in Mexico would establish the basis for seamless communication among all the military forces of the three countries.

***A6. Canada Joins the US/Mexico Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Command Located in Mexico.*** This step would enhance the foundation for tri-national coordination and level the playing field among the three nations in the important sector of humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and consequence management.

***A7. Mexico Joins NORAD.*** As mentioned above, the inclusion of Mexico into NORAD will be an important and very useful step forward in terms of tri-national cooperation—if/when accomplished at the appropriate time. NORAD has adapted flexibly to address changing threat scenarios since its creation in 1957, while ensuring respect for each nation's sovereignty concerns. Previous steps described above would allow Mexico to gain experience working international actions with joint force structures in less controversial functional areas. This sequencing brings Mexico into a tri-national command structure that could handle security and defense-related activities. At that point, Mexico should be able to integrate confidently into an organization focused on security challenges that are common to the three countries. Mexico will also contribute measurably from a substantive perspective. The inclusion of Mexico's civilian and military air traffic radar information would fill important gaps in NORAD's Surveillance Data Network, greatly enhancing the aerial and maritime surveillance capabilities of all three countries.<sup>25</sup>

Even more important, this step would help create a common strategic vision across the three North American countries.<sup>26</sup> Given sufficient time following Mexico's entry into NORAD, this three-nation command could take on additional tasks and missions that would help build a common operating framework in a variety of sectors related to defense and security. These could include sup-

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<sup>25</sup> Lawrence Spinetta, "Expanding North American Aerospace Defense," *Air and Space Power Journal*, 3rd qtr., 2005, at <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/apj-s/2005/2tri05/spinettaeng.html>.

<sup>26</sup> Carafano, et al., p. 1.



port to agencies combating transnational criminal organizations, the protection of critical infrastructure, pandemic prevention and consequence management, counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, as well as cyber security.

## **B. Proposed Security Sector Actions**

The following steps seek to build on cooperative security sector actions involving police and public security forces already in progress among Canada, the US, and Mexico. A level of cooperation exists among law enforcement and security organizations in the three countries. The suggested actions in this section seek to institutionalize and capitalize on these cooperative programs. The most advanced, extant initiatives relate to cooperation regarding border enforcement operations, such as Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BEST) and Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBET).

***Trilateral Border Cooperation: BEST Teams.*** The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has partnered with US federal, state, and local, as well as Canadian and Mexican, law enforcement authorities to create the Border Enforcement Security Task Forces initiative. Deployed in 22 seaports and other critical locations along the Canada/US and US/Mexican borders and in the US and Mexico, multi-agency teams seek to identify, disrupt, and dismantle criminal organizations that pose threats to border security. These teams were formed to increase information sharing and collaboration on both sides of the border. They incorporate personnel from: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) on the Canadian side; the US's ICE, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), US Coast Guard (USCG), and Attorney General's Office; and Mexico's Secretariat of Public Security.<sup>27</sup>

***Canada/US Customs, Immigration, and Border Cooperation: The IBET Program.*** In addition to cooperation through the BEST Teams, Canada and the US have also established the bilateral IBET program. These teams are designed to enhance security between designated points of entry along the Canada/US border by identifying, investigating, and interdicting organized criminal activity and persons, organizations, and goods that threaten the national security of one or both countries.<sup>28</sup> Members of five Canadian and US law enforcement agencies comprise the IBETs, including: the RCMP, the CBSA, the CBP, the ICE and the USCG. This bi-national partnership enables Canada and the US to work together on a daily basis to enhance the sharing of information and intelligence necessary to secure their shared border while respecting the laws of each country. The structural international requirements as well as the procedures that were required to make this initiative possible will also be a useful model for cooperation with Mexico.

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<sup>27</sup> For additional information, see the ICE website, <http://www.ice.gov/news/library/factsheets/best/html>.

<sup>28</sup> For more information, see the Royal Canadian Mounted Police website, <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ibet-eipf/index-eng.htm>.



International Border Enforcement Team, U.S. and Canada.

***B1. US/Mexico Establish an IBET Program.*** Using the Canada/US IBET model, the US and Mexico build cooperative measures to jointly coordinate and enforce their customs, integration, and border operations. Given concerns regarding evidence of corruption—on both sides of the border in this area—vetting of personnel must be a priority for this organization.

***B2. Create US/Mexico Interagency Teams to Counter Illicit Trafficking and Organized Crime.***

This step envisions a level of coordination and integration of effort in the counter illicit trafficking area similar to that of the IBETs in the area of border enforcement. A key advancement would be the initiation of routine joint operations on both sides of the border, based on shared information among the DEA, the ATF, and the FBI and their Mexican counterparts through the SSP.<sup>29</sup> Such coordination should be focused on the acquisition, sharing, and safekeeping of law enforcement information and intelligence that has been developed by both countries. As noted above, concerns regarding corruption will be a priority for this organization. Periodic vetting and security checks, constant monitoring, and a system of internal review to ensure accountability will be necessary elements in creating a cadre of trusted individuals who can operate in this highly sensitive environment. Such measures are required to assure officials on both sides of the border that a trusted group of dedicated law enforcement officers can be created who can effectively carry out operations against transnational organized crime. Accomplishing this task would be a monumental confidence-building measure toward the establishment of a solid foundation toward greater law enforcement cooperation.

<sup>29</sup> See “United States–Canada: Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness Action Plan,” The White House, Washington, D.C., December 2011, pp. iv, 3.



Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Mike Mullen attend a meeting hosted by Mexico's Secretary of the Navy Adm. Mariano Francisco Saynez Mendoza and Secretary of National Defense Gen. Guillermo Galván Galván in Mexico City, March 23, 2010. Gates and Mullen were in the region along with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to attend a Mérida Initiative plenary meeting. The Mérida Initiative is a security cooperation between the United States, Mexico, and countries of Central America that is aimed at combating drug-trafficking cartels and other security and criminal threats.

***B3. Canada and the US Establish a Combined Law Enforcement Training Center.*** Training is a critical function in developing a common frame of reference among law enforcement officials. The importance of integrated training is evident among the variety of US law enforcement agencies such as the FBI and state and local law enforcement entities who must work together on a variety of issues. Having a combined Law Enforcement Training Center does several things. First, it ensures that the training received by participants from both countries is consistent so that all trainees learn and know the same laws and requirements. Second, participants from the two countries get to know one another, decreasing resistance toward the possibility of future combined operations. Finally, training together as bi-national teams in a learning environment makes future combined operations along the real border or in other bi-national law enforcement scenarios less threatening or problematic and more routine. Because of the strong cooperation that already exists between Canada and the US in the security sector, this step of creating a Canada/US law enforcement training center is an option that will build on past successes.

***B4. Create a US/Mexico Interagency Organization to Coordinate Bilateral Efforts to Combat Organized Crime.*** Capitalizing on the momentum of the cooperation established through the implementation of routine combined operations, the next logical step would be to institutionalize that coordination through the creation of an integrated US/Mexico interagency organization. The function of this international and interagency entity would be to serve as the focal point for the facilitation and coordination of all US and Mexican efforts to combat illegal trafficking of drugs and other materials.



**B5. Mexico Joins the Canada/US Law Enforcement Training Center.** Building on and applying lessons learned from the establishment of the Canada/US Law Enforcement Training Center, this step envisions Mexico joining and sending its law enforcement officials to the new Trilateral Law Enforcement Training Center. As noted above, having Mexican officials train with their Canada and US counterparts will be an important step in both the socialization of the concept of trilateral security operations and the establishment of personal relationships. Moreover this center can help develop the doctrines, processes, and operating procedures regarding how the three countries will work together in combined law enforcement functions and operations.

**B6. Canada Joins the US/Mexico International/Interagency Organization Coordinating Trilateral Customs, Border, and Immigration Issues.** Canada enters the already established US/Mexico organization. The function of this trilateral agency would be to coordinate and monitor the international functions and operations of all three countries in the area of customs, immigration, and border enforcement.

**B7. Canada joins the US/Mexico Interagency Organization to Coordinate Bilateral Efforts to Combat Organized Crime.** Canada enters this US/Mexico organization created in step B4. The function of the trilateral agency would be to coordinate and monitor the international counterdrug operations of all three countries.

**B8. Canada/US/Mexico establish an Interagency Law Enforcement Organization.** At this point, the three countries have significant experience working together in functional areas such as customs, immigration, border enforcement, and combined operations intended to counter organized crime and illicit trafficking. Moreover, the trilateral law enforcement training center educates officials on standards consistent among and applicable to the three North American countries. By this time, one would expect the existence of a sufficient level of trust and confidence among law enforcement personnel in Canada, the US, and Mexico to permit the establishment of an international and interagency organization that coordinates the international aspects of law enforcement functions of the three countries.

### **C. Proposed Actions That Cross the Defense/Security Sector Divide**

This section suggests several steps that do not fall neatly within either the defense or the security sector; but instead relate to or support both. These measures include the establishment of intelligence mechanisms and political-military organizations that integrate both civilian agencies and military elements. Such political-military structures help achieve the coordination and unity of purpose necessary to execute a variety of security tasks among a variety of organizations and agencies.

**C1. The US and Mexico Establish an Information-Sharing Coordination Mechanism Focused on Countering Transnational Organized Crime.**<sup>30</sup> Given the presumed establishment of the preceding

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<sup>30</sup> This step extrapolates from the US/Canada model discussed in "US-Canada: Beyond the Border," pp. 3-4; see also "The US

organizations in the security and defense sectors, the next logical action would involve the essential task of achieving a common threat assessment and sharing information. Accordingly, the next proposed action on the pathway toward a North American Security Perimeter involves the establishment of a coordination mechanism that would obtain information from all sources, then analyze and disseminate that information as appropriate and useful. Information sharing is one of the most important and sensitive tasks that can occur between countries. The US Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-South), located in Key West, Florida, has established an excellent model through which many countries achieve agreement on threats and share and disseminate information related to counternarcotics operations.<sup>31</sup> As JIATF-S has demonstrated, timely, accurate information can yield tremendous results against criminal groups. Different countries have different strengths in collecting sensitive information. In the case of North America, the US has great advantages in technical means such as satellites or other processes. On the other hand, Mexico has greater knowledge in terms of “human intelligence” on its own territory, reflecting its advantages regarding networks of families, friends, and acquaintances. Combining information that two countries may obtain from various agencies or security forces can be more effective than information that either nation’s forces could acquire in isolation. This sharing of information is particularly helpful in the effort to combat transnational organized crime.

Corruption is an issue that must be addressed effectively, given the sensitivity of certain information being shared. If compromised, important information can become useless. Transnational criminal organizations have used their enormous wealth to bribe and corrupt police and senior officials in past high-profile cases in Mexico.<sup>32</sup> There is great concern among US law enforcement personnel concerning the possibility of corruption among people with whom they must work in the sharing and transfer of information. With the sophisticated nature of Transnational Criminal Organization (TCO) operations, even small bits of intelligence passed to criminal organizations could cripple law enforcement operations. Indeed, transnational criminal organizations have devised clever warning systems. For example, in Juarez, Mexico, TCOs have used networks of shoeshine boys with cell phones positioned outside military or police facilities. Piecing together information with what their informants already provide allows the TCOs to simply change their planned activities and avoid being where the police and security forces intend to go.

For that reason, vetting to ensure the reliability of security personnel must be an absolute priority. Such actions help preclude the possibility that TCO personnel can work covertly for legal security forces. All personnel involved must undergo routine security checks with lie detectors. Furthermore, security force personnel must be paid a reasonable salary. Otherwise, these individuals can be tempted to accept bribes simply to be able to care properly for their families.

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Cross-Border Forum: Next Generation Operations,” Canada-US Cross-Border Crime Forum, Washington, D.C., October,28, 2011, slide 4.

<sup>31</sup> For a good discussion of JIATF-South and its role in coordinating and implementing interagency operations to counter drug trafficking, see Evan Munsing and Christopher J. Lamb, “Joint Interagency Task Force–South: The Best Known, Least Understood Interagency Success,” Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University Press, Washington D.C., June 2011, [http://www.ndu.edu/inss/docuploaded/Strat%20Perspectives%205%20\\_%20Lamb-Munsing.pdf](http://www.ndu.edu/inss/docuploaded/Strat%20Perspectives%205%20_%20Lamb-Munsing.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> The classic case frequently used to highlight corruption among senior officials in Mexico involves the 1997 arrest of Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo, Mexico’s former drug czar, who was removed for close ties and collusion with narcotraffickers.





(R-L) U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, Canadian Defense Minister Peter MacKay, Mexican Defense Minister Guillermo Galvan Galvan, and Mexican Navy Secretary Admiral Francisco Saynez after a meeting in which they promised to provide more military cooperation to combat the trade in illegal drugs in Ottawa, Canada, March 27, 2012. Photo: Xinhua/David Kawai.

***C2. Canada Joins the US/Mexico Information-Sharing Coordination Mechanism.*** The entry of Canada into the US/Mexico Information Sharing Coordination Mechanism should not involve a difficult transition. Considering the existing collaboration between Canada and the US at NORAD and USNORTHCOM, information and sharing procedures are already well established. Accordingly, Canada would only have to become accustomed to working with any unique requirements and standard operating procedures that will have been established between the US and Mexico in the bilateral Information Sharing Coordination Mechanism created in step C1.

***C3. Canada, the US, and Mexico create a North American Alliance Security Organization.*** This final step is the crowning achievement that should allow the establishment of a North American Security Perimeter. This alliance organization will facilitate the bureaucratic structures necessary to coordinate all security and defense aspects of the relationship among the three countries. This coordination would include aspects of all military as well as civilian agency activities in the security and defense sectors. Although each country would control its own military, this alliance organization would function in a manner similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Civilian leadership would provide oversight for the operational elements of international defense and security activities of the three countries.

#### IV. Concluding Remarks

Clearly, the pathway toward the lofty goal of a North America Security Perimeter would be distinctly challenging and demand the long-term accommodation of a range of political sensitivities in Canada, the US, and Mexico. The notional pathway to a North American Security Perimeter offered above and summarized in Chart 6 is heuristic and exploratory in nature. Indeed, no other work has delineated a specific, step-by-step pathway designed to engender the trust, operational capabilities, and experience necessary to ultimately establish a North American, tri-national security institution. There are indeed some controversial (some may even consider them offensive) steps listed. Perhaps an even more challenging discussion would involve whether a North American Security Perimeter is even a realistic or useful idea. Readers will hopefully debate the utility or specifics, as well as the requirement for other steps not discussed. The author would welcome and encourage that discussion.

A significant obstacle toward the establishment of a North American Security Perimeter is the belief that the political, operational, and technical measures necessary to achieve this goal are simply too difficult to overcome. Nevertheless, as the creation of the bilateral NORAD command proved, such hurdles could be surmounted. Today, we take for granted that the US and Canada developed procedures respectful of each nation's national security prerogatives involving critical security and defense tasks of both countries. Yet prior to the command's establishment, the bi-national agreements necessary to approve those tasks were considered very difficult, if not unattainable. During the Cold War, the US feared Canada could be lax in preparing for and mobilizing in a crisis to intercept nucle-



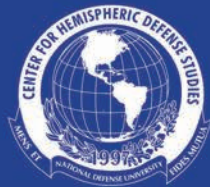
From left: President Felipe Calderon of Mexico, President Barack Obama, and Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in the Rose Garden of the White House.

ar armed aircraft. The US believed it would bear the burden of a nuclear attack while Canada avoided damage. To address these concerns, the two countries implemented procedures giving NORAD's US Commander and Canadian Deputy Commander operational control over forces assigned to the command from both countries. In short, Canada and the US successfully surmounted sensitive political obstacles by developing the procedures and protocols necessary for NORAD to operate effectively.

Currently, concerns regarding sovereignty evoke lowered expectations toward trilateral integration of national security and defense prerogatives. Nevertheless, we live in a dynamic threat environment. Political considerations can change. The tragedy of 9/11 dramatically shifted our focus and perceptions of our most important security challenges and the actions we were willing to take in response. Following those terrible events, all three nations recognized that an attack on one nation affected the safety, security, economies and well-being of all three North American countries. Moreover, during the administration of Felipe Calderon (2006–2012), the US and Mexico advanced dramatically in their cooperation to address transnational organized crime. We cannot rule out the possibility of another security challenge that could once again instantaneously shift our threat perspectives. Correspondingly, our countries might then be willing to adapt policies that now serve as barriers to a North American Security Perimeter.

Clearly, the most successful security arrangements have been those shaped by shared perceptions of imminent threats. Accordingly, we could one day very well determine that greater synchronization and integration among the security and defense entities of North America were required. The author hopes the presentation of this notional pathway toward a North American Security Perimeter may stimulate dialogue regarding the feasibility of whether such a goal could become reality.





Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies  
National Defense University  
Abraham Lincoln Hall  
260 5th Ave. Bldg. 64  
Washington, DC 20319-5066