

AN AMERICAN PEACE KEEPING FORCE

By Col Don P. Wyckoff

The Western Hemisphere has 11 navies, 14 armies, 15 air forces and 8 Marine Corps south of the Rio Grande.



Col Wyckoff is a former enlisted Marine who received a field commission while overseas early in WWII. Between FMF tours he instructed at LFTULant, the Basic School, and Senior School. He has recently moved from CO, 2d ITR to the 3dMarDiv

IN May of 1965, officers and men of the United States Marine Corps were joined with those of Brazil, Honduras, Costa Rica and El Salvador in the restoration of order in the Dominican Republic.

The first inter-American peace force was a product not of the United States alone, but of all the Latin American nations—except, of course, Cuba.

We have had United Nations forces, NATO and SEATO.

We have been concerned with Southeast Asia for a generation and the Middle East for a decade.

We have guarded the Formosa Straits, made practice landings in Spain and practiced Solant Amity off the coast of Africa.

Now, back home, in our own hemisphere, we find ourselves, not only serving with, but commanded by, our Latin American neighbors.

Young, bronzed men, well equipped and smartly turned out, show up in the thousands. Something called OAS is now added to NATO, SEATO and CENTO.

Suddenly, as if a veil were lifted, we see south of the border.

It's quite a view.

There are eleven navies and eight Marine Corps from the Rio Grande to Cape Horn. There are fourteen armies, ten national guards and fifteen separate air forces. Most of these forces are in the image of their US counterpart.

There are no Polaris submarines, but there are

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aircraft carriers, cruisers and every other type of smaller combat ship represented.

There are infantry, cavalry, artillery, armor, parachute troops, commandos, coast artillery, and army aviation.

There is no SAC, but there are Air Defense Commands, Tactical Air Commands and Fighter Commands. Nine of the fifteen Air Forces have jet aircraft.

There are six naval air arms, separate from the autonomous air forces. They include carrier aircraft, helicopters, ASW aircraft and patrol bombers.

Each of these have their own traditions and *esprit de corps*. Their organization, equipment, weapons and training may show French, German, British or United States influence. In most countries, they represent both political and military elements of the state.

The Military in Latin America

The North American tradition of non-political armed forces does not apply south of the border.

Equivalent to the United States oath of office, to defend the Constitution of the United States, is the Latin American tradition (inherited from Portugal and Spain) of the officer corps acting in concert as protectors of the honor and dignity of the state. The military in Latin America has always been the stabilizing factor in an often chaotic political scene. They have always exercised police functions, protection of government installations, riot control and counter-subversion. "The Army is the people in uniform."

Neither can it be denied that the balance of political power in many Latin American countries has dictated the creation and retention of traditionally opposed services. Armies have fought Marines; Navies have fought Armies; each representing a political faction of the time. The existence of a Marine Corps may well be a political consideration to counter-balance the excessive power of an Army; an Air Force may be the balance between equally powerful Army and Navy forces split between opposing parties. So we may expect to find some military forces unjustified by military considerations but essential to the political life of the nation.

The Hispanic origins of Latin American societies, and the early history of settlement in the new lands, have made the military a major political influence in most nations to our south.

Latin American countries are underdeveloped in comparison to the United States. With few exceptions, they have not realized the potential of their own human resources, through lack of universal basic education, and advanced or technical

education sufficient to exploit the natural resources.

Many areas remain isolated by inadequate surface communications; some regions remain unexplored and unmapped. Known natural resources, both mineral and agricultural, are untapped because of poor communications, inadequate native skills, or insufficient capital investment. In many respects, large areas of Latin America are in a state similar to our West of the 1880's.

These problems are compounded by a common lack of political sophistication. A largely unschooled population cannot produce a mature, well-regulated political scene. Even a country as advanced as Brazil, settled 100 years before the Pilgrims landed, suffers from an uneducated and impetuous mass of voters. Thirteen political parties acting individually or in coalitions provide no clear issues for decision. In times of political crisis, such as followed the resignation and suicide of President Vargas in 1954, governments are changed four or five times in a matter of months.

Under such conditions, the military is often the only cohesive force. In the wilderness areas, they are the "law West of the Pecos" of our early days. On the political front, they are the only ones capable of acting in the interest of the State—to preserve its dignity in the community of nations, to prevent chaos, to keep the essential functions of government and the flow of goods and services from breaking down.

The system is not beyond abuses. The military power can be used also to support factions, to maintain absolute dictatorships, to rob and corrupt on a national scale, against the will of the people. There have been many "bosses," *caudillos*, in Latin America. Many have originated in the military, and maintained office largely through continued military support. Some remain. But the modern officer corps of Latin America is less solidly based upon the landowner class, the old traditional families, the extreme right of the political scene. No less concerned with the honor and dignity of the State, they are more aware that the State is degraded by a Gomez or a Trujillo.

As the individual citizen of Latin America moves out of poverty and illiteracy, he and his fellows replace the military as the dominant force of the country. Uruguay has maintained positive civilian control over its armed forces for many years; its literacy rate is also the highest in Latin America.

Costa Rica, another highly literate country, actually disbanded its army in 1948, after what was considered an unacceptable interference in the national elections.

A new factor has entered the scene since radio, television—and Fidel Castro—have appeared in Latin America.

Even to the most illiterate, radio and television are enormously influential. As modern public

media become common in Latin America, popular support and popular disapproval are increasingly molded by sound and video tube. Radio and television stations are now the focal points of revolution, counter-revolution and *coup d'etat*. The beard, uniform, beret or other distinctive symbol are increasing in importance as television expands south of the border.

Historically, the military have been the dominant figures of Latin America. Even today, six of the Latin American countries are under direct control of military individuals or military junta—seven, if you choose to include Cuba as dominated by a primarily military figure.

Military rule in Latin America, however, must not be automatically associated with *peons* ground beneath a cruel heel of military dictatorship. In many cases, the military exercises judicial review of political actions, intervening when politicians jeopardize the nation or its institutions. Substantial economic and social reforms have been accomplished by military regimes. Operation of the government is commonly released to responsible civil officials so long as they conduct the affairs of the nation with propriety.

Equal Nations

It is prudent to remember that our neighbors south of the border have these many fundamental differences—from us and from one another.

It is also well to remember that our southern neighbors are independent and equal nations. Since World War II, the position of the United States in any agreement with Latin American nations has been on the basis of "one country—one vote." There is no special privilege of veto such as given the "Great Powers" in the Security Council of the United Nations.

Whatever are the demands of the United States, each Latin American country has its own military requirements, and its own freedom of action in fulfilling them. Each may recognize its obligations to hemispheric defense but cannot ignore the other basic national requirements: internal security and security against external attack.

Internal Security

In the purely military sense, the forces required for internal security are those capable of maintaining order, providing stability to the regime, defeating subversion, terrorism, paramilitary resistance and secession.

Until recent years, order and stability were maintained by preponderant military forces applied to the protection and support of the regime.

Lately, as in Venezuela and Colombia, the suppression of terrorism and paramilitary resistance has become increasingly important.

This is expensive. The tanks, aircraft and division-size units maintained to crush an armed re-

bellion must be maintained along with small, light and dispersed units operating against paramilitary forces. Civic action programs in the boon-docks supplement the shows of strength in the capital.

The effect of major (and expanding) armed forces on the economy of the nation must be carefully assessed. Subversion and civil resistance feed on poverty. In the past, fear of the poor has inflated the armed forces, pouring more money into armies and making the poor poorer. It is still a danger not to be taken lightly. Some Latin American countries have legislated against regular armed forces and will allow only militia or *Guardia Nacional*.

Nevertheless, armed strength maintained to keep order within the nation remains a common requirement. The further demands of counter-insurgency have been a severe burden on several nations already. It may well be that the Latin American nations cannot all continue to bear the costs of internal security independently. There is already distinct military cooperation between Colombia and Venezuela against guerrilla bands in their mutual backwoods areas. The restoration of order in the Dominican Republic was beyond the capability of national forces alone. These are problems of internal security faced by several Latin American nations today—can they maintain order in their own country? To what nation or nations can they turn for help?

Defense Against External Attack

Another function of primarily unilateral concern is protection of the State from external attack.

There have been long and terrible wars between Latin American countries, although none since the Chaco Wars (1928-35).

External attack from beyond the Americas would immediately involve the United States, as the Cuban crisis of 1962 amply demonstrated. Such an event is no longer a unilateral concern of any Latin American country.

While no nation can totally relinquish its own security to others, neither is it necessary any longer that every Latin American nation maintain the military force necessary for its defense against overt attack. Since 1947, there has developed a system of mutual security and regional settlement of disputes which govern, to an increasing degree, the function of Latin American armed forces beyond that of internal security. Defense against external attack is indissolubly a problem of multilateral defense in the Western Hemisphere today.

Multilateral Defense

The Rio Treaty (1947), the Charter of Bogotá (1948), the confirmation of the Inter-American Defense Board as an instrument of military coordi-

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nation (1950), have placed the military problems of the Americas on a multilateral basis. The United States has entered these agreements as a member nation, not as the "Colossus of the North."

It is well to remember that the stand made during the Cuban crisis of 1962 was a stand of the Organization of American States, not the United States alone. Also, that the American landings in the Dominican Republic of 1965, while imperative as a unilateral action at first, were followed as quickly as circumstances would allow by reference of the problem to the same Organization of American States.

The Dominican crisis has demonstrated the need for an international force, domestic to the hemisphere, which could be called upon to maintain or restore order on the request of any member nation. It also has shown that the present machinery of the Organization of American States does not have a reaction capability swift enough to apply control effectively and in time.

There is no doubt that an OAS force, properly constituted and properly alert, could have reacted as effectively as the United States Navy and Marines in the Dominican Republic.

Such an action—by the OAS—would have avoided the accusations of "intervention," "gun-boat diplomacy" and "Yankee imperialism," even if United States forces were involved as part of the hemispheric force.

Also, the participation of Latin American forces in the establishment of order anywhere in Latin America would result not only in increased effectiveness but is close to the basic tradition and function of all Latin American armed forces.

One Parallel

As a parallel, United Nations peacekeeping forces have become commonplace. Canada has even reorganized her armed services to provide a permanent "mobile police force" for such commitments. Sweden is enlisting a special volunteer force for United Nations duties. India, Poland and other nations have provided forces repeatedly to the United Nations. The Latin American nations, no less independent or neutral than any of those named, can obtain increased stature in the community of nations by participating in such actions. The by-products of increased morale, discipline, military effectiveness and the time-honored attractions of "adventure, travel and romance" to the young soldier or sailor, cannot be ignored.

The contributing nation has much to gain in prestige and military skill. The duty can be regarded with particular honor as an act of peace, not of aggression or war. But only a professional

force, skilled, disciplined and capable, can act with the peculiar combination of resolution and restraint required. So done, it commands respect and is a force to be reckoned with in any other type commitment.

Forces Available

There is a wide variety of military forces in Latin America, with powerful—even predominant—political influence. What does this mean in relation to United States views, expressed by our President in Waco, Texas in May of 1965: that the nations of the Western Hemisphere must be ready to respond to intervention?

If only *one half* of the ground forces of Latin America were made available for action within the OAS, they could field 10 divisions, 50 separate regiments and three regiments of Marines. This is larger than the US Strike Command or the entire US Marine Corps.

If the capability of all the navies of Latin America were utilized, over 30 landing ships (LST/LSM/LCI) and an equal number of small transports could be massed. There are two aircraft carriers whose most useful employment could well be as Commando ships (LPH). There are over 100 corvette/frigate/destroyer types, 10 cruisers and smaller craft.

Latin American air capabilities are of less significance. There is a distressing mix of equipment, old and new.

In one sense, however, this has turned to advantage. The very type of aircraft to which our own services are now orienting, for "small" or counter guerrilla wars, are in the Latin American inventory.

Other than this, more than sufficient modern armed strength is now present in Latin America to provide for both internal security and any conceivable hemispheric commitment.

It is estimated that the Latin American countries could simultaneously field elite forces of several types.

Quick Reaction Forces

From current armies, assisted at present by United States air lift, a quick reaction force of at least five battalions could be employed in both western or eastern areas of the continent.

The equivalent of an airborne division could be massed anywhere in the continent.

Such forces could, if necessary, rotate an "alert status" so that in times of crisis one battalion of elite troops could be on the way to a trouble spot as soon as air lift arrived, with the equivalent of a regiment in hours and a division in a matter of days. They could be task organized with local air units under central command as the Marine Corps has done for years and as the US Strike Command now does.

There are sufficient Marines or Naval Infantry in Latin America to field the equivalent of over two brigades on each coast of South America.

Amphibious lift nowhere matches this capability, but neither is it inconsequential.

In addition to airborne (or air-landed) and amphibious forces, Latin America has the forces in being to provide further light units of company or battalion size from many of the smaller nations. The Caribbean countries such as Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama are suited to field such units. Many are specially trained in jungle warfare, scouting, counterinsurgency, ground or amphibious reconnaissance, or raiding missions. The usefulness of such units would be complemented by the participation of smaller nations in the continental security system. Every nation should contribute to the multi-lateral defense as an equal partner; while there may be great and small American powers, it is fundamental to inter-American defense that there be no second-class members.

A number of countries possess suitable types and quantities of aircraft to provide composite air strike forces of jet fighter-bombers and propeller-driven bombers in the support of ground operations.

Civic Action

In almost every Latin American country are remote areas—some unexplored, some primitive, some economically depressed.

The capabilities and useful training of the military can be employed to great gain in exploration, surveying road construction, irrigation, flood control, medical care, ground and air transportation, reforestation, food distribution and emergency agricultural assistance.

The stimulating action of the Colombian Air Force in providing air service to communities not reached by commercial routes (*Time Magazine*, 21 February 1964) is an excellent example of such work; there are others throughout Latin America, such as COHATA, the National Air Line in Haiti operated by the Haitian Air Force flying the highly practical C-47.

Expansion of this effort is a major weapon against subversion and discontent.

International cooperation pays large benefits. With mutual military assistance, civic action pro-

grams could also be integrated, bringing further assistance, medical care, construction and hope to the common man of Latin America. "The Army is the people in uniform" still holds true south of the border. There could be no better way of demonstrating it.

The Stronger Shield

Much of what has been discussed, including the organization of multi-national forces of combined arms, have been projections of actions and trends already in progress.

An international structure exists for common defense and the burying of old rivalries.

There have been three multi-national defense exercises in Latin America in the past three years, in Honduras, Colombia and Peru. The most recent—Operation AYACHUCO—involved forces of the United States, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Paraguay, Venezuela and Peru.

There is a multi-national force in being in Santo Domingo, under Brazilian command and containing forces both from the United States and Latin America.

Civic action programs have begun in Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador and Brazil.

These are steps toward a community of American states assuming mutual responsibility for the security of their own continent. They also increasingly insure that the peso, cruzeiro, dollar or Bolivar of the individual citizen spent on men and arms is meeting the strict standard of necessity.

Finally, none of us expect that the Dominican Republic in 1965 will be the last time that United States Marines will be committed in Latin America. There is peasant agitation in eight countries south of our border; terrorist activity, labor unrest and high unemployment in more than half of those countries.

And there is Cuba.

The organization of a multi-national security force of American states in May of 1965 was a turning point for all of us.

It was the first step in forging a "stronger shield against disaster," as the President of the United States announced in May of this year.

"The opportunity is here for a new thrust forward—to show the world the way to true international cooperation in the cause of peace and in the struggle to win a better life for all." US&MC

Too Many Feet

During the Cuban Crisis our "Starfighter" pilots at NAS Key West demanded top shape aircraft. They were especially fussy with their radar and optical sight, because of the chance of meeting Russian-made aircraft on their missions. Thus the system was always given an elaborate in-flight inspection. One very tense day a veteran pilot, who considered himself a radar expert, made a long list of overly critical radar writeups in the aircraft records. His last discrepancy was on the radar self-test: "The 500-yard Range Check read 1500 feet every time I tried it."

\$15.00 to J. H. Saylor