

## A Way Forward for the CDMA: Should a more permanent architecture be created?

I would like to open this discussion by reiterating thanks to our Canadian and Barbadian hosts. These “academic” meetings prior to the more formal preparatory meetings have always been informative and productive for civil society participation in the discussion of defense and security issues. It is also good to see both old and new friends who share interests in .

It is very promising that there has emerged a considerable consensus about what ought to occur in our Hemisphere in terms of defense and security cooperation. The Managua CDMA Declaration identifies four broad clusters of commitment: (1) strengthen the region’s defense and security institutions; (2) support international commitments for addressing terrorism and organized criminal activities, trafficking and proliferation of arms or weapons of mass destruction; (3) participation in and cooperation in peacekeeping operations, humanitarian relief and similar activities, and finally, (4) “To continue consultations with a view to sustain the institutional memory of the Conferences of Ministers of Defense of the Americas.”

This panel will address this fourth issue

When talking about architecture, we must be careful to distinguish between two elements of architecture: (1) the organization and governance of hemispheric security and defense cooperation on the one hand, and (2) the institutional support to that framework. My charter is to introduce a discussion of the latter, that is, does the CDMA process require a permanent secretariat? And, if so, what should or could that secretariat look like, and what would it do? The secretariat is understood to support and facilitate the organization and governance and so it is also important to understand the nature and degree of regional consensus with respect to governance in order to design the support that that governance requires.

The nations of the region have clearly stated, in the past four CDMA’s, their preference for respecting bi-lateral and sub-regional organization of defense and security in the region, rather than a unitary, one-size for all organization. They did this recognizing that the issues and priorities, roles and missions of security and defense, and finally the strengths and capabilities of military and security forces vary from sub-region to sub-region and country to country. The ministers recognized that neighbors have more reasons to cooperate and collaborate than to distant States.

This recognition suggests that the Hemispheric security governance architecture is most likely to evolve from the bottom up – from bi-lateral and regional experience and practice, rather than from top down, and by connecting elements that are common or of interest to a few, or many, if not all.

This poses a dilemma: how does one facilitate and promote cooperation and collaboration around the region? How does one link the dots of collaboration? How can we promote information sharing such that countries can learn from each others’

experiences. These are questions relevant to both the governance and the support frameworks.

Cooperation and collaboration requires some contact – working together so that insights (lessons learned) can be mutually experienced and shared. They require that participants value the lessons learning process and the recognition that we're all learning and that each can contribute. Finally cooperation and collaboration require some kind of knowledge management/information sharing so that new entrants to the process can benefit from the experience of those who have gone before.

Contact and learning from shared experience best occur in bi-lateral and sub-regional fora where interactions can be more intense and experiences can be tailored and scaled to shared needs. So learning from shared experiences, working out protocols for combined operations, or for crisis response may suggest that the best way to connect the dots is to build upon bi-lateral and sub-regional initiatives.

The requirement for information sharing and knowledge management does suggest the need for a central clearing house that could collect the experiences of many and offer lessons learned to those who wish to examine them. There is much to build on in our hemisphere – a long experience in peace operations and especially regional cooperation in MINUSTAH; plenty of lessons to be learned from both successful and not so successful preparation and response to natural disasters; recent cooperation in building a central American regional emergency operations center; several countries' experiments and exercises for civil-military collaboration in crisis management, the Caribbean region's experience in security cooperation during the Cricket World Cup, and a notable demining experience. These are just a few operational examples. I would also add the need to share experience in enhancing executive civilian leadership and ministerial capacity.

In order to set the process of cooperation and collaboration and of information sharing in motion, the nations and ministers need to decide whether they wish to take the CDMA process to a next step of implementation, or whether they are content with the largely hortatory reminders of objectives that are reflected in bi-annual declarations. I hope that they do choose to make more explicit the activities that countries in the region are taking in pursuit of CDMA objectives, but they must decide or there will be little action in follow-up, no matter what framework for organization is proposed.

This brings us to the second theme of Architecture, that of the need for a secretariat. Does the CDMA need a permanent secretariat and what should it/could it look like?

With respect to need, it is important to recognize that it is much easier for large countries with more robust ministries to organize and support the CDMA. Their depth of manpower and the fact that they are likely to have had more experience with multi-lateral meetings in the past are absolute assets. It is also inefficient that new hosts have to re-invent the organization wheel for each new CDMA, although there has evolved a sort of

“buddy system” whereby past hosts provide guidance for incoming hosts. Canada and Nicaragua might comment on the strengths and weaknesses of this “buddy” process.

What is missing, however, is any clear and organized record of accomplishments of the goals set out at the different meetings. In part this is because the participants have not set specific goals to accomplish between meetings, and they have not asked for much reporting beyond engaging in confidence and security building activities.

Nevertheless, the Managua CDMA declared members’ commitment to “continue consultations with a view to sustain the institutional memory of the CDMA.”

The most frequently proposed solution for sustaining institutional memory has been to charge the Inter-American Defense Board with that responsibility, just as the OAS itself serves as secretariat for the Summits of the Americas. The Board is clearly seeking a *raison d’etre*. Nevertheless, this charter to the Board has been rejected or resisted by countries since the beginning and it is useful to reflect on why. Some of the reasons offered include --

- Not all members of the OAS or participants in the CDMA are members of the Board, so it is not representative of the CDMA community.
- The Board represents the military institutions of the region, while the CDMA is focused importantly on civilian leadership and military subordination to democratic civilian control. (The Board clearly bears the stigma of a continuing difficult civil-military relationship in some countries in the region).
- The Board is an “autonomous entity” within the OAS, with its mission remaining unclear, much to the dismay of committed members. The Committee on Hemisphere Security has, to date, failed to take responsibility for working with or directing the Board to undertake specific tasks. As a consequence of both of these organizational issues, the “chain of Command” between countries, the OAS and the Board remains fuzzy.
- Finally, and most importantly from my perspective, Ministries of Defense are not represented either in the OAS or in the Board. How can we place secretariat responsibility for a ministerial meeting in the hands of an entity in which the ministries have no representation?

The DMA process was started with the notion of strengthening civilian leadership in the defense and security sectors and of enhancing the commitment and practice of democratic civilian leadership and military subordination to that leadership in this sector. I am pleased that this goal continues to be a primary objective for the region, as reiterated in the Managua and all earlier declarations. However I believe that we do need to continue insisting on the civilian Ministry leadership component of the DMA process, for a very significant part of our discussions tend to revert to questions of “what do the military do?” rather than what can ministers do to lead the policy process.

In this regard, the Board (Junta) represents the military planning capability in the hemispheric context and the Board, as constituted, would find it difficult to represent the

Defense Ministries (political and executive functions) without a significant infusion of civilian personnel. This might be encouraged. Some countries already send civilian representatives to Board meetings, but a significant infusion of civilian personnel would change the nature of the Board dramatically.

To remedy the civilian-military imbalance, the Committee on Hemispheric Security might be charged by States members to work with the Board in a joint secretariat. The OAS does a modestly good job of maintaining web pages of document, meetings and so forth. The Board has a good record of lending manpower support to OAS agencies, and there is clear need to improve interaction between the OAS-CHS and the Board. This would reflect the decision of States, working through their foreign ministries, but again, the Ministries of Defense would be missing unless ways were found to incorporate MODs to the Committee on Hemispheric Security. This integration might be facilitated if countries were to assign liaison to MODs, or MODs might post a liaison to the OAS Mission and Committee.

If the representational issues could be resolved, the Board might then host and maintain an internet portal to which national could post agreed-upon documents, white papers, lessons learned, other items part of the CMDA agenda, studies and analyses and so forth. Indeed a well-motivated Colonel or LtCDR, working with diplomatic and MOD counterparts, could solicit, from home countries, material to contribute to Centers or Fora for lessons learned in Disaster Response, Peace Operations, large-scale international events like the Cricket World Cup and others. They might even pester their home offices do deliver reports pending to both OAS and UN on arms acquisitions, military expenditures, and so forth.

But reporting will only be useful if the Ministers of Defense, representing their governments, agree that information sharing, collaboration and coordination is important and useful. I believe that support for this consensus is most likely to occur at the bi-lateral and sub-regional level, reinforcing the notion that the governance architecture is most likely to evolve over time from the bottom up.

This suggests that a parallel, or perhaps alternative and more bottom-up, approach to eliciting institutional memory about security and defense cooperation in the region might be possible.

Those countries, like the Caribbean states, the Central Americans in the SICA process, and southern cone countries that are pursuing more combined operations, and North America might choose to report voluntarily from their individual communities on processes and experiences in peace operations preparations, disaster preparedness and other activities of interest. Again, a single portal would be required, accessible by all, but that should not be difficult given experience in the region.<sup>1</sup> The US, Canada, Chile or another country might facilitate the launch of such a Portal responsibility for maintenance of which might then be passed to the OAS/Board, or to regional partnerships (SICA, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Military services have coordinated exercises via internet for years.

RSS, etc). A Disaster Response Emergency Operations Center for shared-information management was developed for Central American countries in the past couple of years and I understand a similar system is contemplated by Caribbean states. That model might be offered for emulation in other areas. I recall vividly Colombian Ambassador Ospina asking “where is the regional response coordination mechanism” that could have been mobilized after Peru’s recent earthquake? There is no question that regional response mechanisms are needed

Thus knowledge management is perhaps the key to our process dilemma. I am reminded of the observation of a former Vice president for Latin America at the World Bank, Nicolas Ardito Barletta, who commented to me that, from his perspective, the most important meeting of the year for Finance Ministers was one in which the Ministers related, with total frankness, to one another, how they had solved their most pressing problems during the year. The learning curve was very high in those meetings as the Finance Ministers recognized that they shared many of the same problems and identified new ways to deal with them.

If there is not sufficient support for taking a step toward great information sharing and more coordinated planning, then a final recommendation for the next CDMA (Bolivia in 2010) would be for Canada to leave its planning as a model for the subsequent meeting. This might serve as the foundation for and “Enhanced Buddy System” that would need to be sufficiently well funded so as to be practicable into the future.

I have offered several comments and hypotheses for addressing the proposition that the CDMA needs a permanent secretariat.

1. CDMA may not need a secretariat if states do not commit to more operational progress in cooperation, collaboration and information-sharing. Bi-annual hortatory reiterations of commitment may be all that is desired.
2. Several changes are needed if the OAS/Inter-American Defense Board is to assume secretariat's responsibility. Most important of these is that Ministries of Defense need some means of representation/participation in the project and the secretariat should not be an exclusively military staff, as this would undermine the CDMA purpose of enhancing civilian ministerial leadership and military subordination.
3. If obstacles in (1) and (2) can be overcome, the Board might host an information-sharing Portal that could serve as a archive and window on on-going hemispheric cooperation, collaboration, learning and knowledge management
4. If (3) is not possible, then individual countries might take initiative to set the knowledge management process in motion, anticipating that once started, other nations would join.
5. In the event of none of the above, Canada might undertake to institutionalize a planning model based on its experience and set that in motion with an “Enhanced Buddy System” model (i.e. further, though limited, Canadian support) aimed at facilitating institutional memory in anticipation of the 2010 CDMA in Bolivia.