

Cómo citar este artículo:

Ellis, E. (2018). The Armed Forces of the Dominican Republic: Contributions and Challenges to Regional Security. *Estudios en Seguridad y Defensa*, 13(25), 21-45.

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Recibido:
14 de agosto de 2017

Aprobado:
15 de enero de 2018

Keywords:
Dominican Republic,
narcotraficking, citizen security,
Haiti, migration.

Palabras clave:
República Dominicana,
narcotráfico, Seguridad
ciudadana, Haití, migración.

Palavras-chave:
República Dominicana, tráfico de
drogas, segurança cidadã, Haiti,
migração.

The Armed Forces of the Dominican Republic: Contributions and Challenges to Regional Security¹

Las fuerzas armadas de la República Dominicana: contribuciones y desafíos a la seguridad regional

Forças Armadas da República Dominicana: Contribuições e Desafios à Segurança Regional

ABSTRACT

This work examines the Dominican Republic's principal security issues: Haiti, street crime, and narcotraficking, as well as the role of its armed forces in the government's response. It finds that poverty and instability Haiti continue to present serious challenges through immigration and cross-border criminal activities. It also finds that while the role of the military in citizen security through the task force Ciudad Tranquila and other programs has deterred crime, the long-term effects on crime are limited, while presenting serious

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burdens on the Armed Forces as an institution and legal risks for its personnel. With respect to narcotrafficking, the Dominican counterdrug agency DNCD, with the support of the military, has significantly decreased air transits and contributed importantly to maritime interdictions, but continues to be limited by resources and interagency coordination challenges in combatting the expanding flows of drugs through the region. This work concludes with recommendations for the U.S. to support its Dominican partners through education, training, and other support.

RESUMEN

Este trabajo examina los temas de seguridad principales de la República Dominicana: Haití, crimen urbano, y narcotráfico. También examina el rol de las Fuerzas armadas dominicanas en la respuesta del gobierno. Concluye que la pobreza e inestabilidad en Haití sigue presentando serios desafíos a través de inmigración y actividades criminales transfronterizas. También concluye que, mientras que el rol de las FF. AA en seguridad ciudadana a través de la fuerza de tarea Ciudad Tranquila ha evitado crímenes, los impactos a largo plazo están limitados, y presentan dificultades graves para las Fuerzas armadas como institución, y riesgos legales para sus miembros. Con respecto a narcotráfico, la agencia contra drogas el DNCD, con el apoyo de las Fuerzas armadas, ha bajado de forma significativa el tránsito de los narco-vuelos y ha ayudado de forma importante con interdicciones marítimas. Sin embargo, sigue impedido en combatir los flujos crecientes de drogas en la región, por causa de la limitación de recursos y desafíos de coordinación Inter agencial. Este trabajo concluye con recomendaciones para los EE. UU en apoyar sus socios dominicanos a través de educación, capacitación y otras formas de ayuda.

RESUMO

Este artigo examina as principais questões de segurança da República Dominicana: o Haiti, o crime urbano e o tráfico de drogas. Também examina o papel das Forças Armadas dominicanas na resposta do governo. Conclui que a pobreza e a instabilidade no Haiti continuam a apresentar sérios desafios por meio da imigração e das atividades criminosas transnacionais. Também conclui que, enquanto o papel do FF. AA na segurança cidadã através da força-tarefa Ciudad Tranquila evitou crimes, os impactos de longo prazo são limitados e apresentam sérias dificuldades para as Forças Armadas como instituição e riscos legais para seus

membros. Com relação ao narcotráfico, a agência antidrogas DNCD, com o apoio das forças armadas, reduziu significativamente o trânsito de voos de narcotráfico e ajudou significativamente com as interdições marítimas. No entanto, continua impedido de combater os crescentes fluxos de drogas na região, devido aos recursos e desafios limitados da coordenação interinstitucional. Este trabalho conclui com recomendações para os EUA. UU no apoio aos seus parceiros dominicanos através de educação, treinamento e outras formas de ajuda.

INTRODUCTION

From the landing of Christopher Columbus on the Island of Hispaniola in December 1492, the island of Hispaniola, today shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti, has occupied a strategic position in the security environment of the Americas. For the Spanish in the 15th and 16th Centuries, the island served as an important launching point in the conquest of the New World. In the 20th Century, the island's proximity to the United States contributed to the later invading it on two separate occasions: first from 1916-1924 (due in part to concern over German influence), and subsequently in 1965 (to avoid the establishment of a second communist government close to U.S. shores).

In the post-Cold War period, the position of the Dominican Republic in the Greater Antilles between Colombia (as a source-zone country for cocaine), and the United States (as the region's principal market for such drugs), has made the nation an important transshipment hub for narcotics. That status has contributed to the corruption of Dominican public and private institutions, while competition over drug routes, the emergence of local drug consumption, and the proliferation of small criminal groups has fueled insecurity in major urban areas.

Complicating the Dominican Republic's security challenges, the persistent poverty, political instability, and vulnerability to natural disasters of its neighbor Haiti, has fueled cross-border migration and illicit activities that has undermined Dominican security.

As in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Armed Forces of the Dominican Republic have played, and continue to play an important role in the nation's response to the challenges of narcotrafficking, public insecurity, immigration and other internal security challenges, with the support of the United States and other international actors.

The Dominican Republic, and the Caribbean more broadly, seldom receives emphasis as a national security priority for the United States. Yet its geographic

proximity, trade and investment ties, and human connection through the 1.5 million persons of Dominican diaspora living in the United States (Brown & Patten, 2013), makes the success of the Dominican government in confronting its security challenges of strategic importance to the United States.

In December 2016, the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 114-291, highlighting the importance of the Dominican Republic, and the Caribbean more broadly, to the United States, and requiring the U.S. State Department to write a U.S. engagement strategy toward the region. In a separate, but reinforcing development, foreign and defense ministers from across the region are scheduled to meet in Santo Domingo in November 2017 to discuss the future of the U.S.-funded Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

The present work examines three of the most significant security challenges facing the Dominican Republic: Haiti, street crime, and narcotics, and the efforts by the country's current government to address them, with a focus on the role of the nation's Armed Forces. It argues that the Dominican military has made important and necessary contributions to national and regional security in these areas, yet its effectiveness has been limited by resource and legal constraints, deeply-rooted corruption within public and private-sector Dominican institutions, and other factors. It further finds that the U.S.-Dominican partnership has played a key role in those struggles, and offers concrete recommendations for how the U.S. should continue and improve the effectiveness of that security engagement in the future.

To develop these arguments, this work is divided into five parts (1) analysis of the security challenges facing the Dominican Republic, (2) presentation of the structure, capabilities, and mission of the armed forces relevant to those challenges, (3) analysis of the performance of the Armed Forces in each area, (4) recommendations for the U.S., and (5) conclusions.

SECURITY CHALLENGES FACING THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The security challenges facing the Dominican Republic are rooted in the intersection of the country's particular geographic, demographic and political-economic situation, including its connections to the United States and the rest of the international community as a nexus of flows of people, goods and money through the region. Nonetheless, the complex and interdependent security challenges facing the Dominican Republic may be artificially separated and examined as three clusters: Haiti, urban crime, and narcotics.

HAITI

The history of the Dominican Republic, since the colonial period, has largely been defined by problems with neighboring Haiti, with whom it shares the island of Hispaniola. Within a year of achieving independence in 1804, Haiti invaded the Dominican side of the island to liberate it from Spanish rule, in the process killing thousands of Dominican residents and sacking cities including Santiago and Moca. The Dominican Republic's eventual achievement of independence in 1821 was subverted by another Haitian invasion, leading to 22 years of Haitian rule that is generally considered harsh and exploitative (Ellis, 2017). Although Juan Pablo Duarte led a movement that succeeded in freeing the country from Haitian rule in 1844, the later invaded its neighbor four more times before finally recognizing Dominican independence in 1874 (Ellis, 2017).

In the contemporary context, endemic poverty and recurrent political instability in Haiti has made the nation the primary source of illegal migration to the Dominican Republic and cross-border contraband activity. An estimated 800,000 Haitian immigrants live in the Dominican Republic (“Primera encuesta nacional de inmigrantes [...]”, 2013), with 46,000 deported from the Dominican Republic in the first six months of 2017 alone (Ventura, 2017).

Haitian migrants are widely viewed in the Dominican Republic as contributing to the informal sector and crime in the country. Haitian immigrants are the key actors in a widespread contraband trade, smuggling international relief supplies across the border to sell in the Dominican Republic without paying customs duties, including clothing, garlic, cooking oil, and high-quality rice. In return, Haitians buy chicken, eggs, cocoa and cheaper rice from the Dominicans to use or sell in Haiti.

Despite the efforts of Dominican authorities to control the border, it is highly porous, with an absence of natural barriers such as deep rivers or steep cliffs to prevent crossing, and an abundance of “blind crossings.”

In 2016, the theft of cattle on the Dominican side of the border and its smuggling back to Haiti (as well as its butchering on the Dominican side and the theft of the meat) became a major problem (Vega, 2016), although the problem is reportedly now under control (Ellis, 2017).

Haitians are also viewed as driving deforestation in the Dominican Republic, through what the Dominicans refer to as Haitian “mafias” that organize the cutting down trees in the Dominican Republic and transforming them into charcoal to sell in Haiti as cooking fuel (Perez, 2014). In this widespread but decentralized activity, Haitians are brought in to cut down the trees, often in coordination with a

local Dominican partner, then transform the lumber into charcoal on site. Others then smuggle the charcoal in small quantities at night, often in marked sacks, back into Haiti for sale.

The entry of drugs and guns from Haiti into the Dominican Republic is also a concern for the Dominican government, although the number of public cases are limited (Ellis, 2017). In general, the combination of increased drug enforcement in the airspace and waters surrounding the Dominican side of Hispanola (discussed later), combined with the relative incapacity of law enforcement on the Haitian side, is believed to have displaced a portion of the drugs and guns bound for the Dominican Republic, to first enter Haiti, then cross over to the former via the relatively porous border. The market for guns in the Dominican Republic is believed to be particularly lucrative, with gun control laws so strict that criminals have taken to attempting to rob guns by assaulting members of the Dominican military (“Buscan fusiles que robaron haitianos”, 2015), as easier than attempting to acquire such weapons on the black market. Authorities have documented multiple cases of smuggling marijuana from Jamaica into the Dominican Republic, concealing the drugs in hidden compartments of vehicles, or smuggling it in via individual “drug mules”. Authorities believe that the same smuggling infrastructure may be used for smuggling cocaine and guns, but the public evidence of such flows do not yet exist (Ellis, 2017).

Dominicans worry that the withdraw of the 2,400-member multinational peace-keeping force MINUSTAH from Haiti by October 2017 (“Haiti has chance to solidify [...]”, 2017), and its replacement by a less-capable follow-on force, will lead to expanded instability and crime, with spill-over effects into the Dominican Republic.

URBAN CRIME

By Central American standards, crime in the Dominican Republic is relatively low, with homicides falling from a reported 22/100,000 in 2012 to 13/100,000 by 2015 (Yagoub, 2015), although rising again to 16/100,000 by 2016 (Thomas, 2017). Nonetheless, many crimes are unreported. Moreover, many of the reported cases of violence reflect the limited number of occasions in which the victim has attempted to resist the robber and the interaction has gone badly. In addition, the highly publicized violent crimes in major urban areas such as Santo Domingo and Santiago, including the common use of motorcycles to commit robberies and make getaways through crowded city streets (Ellis, 2017), have contributed to public perceptions of insecurity.

Such crime may reflect growing drug consumption in the country, as narco-traffickers pay locals in kind with drugs for services rendered as they move

narcotics through the country. Similarly, some of the violence may reflect fights over drug routes.

In the 2010 timeframe, the Dominican Republic began to have some difficulties with organized gangs, similar to the Dominican gangs operating in U.S. East Coast cities, including the Trinitarios, Latin Kings, Bloods, Los 42, Metálicos, Ñetas, Mercaderos, Dorados and Rastafarys (“El 40% de los pandilleros [...]”, 2014). Nonetheless, thanks to efforts by Dominican authorities, including the Anti-Gang task force of the Dominican National Police (DIPANDA), the problem of large criminal street gangs in the country has largely been suppressed (Ellis et al., 2017).

Beyond the foreign associates of local narcotraffickers, the problem of non-Dominican criminal organizations operating in the country has been relatively limited. Dominican authorities interviewed for this study mentioned individual incidents involving Russian criminals operating in the tourist zones in the east of the country, and in Puerto Plata in the north, yet argued that there is no evidence that the Russian mafia has established a presence in the country more broadly. Dominican authorities also mentioned crimes within the Chinese community but argued that there was no evidence of Chinese triads or other Chinese mafia organizations operating in the country on a large scale (Ellis, 2017).

Aside from Haitians, the immigrant group which has most radically impacted the socioeconomic and security environment of the Dominican Republic in recent years is the Venezuelans. Due to the deteriorating economic situation in Venezuela, compounded by rising crime and escalating political violence, Venezuelans have increasingly left their country for the surrounding region, migrating to neighboring Colombia, Brazil, and throughout the Caribbean.³ The Dominican Republic, which both shares the Spanish language with Venezuela, and which has enjoyed strong economic growth in recent years, has received a significant number of Venezuelan immigrants, with up to 800,000 Venezuelans living in the country by some estimates (Ellis, 2017). In the context of expanding Venezuelan immigration, Dominican authorities began restricting access by Venezuelans to permits to legally live and work in the country. As a consequence, some 80% of Venezuelans in the Dominican Republic currently are in an irregular immigration status, with many working in the informal sector. Dominicans interviewed for this study mentioned dramatic increases in the number of Venezuelan prostitutes and Uber drivers in Santo Domingo, as evidence of the phenomenon (Ellis, 2017).

3 See, for example, Colina Páez, W. & Rodríguez, J. L. (2017, June, 04). Inmigrantes venezolanos: hacinamiento, pobreza y falta de oportunidades. *El Heraldo*. Recovered from <https://www.elheraldo.co/barranquilla/inmigrantes-venezolanos-hacinamiento-pobreza-y-falta-de-oportunidades-369189>

While only a small number of Venezuelans are associated with criminal activity in the Dominican Republic, their presence in the informal sector is believed to be associated with part of the expansion of street crime.⁴

DRUG FLOWS

As noted in the introduction, the location of the Dominican Republic has made it a key transshipment and storage hub for drugs flowing from Colombia and Venezuela to markets in both the United States and Europe. The principal counter-drug agency of the Dominican Republic, the DNCD, estimated that drugs flowing through the country expanded from 10 tons in 2014, to 13 tons in 2015, to 20 tons in 2016 (“Presidente Danilo Medina llama a explorador [...]”, 2017). By one source, as much of 15% of all drugs flowing from South America to the U.S. pass through the Dominican Republic (“Weekly InSight: The Dominican Republic [...]”, 2015).

A key driver of the expanded drug flows through the Dominican Republic has been the cessation of aerial spraying of coca plants in Colombia with glyphosate, and the associated expansion of coca cultivation in that country by more than 200% (“Producción de cocaína en Colombia [...]”, 2017). At the same time, the deterioration of law and order in Venezuela and the involvement of senior members of its government and security forces in narcotrafficking (Meacham, 2015), has facilitated transits by narcotics-carrying aircraft and boats from Venezuela to the Dominican Republic as a transit and storage hub for sending those drugs to the United States, and to a lesser extent, Europe.⁵

Thanks in part to an expansion of air interdiction capabilities by the Dominican Air Force, discussed in the next section, the majority of drugs arriving in the country today are believed to arrive via maritime routes.⁶ On the other hand, drugs depart the Dominican Republic for ultimate destinations in the U.S. and Europe via a range of means, including commercial air transport, maritime container shipping, commercial charter boats, and fishing boats such as yolas (most commonly used to smuggle drugs, as well as people, from the Eastern side of the Dominican Republic across the narrow Mona Pass to neighboring Puerto Rico).

4 Incidents mentioned by those interviewed during the author’s conversations in Santo Domingo in August 2017 included a Venezuelan ring involved in credit card fraud, and a group of Venezuelans that took a Chinese family hostage.

5 See, for example, Desarticulan banda de narcotráfico con nexos en Venezuela, Dominicana, Colombia y China. (2015. May, 23). *El Nuevo Herald*. Recovered from <http://www.elnuevoherald.com/noticias/mundo/america-latina/article21930201.html>

6 Approximately 5,000 packages of drugs arriving by sea have been captured by Dominican drug authorities in the First 7 months of 2017. See, for example, Mayores alijos de drogas se ocupan por vía marítima. (2017. July, 28). *Diario Libre*. Recovered from <https://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/mayores-alijos-de-drogas-se-ocupan-por-via-maritima-KY7735408>

As noted previously, in addition to cocaine, Marijuana from Jamaica also moves through Haiti into the Dominican Republic across the dry porous border between the two countries. With the expansion of control by the Dominican Republic over its airspace and waters, Dominican authorities also believe that Haiti is being used as an intermediate stop to smuggle drugs into the Dominican Republic, with an ultimate destination of the U.S. or Europe.

The majority of drugs are moved through the Dominican Republic with the help of foreign partners, principally Colombians. The most notable narcotraffickers in the Dominican Republic have been Dominicans or from the immediate Caribbean neighborhood, such as famous Puerto Rican narcotrafficker Jose Figueroa Agosto.⁷ A small number of Mexican narcotraffickers, including some tied to the Sinaloa cartel (Fieser, 2012), have reportedly operated in the Cibao valley, but principally to coordinate the movement of heroin from Mexico to the East Coast of the United States, rather than to move drugs through the Dominican Republic (Ellis, 2017).

With respect to the broader drug flows across the region, the Dominican Republic is primarily transit country (U.S. Department of State, 2016), with some local drug consumption, reflecting payment in drugs by some narcotraffickers for the services rendered to them by local gangs and groups. Some drug laboratories have been discovered, including one found in 2013 in San Cristobal, in the south of the country (“Descubren en República Dominicana [...]”, 2013). More recently, laboratories for the production of synthetic drugs have been found in Santiago and Puerto Plata (“Autoridades desmantelan tres laboratorios [...]”, 2017), but Dominican authorities believe these to principally be small-scale experiments by narcotraffickers serving the U.S. East Coast market (Ellis, 2017).

The significant flow of drugs through the region has contributed not only to expanded urban crime and violence, with fights over routes and a small but growing local drug market (Fieser, 2011), but also to endemic corruption, undermining the effectiveness of government agencies, public confidence in the Dominican government, and ultimately, Dominican democracy.

THE ARMED FORCES OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

As in many nations of the region, the Dominican Armed Forces have long played a role as a protector not only of the sovereignty, but also the stability, of the country. In the context of the nation’s current security challenges, the Armed Forces have

⁷ See, Vinculan con F. Agosto hombre alijo 419 kilos. (2011. August, 13). *Diario Libre*. Recovered from <https://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/vinculan-con-f-agosto-hombre-alijo-419-kilos-LLDL301659>

involved themselves in securing the nation's borders against Haitian migration, complimenting police forces in providing security in urban areas, and combatting drug flows through Dominican territory, water and airspace.

The role of the Dominican Armed Forces in internal security missions is legally sanctioned by Article 252 of the year Dominican constitution, which gives the military the authority to intervene under exceptional circumstances in matters involving the public order (CRD, 2010). Within this framework, the Armed Forces law of 2013 gives statutory authority to the role of the Armed forces in supporting the national police to provide public order under exceptional circumstances, as well as the role of the armed forces in border security (Congreso Nacional, 2013). Nonetheless, critics of the role that the Dominican forces have played in matters such as urban security and counter-narcotics operations argue, however, that what the Constitution authorized for exceptional circumstances has now become routine.

Overall the Dominican Armed Forces are among the largest in the Caribbean, behind only Cuba, with approximately 66,600 persons, including 34,900 in the Army, 13,600 in the Navy, and 18,100 in the Air Force ("Armed Forces", 2017). In theory, the military is organized into four geographically-oriented joint commands: Metropolitan (the greater Santo Domingo area), North (including the north coast and the interior city of Santiago), South (location of many of the drug transits from Colombia and Venezuela, including the provinces of Pedernales and Barhona), and East (location of many of the country's primary tourist areas such as Punta Cana), as well as "special" functional commands such as those for border security (CESFRONT), airport security (CESAC), port security (CESEP), and metro security (CESMET).⁸

In practice, the Army organization remains dominant, and the geographic commands have a principally coordinating role, rather than regularly commanding assigned forces.

ARMY

The Army is the primary military resource for all of the national security missions mentioned previously, particularly citizen security and guarding the frontier with Haiti.

The principal body of the Army is sixteen battalions, organized into 6 brigades. In addition, it has a very capable Presidential Guard regiment, a company-sized

⁸ The perceived need for specialized training, and the loss of experience as regular military personnel rotated into and out of these units, led to the establishment of the specialized commands with dedicated personnel. Nonetheless, for some in the Dominican military, the cost of such specialization has been the loss of these forces to the military as an institution, with the personnel serving a career in such institutions failing to gain experience in, or identify with, the Armed Forces more broadly as an institution.

honor guard, and a Mountain regiment with some special force's capabilities ("Dominican Republic – Army", 2017). The Dominican army is primarily an infantry-based force, with a limited quantity of tactical vehicles and even fewer helicopter for the type of mobility required in operations against narcotraffickers or border incursions by criminal groups.

A key impediment to the ability of the Dominican Army to support the security missions described in this work is resources. The Armed Forces as a whole receives only .9% of the national GDP, although this figure has climbed from .6% in 2012 ("Dominican Republic – Army", 2017). Of the money allocated to the Army, the vast majority is dedicated to salaries, leaving very little for operations and maintenance, let alone the acquisition, on of new equipment. Moreover, a substantial portion of Army brigades are regularly "loaned out" to missions such as the protection of government personnel and infrastructure, leaving limited capabilities available for other missions.

NAVY

The Dominican Navy is the largest in the region, and a relatively professional and capable force, for which the interception of drugs and other contraband transiting national waters is a key mission. Among its core assets are 12 Boston Whaler interceptor vessels, obtained from the U.S. since 2001, with a 13th expected to be delivered within the coming year. In addition, the Navy also operates 11 older surface ships, which augment the smaller, faster craft, but have high maintenance costs. Indeed, the oldest two of these assets are former U.S. Coast Guard vessels, commissioned in 1943, and donated to the Dominican Navy in 1997 and 2004 respectively ("Dominican Republic – Navy", 2017).

The Navy divides its coverage of Dominican waters into three naval zones: Northern (the waters off the northern coast from the Mona Passage in the East to the Haitian border in the West), Southern (the waters off the southern coast, also from the Mona passage in the East to the Haitian border in the West), and the Santo Domingo naval zone (covering naval administrative facilities in the capital region). Some analysts have argued that the Navy needs more bases in the south, where many of drug-carrying vessels come from Colombia and Venezuela, to better cover the Dominican shoreline, although creating and sustaining naval bases in an environment of limited resources is a difficult proposition.

The Dominican Navy reportedly has a close working relationship with the U.S. Coast Guard and Navy for drug interdiction and in other areas, typically coordinating with its U.S. counterpart to divide up the coverage maritime zones around the island.

AIR FORCE

The Dominican Air Force operates a small fleet of fixed wing transport and surveillance aircraft, as well as 8 Super Tucano interceptors received from Brazil in 2010 (Fieser & Moura, 2016). The Air Force also has a small number of helicopters which it uses for VIP transport and search and rescue operations, as well as occasional surveillance missions along the border with Haiti.

The aircraft of the Dominican Air Force are principally operated from two airbases, San Isidro, in Santo Domingo, Puerto Plata, on the north coast of the country. There are also other airfields in parts of the country such as in the south of the country in Barahona near where ships and aircraft carrying drugs most frequently attempt to penetrate Dominican airspace, but are presently inadequate to support sustained military operations. Nonetheless, in the aerial interdiction of narcoaircraft approaching from the south, persons consulted for this study argued that the relative rapidity of the Tucanos makes the somewhat greater distance of San Isidro from the zone of minor importance.

The operation of the Tucanos and the coordination of operations through the country's Command Center (CICC) is supported by aircraft track data obtained from the civilian radars located in the Dominican Republic's commercial airports. The United States has also donated a military radar, and the Dominican Republic purchased two others in 2010 from the Israeli firm Elta ("FEAA. ya cuentan con radar", 2010), but they have not been installed, due in part to a financial dispute with the contractor and a lack of funds on the Dominican side (Ellis, 2017).

TASK FORCES

The Dominican Armed Forces have traditionally established task forces for limited periods of time to meet operational needs going beyond routine missions. At the end of the established period for those task forces, often with a changeover in command, they are either dissolved or if successful, transformed into a more permanent structure such as a specialized command (as discussed below).

For the purpose of citizen security, the principal task force used by the Dominican Armed Forces is *Ciudad Tranquila* (CiuTRAN), used to supplement police patrols in major urban areas, and which also incorporates the Dominican rapid reaction force DEPROSER. Other military entities, however, also play some citizen security role.

NATIONAL COUNTERDRUG AGENCY

The *Dominican Direccion Nacional Contra Droga* (DNCD) was created in 1988 by Public Law 50-88 (Congreso Nacional, 1975), to attack both drug

trafficking and drug use, functions previously performed principally by the Dominican National Police. Initially the DNCD was staffed principally by military personnel, but its character has evolved under different leadership, first expanding the presence of police personnel under the leadership of police general who? And later incorporating more civilian personnel.

As in other organizations, some members of the DNCD have been corrupted by criminal organizations. Examples include Francisco Hiraldo Guerrero, head of DNCD operations, who was extradited to the United States in 2013 to face criminal charges (Cruz Benzán, 2013). Despite such exceptional cases, the DNCD is today considered one of the least corrupt security organizations in the country, with relatively good procedures for entry level screening and periodic monitoring of personnel, and specially vetted units which work with their U.S. Counterpart, the DEA.

While the DNCD is supported, in principal, by the Armed Forces and National Police in its counterdrug operations, it also has important organic capabilities, including the operation of a small fleet of interceptor boats, largely confiscated from criminals and reconfigured for law enforcement use. It also has its own rapid response force, which may or may not be assisted by military and police forces in operations to intercept drug shipments, and against narco-trafficking groups.

INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS

The Dominican intelligence system, not unlike that of the U.S., is struggling to overcome a fragmented structure, with different organizations focused on different types of intelligence tasks, reporting up different bureaucratic chains of command.

Within the armed forces, each service branch has its own intelligence organization: the Army intelligence organization (G2), Navy intelligence (M2), and Air Force intelligence (A2), which report in principal to the joint staff (J2) intelligence organization on the joint staff, which both has a fusion function, as well as its own intelligence collection capabilities.

Independent of this structure, the national police has a directorate for intelligence (DI), the DNCD has its own intelligence collection and analysis capabilities (focused on narcotics), the Financial Analysis Unit of the Ministry of Finance has a financial crimes-oriented intelligence capability, and the national prosecutor's office has its own case-oriented intelligence collection and analysis capability. All are integrated, in principle, by the National Intelligence Directorate (DNI), which also has its own independent collection and analysis capabilities.

Beyond these traditional intelligence organizations, the Dominican government also has an economic intelligence unit within the Ministry of Interior and

Commerce, although its activities are not strongly integrated into the national intelligence system.

Beyond bureaucratic frictions and technical coordination issues between agencies, intelligence sharing is often impaired by a lack of trust between organizations and their counterparts, which they fear are compromised by criminal agents. Yet despite such difficulties, it is important to recognize that each of the organizations discussed herein are also staffed with professionals seeking to do their jobs.

RESPONSE OF THE DOMINICAN ARMED FORCES TO THE NATION'S SECURITY CHALLENGES

HAITI

The Armed Forces of the Dominican Republic have the leading role on security issues involving neighboring Haiti. In controlling the border against flows of immigrants and contraband goods, the specialized command CESFRONT, under the Ministry of Defense, manages the official border crossings (Dajabón, Jimaní, Comendador, Cañada, Miguel, and Sabana Cruz), in conjunction with customs and other authorities. Indeed, CESFRONT has announced its intention to build a new base facility in the province of Pedernales for its forces guarding the border (Cornelio, 2016). As a compliment, regular Army battalions and other forces deploy to protect Dominican territory in depth along the border. The three Army brigades with responsibility for provinces adjoining Haiti (the 3rd, 4th and 5th) each have battalions deployed near the frontier. In the context of concern over expanded migratory and contraband flows with the withdraw of MINUSTAH from Haiti, the Dominican Army has deployed 1,000 additional soldiers to augment that force (Ministerio de Defensa, 2017).

In addition to its role at the border, the military also supports immigration authorities inside the Dominican Republic in the detention and deportation of Haitians and others found in the country without legal authorization for their presence. Such deportations expanded greatly in 2016 when the government completed the first phase of the regularization of the status of undocumented Haitian immigrants living in the country (“Haiti: Stateless People Trapped [...]”, 2016). Yet the pace of such deportations may decrease in 2018. Not only have the easiest to round up now been deported, but in July 2017, the government granted those already in the process of regularizing their status an additional year to complete the process.

PUBLIC INSECURITY

Within the framework of Article 252 of the Dominican constitution, and in response to politically-significant concerns over public insecurity the Dominican military has deployed forces into Santo Domingo and other major urban areas under Task Force Ciudad Tranquila (CiuTran), as the best known, but not the only military initiative in support of citizen security.

CiuTran was first initiated in 2007, but redefined in 2014 under a different Minister of Defense. The program currently involves the deployment of troops, with associated vehicles and other equipment into troubled urban areas, in Santo Domingo and Santiago.

Despite the public attention to the deployment of military forces into the capital under President Medina, the military had long been deployed in a variety of public security roles. Indeed, under the country's previous president Lionel Fernandez, the military had similarly been deployed to urban areas, under the command of the National Police (Ellis, 2017).

In addition, prior to, and concurrent with CiuTran a substantial portion of the Dominican has been assigned duties in support of other government organizations, to include guarding government personnel and facilities. Those performing such guard duties have been given the additional duty of conducting patrols in the area around the protected facility, coordinating with police and other responsible officials in the area. In total, approximately 7,000 military personnel were dedicated to citizen security tasks as of August 2017.

While CiuTran and other presence of the military in urban areas is credited with reducing criminality in troubled in which the forces have been deployed, some worry that it has merely displaced delinquency to areas where the military are not present, while others note that the forces have neither the assets nor broad enough authorization to use force and conduct arrests, nor sufficient training to act effectively in a law enforcement role. The soldiers which are deployed in public areas, for example, generally lack vehicles on the scene to pursue those engaging in acts of crime, and their military weapons, while possessing intimidation value, are generally too powerful to be used safely in urban areas for police actions.

Because CiuTran is not a specialized force like CESFRONT, those assigned to it have only a minimum of law enforcement training, and the experience gained in the line of duty is lost when, after several months, the personnel who have served in the role are rotated out, and new personnel are brought in. Finally, while the CiuTran mission is authorized by the constitution, per se, the inexperienced soldiers performing the mission may be tried in civilian court for alleged offenses arising in the course of their performance of those duties. While the military

provides legal defense for some personnel tried in civilian court, in practice, such resources are not universally available for potentially accused soldiers, while the cost of hiring a private lawyer to defend against criminal charges are beyond the reach of most military personnel. Such legal risks and the potential cost of a legal defense thus arguably gives soldiers in CiuTran an incentive to behave with caution, obeying orders but not necessarily taking initiative.

Such risk aversion reportedly also has occasionally extended to unit commanders who have taken actions that reduce risk of problems at the expense of effectiveness. One knowledgeable source consulted for this work gave the example of soldiers assigned to patrol urban areas with the ammunition cartridges removed from their rifles, in order to avoid the risk of a civilian being shot.

Dominican security experts consulted for this study expressed concern that the population could lose its respect for, and fear of, the military, through their long-term utilization in this citizen security role without the ability to effectively perform the implied law enforcement tasks of that role.

Beyond the operational and legal difficulties with the military's public security role, those activities are arguably not well coordinated with the socioeconomic component of the Medina government's development plan, *Plan Vivir Tranquilo* (Ellis, 2017), which replaced his predecessor's plan *Barrios Seguros* ("Cinco años después, el gobierno [...]"; 2017).

DRUGS

The military has contributed to the fight against narcotrafficking principally through aerial and naval interdiction. To a lesser degree, military citizen security and border control efforts, as well as the providing of military forces to the DNCD and DNI, also advance the goal.

With respect to interdiction of aircraft smuggling drugs through the national airspace, the Dominican Republic does not have a law authorizing the shoot-down of unauthorized aircraft, nor has it publicly forced down such an aircraft, making its effectiveness in an intercept situation dependent on its ability to rapidly respond with ground and/or naval assets to the target identified by the intercepting aircraft. Nonetheless, the previously noted acquisition of 8 Tucano interceptors in 2010 has had a significant deterrent impact on narcotics flights from Colombia and Venezuela. Prior to the acquisition of the Tucanos, aircraft carrying drugs were known to land with relative impunity on Dominican roadways and improvised landing strips to unload their cargo. With the deterrent effect of the Tucanos, there was only one suspected drug flight in all of the first half of 2017 (Ellis, 2017).

In principle, because the Tucanos are not legally authorized to shoot down suspected narcotics flights, Dominican authorities must still follow the flight suspected to be carrying drugs, and intercept it when it lands, before it can offload its cargo, refuel and escape.

To support the rapid response capability of the DNCD in responding to suspicious flights and maritime transits, as noted at the beginning of this section, the Dominican military created a series of specially trained air, sea and maritime response forces, DEPROSER. Nonetheless, the forces were never truly used in that role, and had limited ability to communicate tactically with their DNCD counterparts. As of mid-2017, the Dominican armed forces were moving to a new concept using military special forces in support of DNCD rapid response units, and had moved DEPROSER under CiuTran, emphasizing its citizen security role, rather than its role in interdicting drug shipments (Ellis, 2017).

Overall, the record of the DNCD, working in conjunction with the Dominican Armed Forces, the U.S. Coast Guard, and other foreign partners to interdict the drugs passing through national waters has been relatively good. In the first 7 months of 2017, for example, more than 5,000 packages of drugs were intercepted passing through Dominican waters, a level comparable to the entire previous year (“Mayores alijos de drogas [...]”, 2017).

Beyond air and maritime interdictions, the Dominican government must also combat drugs being smuggled into the country in shipping containers, as part of the large volume of legitimate commerce passing through the nation’s ports. To this end, the government operates two scanners in each of two key commercial ports in the country, Caucedo y Haina, and has plans to install scanners in Puerto Plata and Manzanillo. Nonetheless, there is much work still to be done for the government to provide scanners to adequately cover the commercial products flowing through each of the 12 commercial ports in the country.

Beyond scanners, the DNCD has visibility over operations in multiple ports and airports across the country from its command center in DNCD headquarters, through access to data and security camera images from those facilities. The same facility also has a joint operations center with capability for coordinating with Dominican military forces, and those of the U.S. and other countries, for conducting interdiction operations against air and maritime targets.

Another important part of the government’s struggle against narcotrafficking is attacking the illegal money flows of narcotrafficking groups. To this end, the government has expanded the capabilities of the Financial Analysis Unit (UAF) within the Finance Ministry. During 2017, the UAF is in the process of an Audit by the Financial Action Task Force for Latin America (GAFI-LAT), and is

seeking readmission into the prestigious Edgemont Group of financial intelligence organizations.

In addition, the government is also in the process of implementing a new financial law, 155-17, which expands financial reporting requirements and the list of institutions subject to such disclosure (Medrano & Pérez, 2017).

Despite such technical capabilities for coordination at the national level, both coordination and intelligence sharing in the counter-drug fight continue to be limited by technical and organizational issues. These include difficulties by platforms of different military services and different agencies in communicating with each other in prosecuting a drug interceptor or other operation. Above the tactical level, a surprising amount of operational coordination in the Dominican Republic is reportedly done over unsecure radios, or via the social media application WhatsApp™.

Coordination is further limited by the presence of corruption within parts of many government organizations involved, generating concern among those leading operations or possessing intelligence, that sharing too much information with a potentially compromised partner could undermine the mission and put lives at risk. It is thus not uncommon for government organizations to withhold information from each other, or delay sharing it until the last minute, out of concern that other members of the team are compromised and may pass the information to criminal entities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. has a strong strategic interest in helping the Dominican Republic succeed in its fight against internal security challenges driven by public insecurity, Haiti, and narcotrafficking. The proximity of the Dominican Republic to the United States, and its strong existing connections to the U.S. through human connections, commercial flows and geographic proximity means that any worsening of the aforementioned security challenges could be quickly felt in the U.S. through expanded flows of immigrants and drugs to the U.S. East Coast, and even expanded vulnerability to terrorists or other threat actors operating from the country.

While the challenges outlined in this paper are fundamentally issues that must be addressed by the Dominican people and their government, there are ways in which the U.S. can and should help.

Maintain funding for Dominican Professional Military Education programs in the U.S. Programs allowing the Dominican military to study in the U.S., such

as those provided by the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), as well as shorter courses in the U.S., such as those offered by the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies are particularly desired and valued within the country, and are a vehicle for supporting the Dominican Republic to develop specific skills within its military, thus enhancing its capabilities to respond to the aforementioned challenges, while simultaneously strengthening the bonds of an entire generation of Dominican military personnel with the United States. Reciprocally, cutting such benefits, when the armed forces of the Dominican Republic has built its professional military education plan around participation in U.S. institutions, risks provoking bitterness toward the U.S. at multiple levels, possibly obligating the country to pursue options with other security partners.

Relative to other options for spending defense funding, education and training programs are relatively inexpensive, in consideration of the capabilities and relational benefits imparted. Proposed reductions in future years defense budgets in this area should thus be re-considered.

In addition, to the extent possible, financing for higher-level military education should be considered, such as slots to attend the Command and General Staff College or the U.S. Army War College. Such programs not only impart high level skills relevant to the challenges described in this work, but also help to strengthen the bond between the U.S. and senior host nation military leaders by allowing them to work and study side-by-side with their U.S. counterparts for an extended period, benefitting the U.S. officers in the engagement, as much as their Dominican counterparts.

Continue in-country activities and exercises. As with sending Dominican personnel to U.S. military education and training institutions, the U.S. should continue and expand cooperation activities in the Dominican Republic itself, including collaborative exercises in which Dominican personnel participate such as Tradewinds, UNITAS, and Fuerzas Commandos. As with in-U.S. training, such activities in the Dominican Republic are a useful and cost-effective way to strengthen needed skills within the Dominican military while demonstrating U.S. commitment to the nation.

Nor should such support necessarily be limited to training. To the degree consistent with Dominican laws and political will, the U.S. should consider operational support, such as providing helicopter airlift to augment the capabilities of Dominican counterdrug rapid reaction forces, would also make an important contribution.

Continue and expand CBSI funding for both military and other security activities. In responding to the majority of the security challenges described in this

work the Dominican military plays an important, but only supporting role. Correspondingly, it is important for the U.S., through the Department of State, to continue to administer programs that bolster the capabilities of other Dominican institutions, such as the DNCD, the National Police, the judicial system, immigration and customs authorities, and the national intelligence apparatus. The principle vehicle for doing so across the region has been the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), which has been targeted on the U.S. side for significant funding cuts. It is important that the U.S. continue, and if possible, expand, CBSI funding, particularly with respect to programs in the Dominican Republic for support to personnel screening and monitoring to protect against corruption, narcotics interdiction, and technical and intelligence support to law enforcement, including pursuing the financial component of criminal activity. While the DNCD, for example, performs entry level screening for all of its members, it would benefit from more resources for polygraphs to ensure that all of its personnel receive confidence testing at the proscribed intervals, and resources to perform home visits to monitor for unjustified changes in the financial situation of its members.

Beyond such items to maintain the integrity of key Dominican law enforcement organs, augmented CBSI funding should consider including support for high-payoff / low cost law enforcement technologies, such as drones for border security and maritime surveillance.

Expand U.S. military and Coast Guard presence in the Caribbean Basin. While the assets of all U.S. agencies are stretched thin by global requirements, an expanded presence by U.S. military and Coast Guard assets in the Caribbean basin would contribute significantly to the reduction of narco-trafficking through the region, removing part of the corrupting pressures of such activities that contributes to governance issues in the region, creating security challenges for the U.S. The working relationship between the U.S. and the Dominican Republic in this area is widely acknowledged to be positive, and its effectiveness would be enhanced by the addition of capabilities on the U.S. side. Within this scope, the U.S. should consider extended special programs, such as a Caribbean version of the counterdrug operation “Martillo” previously conducted off the coast of Honduras (“Operation Martillo”, 2018). Such an expanded U.S. presence would have the side benefit of demonstrating U.S. commitment to both the Dominican Republic and other partners in the region at a time when extra-hemispheric actors such as Russia and China are increasingly conducting military and commercial activities there.

Contribute to strengthening of the Haitian police and a robust capability for the United Nations follow-on force in Haiti. While it is too late to reverse the expiration of the mandate for the United Nations peacekeeping force in Haiti, MINUSTAH, the United States has an interest in ensuring that the force that replaces it will be

capable of preventing the deterioration of the economic and security situation in the country. Similarly, the United States must focus on strengthening the Haitian police as an institution, including both processes and technology to root-out corruption, and training and assets to expand its ability to perform the multiple missions it is called upon to perform. To the extent that Haiti insists on re-constructing its military, the United States should cautiously support the border control capabilities of the new force, while working to ensure its professionalism and commitment to civilian authority. Through this combination of measures focused on Haiti, the United States can help minimize the risk of an expansion of outward migration and criminal activity from the country that impacts the security of the neighboring Dominican Republics, as well as the rest of the region, including the U.S. itself.

Help the Dominican Republic to make the most of its leadership of the Conference of American Armies. When leadership of the Conference of American Armies passes from the United States to the Dominican Republic in November 2017 for the coming 2-year cycle, it will provide an opportunity for the country to showcase its institutional capabilities, and call the region's attention to the security issues affecting the Dominican Republic and the rest of the Caribbean. The United States supports this process through the resources of the permanent secretariat of the institution (PESCAA), located in Ft. Sam Houston, Texas. For a small country such as the Dominican Republic, hosting and coordinating the multiple high-level international events involved in the CAA presents a significant administrative burden with which the U.S. is positioned to help, both through the PESCAA and the ties between U.S. and Dominican Army leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

The armed forces of the Dominican Republic have made an admirable effort, under difficult conditions, in supporting the efforts of its government against the challenges of public insecurity, Haiti, and narcotrafficking. The effectiveness of those efforts has been limited by multiple factors from what.

Such difficulties notwithstanding, the Dominican Republic is tied to the United States through bonds of geography, commerce, and family. What happens there affects the security of the United States. It is imperative that the U.S. continue to work with its Dominican partners through adequately funded programs for military engagement and institutional strengthening to help them succeed.

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