

FACT SHEET

Department of Defense Engagement in Support of Caribbean Partners

April 4, 2022

This fact sheet is released on the occasion of the Caribbean Nations Security Conference taking place April 5-7 in Barbados, co-hosted by Commodore Errington Shurland, Chief of Staff of the Barbados Defence Force, and General Laura Richardson, Commander of U.S. Southern Command. Featured speakers include Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Daniel P. Erikson, and security leaders from the Caribbean who have gathered to review regional defense and security challenges and discuss collaborative strategies to bolster regional stability.

The Department of Defense's substantial engagement with Caribbean partners demonstrates our commitment to strengthen relationships and address shared interests and threats. The Department of Defense seeks to remain the trusted defense and security partner for Caribbean nations.

Climate Change:

The Department of Defense seeks to collaborate with Caribbean partners to address the risks of climate change, recognizing the threat from rising temperatures and water; and more frequent storms and floods require increased humanitarian response capabilities. The Department of Defense exchanges information with Caribbean partners about our efforts to develop new ways and tools to address climate change, including integration of climate change considerations in the 2022 National Defense Strategy.

COVID-19 Assistance:

Recognizing the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Defense has donated about \$32M of assistance to Caribbean partners since 2019, including 25 field hospitals, personal protective equipment, medical and non-medical supplies, disinfectants, test kits, ventilators, and cold storage devices.

Disaster Preparedness and Health Assistance:

Between fiscal year 2019-present, the Department of Defense has executed 180 projects totaling over \$35M for disaster preparedness as well as 15 projects costing about \$14M for health and education. Altogether, this assistance totals about 200 projects costing \$50M.

The Department of Defense stands ready to support humanitarian relief operations (when requested by our partners and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)), such as the Department of Defense's provision of transportation and imagery following the 7.2 magnitude earthquake in Haiti on August 14, 2021.

The Department of Defense periodically deploys the USNS Comfort, a hospital ship, to conduct medical assistance in support of regional partners. During each port visit, the USNS Comfort typically provides medical assistance to about 3,500-8,000 people. The USNS Comfort last visited seven Caribbean countries in 2019 (Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago). The Department of Defense seeks to re-visit the Caribbean in late 2022.

Capacity Building:

The Department of Defense conducts a range of security cooperation activities to build partner capacity, complementing other U.S. assistance, such as in support of Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) objectives. The Department of Defense is currently implementing \$23M in fiscal year 2021 and 2022 approved programs to support The Bahamas, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica to develop maritime domain awareness, interdiction capabilities, and more effective defense institutions.

Women, Peace, and Security:

Women, Peace, and Security collaboration with our Caribbean partners is essential to enhancing our operational effectiveness in addressing the myriad security challenges we face together in the maritime domain. Challenges such as transnational organized crime, trafficking in persons, and mass migration have a significant human security dimension that requires a gender perspective to enhance our collective prevention and response efforts. The Department of Defense promotes the role of women in the military as a cross-cutting priority through a variety of exchanges, panel discussions, and workshops.

State Partnership Program:

The Department of Defense has eight active, decades-old State Partnership Program relationships with fourteen Caribbean partner nations; one partnership is with the Eastern Caribbean seven-nation Regional Security System (Bahamas-Rhode Island; Jamaica-District of Columbia; Haiti-Louisiana; Dominican Republic-Puerto Rico; Regional Security System-Florida and U.S. Virgin Islands; Trinidad & Tobago-Delaware; Guyana-Florida; and Suriname-South

Dakota). Altogether, the programs have featured about 200 events and exchanges since 2019, with about 100 more events planned for fiscal year 2022. Main focus areas include: disaster response; counter-illicit trafficking; medical readiness; Women, Peace and Security; and non-commissioned officer development.

Training and Education:

From 2019-present, the Department of Defense has provided training or education to hundreds of Caribbean defense or security students at Department of Defense schools, education events, or through in-country mobile training teams. Caribbean partners attend the Department of Defense's leading professional military education programs at schools including the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, the Air Command and Staff College, Army Command and General Staff College, and the Naval Command College.

The Department of Defense's William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies conducts academic programs to build institutional capacity and promote common perspectives on regional security, and has engaged almost 500 Caribbean participants in courses and webinars since 2019.

Exercises:

The Department of Defense's exercises involving Caribbean participants promote regional and sub-regional coordination, enable U.S. and partner forces to meet training requirements, and improve readiness. The annual flagship Caribbean exercise **TRADEWINDS**, which Belize and Mexico will host on May 7-21, will focus on regional coordination for counter-transnational organized criminal organization and counter-violent extremist organizations.

Other significant annual exercises include **FUERZAS COMANDO** for special forces integration, **UNITAS** for maritime security, **PANAMAX** focused on defense of the Panama Canal, **RESTORATION ISLAND CAYS** focused on disaster response and management, **CORAL CAYS** focused on defense and mutual security matters, and **CYBER CAYS** focused on cyber security and cyber operational compatibility.

Detection and Monitoring and Information Sharing:

Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) conducts detection and monitoring operations throughout its joint operating area (which includes the Caribbean) to facilitate the interdiction of illicit trafficking in support of domestic and international partners.

The Department of Defense works closely with regional partners representing over 20 partner nations, including the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago, to facilitate the flow of information to their home nations' operation centers, helping with "end game" seizures. Key partners have been involved in almost 60 percent of drug disruptions.

The Department of Defense hosts the Cooperative Situational Information Integration (CSII) system, an online system that allows the United States and over two dozen partner nations to share air-, maritime- and land-domain awareness information to counter illicit trafficking in the Caribbean.

Presence:

The Department of Defense regularly deploys naval ships and patrol aircraft in the Caribbean Sea to support a range of missions, including deterrence, detection and monitoring, and interdiction. Featured operations include Department of Defense support to the longstanding, Department of Homeland Security-led Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos (OPBAT) and to counterdrug operations.