

SSI conference voices warning over new threats

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KINGSTON, Ontario – Transnational crime, drug trafficking, homeland security, natural disasters, and health pandemics were all voiced as major concerns facing the Western Hemisphere in the next decade during a recent conference co-sponsored by the Army War College Strategic Studies Institute.

More than 100 military officers, government officials, academics, and policy makers representing the United States, Canada, and Mexico gathered for the conference in Kingston, Ontario June 10-12 to discuss regional security threats.

"North Americans face a complex and changing security environment. Where enemies of the past were relatively predictable, today we face a range of threats extending across multiple domains," said Lt. Gen. Thomas R. Turner, commander of U.S. Army North.

Turner participated in a panel discussion on North American security perspectives and described the developing threats and mutual security concerns.

"Many of today's threats, including terrorist use of WMD, illicit drug trafficking, threat of pandemic influenza and other natural and manmade disasters, attacks on information and space systems, are unpredictable, diverse, decentralized, and yet increasingly networked," said Turner.



Dr. Max Manwaring discusses new security threats in the Western Hemisphere and the need for a multilateral approach to resolve them at the Kingston Conference on International Security June 10-12. Over 100 military officers, government officials, academics, and policy makers representing the United States, Canada, and Mexico, gathered in Kingston, Ontario to discuss regional security threats. Photo by Kelly Schloesser.

SSI share studies with international partners

In co-sponsoring the event, SSI contributed research and analytical expertise to the dialogue: Col. **Douglas Lovelace**,

director of the Strategic Studies Institute, and research professors Dr. **Max Manwaring** and Col. **Alex Crowther**.

Army War College faculty member, Dr. **Paul Kan**, participated as a panel chairperson as well.

Both Manwaring and Crowther presented studies that outlined new security threats for the region.

"War has changed from the unilateral dimension to the multilateral dimension of the social, political, and economic paradigm," said Manwaring.

"Most of the threats we, the United States, and much of the rest of the world face today are transnational in nature and require transnational solutions," he said.

Manwaring encouraged the three countries to work together consistently and face the new threats as a united front.

"All of the elements of power must be applied to solve these challenges. And we need not just a whole-of-government approach but a multilateral, hemispheric approach," said Manwaring.

During a panel on building security in the Americas, Crowther discussed difficulties that must be overcome in order to curb drug trafficking from Latin America through Mexico and into the United States and Canada.

"In many of the Latin American countries the policing levels are very low, allowing for ships, aircrafts, trucks, and people to transport drugs," he said.

Crowther addressed the policing efforts and underlined the need for improved coordination from the U.S. and Mexico.

"With the support of several organizations, once the drugs reach Mexico they have a very well developed system. It's very hard to control," said Crowther. "With mass corruption and threats, it's very difficult to encourage local police to challenge the trafficking."

Crowther advocated supporting a police exchange program, where the units are assigned to another location in Mexico, far from their home. This would provide more protection for forces and their families, he said.

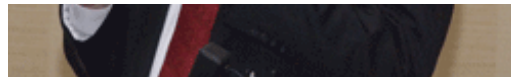
Col. Alex Crowther, SSI research professor, presented research on drug-trafficking originating in Latin America, to Mexico, and then to the United States and Canada. Photo by Kelly Schloesser.

Working as partners, sharing information

In facing these threats, several panelists highlighted the need for continued open-discussions and information sharing.



"This conference brought together key partners to interact in thought-provoking discussions on enhancing security in the Americas," said



Lt. Gen. Charles Bouchard, deputy commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command.

"We need to continue to strengthen our relationships and learn from each other," said Bouchard.

Several of the panelists noted that Canada's re-engagement in the region over the last few years has greatly increased the amount of information shared. The relationship between the two countries was said to be very effective by speakers.

Turner also focused on the growing ties between the United States and Mexico, where growing security concerns have led to increased U.S. engagement.

"As part of our theater security cooperation effort with Mexico, we are in routine contact with SEDENA and the Mexican Army leaders in an effort to not only continue building a strong relationship between our country's two Armies, but to exchange lessons learned from our 7-years of COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan that may be applicable to their close fight against the drug trafficking organizations," said Turner.

"It is imperative that we do everything possible and within their wishes, to operationally enable them for success while respecting the sovereignty of both nations. The Mexican Army's success in Mexico mutually supports our efforts to secure the land approaches to the homeland," he said.

Representing the Mexican Navy, Admiral Jorge Pastor Gómez, further described the Mexican Armed Forces role as being supportive to both federal and state authorities on issues such as organized crime, drug, weapons, or human trafficking, terrorism, natural disasters and pandemics. Gomez also noted the need for strengthening relations with regional partners and collaborating on security concerns.

SSI participates in several academic conferences throughout the year.

"SSI's Academic Engagement Program creates and sustains partnerships with the global strategic community. We co-sponsor academic conferences to examine issues of importance to the Army, collaborating with some of the most prestigious universities in the country," said Dr. **Dallas Owens**, chairman of SSI's Strategic Research and Analysis Department.