

Faller: Partnerships Vital in Countering Threats



Adm. Craig S. Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command, speaks Sept. 30 at the Gen. Bernard W. Rogers Strategic Issues Forum, an event sponsored by the Association of the United States Army and the Navy League of the United States. Danielle Lucey

ARLINGTON, Va. – The commander of U.S. forces in Latin America and the Caribbean Sea said that the U.S. strategy in the region is designed to secure a prosperous hemisphere and to counter threats that would undermine the security of the region, including the issues brought about by the increasing great power competition.

“The best way to counter threats is partnership,” said Adm. Craig S. Faller, commander of U.S. Southern Command, speaking Sept. 30 at the Gen. Bernard W. Rogers Strategic Issues Forum, an event sponsored by the Association of the United States Army and the Navy League of the United States.

Strengthening partnerships “wins in life, wins in war,” Faller said.

Strengthening partnerships is Faller’s top priority as he works with the nations of the region and their militaries. He said that partnership is the best way to achieve his second priority, countering threats to the region. His third priority is to “build our team,” strengthening the forces available to secure the peace in the region.

“The best way to counter threats is partnership.”

Adm. Craig S. Faller, U.S. Southern Command

Faller pointed out as good news that 27 of the nations in his

area of responsibility are democracies. He also noted that some nations, such as Colombia, are now not only providing their own defense but are providing security assistance to other nations in the region.

The admiral stressed the importance of promoting shared values – professionalism, respect for law, respect for human rights – as a means to address the regional problems of weak democracies and institutional corruption and of countering transnational criminal organizations engaged in activities such as drug running, human trafficking, weapons running and illegal fishing and mining. He said that combatting international terrorism, such as that sponsored by Iran, comes under the purview of U.S. Special Operations Command.

Faller said he considered Russia and China to be “malign actors” in the region that have “moved in a way that all of us should find alarming.”

China is working on 60 seaport access deals across the hemisphere, 56 in the Southern Command region, he said.

Faller said that 67% of the goods that pass through the Panama Canal are U.S. goods, but he noted that China has signed 45 agreements with Panama during the last U.S. administration “and locked up port deals at either end of the canal.”

“I do consider China a threat to the democracy, to the stability of this neighborhood,” Faller said, noting the support of China and Russia for Venezuela’s Maduro regime. He also said that Maduro’s presidential guard is provided by Cuba.

He said that the Panama Canal is vulnerable to terrorist and cyber threats.

Faller praised the partnership between the United States and Brazil during World War II, when the U.S. 4th Fleet was based in Brazil, and the two countries operated together to counter

the German submarine threat in the Atlantic.

“Brazil would say they should be part of NATO, and I don’t disagree with them,” he said. “There is a lot of opportunity there.”

The admiral also stressed the importance of the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which is the southernmost U.S. facility in the region. The U.S. stages aircraft at Soto Cano in Honduras and has some pier space in Curacao, an island owned by The Netherlands.

The 4th Fleet has no ships permanently assigned to the Southern Command, but Faller is looking forward to one ship being assigned there. Typically, five Coast Guard cutters are in the region on drug and migrant interdiction missions.