

According to official State Department records, dialogue between the countries “serves as a continuing forum for counterterrorism cooperation and prevention among all four countries.” Argentine Embassy Political Counselor, José Luis Sútera, in an interview with COHA asserted, “The 3 +1 Counterterrorism Dialogue, without question, is the chief board of exchanging information. The first meeting in Buenos Aires stemmed from American suspicions that Hezbollah and Hamas groups were harbored in the [tri-border region].” The next meeting is scheduled to take place in Washington, DC on December 6, 2004.

“NO OPERATIONAL TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS,
NO AL-QAEDA PRESENCE”

In an interview with COHA, Dr. Jorge Brizuela, a high-ranking official in the Paraguayan Embassy in Washington, DC, stated, “Terrorists have not been found in the zone. No information would indicate that terrorist activities exist in the zone—this has been reiterated on various occasions by the corresponding authorities and the necessary steps are being taken so money obtained in the tri-border region is not being sent to Arab countries.” Though he agrees with Brizuela’s assertion that “al-Qaeda is not in Ciudad del Este,” Argentina’s Sútera recognized that “suspicions still loom over Arabs who are sending money to terrorist groups in the Middle East.” Such groups pose as charity organizations that seek to aid socially and economically stricken areas of Iran, while what they do is to donate the newly acquired funds to the terrorist cause of Hamas and Hezbollah.

The transcript of the 3+1 Counterterrorism Dialogue’s December 3, 2003 meeting held in Asunción emphasized the delegation’s stance that “Although there continued to be reports in 2003 of an al-Qaeda presence in the tri-border area, these reports remained uncorroborated by intelligence and law-enforcement officials.” Still, those assembled agreed that international terrorist funding and money laundering in the area remained an area of primary concern. Considering the priorities of money launderers and piracy crooks, the 3+1 understandably has organized a Financial Intelligence Organization under the umbrella of the Counterterrorism Dialogue. Last May in Buenos Aires, the four government delegations discussed the threats of banking activities that could lead to funding of terrorist organizations. Sútera has concluded that most of the terrorist-funding organizations had traveled to other parts of South America, though he declined to comment where he believed such groups had gone.

ARGENTINA’S COOPERATION

In separate interviews with COHA, Argentine officials like Sútera and Congressional Liaison, Mariano Enrico, both expressed the belief that Argentine authorities had initiated and bolstered Southern Cone efforts to clean up the tri-border region. According to a recent State Department document, “Argentina continues to express strong support for the global war on terrorism and worked closely with the UN, the OAS, MERCOSUR and the U.S. to ensure full implementation of existing agreements.” In particular, Argentine officials have shown their disposition to freeze assets of alleged terrorist-funding organizations/individuals.

Among the channels of communication connecting U.S. and Argentine officials is the line between the CIA and SIDE (Intelligence Sector of the Argentine State). Both SIDE and the CIA work in concert with Brazilian and Paraguayan secret service personnel. Another perhaps more crucial element in the war on terrorism in Latin America began as a result of an Argentine initia-

tive; CICTE was organized in 1998 as a multinational security plan for the region. Since then, Paraguay has cooperated openly with the Argentines. But, Brazil has had some reservations about instigating any anti-terrorism plans without proof of terrorism. However, since 9/11 the Brazilian sector of the CICTE team has offered full support for the organization as information among the three countries has passed with little inhibition.

PARAGUAY’S COOPERATION

Paraguay’s role in the war on terrorism has never held a more important role than it does now. Though few terrorists per se have surfaced in the region, rumors of the possibility of some al-Qaeda connections to the region simply will not go away. While President Nicanor Duarte Frutos has determined that there is a domestic problem in Paraguay with fundraising that might support terrorist causes, many State Department officials have concluded that Paraguay’s greatest impediment to the prosecution of suspected terrorists is the absence of an anti-terrorist law.

BRAZIL’S COOPERATION

President Luiz Inácio Lula has taken a greater initiative than perhaps has been the case of his predecessors in terms of combating terrorism, especially in the tri-border region. Foz do Iguacu, Brazil’s portion of the region, has received considerable scrutiny from the once aloof, but now rather concerned, Lula administration. The Brazilian president has “vigorously condemned terrorism” and calls such acts “the insanity of perpetrators of terrorism.”

Though Lula’s intentions merit praise, his country’s shortage of resources and training have hindered its role in acting as a watchdog over the region. In an exclusive interview with COHA, Brazilian Embassy First Secretary of Political Section, Breno Costa, offered an explanation as to why Brazilian officials appear to act lethargically when it comes to terrorist concerns: “At first it seemed like the U.S. was constantly alleging that the tri-border area harbored criminals and terrorists, yet they never specified where exactly in the region such evidence was forthcoming. So Brazil asked the U.S. for concrete evidence and, of course, not one piece of evidence. Just as the State Department reported last year, no terrorist cells are acting in the region.” Costa went on to say that once evidence of money laundering was presented to the Brazilian government, officials in Foz do Iguacu began to examine cash flow entering and leaving the city. Overall, Brazil has cooperated considerably with the other three countries involved in the counterterrorism dialogue, having signed all of the 12 UN conventions on terrorism and is a party to nine of them.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, the effort to prevent terrorism in Latin America has become a more salient issue since 9/11. With cooperation among the Southern Cone countries in conjunction with participation of the U.S., terrorist acts have a lower likelihood of occurring. Still, as the Afghanistan mountains provide a haven for terrorists in the Middle East, Ciudad del Este—if not properly monitored—could evolve as yet another hub for terrorism. Whereas the U.S. has supported and participated in the 3+1 Counterterrorism Dialogue, American leaders merit commendation.

TRIBUTE TO PAM BULINE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize a key member of my team who I have worked alongside for

almost 10 years now and most importantly, to mark a milestone of dedicated service to this body, the U.S. Senate.

On September 24, 2004, Pam Buline marked her 25th anniversary of working for the U.S. Senate. Twenty-five years all spent as a valuable aide to two Senators from the great State of Wyoming.

Pam began her career in the Senate back in 1979, working for former Senator Malcolm Wallop. In those days, Pam worked out of a little office in a town called Lander, WY. Upon my election to the U.S. Senate, Pam agreed to join my staff and continue her efforts to serve constituents in our State. I was extremely pleased to have a person with her degree of knowledge on so many important issues—she is invaluable.

Pam remains a crucial person on my staff. Her domain in Wyoming covers a wide array of issues, from land swaps, to American Indian issues, to snowmachines in Yellowstone and Grand Teton. I can always turn to Pam for good advice and a very thorough explanation of the issue at hand or as she says, “the long and the short of it.” Pam loves her job and the people she works with and I am extremely grateful that she is on my staff.

We are part of a team, my staff and I. Along with my wife, Susan, we all feel strongly bound to service for the people of Wyoming. Pam continues to be an invaluable member of that team. Her loyalty, while not rare in this great body, is special nonetheless.

As U.S. Senators, we all know how important it is to have staff around us that are trustworthy, and will do whatever it takes to make things work. I have been particularly fortunate to know Pam and work with her for the past 9 years. Wyoming and the U.S. Senate have been blessed by her service for the past 25 years. I know my colleagues, and her husband Jim, and son Robert, join me in saluting Pam. I look forward to working with her for many years to come.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to note the importance of the week of October 3–9, 2004, which is National Mental Health Week. This annual event was created in the hopes that Americans would recognize and honor the challenge encountered by the mentally ill and their loved ones. This year, the theme of the National Mental Health Week is “unity through disparities”.

Mental illnesses affect 22.1 percent of Americans over the age of 18. According to a National Institute of Mental Health 2001 survey, approximately 44.3 million Americans suffer from some form of mental illness. Conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive compulsive disorder, together are ranked fourth of the ten leading causes of disabilities in