

# Playing the Field: Alleviating US Energy Dependency on the Persian Gulf with Alternative Partners

by Michael Coffey

Energy security is poised to become as contentious an issue in the 21st century as ideology was in the 20th. Russian President Vladimir Putin has called for post-Soviet Russia to reclaim its great power status as an energy hegemon that doles out subsidized energy to friendly states and allies, implying that unfriendly states will find themselves short of such supplies in times of crisis. Chinese state-owned oil companies are on a procurement spree worldwide, as Beijing acquires oil and gas from rogue states otherwise ostracized by the world community, buying up stakes in future developments to ensure a long-term flow of energy. President George Bush committed the United States to energy independence (and even self-sufficiency) in his 2006 State of the Union address to Congress when he expressed a desire to make US reliance on Middle Eastern oil “a thing of the past.”<sup>1</sup> Despite the president’s optimism, the goal of eliminating America’s dependency on Persian Gulf oil remains far-fetched. Energy independence for the United States will require as-yet undeveloped technologies and resources and, until these goals are realized, the United States must counterbalance current energy consumption trends by boosting supplies from non-Middle East producers.

What follows is an assessment of countries outside of the Middle East that will have a direct impact on Washington’s energy security as the United States works to alleviate its Persian Gulf dependency. Some potential secondary producers of oil and gas that are expected to alleviate US dependency are illustrated in case studies on Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Venezuela, and Trinidad & Tobago. Many of these energy partners share key aspects of insecurity common to developing states; they are often engaged in two of Charles Tilly’s four characteristic state activities.<sup>2</sup> Extraction, primarily conducted through energy rents, allows these regimes to acquire the resources necessary to battle internal rivals. Eliminating internal threats, or state making, is a common preoccupation of developing states. The current international system usually obviates (or precludes) war making against external rivals. Thus, US security assistance to these countries can play a crucial role in supporting the state

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making process. Support for states that have a limited capacity to deal with internal threats, precisely because they are rentier states in a formative phase, will help the United States and its energy partners achieve their ultimate security goals.<sup>3</sup> Development aid and military training in the Caucasus will likely prove beneficial to US interests; security/intelligence cooperation with Trinidad and Tobago will help safeguard energy in the Caribbean against terrorist threats; US policymakers will face tougher challenges in Venezuela and Nigeria, where President Hugo Chavez seems willing to cut off US oil and the resource-rich Niger River Delta region threatens secession.

Nigeria is a significant supplier of oil to the United States and, as a member of the Oil Producing Export Countries (OPEC) cartel, it is already in the top tier of oil-producing nations in the world. Nevertheless, Nigeria is the least secure producer analyzed in this paper. Nigeria risks complete collapse if the government cannot ease religious conflict, repair divisions along ethnic lines, and lessen the rancor between federal centers of power and oil-rich regions.

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The opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline on July 13, 2006, punctuated US energy diversification efforts in the Caucasus and Central Asia.<sup>4</sup> The South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) could also help meet US energy needs. However, Baku may risk renewed war with Armenia thanks to boosted pipeline revenues. Even without another war in the Caucasus, criminality, thievery, ethnic conflict, corruption, and a revanchist Russia all threaten stability in the region. Chechnya exemplifies the risk to energy security in the region if these threats are not resolved.

Venezuela and Trinidad are situated in America's "backyard," though this does not guarantee local stability. Trinidad is still host to Islamic organizations that attempted a coup in the 1990s. Neighboring Venezuela's support for Columbian terrorists is leading the country toward roguery, rather than democracy. Populist politics and labor relations have already proven turbulent issues for Caracas.

Broadly speaking, the United States must tamp down unrest in Nigeria, maintain peace in the Caucasus, curb disruptive policies in Venezuela (that exacerbate market spikes), and promote economic development and counterterrorism practices in Trinidad if the United States expects to dent its Middle East energy dependency with the help of these (and other) alternative energy suppliers. Collectively, these efforts to provide internal stability can be understood as preemptive security sector reform (SSR). Traditional SSR entails providing security, bolstering the control of force, and developing capable organs in partner states.<sup>5</sup> However, rather than apply SSR in a

post-conflict environment, this paper argues that, in most of these cases of weak energy states, military and security-strengthening operations, fostered by the US Department of Defense, should play a leading role prior to state collapse or civil war.<sup>6</sup>

## **AZERBAIJAN**

US economic interests reaped a significant victory when Caucasus leaders decided to build the BTC pipeline, despite cheaper alternatives. However, regional stability and a peaceful Azerbaijan are key to exploiting the full potential of the BTC pipeline. Security along the Russian periphery is a concern, as evidenced by the explosions that damaged the Mozdok-Tbilisi gas pipeline in North Ossetia, cutting supplies to Georgia and Armenia on January 22, 2006.<sup>7</sup> Power lines in Karachayevo-Cherkessia, providing electricity to Georgia, were also cut the same day.<sup>8</sup> Moscow blamed terrorists, while Tbilisi blamed Russian security services. Either possibility poses a threat to the BTC pipeline component of US energy strategy.

President Ilham Aliyev is a friendly authoritarian who has aligned Azeri oil production with US consumption interests. However, in 2004, Azerbaijan's former National Security Minister, Namiq Abbasov, warned that Baku believed members of al-Qaeda were plotting to sabotage the BTC.<sup>9</sup> Gal Luft, co-director of the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security (IAGS), worried that internal conflicts involving Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia, or external conflicts between Georgia and Russia or Azerbaijan and Armenia, could upset regional peace and energy security.<sup>10</sup> Baku significantly increased defense spending in 2005, leading some to worry that a new Nagorno-Karabakh war was in the offing. In a 2005 speech in Quba, Aliyev promised that the military, after a 76 percent increase in funding, "will be able to liberate our lands at any time."<sup>11</sup> Armenia's army Chief of Staff, General Mikayel Harutiunian, responded, "That will create a certain tension in the region."<sup>12</sup>

In 2005, the Chechen Interior Ministry reported that criminal rings stole at least one-third of the oil produced and refined in Chechnya.<sup>13</sup> Thieves can siphon or "bunker" from pipelines or steal directly from oil wells – both profitable rackets. "Everybody does the former, while the latter is the business of Kadyrovtsy," said one Chechen Interior Ministry official.<sup>14</sup> The Chechen experience is instructive because ethnic conflict and widespread corruption are also present along the routes of new pipelines being built in the southern Caucasus. Transparency International ranked Azerbaijan and Georgia—thoroughfares for Caspian and Central Asian oil and gas—as two of the world's most corrupt states in its 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index.<sup>15</sup>

With the successful completion and inauguration of the BTC pipeline, energy will flow from the Caspian Sea to Western markets, including the United States, while avoiding Russian- and Iranian-controlled infrastructure. Stability and international investment will allow the Caspian Sea region to overtake Venezuela's annual output of oil, producing up to 5.9 million barrels per day (bpd) in a best-case outcome. The

revenue from the BTC pipeline will allow President Aliyev to solidify his authoritarian rule and avoid genuine democratic reform. However, Aliyev's balance against Iranian or Russian interference will continue to shield him from US interests in democratization.

There is also a legitimate concern that new energy wealth in the Caspian will lead the southern Caucasus down the path followed by Chechnya, mimicking the territory's endemic conflict, criminality, corruption, thievery, and strife. In such a worst-case scenario, Baku could renew conflict with Armenia if leaders believed new oil revenues and Western dependence on the BTC pipeline would proscribe diplomatic outrage. Fresh interstate conflict would exacerbate the threat mafias and militants pose to pipeline security in the region. The outbreak of war among any of the southern Caucasus states, and Azerbaijan in particular, would annul the benefits of authoritarian rule in Baku for US energy security.

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The United States needs to safeguard the completed BTC pipeline and prevent destabilizing moves by any of the independent polities (Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, or Georgia) in the region that could lead to renewed conflict and increased pipeline/energy insecurity. Diplomats must make clear that, for example, Baku's energy policies favoring the West will not excuse renewed aggression against Armenian populations. A new shooting war between US-trained and -equipped Georgian forces and Russian-backed separatists in Abkhazia would be equally unfortunate for US energy security. The BTC pipeline hub located near Tbilisi would certainly present a powerful lure for anti-government forces. The State Department should support a policy of Georgian integrity, but make clear to President Mikheil Saakashvili that unification efforts must proceed along peaceful, negotiated lines. Conflict that embroils Russian peacekeeping forces threatens Caucasus sovereignty, regional security, and US energy interests.

US training programs calibrated to teach good civil-military relations, human rights, and other aspects of modern liberalism in the south Caucasus will cultivate a security force better equipped to handle conflicts between various ethnic and religious groups that could destabilize the Caucasus and threaten energy infrastructure. NATO's Partnership for Peace is an important launching pad for such cooperation. The recently concluded Stability and Sustainment Operations Program for Georgia's 32nd Light Infantry Battalion, III Infantry Brigade, is one example of a Georgian-American program that has seen hundreds of soldiers trained to US standards.<sup>16</sup> Military exchanges are also convenient gateways for more complex and invasive nation-building efforts.



Nation-building, including political and economic development, will improve US energy security across the Caucasus. The Westward orientation of Caspian (and Kazakh) oil output and new governments—like the one headed by Saakashvili in Georgia—are significant first steps toward improving Washington's regional energy security outlook. To guarantee the longevity of these developments, the United States must work to improve the Caucasus nations' security and help them disengage from both Russia to the north and Iran to the south. Increasing transparency, political openness, citizens' rights, and economic dynamism will gradually help bring the region into the Western fold of nations. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is an ideal platform for European countries to project soft power and foster these ideals. Partnerships between Tbilisi, Yerevan, and Baku, including security agreements with the European Union, NATO, and the United States, should be encouraged wherever possible.<sup>17</sup> The October 2006 agreement between Paris and Tbilisi that provided for French military instruction, military exchanges, and mountain warfare training in 2007, is the type of budding security partnership that US planners should encourage among allies.<sup>18</sup>

## **NIGERIA**

Nigeria currently produces 2.5 million bpd of oil.<sup>19</sup> In 2004 and 2005, Nigeria supplied the United States with more than 400 million barrels of oil, an amount exceeded only by Canada, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. As Africa's largest oil-producing nation, Nigeria is an established provider of oil for Europe and the United States. Therefore, Nigeria is central to reducing US dependency on the Persian Gulf, and the outbreak of civil war would seriously hinder such diversification efforts. Most of Nigeria's oil is located along the coast in 250 small fields, containing less than 50 million barrels in each field.<sup>20</sup> Regional conflict, piracy, and theft threaten these deposits. In January of 2005, ChevronTexaco announced that it was losing 140,000 bpd because unrest in the Delta forced it to close several facilities.<sup>21</sup> Like the Caucasus, Nigeria faces a separatist movement in and around energy-producing regions. Specifically, unrest in the River Delta threatens continued production. Corruption is significant in the country; mismanagement is so endemic, Nigeria buys refined oil from non-producing nations like Spain at a markup, according to Lionel Beehner of the Council on Foreign Relations.<sup>22</sup> Transparency International's corruption ranking placed Nigeria 142nd out of 163 countries in 2006.<sup>23</sup>

In January of 2006 the rebel Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which had previously focused its attacks on the Royal Dutch Shell Company, said it would widen oil-related attacks.<sup>24</sup> On January 18, the rebels promised to attack Agip, Total, and Chevron facilities as well. In late January, a band of thirty armed men stormed the offices of Italian oil company Agip in Port Harcourt in southern Nigeria, killing nine, including eight police officers.<sup>25</sup> A few days later, on January 29, 2006, gunmen raided a compound operated by South Korean oil producer Daewoo.<sup>26</sup> In mid-February, militants took nine foreign

hostages and attacked two pipelines, as well as Shell's Forcados offshore oil terminal.<sup>27</sup> In October of 2006, a band of seventy militants attacked several dozen Nigerian soldiers, killing three, stealing a barge of crude oil, and kidnapping twenty-five Shell contractors in the process.<sup>28</sup> That same month, the US consulate warned that militants could be targeting the liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant on Bonny Island, the world's third largest such facility.<sup>29</sup> The past year has been rife with insurgent attacks on infrastructure, security forces, and foreign nationals in Nigeria.

Organized criminals, through bunkering and theft, also contribute to Nigeria's underperformance as an oil producer. In October 2003 the Nigerian navy stopped the Greek-owned ship MT African Pride and discovered 11.3 metric tons of crude oil allegedly stolen from pipelines.<sup>30</sup> In late September 2005 a joint task force near Sapele seized a barge carrying tens of thousands of tons of stolen crude oil.<sup>31</sup> Oil pipeline thievery near the city of Warri in October 2005, resulted in a pipeline explosion and a major fire. A dozen bunkerers, using heavy machinery to siphon oil from a Pan Ocean Oil Corporation pipeline, were gunned down by Nigerian troops on January 2, 2006.<sup>32</sup> In August 2006, suspected oil thieves in Rivers State started an oil well fire that lasted forty-two days, casting a pall over neighboring regions before the damage was repaired.<sup>33</sup> The Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) estimates that hundreds of attacks on pipelines and oil facilities occur every year. Some 30,000 barrels of oil are believed to be lost to fuel smugglers every day.<sup>34</sup>

The government has established more policing, but given pervasive corruption, it is questionable whether increased enforcement will have a positive effect. Nigeria recently established three additional naval formations in the oil-producing Niger Delta, to better police the area. The naval units, identified as forward operating bases (FOBs), were situated in Bonny in Rivers State, Forcados in Delta State, and Egueme in Bayelsa State, according to Sunday Baje, officer in charge of the Eastern Naval Command.<sup>35</sup> Previously, the Nigerian government established two naval formations in Ibaka in Akwa-Ibom State and Igbokoda in Ondo State.<sup>36</sup> The FOBs will be equipped with fast-moving rapid-response boats to patrol creeks and channels leading to the sea.

Militants and criminals are not the only threats posed to Nigeria's oil facilities. Government security forces, ostensibly deployed to protect infrastructure against damage and theft, have colluded with criminals to steal oil. In September 2005, three policemen—part of a team specifically created to combat large-scale fuel theft—were arrested for committing crimes they were meant to stop.<sup>37</sup> Also in 2005, two top-ranking naval officers—Rear Admiral Francis Agbiti, chief of training and operations, and Rear Admiral Babatunde Kolawole, chief of the Western Naval Command—were found guilty of “colluding with a criminal mafia syndicate involved in the oil bunkering business.”<sup>38</sup> The government, at all levels of authority, is corrupt and complicit in robbing the state. In November 2005, the federal government froze the flow of funds to the oil-rich Bayelsa state, charging the governor with corruption. Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha was charged a month earlier in Britain with laundering US\$3.2 million, stolen from Nigerian government coffers.<sup>39</sup>

Because the government cannot check insurgent forces, many companies have considered pulling out of on-shore drilling, calling into question Nigeria's ability to meet the production goals of 3 million bpd in 2006 and 4 million bpd in 2010. For example, Shell responded to insurgent attacks in mid-February 2006, by shutting down Nigerian production on February 18, halting 455,000 bpd-operations in the country—20 percent of Nigeria's daily output.<sup>40</sup> Shell's decision temporarily pushed world oil prices up a dollar, to over \$61 per barrel.<sup>41</sup>

In late March, 2006, insurgents suspected of connections with MEND attacked an Agip pipeline in Nigeria, leading the Italian company to shut down 60,000 bpd of production in the western Delta region.<sup>42</sup> This fulfilled a promise by the Delta separatists to widen their offensive against foreign multinationals. If the government and military are unable to eliminate separatism across the country, Nigeria could eventually resemble the North Caucasus in terms of geographical partitioning and prolonged low-intensity warfare. If events unfold in this manner, Nigeria will likely be unable to increase oil production and could even be hard pressed to maintain current levels of output.

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There is also a possibility that Nigeria could fall into civil war. This worst-case scenario envisions the Christian south and Muslim north battling each other while oil-rich regions attempt to assert independence from the central government. In such a threatening environment, many multinational companies could leave the country. Consequently, oil production would plummet, world energy prices would spike, and the country would be unable to serve as a key partner in the US energy strategy.

The US government is already engaging Nigeria and other countries in the region on diplomatic and military fronts, attempting to forestall significant conflict and improve local security. In March of 2006, Admiral Henry Ulrich, commander of the Allied Joint Force Command Naples, met with Nigeria's Chief of Naval Service, Vice Admiral Ganiyu Adekeye, and announced a plan to send more US ships to the Gulf of Guinea to improve regional maritime security.<sup>43</sup> Ulrich noted a repair/training ship was already in the area conducting counterterrorism training with local African forces.<sup>44</sup> The United States needs to continue military-to-military cooperation and other programs that inculcate good civil-military relations and democratic norms of behavior with the Nigerian security apparatus, in addition to basic training exercises that teach surveillance, patrolling, and counterinsurgency tactics.

The State Department recognizes that Nigeria is vital as a regional peacekeeping power and US energy supplier, but funded activities do not reflect acknowledged interests. In 2005 and 2006, the State Department funneled more than \$100 million into the Global HIV/AIDS Initiative (GHAI) and Child Survival and Health (CSH) programs.<sup>45</sup> Over that same period Nigeria only received slightly more than \$3.2

million for law enforcement programs.<sup>46</sup> Security forces need more training, including human rights instruction, and support. Diplomats should encourage discussions that are aimed at reducing conflict between the government and MEND. Funding from the State Department for social programs targeted at rebellious regions could help alleviate some local grievances. Once terms of discourse are established between separatist groups and the government, this groundwork will hopefully provide the parties with the means to achieve long-term settlements.

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The United States needs to prevent the total collapse of Nigeria, and over the long term, strengthen and bolster the legitimacy of the central government. Diplomats should work to achieve lasting settlements between various independence movements, insurgents, and the federal government. The US military should continue training Nigerian naval forces and consider establishing joint patrol agreements that could allow US forces—perhaps with intelligence or even more forceful capabilities—to assist or advise local security contingents responding to situations involving foreign nationals and offshore oil facilities.<sup>47</sup> The long-term health of the nation depends on the health of the population; thus, GHAI and CSH funding should remain at current or near-current levels (to at least act as levers). Finally, the United States should predicate increased security cooperation on reciprocated efforts by the central government to fund social programs for disaffected regions and populations.

In February 2007, the Bush administration officially announced the creation of a military command for Africa (AFRICOM).<sup>48</sup> Unlike other combatant commands, AFRICOM is being touted as a solution to the array of soft power security issues present in Nigeria (and elsewhere on the continent): preemptive conflict management, providing security to ungoverned regions, responding to refugee flows, confronting corrupt and weak governments, combating widespread poverty, and treating HIV/AIDS and other epidemics, are all potential AFRICOM responsibilities. According to Principal Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Ryan Henry, AFRICOM's mandate will include the development of "a stable environment in which civil society can be built and that the quality of life for the citizenry can be improved."<sup>49</sup>

Such an organization, staffed with US Agency for International Development (USAID) and State Department personnel, and even a civilian deputy commander, will be able to marshal the resources of the Pentagon alongside the development expertise of other civilian government agencies. This synergy, with the military positioned to play a leading role rehabilitating the security apparatus, is exactly what is demanded for preemptive SSR in a rentier (US partner) state like Nigeria.

## VENEZUELA

Venezuela is a significant supplier of oil to the United States, providing more than half a billion barrels of oil annually to American markets. Only Canada, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia provide the United States with more. The United States imported 68 percent of total Venezuelan oil exports in 2003.<sup>50</sup> Continued government repression, closer ties with narco-terrorists, and a possible alliance with Beijing will threaten Venezuelan stability; activities unrelated to the oil industry could still destabilize oil markets and, by extension, US energy security.

Caracas has not had to counter domestic militants, as in the Caucasus, or corruption akin to that of Nigeria, though instability in the region is still a concern. Events in 2002 demonstrated Venezuela's political instability. A March 2002 coup attempted to oust Chavez, and a November 2002, general strike, followed by a two-month shutdown of the oil industry, resulted in a global spike in the price of oil. Chavez is using oil wealth to support other leftist political leaders in South America, attempting to counter US influence in the region. Meanwhile, Chavez's "Bolivarian" foreign policy supports multi-polarity by courting Cuba, Iran, Russia, and China.<sup>51</sup>

While, ultimately, "Chavez's ability to challenge the United States is severely limited... [and] the occasional threat to cut off oil exports to the United States is fairly meaningless," Chavez can still foment unrest at a regional level.<sup>52</sup> Colombian terrorists use Venezuelan territory as a place to train, equip, base operations, and retreat, according to a *US News and World Report* 2003 expose.<sup>53</sup> The National Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) are receiving support from Venezuelan military and intelligence officials.<sup>54</sup> Former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, General Richard Myers, has likened Venezuela's support for terrorists in Colombia to Syria's support for terrorists in Iraq.<sup>55</sup> The FARC has a base near Resumidero (inside Venezuela) able to support 700 troops, as well as a second base near Machiques with Internet access and other training facilities.<sup>56</sup> FARC also operates a radio and communications station from Venezuelan territory.<sup>57</sup>

More specifically similar to Syria, Venezuela also allows Middle Eastern terrorist groups to operate within its territory. Margarita Island serves as a base for Islamic terrorist groups, including Hamas and Hezbollah, to conduct money-laundering and drug-trafficking operations worth millions.<sup>58</sup> The Venezuelan government has also provided Syrians, Egyptians, Pakistanis, and Lebanese with visas and other documentation, potentially enhancing terrorist mobility.<sup>59</sup>

In an area that the IAGS considers the soft underbelly of the United States, Trinidad, Venezuela, and transiting tankers all present tempting targets for terrorists. Creating bases of operation for foreign terrorists could inoculate Venezuela against attacks on its own infrastructure, but this may not protect others in the Caribbean Sea. Furthermore, militant activity in Colombia could spill over the border or lead to regional clashes if Caracas's culpability becomes too obstreperous.

A reasonable best-case outcome in Venezuela, with Chavez still in power, would allow for continued political tension without significantly altering economic relations

between Washington and Caracas. Chavez will continue to maintain his popularity and authority by pursuing a domestic policy of semi-rentiership, thanks to the high price of oil.<sup>60</sup> It is unlikely that US diplomatic persuasion will dissuade Chavez from hostile and destabilizing foreign policies, such as his support for FARC, unless South American nations act collectively. Nevertheless, as Chavez depends on oil revenues to purchase arms, fund rebel movements, and mollify his supporters, he is tied to the United States in the near-term. He cannot halt shipments of oil to the United States and, at the same time, pursue a “Bolivarian” foreign policy—dependent upon those revenues—throughout South America. Thus, the United States can expect continued antagonism from Caracas, with little change to its oil policy.

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An alternative worst-case scenario includes Chavez sealing a deal with Beijing to deliver nearly 100 percent of Venezuela’s exported oil to China. Meanwhile, leftist movements supported by Chavez could reach a tipping point in the region and begin unseating conservative US allies, such as Colombia’s President Alvaro Uribe. This unlikely confluence of events would disconnect the United States from an important reservoir of international support and redirect needed energy supplies to a strategic competitor. China cannot immediately absorb Venezuela’s oil production, but any moves that redirect Venezuelan exports or retain energy supplies within South America—such as the proposed trans–Latin American pipeline—would hamper US plans to mitigate its Persian Gulf dependency.

Washington should ignore Chavez as often as possible. His reach, even with record-high oil prices, is limited. Pressure from states in South America that are decidedly democratic will curb Chavez’s foreign policy more efficiently than many US efforts. Diplomats should draw attention to Venezuelan connections to terrorism, especially when those links show Caracas is interfering in the domestic affairs of its neighbors. Indeed, some analysts with Stratfor, a private intelligence firm, believe Chavez’s influence is already on the wane.<sup>61</sup> However, undue American pressure against Chavez could bolster his popularity at home, delaying a possible domestic backlash against his authoritarian rule.

Steps the United States can take to counter Chavez in Venezuela, which will produce positive results immediately, may be few. The South American public has a low opinion of US foreign and economic policies, in part because many in the region have not benefited from globalization. However, the State Department could lead a public campaign tracking Chavez’s anti-democratic policies that cast him in an unfavorable light compared with his political role model, Simon Bolivar.

Looking beyond Chavez’s ranting in international forums, Washington can emphasize continental ties over regional alliances or, given opposition to more pacts like the North American Free Trade Agreement, emphasize bilateral agreements



between South American countries and the United States. Chavez has admitted that either direction away from regional blocs effectively limits his ability to oppose US policies.<sup>62</sup> The Venezuelan president bemoaned that, “the very moment...some countries...[sign bilateral accords], unity is finished.”<sup>63</sup> Chavez recognizes that bilateral deals effectively circumscribe his influence in the near-abroad. Greater integration with the US will diminish the role of regional Mercosur-type (Southern Common Market) blocs and decrease the likelihood Chavez’s \$20 billion trans–Latin American pipeline—meant to supply energy throughout South America to the exclusion of North American consumers—will ever come to fruition.<sup>64</sup> Security cooperation between Washington and Caracas is limited by politics, according to former Southern Command head, General Bantz Craddock. Thus the military is pursuing a dual policy of engagement and containment: the military is engaging Venezuelan forces through continuing education programs in the US and invitations to participate in regional training exercises; simultaneously, the military is attempting to contain the “exporting of instability coming out of Venezuela,” by training Colombian police and military forces.<sup>65</sup> Current relations allow for little more.

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Trinidad does not provide oil to the United States, but the tiny country is responsible for providing 80 percent of America’s liquefied natural gas (LNG).<sup>66</sup> Including all natural gas imports, Trinidad ranks only behind Mexico and Canada as a supplier to the United States. The main security concern in Trinidad and Tobago is the presence of Islamic extremism. Waajihatul Islaamiyyah (The Islamic Front) and Jamaat al-Murabiteen (The Almoravids), supporters of al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah, are both present on the islands.<sup>67</sup>

In July 1990, there was an attempted coup; 114 members of the Jamaat al Muslimeen, led by Yasin Abu Bakr and Bilal Abdullah, stormed the Red House parliament and captured the national television station.<sup>68</sup> The army and other officials declared martial law and negotiated an end to the attempted putsch. More than a decade later, Prime Minister Basdeo Panday warned that opposition groups were plotting to forcibly seize power. Panday announced that “groups [were] amassing arms, recently smuggled into the country, for what [was] believed to be a violent attempt to take control of the country.”<sup>69</sup>

In recent years, Trinidad’s Minister for National Security, Martin Joseph, has proven to be an effective leader. Security services are well trained and equipped and the country’s Joint Operations Command Center, set up in the late 1990s, has led the way in fighting maritime crime and arms smuggling. However, Candyce Kelshall, Director of Bluewater Defence and Security Ltd., doesn’t believe the vulnerabilities of LNG tankers and the danger they pose to port cities are threats that can be handled by local security forces.<sup>70</sup>

Trinidad does not face grave security threats. The island nation has poverty, crime, and religious extremists, as well as ethnic divisions, but these problems are at manageable levels. If events transpire along a reasonably positive track, Trinidad will



continue to provide the United States with significant energy supplies disproportionate to its small size.

However, Trinidad may not have the resources or capabilities to detect and thwart terrorists using the island as a conduit or base of support for their operations. Conceivably, the island's insignificance could attract terrorists looking for vulnerabilities in US energy security. Terrorists interested in using LNG tankers as weapons of destruction and terror could easily find the island's security is a weak link. Successful attacks on Trinidad's government, energy infrastructure, or LNG tankers themselves would represent a worst-case scenario for the island and US energy interests.

Trinidad encompasses the smallest range of security concerns presented here in this essay, but the United States can help train its security forces and provide development aid through programs supported by the State Department and charitable organizations. Last year, for the first time, Trinidad received foreign operations funding from the State Department, but the \$5 hundred thousand it was given is clearly inadequate, given the danger of active al-Qaeda-related groups on the island.<sup>71</sup> The Department of Defense has the resources to provide much more assistance.

The United States suspended International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funds in 2003 because Trinidad had not signed an exception to its adherence to the International Criminal Court (ICC) with the United States, which would protect US servicemembers from potential prosecution.<sup>72</sup> Concluding an agreement that will protect the US armed forces would allow renewed funding for IMET and FMF programs.<sup>73</sup> Both Congress and the President acted to eliminate these restrictions in late 2006.<sup>74</sup> In September, Congress passed an amendment repealing IMET restrictions on states adhering to the ICC that had not signed separate bilateral agreements with the United States.<sup>75</sup> Just weeks later, President Bush instructed that waivers to IMET funds restrictions be issued for several close allies, including Trinidad and Tobago. Should the issue of IMET and FMF funding resurface, Washington might look to alternative means for training and supporting Trinidad's security apparatus, such as hiring contractors or bringing in experts from outside of the Pentagon, to lessen the island's terror-related risk.

No systemic problems related to energy security currently affect Trinidad, which would require prolonged US attention. However, Trinidad's importance as a provider of LNG suggests the United States should increase its counterterrorism presence on the island. The US government's promise of \$1.6 million in February 2005, in addition to \$5 million spent since September 11, 2001, for all Organization of American States members seems woefully inadequate.<sup>76</sup> Funding for the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism should be increased, as well as funding for the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) permanent office on the island, established in August 2004. The branch office was placed on the island in order to track down al-Qaeda terrorist Adnan El Shukrijumah, but the agency should now cast a wider net.<sup>77</sup> The broad range of intelligence and surveillance capabilities

available to the Pentagon may be required to uncover potential terrorist threats to Trinidad's energy infrastructure and LNG tankers. The June 2007 arrest of four terrorism suspects, accused of plotting to blow up the John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport in New York, served as a reminder that even a little-known group such as Jamaat al Muslemeen deserves the continued vigilance of US intelligence agencies and their overseas partners.<sup>78</sup> The suspects reportedly traveled to Trinidad to make contact with Jamaat al Muslemeen's leader Abu Bakr, requesting assistance for an attack that was to involve placing explosives on JFK's jet fuel arteries.

## CONCLUSION

In most cases, cooperation between the US military and partner nations should play a leading role in US energy security policy. In nations closest to the liberal ideal, such training can cement close alliances and indoctrinate finer points of civil-military relations and respect for human rights among armed forces personnel. In Georgia, strengthened military cooperation could ease the way for eventual North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership. Such close security ties will ensure stability, sovereignty, and a Western orientation—important factors for the uninterrupted and ample flow of oil and gas to the United States. In countries where democratic principles are lacking and instability threatens oil production, military cooperation can play a dual role. In Azerbaijan and Nigeria, for example, military cooperation will improve foreign militaries' abilities—build capacity—to secure their own energy infrastructure. The governors of semi-rentier states value the ability to protect their most valuable assets. Such assistance could be leveraged to encourage other beneficial steps by those governments. The promise of military aid to Ajuba may convince the central government to widen negotiations with separatists, alleviate regional impoverishment, or allow the US State Department a greater diplomatic and humanitarian role in conflicted regions. The assistance rendered by the Department of Defense will have then proved doubly useful; linking military assistance to overall governmental efficacy will allow foreign governments to better safeguard their energy resources while pressuring those capitals to deal with the social problems that threaten their energy resources. The newly-created AFRICOM should provide the ideal mix of capabilities for such an approach. In states with less apparent security concerns, such as Trinidad, Department of Defense intelligence agencies could provide a needed buffer against terrorist threats.

European allies and other security agencies—ranging from the OSCE to the FBI—can play important secondary roles securing foreign energy assets. States such as Trinidad and Georgia could benefit from finer instruction and training in policing and intelligence collection techniques. These moderately stable and democratic nations are better positioned to take advantage of Western economic development aid and policing & intelligence techniques. With relatively minimal assistance, these Western-oriented nations can fulfill promises of increased energy production for Western consumption because only minimal SSR is required.

The countries highlighted in this paper all face varying energy security threats. States with lesser security concerns require instruction in the military's more specialized capacities, such as intelligence, surveillance, and civil affairs operations. In states at the other end of the stability spectrum, such as Nigeria and Azerbaijan, military aid, in the form of surveillance, new hardware, direct action, and counterinsurgency tactics—while seen as the primary tool for security in this paper—is alone an insufficient band-aid. Helping Nigeria reach a potential output of 4 million bpd in 2010 will require a comprehensive effort aimed at bolstering military proficiency and federal legitimacy, while also mitigating the unrest that is contributing to falling production in the first place. Attacking MEND's *casus belli* through humanitarian and diplomatic efforts, headed by the State Department, could prove as valuable as flotillas of new coastal patrol boats for the Nigerian navy. But barring a sharp reversal in US government funding priorities for the State Department, the military, rather than the diplomatic corps, must take the lead implementing US energy security and complementary SSR abroad.

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