



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Disease Outbreak Preparedness and Mitigation Workshop and Senior Executive Seminar
San Salvador, El Salvador
27-30 March 2012

The US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) hosted the Disease Outbreak Preparedness and Mitigation Workshop on March 27-29, 2012 in San Salvador, El Salvador with support from the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center (AFHSC), the Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine (CDHAM), the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America and Dominican Republic (*Consejo de Ministros de Salud de Centroamérica y República Dominicana, COMISCA*), the Central American Armed Forces Conference (*Conferencia de las Fuerzas Armadas de Centroamérica, CFAC*), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Central American Region (CDC-CAR), and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). The purpose of the 3-day workshop and senior executive seminar were to exchange information, build awareness for needed improvements, and provide options for capacity building in disease outbreak preparedness and mitigation within the region.

The objectives for the Disease Outbreak Preparedness and Mitigation Workshop included:

- Fostering civil-military coordination and integration efforts for disease outbreak preparedness, mitigation, and response.
- Identifying baseline state of preparedness, to include strengths, weaknesses and limitations in disease outbreak response mitigation and propose recommendations to improve current practices.
- Develop a database of key organizations (functional offices) and stakeholders to improve regional communication, collaboration, and response to emerging infectious disease outbreaks.

Participants included representatives from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Panama, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Spain, and the United States. Organizations from civilian health, military health, and emergency response groups on the national, regional, and international level were well represented. Central American regional entities included COMISCA, CFAC, and the regional emergency response group, *Coordination Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (Centro de Coordinación para la Prevención de los Desastres Naturales en América Central, CEPREDENAC)*, as well as CDC-CAR and PAHO.

The workshop began with organizational overviews of COMISCA, CFAC and CEPREDENAC, followed by presentations from subject matter experts on key issues in disease outbreak preparedness and mitigation. The second day continued with speakers providing important background information for future discussion, including a regional overview presentation from PAHO, as well as a presentation of preliminary results from CDC-CAR and COMISCA's pandemic preparedness assessment of the Central American countries. In addition, each country provided a brief overview of their pandemic and/or disaster preparedness plans, with particular attention to current capabilities and gaps. The last day of the workshop focused upon a facilitated discussion of a pandemic scenario. Countries were able to further assess their current capabilities and identify gaps. Out of this discussion, three main gaps were identified: lack of a standard communication platform; lack of a financial reserve and resources for planning; and lack of a comprehensive response plan at the regional level.

The executive seminar further examined these gaps through the perspective of senior leaders attending the workshop. At the end of the senior seminar, COMISCA proposed an inter-agency working group of regional experts (including SOUTHCOM, CFAC, CEPREDENAC, CDC-CAR, and PAHO) to meet in two months' time to synthesize and analyze gaps discussed during the workshop. In addition, the inter-agency group will draft by-laws and rules of engagement at the first meeting. The ultimate goal of these meetings would be initiation of a larger working group involving all the countries represented to strategize on a comprehensive regional response plan.