

*Hemisphere Insider***Program News****U.S. Efforts in Assisting
Haiti's Recovery**

December 4, the Americas Program hosted a private roundtable discussion with Nicole Widdersheim, who served as the Haiti country representative for USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) from June 2010 to October 2012. In that capacity, Widdersheim managed the multisectoral Haiti Recovery Initiative. Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States and head of the OAS Haiti Task Force Ambassador Albert Ramdin, set the scene for the discussion. The Inter-American Development Bank's coordinator of private sector development in the Haiti Response Group Agustín Ignacio Filippo provided commentary. Speakers agreed that while many challenges remain, such as jobs and a permanent electoral council, Haiti has made considerable progress since the earthquake.

In Depth

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***UNASUR Defense Council Meeting Calls for Regional Cooperation in
Drone Development***

During the November South American Defense Council meeting of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), defense ministers resolved to pursue joint research and production of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones. The renewed attention to drones, which were spotlighted in last year's meeting and the resulting 2012 Action Plan, comes as the scope of drone use in Latin America continues to expand. The 2012 Action Plan for regional defense cooperation directed Brazil to lead drone technology development. As Brazil's experience with UAVs precedes last year's Defense Council directive, the country seems a logical choice to coordinate regional efforts. With Brazilian drug consumption among the region's highest, the government has adopted new tactics, including drone use, to monitor porous borders. Additional drone applications are creating new markets in Brazil, where drones are used for such purposes as environmental monitoring and agricultural mapping. Brazilian companies like AGX Tecnologia have begun selling commercial models of military UAVs to farmers, and are beginning to tap into export markets. Not to be left behind, other countries are also moving forward with drone production. The Chilean army introduced its first independently built drone in November, which had been in development since 2008. And Venezuela revealed it was assembling Iranian-manufactured drones in June. Although joint collaboration favors transparency, few rules govern lawful use of drones in the hemisphere. If Brazil wants to see itself as the regional leader in producing UAV's, developing a regional framework to guide their deployment would be a good starting point. —**Alek Suni**

In the News***Caribbean: Cuba***

Cuba's economy grew by 3.1 percent in 2012, according to economy minister Adel Yzquierdo. While this is lower than previous official predictions of 3.4 percent growth, it outpaces last year's level of 2.7 percent. Yzquierdo stated that the slowing of the nation's construction sector was the primary culprit and predicted 3.7 percent growth in 2013. —*The Miami Herald (U.S.)*

Central America: Nicaragua

A review by the World Trade Organization (WTO) concluded that despite the global economic crisis, Nicaragua maintained economic growth from 2006-2011. While the rate dropped to 1.5 percent in 2009, it rebounded to 4.7 percent

New Reports

[Recommendations for a New Administration: Justice and Police Reform for Safer, More Secure Societies](#)

(Upcoming) Safeguarding Progress with Mexico

Americas Blog Posts

[Mexico: Enrique Peña Nieto's Cabinet](#)

Americasts

[U.S. Foreign Policy and Latin America in 2013: What Are the Black Swans?](#)

Americas Calendar

December 7: Mercosur

Summit, Brasilia

December 16: Venezuela

Gubernatorial Elections

January 2013: Barbados

Parliamentary Elections

January 10: Venezuela

Presidential Inauguration

February 17: Ecuador General

Elections, First Round

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in 2011; one of the highest in Central America outside of Panama's, which is double. The review stated that Nicaragua increased investment and exports, and praised Nicaragua's "strong commitment" to upholding free trade in order to spur development and combat poverty.

—[El Nuevo Diario \(Nicaragua\)](#)

Regional

Meeting in Costa Rica, members of the OAS Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) approved an overhaul of its evaluation tool for counterdrug efforts. The new Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) includes the creation of national and regional reports on the strengths and weaknesses of individual nation's drug policies in order to improve multilateral coordination. CICAD also hopes that the new tool will increase economic and technical cooperation from the external international community. —[Prensa Libre \(Guatemala\)](#)

North America: Mexico

Mexico's new communications and transportation minister, Gerardo Ruiz Esparza, declared that the Peña Nieto administration will not bail out Mexicana Airlines or any other failing airline. Mexicana de Aviación has been in bankruptcy proceedings since August 2010. He added that bailing out one company would oblige the government to save others in similar straits—something that is not feasible, he said. —[El Economista \(Mexico\)](#)

South America: Brazil

After vetoing parts of a bill that would have directed oil royalties to fund federal projects, Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff defended her decision to direct royalties from new oil contracts to education. The long-awaited decision allows existing projects to maintain current royalty schemes with state governments, and mandates that new drilling areas dedicate royalties toward federal education. One program to receive funds under the new arrangement will consist of monthly transfer payments to families with children. —[Estadão \(Brazil\)](#)

Chile

A committee of six Chilean ministers has lifted the suspension on energy firm Endesa's 740-megawatt coal-fired thermoelectric project near Punta Alcalde. The \$1.4 billion project was put on hold in June by an environmental commission because of pollution concerns. The controversial project is expected to last 30 years and will be located near Chile's Atacama desert, a major copper mining area. —[La Tercera \(Chile\)](#)

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