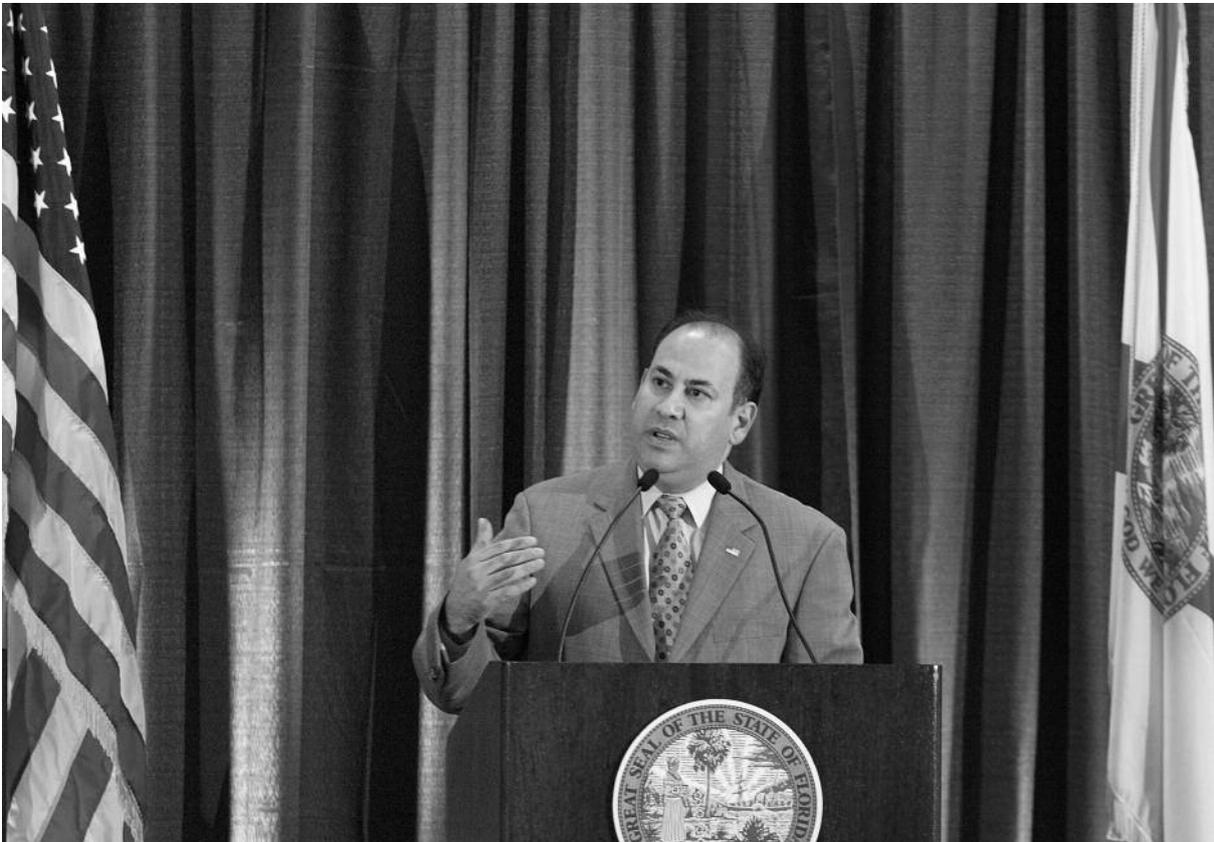


# The FTAA and Migration

## An Interview with Roger Noriega<sup>1</sup>

Leonardo Curzio\* Jesús Esquivel\*\*



Assistant Secretary Noriega at last November's Miami summit.

"How can the U.S. achieve a multilateral accord? It may be complicated, but it is very important, and we have to at least try to achieve that objective.

If we cannot, the United States will explore the possibility of establishing bilateral accords with those countries that are willing to at least ensure an advance of the trade issue among our countries."

The following interview was done on the eve of the Hemisphere Security Meeting held under the auspices of the Organization of American States in Mexico City in late October 2003. For that reason, and because Noriega is very familiar with the issues involved as he was previously the U.S. permanent representative to the OAS, the first question speaks to hemispheric security. The interview later deals with Mexico's situation after abandoning the Inter-American Mutual Assistance Treaty (IAMT). The assistant secretary looks at other issues such as the November 12 binational meeting, the future of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the Americas Summit to be held in January in Monterrey. Finally, it puts bilateral relations between Mexico and the United States into perspective.

**LEONARDO CURZIO:** Mr. Noriega, you were your country's ambassador to the Organization of American States, and you worked very directly with the commission that has discussed the issue of hemispheric security. Is the United States satisfied with what has been achieved in matters of hemispheric security?

**ROGER NORIEGA:** Yes, very frankly, I believe that the October declaration on hemispheric security which the ministers finally approved represents a very broad, very profound consensus on the issue. We talk in that declaration about the new threats, the new challenges to hemispheric security, but also about the traditions. And we discuss

in it the existing mechanisms to confront the problems in a practical, comprehensive and constructive way. It represents a very important commitment. It is a political document, a very profound commitment, and a very broad consensus about the issue of hemispheric security.

**LC:** Does Mexico's decision a few days before the tragic events of New York and Washington to leave the Inter-American Mutual Assistance Treaty have an effect? Does the fact that Mexico is no longer in the treaty and that

**LC:** Mr. Noriega, we have advanced a great deal in inter-American dialogue. One example is the certification process which used to create friction between societies and governments and has now been replaced by a multilateral certification system that I think has helped everyone. I am referring to the fight against drugs. What is Washington's opinion of this matter?

**RN:** Well, our government still has an instrument to determine which countries are not making the efforts needed to deal with drug trafficking, but it is a

“Obviously, there are challenges, but there are also important opportunities to strengthen our North American community.”

the commission meeting was held in Mexico create a bad atmosphere, particularly when you have said—as have other American dignitaries—that the IAMT continues to be functional for dealing with threats?

**RN:** In my opinion, no. This declaration includes a reference to the IAMT as a mechanism that deals with the issue of the threats against the Americas, but the declaration also recognizes that there are other mechanisms that deal with other non-traditional problems, new challenges. We are really satisfied because that document recognizes the importance of the IAMT as an inter-American legal instrument to coordinate our efforts about foreign threats, but it also recognizes the viewpoint of the Mexican government that other challenges, other threats can be dealt with using other mechanisms and other instruments that we have in the inter-American system.

separate action and identifies the very problematic countries. We are talking here about only two or three countries in the world. There is also a multilateral mechanism, different from the one you mentioned, to coordinate efforts, to measure countries' policies and also provide them with technical help to ensure that all countries in this inter-American community are participating in the fight against drugs, particularly within their own national borders.

**LC:** Mr. Noriega, before getting into bilateral affairs, would you tell me, what are the United States' expectations about the Americas Summit in Monterrey?

**RN:** Well, we are seeking a good opportunity for the heads of government from our region to dialogue about the challenges the hemisphere is facing. Obviously, there are challenges, but there are also important opportunities

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to strengthen our North American community. We are also working with our colleagues from Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada to devise an action plan that includes concrete measures that the governments will have to implement to deal with the problems we face, for example, extreme poverty. The only way to improve this situation is through economic development, which includes international trade, investment, etc. A type of economic development in which everyone in our countries can participate and contribute to the fight against extreme

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poverty. We should come to accords about our governments’ commitments to investing in their own people, in the well-being of their own people to ensure that people have access to health and education programs, to ensure that they have the tools they need to improve their own lives, to build a better life for themselves, for their families and for their children.

Another important issue is good government practices, to ensure that administration in our countries is open, transparent, effective, honest. For that reason, the fight against corruption is also one of the hemisphere-wide strategies for the coming years. The most important thing is to develop an action plan with concrete tactics and strategies to attack the problems we are facing.

**LC:** About trade issues, previous Americas Summits have set a calendar for ad-

vancing with the FTAA. Some say that after the failure of the Cancún WTO meeting and the results of the Miami meeting, the FTAA would still take a long time to be made a reality. What is your opinion? What does the schedule of the FTAA look like to you?

**RN:** Well, our policy is to continue negotiating in a multilateral forum to come to a regional agreement. From our point of view, it would be very important to have an agreement that included all the countries that want to participate. We can talk about bilateral accords, as you

well know. We have bilateral accords: Mexico has 25 bilateral accords with other countries of the world, for example, including NAFTA. But that implies trade just between countries participating in those bilateral accords. We want to continue the efforts to achieve a multilateral accord because trade among neighboring countries is much more important than trade with the United States. For example, trade among the Andean countries really implies much more economically speaking in terms of the development of those countries’ economies than the trade of those countries individually with the United States. This is why the objective of a multilateral accord is very important, and fundamental for our policy. We are talking with our Brazilian partners, who are co-chairing the FTAA, to ensure that we continue with that objective. How can we achieve a multilateral accord? It may be complicated, but it is very

important, and we have to at least try to achieve that objective. If we cannot achieve a multilateral accord, the United States will explore the possibility of establishing bilateral accords with those countries that are willing to at least ensure an advance of the trade issue among our countries.

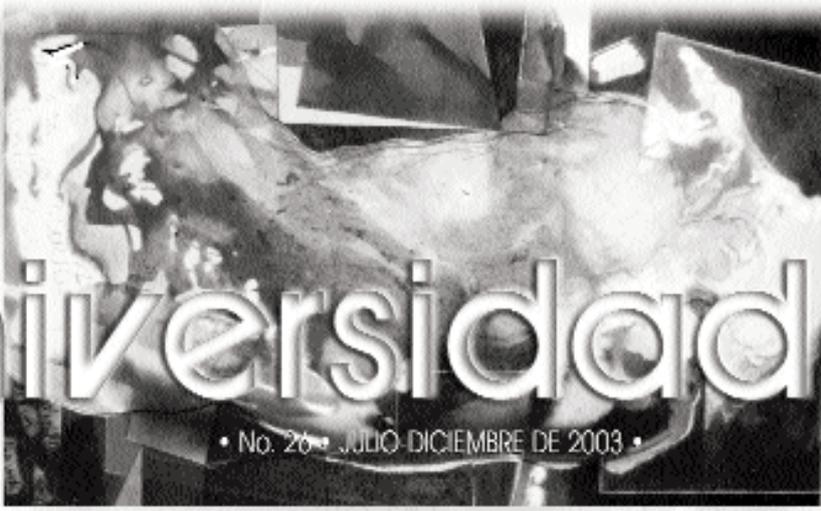
**JESÚS ESQUIVEL:** In Mexico-United States bilateral relations, migration is very important. What is President Bush really going to offer the Mexican government vis-à-vis migration? Can we expect something soon or is simply nothing going to happen?

**RN:** I would prefer to talk about our relations in a comprehensive way. We have to understand and remember that we cooperate widely about issues that are very important for the well-being of our countries, among other things, matters of the economy, investment, security, the fight against drugs. Migration is part of that, and we are going to consider alternatives. It is also important to know that this issue does not interfere with dialogue between our countries. We understand perfectly well that it is a priority for the Mexican government, but it might be a problem if we focused all our attention on it and based our relations solely on the migration issue. We have other sub-issues that we also want to talk about. Undoubtedly, we are going to dialogue about migration, but I am not expecting new initiatives about this issue soon. **NM**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This interview was done October 24, 2003. Roger Noriega is the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. State Department.



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