Welles Says State Department Imperils Hemisphere Defense

Deplores Lengthy Conflict With Military Agencies Over Standardization of Fighting Equipment, and Sees Danger to Nation's Security

By Sumner Welles

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The Inter-American Defense Board celebrated its fifth anniversary a few days ago. It was created by the second conference of the American Ministers for Foreign Affairs which met in Rio de Janeiro immediately after Pearl Harbor. It was established, as a means of extreme danger in all if the New World, in order to coordinate hemispheric strategy and to facilitate reciprocal military training for the American republics. It has accomplished much of practical value. It has grown in stature as a result of the vision and capacity of the high military and naval officers whose efforts the American republics have selected to represent them on the board.

It is, however, notorious that the long-range plans of this board have been persistently blocked throughout the years by the State Department. It is a tragic anomaly that at the very moment when the safety of the United States, and more than ever dependent upon hemispheric security, the State Department should be opposed new and still greater obstacles to this organization. The present organization as officially registered by higher authority the Inter-American Defense Board will become useless and the whole concept of an inter-American defense system, functioning under the authority of the United States, might just as well be scrapped.

Any effective system of hemispheric security must be founded upon two essential prerequisites. The first of these is the conclusion of an inter-American defense treaty such as that proposed by the Chapultepec Conference. Legislation is Urged

The second essential to the adoption of legislation in Washington which will make it possible for this government to help the other American countries to obtain military and naval equipment in the United States and to provide training for the military and naval personnel of the other American republics when this is requested. Through the enactment of such legislation the defense establishment of all of the American republics would be standardized within a relatively short period, and the lack of the United States in guarding the New World against all future danger of foreign aggression would be greatly facilitated.

At a moment of grave crisis in world affairs, when the United States is compelled to assist weaker nations in the Near East to resist Soviet domination, it would seem to be only common sense for this government to help all the countries within its own neighborhood to co-ordinate their means of defense so as to make it possible for them to co-operate effectively with this country in defending the Western Hemisphere. The Department of State persists in stubbornly opposing the proposal of the two measures which are imperative if practical measures for the defense of the Americans are to be carried out.

The Inter-American Defense Conference which was scheduled to meet at Rio de Janeiro almost two years ago has been repeatedly put off at the behest of the Department of State on the ground that in the department's unilateral opinion the Argentine government has not complied satisfactorily with its commitments to clean up past activities within Argentina. The record shows, however, that the Argentine government has already complied with its obligations with respect to former Axis schools, institutions and property. With the promulgation of a decree repealing a former Axis law, thirteen of whom have already been deported.