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PANEL

Security for Americas discussed

BY LISA GUO
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An international panel of three speakers discussed the new focus of security in a post Sept. 11, 2001, world on Friday in a presentation at the Vanderbilt Law School.

"Law is no longer insular," said Professor Vera Kutzinski, who introduced the panel. "We are part of a larger global community and law should encompass that view. We need to partner with others to establish a better world order."

Kutzinski, who is the director of the Vanderbilt Center for the Americas, also provided a brief history of the security debate in the Americas.

Speaker Mauricio Herdócia Sacasa, a Nicaraguan attorney and diplomat, described the new model for security, which focuses on cooperation among the Central American states and democracy as key components of security.

This redefinition of security shifts the focus away from military security to what is called "human security," which highlights democracy as a necessary prerequisite to security. This new, multidimensional approach has many factors that one would not consider traditional "security" issues.

"The main points of human security," Sacasa said, speaking in Spanish, "in-
Please see SECURITY, page 2

Security: Corruption hinders democracy in Latin America

From SECURITY, page 1

clude human rights, education, alleviation of poverty; social and judicial equality; participation in the global market; demilitarization and even preservation of the environment."

Panelist Dinorah Azpuru, an assistant professor of political science as well as research coordinator of the Latin American Popular Opinion Project, explained that the goal of LAPOP was to find survey-based explanations for the many setbacks to democratization that have occurred in the past 20 years.

"In the last 20 years the problems that Latin America has had include executive coup d'états, ousting of elected presidents and election of former authoritarians.

We want to find out why this has happened," Azpuru said.

LAPOP randomly sampled approximately 10 percent of the population of several Latin American countries and found several correlations that may help pinpoint why democratization has been so difficult in Latin America. The reasons include low support for democracy; confusion between the institution of democracy with incumbents and low education.

"People in Latin America are disenchanted by democracy," Azpuru said. "The people have to cooperate for democracy to work — what's the point of having elections, for example, if people don't vote?"

The final speaker, Elizabeth

Villata Vizcarra, a Salvadoran attorney and international law adviser to the Supreme Court of El Salvador, spoke on the devastating effect of corruption on democracy and described several new enforcement mechanisms to fight it.

"Corruption isn't just a local phenomenon," Vizcarra said, speaking in Spanish. "It transcends barriers. It affects the very organization that should be promoting democracy — the government."

Vizcarra named several approaches to combat corruption, including independent oversight commissions and cooperation between various countries, which is essential to prevent any one country from becoming a sanctuary for corrupt officials and mon-

ey laundering.

Vizarra also emphasized the multidimensionality of the new concept of security, which "encompasses public health and the environment as well as social, political, and economic aspects."

The panel was sponsored by the Latin American Law Society, the Law School Office of Student Affairs and Vanderbilt's Center for the Americas, which studies all regions of America and brings together scholars whose work is of shared interest to the people of the Americas.

The event was organized by Giorleny Altamirano Rayo, a Nicaraguan attorney and Vanderbilt law student, and was free and open to the public. ■