

**Panel Six.**

**Arms Trafficking and Contraband Between Trinidad and  
Venezuela Since the Nineteenth Century : Implications for the Present.**

by

**Kelvin Singh**

**Summary**

The paper reviews the role that the arms trade and contraband played in British Trinidad's policy towards Venezuela in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the implications for Trinidad-Venezuelan relations since then. It examines the major objectives of both the British imperial government and the Trinidad colonial authorities with regard to Venezuela, and argues that there was a large British policy incorporating the gold mines of Venezuelan Guyana, the free navigation of the Orinoco, sovereignty over islets and waters of the Gulf of Paria and the development of the asphalt and petroleum markets; that the political destabilization of Venezuela facilitated this larger policy, in which the arms trade played an important role; and that this policy did not always coincide with the interests of Trinidad merchants, who sometimes suffered the commercial consequences of official connivance at Venezuelan insurgent activity in Trinidad. The paper concludes by commenting on some 20<sup>th</sup> century developments involving the arms trade and drug trafficking.