

Argentina militarizes northern borders with Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil

Rafael Azul
6 February 2025

The administration of Argentina's President Javier Milei announced on January 28 that border controls would be strengthened between Argentina's northeastern Misiones Province and Brazil. "We are going after the border with Brazil, that poses challenges, including gangs and security issues," declared security minister Patricia Bullrich.

Bullrich also promised to repress the movement of immigrants along the border with Paraguay.

Bullrich's statements came a few days after the public announcement of a decision to build a high 200-meter fence, topped with a concertina, on a section of the Argentina-Bolivia Border between the city of Bermejo in Bolivia and the smaller city of Aguas Blancas in Salta Province, Argentina.

Argentine officials have falsely accused the Bolivian government of President Luis Arce of allowing the smuggling of tons of cocaine into Argentina.

A fence topped with concertina wire was strategically placed to block easy pedestrian access to the transit terminal in Aguas Blancas. For many decades, Bolivians have crossed the border to buy flour and other agricultural goods and carry them back across to Bolivia. The region around Bermejo produces natural gas that is exported to Argentina. This has now been made more difficult by the presence of Argentine gendarmes and river patrols along the Bermejo river and the installation of the fence.

Further east, on the Paraguay-Brazil-Argentina triple border, where the west-flowing Iguazú River joins the south-flowing Paraná River (forming the Iguazú Falls), three large cities form a single cosmopolitan and multinational area: Ciudad del Este in Paraguay (340,000 inhabitants), Foz de Iguazu in Brazil (206,000 inhabitants) and Puerto Iguazu in Argentina (92,000 inhabitants). Ciudad del Este and Foz de Iguazu are

joined by the International Friendship Bridge (*Puente de la Amistad*), built in the 1950s; Foz de Iguazu and Puerto Iguazu are joined by the Fraternity Bridge (*Puente de Fraternidad*), inaugurated in 1985. The choice of names for these bridges is symbolic of the relationship between the inhabitants of the region.

People walk and drive across both these bridges, from which one can observe the Iguazu Falls. During 2024, some ten thousand shoppers, tourists, and workers in cars, motorcycles and buses crossed these bridges daily, in addition to thousands of pedestrians going back and forth.

Each of these cities has a multi-national citizenry, with Brazilians, Argentines, Paraguayans, Middle-Easterners, native Guaraní tribe people, Taiwanese, and others, live and work there. Their economies are based on tourism, manufacturing, and logistics.

Milei and Bullrich have already begun the process of militarizing the Puerto Iguazú border, initially assigning 300 troops, and placing strict controls on goods transported across.

Bullrich has also promised border controls on what is known as the "Other Triple Frontier" that links towns in Argentina's Chaco Province with Bolivia and Paraguay. In a recent TV interview, Bullrich acknowledged that there are "challenges" in setting up border restrictions in these "unified" metropolitan regions but falsely claimed that the purpose of these border restrictions is to protect "national security."

In all three cases, fences, walls, drones, and an increased military presence would separate territories that for generations have functioned as one region, with the daily movement of people engaged in peaceful commerce and cultural activities, as well as children crossing the borders to attend schools.

Milei's militarization of the border seeks to fuel anti-

immigrant sentiment in order to scapegoat foreign-born workers for the consequences of his economic shock therapy. In June 2024, his xenophobic and fascistic government abolished the right to public education and healthcare for non-resident immigrants and protections against deportation, allegedly to “protect Argentine citizens.”

The ending of these subsidies would compensate for deep budget cuts to public schools, universities, and health institutions, Milei claimed as he proceeds with privatization plans.

The slanderous, xenophobic and racist arguments are not unique to Milei, Bullrich and their political allies (in violation of the Preamble, and many articles of the Argentine Constitution); they copy those of Donald Trump, the Democratic Party, and of fascist currents from around the world. The attack on immigrants is part of the drive to divide the working class, in Argentina and around the world, along ethnic, language, religious and cultural lines.

At the same time, the border restrictions follow repeated insults by Milei against the nominally “left” presidents in Bolivia and Brazil, as Buenos Aires hopes to instigate a confrontation and serve as a command center of regime change and military conspiracies led by US imperialism in the region. The most significant provocation was the unfounded accusation by Bullrich in April 2024 that the Arce administration was hosting Iranian troops.

As demonstrated by constant visits by Milei administration officials to the US, even before the inauguration of Trump and including the CIA headquarters in Virginia, these provocations are being closely orchestrated with Washington.

While Bolivia’s Arce administration has protested the border controls for “violating international treaties,” Lula in Brazil has avoided even the pretense of alarm over US-Argentine conspiracies, ignoring Milei’s recent affronts and describing Argentina’s border controls as “positive” for fighting crime.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)