Argentina's President Milei joins in US preparations for war against China

Rafael Azul
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On April 28 through May 1 Adm. Alvin Holsey the commander of SOUTHCOM, the US Southern Command, conducted a state visit to Argentina, meeting with its fascistic President Javier Milei and military officials.

A May 1 statement from SOUTHCOM Public Affairs described the visit as "focused on future US-Argentina military collaboration and continued US support to Argentine efforts to modernize the nation's defense capabilities."

The statement concluded: "With over two centuries of diplomatic ties, the United States and Argentina enjoy a longstanding partnership and continue to strengthen their political, security, economic, and cultural bonds. Argentina is a trusted partner in promoting democracy, security and prosperity."

Coming from a government that backed every right-wing military dictatorship that ruled Latin America in the 20th century—including the savage regime that killed or "disappeared" 30,000 Argentines—those cynical words, cannot hide the real reason for the naval presence: countering the influence of China in Latin America, and, ultimately, preparing for war against China.

Argentine governments often boast of their neutrality or non-alignment, when it comes to foreign wars. Much of this comes from that nation's historical subordination to British imperialism, which, as in World War II, benefited from a neutral Argentina as a source of agricultural commodities and shipping services.

Since then, Argentina's foreign and domestic policies have mostly been dictated by US imperialism. However, the the establishment of a permanent US naval base in Argentina's southernmost port, Ushuaia, would be a major departure from Argentina's supposed neutrality, particularly given its vicinity to the British-occupied Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), which Argentina still claims.

The latest meetings are in line with Milei's embrace of militarism, including his decision to equip the armed forces of Argentina with up-to-date airplanes and armaments, and with his defense of the military dictatorship (1976-1983). Since he took office in December 2023, he has been in frequent contact with the US military.

In May 2024, he met with Adm. Laura Richardson, then head of the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) to discuss the expansion of military cooperation between the US and Argentina.

These meetings have included visits to Ushuaia, first with Richardson in 2024, and most recently with her successor, Admiral Holsey. Coupled with his backing the NATO war against the Russia over Ukraine and his enthusiastic support for Netanyahu and the genocide in Gaza, Milei represents a radical departure from Argentina's supposed "neutrality."

Latin America's "lithium triangle" (encompassing parts of Argentina, Bolivia and Chile) holds more than half of the world's known supplies of that essential metal, used for electric vehicles, phones, and other electronic devices vital to military production. It has attracted the ambitions of the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, and the European Union. China, which is the second-largest holder of lithium reserves and accounts for two-thirds of global lithium chemical production, has been actively investing in the region, securing deals to extract this metal from Chile and Argentina. Those deals clash with Washington's interests in the region

While the SOUTHCOM statement makes no mention of providing the US Navy a military base with which to

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control sea traffic in the Antarctic region, the US Southern Command is assisting in the expansion of a so-called “integrated” naval base in Ushuaia, which would host both nations’ naval vessels and submarines, anticipating a military conflict with China.

Ushuaia sits on the Beagle Channel, a major shipping route that connects the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Under the terms of a 1984 treaty negotiated between Chile and Argentina to settle a border dispute and avoid a military conflict, the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the Beagle Channel was established as a demilitarized zone; a navy base in Ushuaia violates that provision, particularly one that allows free access to US warships.

The channel is open to shipping and accessible to all nations, including China, connecting the Atlantic Coast of Latin America and South Africa with nations in the Pacific and Indian oceans.

Further north, in the Neuquén Province, near the border with Chile, in 2012, China was granted permission to establish a space tracking station, by the Peronist government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. That agreement stipulated that the station would be used to support China’s space program, including lunar exploration, a trip to Mars and future deep space missions. It uses tracking and telemetry, and helps guide Chinese satellites and spacecraft. Since it was completed in 2018, the station has tracked space vehicles headed to Mars and orbiting the Moon.

The space tracking station has attracted the attention of the US government: “A giant antenna is like a huge vacuum cleaner,” Dean Cheng, a State Department official, told the *New York Times* in 2018. “It sucks up signals, information, all sorts of things.”

In March 2024, speaking before the US Congress, General Richardson referred to the space tracking station, accusing China of militarizing space. She said, “the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) continues to invest in and enhance its military space capabilities, including a deep space station in Argentina, which provides the PLA with global space tracking and surveillance capabilities. These space tracking capabilities could translate into military capabilities that could support the monitoring, tracking, and targeting of our forces and affect conventional and nuclear targets, land-and-sea operations, precision conventional strike capabilities and missile defense.”

At the same time, Mark Stanley, Biden’s ambassador to Argentina, declared that the space station is secretly operated by the People’s Liberation Army.

Upon taking office, Milei, in line with his growing alliance with the US military, began suggesting that the space station had a military purpose and called for greater oversight by Argentine authorities.

Following Admiral Richardson’s visit in April 2024, Milei sent a delegation of scientists and technicians who inspected the Space Station’s equipment. No evidence was found of military or espionage activity.

Last November reporters from the Buenos Aires dailies *Clarín* and *La Nación* also visited the space station. They had access to work areas and the control room from which the antenna (the “huge vacuum cleaner”) is operated, and were allowed to record their visit on film and video.

They reported that seven scientists work at the facility, and are rotated once or twice a year. In a diplomatic gesture, Chinese authorities have invited an Argentine astronaut to join their space ship on its first trip to Mars.

SOUTHCOM operates in Latin American waters and is one of ten US naval commands that operate throughout the planet, including in the South China Sea.

The Argentine government’s subservience to US imperialism is not new. In 2017, then-President Mauricio Macri, who now supports Milei, paid a visit to Donald Trump and met with mining, oil and agricultural conglomerates, including Haliburton, Exxon, Chevron, Monsanto and Cargill.

In 2022, Peronist party officials also met with SOUTHCOM’s General Richardson, showed their support for the policies of the Biden Administration, and developed close ties with US and Canadian financial and extractive conglomerates, such as Monsanto and Barrick Gold.

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