

Latin America's "Pink tide" governments slam Trump at UN, while collaborating with Pentagon

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The UN General Assembly this week heard some criticism of US President Donald Trump from a group of Latin American presidents associated with the so-called Pink Tide.

Trump's fascist rant Tuesday morning, in which he boasted of "using the supreme power of the United States military" to blow up small boats and murder civilians in the southern Caribbean, was sandwiched between speeches by so-called left Latin American heads of state, whose response to these acts of wanton murder ranged from the cowardly to the more pointed.

Brazil traditionally speaks first in the annual General Assembly debate, and President Luiz Incio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT) preceded Trump at the body's green marble podium.

Lula pleaded for maintaining Latin America as a "zone of peace." He charged that "The use of lethal force in situations that do not constitute armed conflicts is the equivalent of executing people without trials." Lula denounced the use of "unilateral and arbitrary measures against our institutions and our economy" in reference to the US sanctions and tariffs imposed over the trial of fascistic former President Jair Bolsonaro and his accomplices in the January 8, 2023 coup plot. He further inveighed against the "false prophets and oligarchs who exploit fear and monetize hate." The words "Donald Trump" and "US imperialism," however, did not escape the Brazilian president's lips.

Colombia's President Gustavo Petro was less diplomatic. He denounced Washington's war on drugs, declaring "it is not for stopping drugs from reaching the United States, it is for dominating the peoples of the south." He insisted that those murdered in the US missile strikes off Venezuela were not "terrorists" or gang members, but migrants and "Caribbeans, possibly Colombians, and if they were Colombians, with apologies to those who dominate the United Nations, a criminal case should be opened against those functionaries of the United States responsible and against the biggest functionary who gave the order, Donald Trump." Petro went on to draw parallels between Trump and Hitler. The US delegation staged a walkout barely five minutes into Petro's remarks.

For his part, Chile's lame duck Broad Front President Gabriel Boric managed to call for Netanyahu's trial for genocide at the international court of justice, but uttered not a word of criticism against the US aggression closer to home, aside from toothlessly – and falsely – declaring Latin America "a region without wars." He

did make oblique criticism of Trump, without mentioning his name, condemning those who "have affirmed at this same podium, today, that there is no such thing as global warming. This is not an opinion, it is a lie."

Even the most full-throated criticism of Trump, militarism and US aggression from the UN podium, however, is belied by the practice of these same governments.

In the run-up to the UN General Assembly, the Pentagon deployed an armada near Venezuelan waters, and Trump posted videos of missile strikes on small boats, gloating over what amount to extra-judicial murders, i.e. war crimes. Meanwhile, the militaries of Brazil, Colombia, Chile and a dozen other Latin American countries deployed their forces in UNITAS 2025, joint exercises with the same US Navy that is carrying out these criminal murders of unarmed Latin American civilians.

UNITAS 2025 was launched on September 15, two weeks after the first US missile strike in the Caribbean killed 11 civilians after their boat had turned course back towards Venezuela and on the same day that Trump announced a second strike that reportedly claimed at least three more lives. Four days later a third boat was hit, killing three more.

This year, UNITAS brought together some 8,000 military personnel from the US and Latin America in two phases of war games, one "in-port" and the other "at-sea." The "at-sea" phase has included the sinking of a target vessel as well as amphibious landings and training in urban warfare at the US Marine Corps' Camp Lejeune.

The UNITAS exercises have been held since 1960, when they were first launched as a Cold War show of force by Washington and its right-wing Latin American puppet regimes against "Soviet influence" and what was viewed as a growing threat of socialist revolution in the region.

Today, the operation is part of what the Pentagon openly proclaims to be a bid to corral Latin America's governments and militaries behind US imperialism's preparations for war with China.

The exercise is only one of a number staged by the Pentagon in the region, which last year included UNITAS 2024, hosted by Chile, in addition to: GUARDIAN in Honduras and Costa Rica; TRADEWINDS in Barbados; RESOLUTE SENTINEL in Peru; FUERZAS COMANDO in Panama; FUSED RESPONSE in

Colombia; PANAMAX at the USSOUTHCOM headquarters; and PANAMAX ALPHA Phase II in Panama.

These exercises, together with courses offered by the US military to Latin American officers and arms sales are directed at currying favor with military establishments that decades after the fall of most of the region's military dictatorships continue to exist as "states within the state."

The economic realities behind Washington's perception of China as a strategic threat to the interests of US imperialism in what it long regarded contemptuously as its "own backyard" are well known. China's trade with the region has expanded from \$14.62 billion 2001 to \$483 billion in 2022, making it the number one trading partner for virtually every country south of Panama. Non-financial foreign direct investment by China-based companies soared from less than \$1 billion in 2001 to a cumulative total of \$193.2 billion by the end of 2022, much of it in strategic facilities ranging from ports and power grids to 5G infrastructure. Chinese financial institutions have also become major lenders to the region.

"Time is not on our side"

In testimony before a US congressional panel in April, Adm. Alvin Holsey, chief of US SOUTHCOM, sounded the alarm. China's gains in the region "threaten the safety, stability, security, and sovereignty of all nations in our shared neighborhood," he said. "Time is not on our side. The Western Hemisphere is suffering from an erosion of democratic capitalism."

Latin America, the admiral declared, is "on the front lines of a decisive and urgent contest to define the future of our world. China is assailing U.S. interests in every theater... jeopardizing freedom of maneuver, access, and influence in our near-abroad." He went on to outline the predatory interests driving US policy, noting that the region is "home to abundant natural resources, including 20 percent of the world's oil reserves, 25 percent of its strategic metals, 30 percent of its forest area, 31 percent of its fishing areas and 32 percent of its renewable freshwater resources." It is scarcely an accident that the current focus of US aggression, Venezuela, boasts the largest crude oil reserves on the planet.

Exercises like UNITAS, together with military education and training programs, are designed, Holsey said, to create a "network of like-minded partners, ultimately contributing to increased access, collaboration, and cooperation during peacetime and contingency operations."

A leading participant in UNITAS 2022 and, presumably, a key member of the Pentagon's "like-minded partners" was the chief of the Brazilian Navy, Adm. Almir Garnier Santos. At the time he told the media he appreciated the war games for providing a "comforting feeling of friendship and togetherness, which makes me have even more faith in the potential of our navies, as instruments to promote... peace, security and prosperity for all."

Barely two weeks ago, Admiral Garnier was sentenced to 24 years in prison after being found guilty together with Bolsonaro and other senior military and intelligence officials of conspiring to

carry out a violent coup and assassinate elected President Lula da Silva and his vice president together with the head of the country's supreme electoral tribunal. At the same time Garnier was praising UNITAS 2022 for promoting "peace, security and prosperity," he was making an unconditional promise to place the troops under his command at the disposal of the coup plotters.

The evolution of Garnier is hardly an anomaly. Virtually all of the leading personnel who carried out military coups and led blood-soaked dictatorships in Latin America during the second half of the 20th Century were trained by the US military at its School of the Americas, first in the Panama Canal Zone and then at Fort Benning, Georgia.

So-called left figures like Lula in Brazil and Boric in Chile have acted as guarantors of the rotten deals made with military dictatorships to restore civilian rule in exchange for granting the military effective amnesties and autonomy. Both the armed forces and the bourgeois parties that made these deals were united in their resolve to contain a wave of revolutionary upheavals that shook the coup regimes to their foundations.

As Washington prepares for war with China, seeking to offset the loss of its global economic hegemony through the use of military force, there can be no doubt that it will call on its network of US-trained and bribed right-wing Latin American military officers to solidify its iron grip over US imperialism's "own backyard."

The critical remarks delivered by some Latin American presidents at the UN General Assembly were a bid to mollify the overwhelming hostility and anger of the broad masses of working people toward the policies of economic and military aggression that the Trump administration is pursuing in the region.

More than speeches at the UN from heads of governments subservient to US imperialism are needed, however, if Latin America is to save itself from a new round of blood-stained military dictatorships and imperialist war. For this, only an independent revolutionary movement of the working class will suffice. Workers of the region must unite, and forge an unbreakable unity with their class brothers and sisters in the US and internationally in the fight to overthrow capitalist rule, disband the US-backed armed forces and reconstruct society on socialist foundations.



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