

Brazil's Lula uses imperialist intervention in Venezuela as bargaining chip with Trump

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On December 2, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva contacted Donald Trump by telephone to request further tariff reductions for Brazilian exports and to discuss a security agreement with the US government, which was publicized at the end of the call.

In an official statement, the Brazilian government declared that the 40-minute call resulted in a “very productive conversation” about “topics on the trade, economic, and fight-against-organized-crime agenda.” The statement added: “Lula indicated that the United States’ decision to remove the additional 40 percent tariff imposed on some Brazilian products, such as meat, coffee, and fruit, was very positive,” but “emphasized that there are still other tariffed products that need to be discussed.”

This friendly conversation between the supposedly “left-wing” Brazilian president and the aspiring US Führer took place as the Trump administration moves ever closer to the brink of full-scale war against Venezuela.

The second official topic on the call’s agenda was the Brazil-US cooperation on the “fight against international organized crime.” On this point, Lula “highlighted the recent operations carried out in Brazil by the federal government aimed at financially suffocating organized crime and identified branches that operate from abroad.” The statement concluded that “President Trump underscored his full willingness to work together with Brazil and that he will provide full support for joint initiatives between the two countries to confront these criminal organizations.”

It is precisely on the pretext of combating “narco-terrorism” that US imperialism under Trump is launching its unprecedented military and political intervention not only against Venezuela but Latin

America as a whole.

Since September, Trump and his “War” Secretary, Pete Hegseth, have conducted a murderous campaign in the Caribbean and Pacific, targeting dozens of civilian vessels with missile strikes that have killed at least 87 people. These absolutely criminal state executions are defended by Trump’s administration as a central piece of its “war against narco-terrorism,” fraudulently presenting its targets as drug-traffickers without any evidence.

At the same time, the US military has stationed 15,000 troops in the Caribbean Sea, a few hundred kilometers off the Venezuelan coast, and sent multiple ships, including the US Navy’s largest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald Ford.

On November 29, just three days before Lula’s call with Trump, the American president announced the “complete closure of the airspace above and around Venezuela.” On December 10, a week after the call, the US military seized a large oil tanker off the coast of Venezuela in a brazen act of piracy. Reuters is reporting that the administration is preparing to seize other Venezuelan tankers in what is clearly emerging as a blockade of the country, a direct act of war.

Lula is fully aware that attacks on defenseless fishing boats and Trump’s offensive against Nicolás Maduro’s government and others—such as Colombia’s Gustavo Petro, who Trump recently declared “is next”—have nothing to do with “combatting narco-terrorism.”

On December 9, in an interview with the *Guardian*, Celso Amorim—one of Lula’s closest advisers and a former foreign minister—described the closure of Venezuelan airspace as “an act of war.” He stated that “it would not be just a war between the US and Venezuela. It would end up having global involvement and that would really be regrettable.” Amorim

concluded: “If an invasion occurred, a real invasion... I think, without doubt, you would see something similar to Vietnam—on what scale, it’s impossible to say.”

In this context, while seeking concessions from Trump on his nationalist ambitions, Lula advances the idea that common ground between the aims of US imperialism’s naked campaign of aggression and the interests of Latin America can be reached at the negotiating table.

On December 2, after the Lula-Trump call, a Planalto Palace source who asked not to be identified told *BBC Brasil* that “the situation of manufactured goods, especially, worries the government.” The same source added that the call was not aimed at pressuring the US government, but at “keeping the issue on the agenda and moving forward to reduce the tariff hike as much as possible.”

In the weeks leading up to the call, Lula made indirect denunciations of the attacks in the Caribbean Sea and, at the same time, tied any solution to direct negotiations with Trump.

On November 23, during the G20 summit in Johannesburg, Lula stated: “I am very concerned about the military apparatus the US has put in the Caribbean Sea and I intend to speak with President Trump about this. It is important that we try to find a solution before it begins.”

Lula is criminally promoting Trump’s pretext for his military offensive while simultaneously expanding the repressive forces of the state within Brazil.

The Workers Party (PT) government recently approved a specific budget for military investment outside of its fiscal austerity framework that cripples social services, and has promoted a series of initiatives to unify municipal and state police agencies under the so-called “Public Security PEC.”

Two days after Lula’s call with Trump, Brazilian Finance Minister, Fernando Haddad, met with US officials in Brasilia. Without mentioning Washington’s intervention in Venezuela, he promoted an agreement to “fight international crime” and declared:

Of 100 percent of Brazil’s exports to the US, we’re already talking about only 22 percent that are being affected at this moment by the tariffs, and I believe that this here [security agreement]

is so much more important, so much more effective, that I believe that this issue of Magnitsky, of the tariffs, ends up being resolved... little by little we’re overcoming this misunderstanding because it benefited no one, it only harmed some businesspeople.

Accepting the American fascist’s tariff blackmail as part of legitimate negotiations is not merely an expression of Lula’s impotence in the face of imperialist aggression. In light of his adviser Amorim’s warning of a potential “Latin American Vietnam,” the Lula government’s actions expose its role as an auxiliary of imperialism in Latin America.

Lula remained silent in response to a recent appeal by Maduro, saying: “People of Brazil, take to the streets to support Venezuela in its struggle for peace and sovereignty.” As a representative of the interests of the Brazilian bourgeoisie and foreign capital, Lula is preparing to suffocate all mass opposition to the imminent US imperialist wars against Latin America.

Refusing to make any direct condemnation of the most recent criminal attacks by US imperialism against Venezuela, Lula declared on December 11 in his usual Aesopian language: “I told Trump, ‘We don’t want war in Latin America, we are a zone of peace.’”

The working class cannot harbor any illusion that Lula or his counterparts in the region’s other bourgeois nationalist Pink Tide governments will fight imperialism and stop a catastrophic war. These dangers can only be overcome through a struggle to unify the working class in Latin America with its brothers and sisters in the United States in a fight to overthrow capitalism and establish international socialism.



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