Fascistic Costa Rican government weighs inviting US ground troops

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In an interview with Reuters published September 4, Costa Rican President Laura Fernández declared that United States ground operations on Costa Rican soil "would obviously be very good for national security if it were about pursuing a common objective against transnational crime, transnational drug trafficking, transnational terrorism."

She disclosed that Washington had raised the matter months earlier and that she had explained the legal channels required. No operation, she added, is currently under way.

Seventy-seven years after the Costa Rican state abolished its army, its head of state is inviting a foreign military onto national soil.

Three days later, Trump posted on Truth Social a doctored map in which the US flag covers North and Central America, Greenland, Iceland, Cuba and Jamaica, captioned "United States of America." San José said nothing.

The discussions referenced likely took place at Trump's Doral golf resort, where the US would-be Führer launched the "Shield of the Americas," or Americas Counter Cartel Coalition, before 12 heads of state, including Costa Rica's outgoing President Rodrigo Chaves and Fernández, then president-elect. Trump declared at the event:

> The heart of our agreement is a commitment to using lethal military force to destroy the sinister cartels and terrorist networks once and for all. ... We'll use missiles ... extremely accurate. Pew, right into the living room.

The launch has opened the floodgates to a vast expansion of US military land operations.

Already, since September 2025, the US military has carried out at least 68 strikes on vessels in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific, killing at least 230 people without charges or trials. And on January 3, it struck Caracas and kidnapped President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, flying them to New York, where they remain imprisoned awaiting a US trial.

Then, following the Shield of the Americas summit, on June 18, US Southern Command executed Héctor Guerrero Flores, the alleged head of the Tren de Aragua, in an air strike on the Orinoco Mining Arc that also bombed informal gold miners. Trump announced the "lethal kinetic strike" with a 10-second video of the building destroyed from above.

Six days later, two earthquakes killed more than 1,700 Venezuelans. Washington answered by deploying more than 900 US military personnel, while committing some 2,000 for land, air and sea operations. The US Air Force took over air traffic control and security at Simón Bolívar International Airport, while the warship USS Fort Lauderdale docked at La Guaira as a "command-and-control node."

In August, War Secretary Pete Hegseth announced that Colombia, Honduras and Guatemala had agreed to joint US operations on their soil, which was followed by a formal agreement with Colombia and Ecuador for sustained US land operations.

The end of the "unarmed democracy"

Costa Rica's demilitarization was never a moral achievement, but a tactical settlement imposed by one faction of the ruling elite at the close of the 1948 civil war.

José Figueres, backed by a section of the coffee oligarchy and a mercenary force financed from abroad, overthrew Rafael Ángel Calderón Guardia's government, which rested on an alliance with the Stalinist Popular Vanguard Party of Manuel Mora. Having crushed the workers' organizations, Figueres dissolved the army by decree on December 1, 1948; the ban was formalized in Article 12 of the 1949 constitution.

The measure disarmed the defeated Calderonista and Stalinist forces and relieved Figueres of obligations to backers he no longer needed.

Above all, it placed external defense under the Rio Treaty, ie., under the Pentagon, freeing revenue for social spending that bought relative class peace for two generations and spared the bourgeoisie the US-backed military coups and civil wars that devastated its neighbors.

Every element of that arrangement has been liquidated but one. The welfare state is gone, dismantled by three decades of austerity. What remains is the dependence on Washington, now threatening a direct, armed presence.

Even in the 1980s, when Costa Rican territory served to train and supply the CIA's Contra terrorists against Nicaragua, the

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operation was clandestine: Reagan was circumventing Congress, employing the Iran-Contra ties and drug cartels to arm the Contras.

The Costa Rican Constitution reserves to the Legislative Assembly the power to authorize foreign troops' entry, requiring approval by 38 of 57 deputies. Fernández's Sovereign People's Party (PPSO) holds 31; however, the precedent is being set by Trump and his puppets across the region to simply bypass such legal constraints.

The subordination to Washington is being accelerated by the restructuring of US capital for war against China. Costa Rica has been a principal beneficiary of manufacturing's flight from Asia: foreign direct investment hit $5.12 billion in 2025, a second consecutive record, 54.8 percent from the United States and 66.4 percent into free trade zones.

The inflows drove up the colón and held inflation near zero—while making Costa Rica one of the region's most expensive countries. This process is beginning to bite back, as companies look for cheaper labor elsewhere. Chip manufacturer Intel closed its plant in 2025. Viant Medical cut 900 jobs in January. In February, Amazon halved its committed workforce, from 16,450 to 8,225.

While billions flow in, the state is starved by design. Education spending fell to 4.9 percent of GDP in 2025 against the constitutional 8 percent floor—the deepest contraction in 40 years—as hospital waiting lists lengthen and families pay out of pocket for healthcare and schooling.

Moreover, the IMF-backed fiscal plan would raise the value added tax on the basic food basket from 1 to 13 percent. The free trade zone exemptions—$1.5 billion a year, more than the budgets of the judiciary, public works and public security combined—remain untouchable. "We're not going to touch free trade zones," Chaves stated.

The same logic drives the Crucitas bill, which would auction 84,800 hectares of gold-bearing land—283 times the size of a project blocked through a decade-long struggle in 2010—for a 5 percent royalty.

In this context and facing mass popular opposition to military operations, the international and local media campaign have launched a barrage of reports depicting the country as overrun by crime to prepare the ground. On August 26, the *Wall Street Journal* reported homicides up 50 percent since 2020. Since its opening in 2019, APM Terminals' Moín container port in Limón, Costa Rica has been designated by the US State Department as the "number one transshipment point for cocaine" to the US and Europe.

None of this propaganda bothers to explain why. With informal employment at 37.7 percent and social investment at its lowest level in 15 years, the cartels recruit from the reserve labor army of youth the free trade zones and shrunken government services have no use for.

Fernández's answer to the crisis her class created is dictatorship. She has accused the Constitutional Chamber of a "coup d'état" for preventing her from replacing judges and warned that she would disregard future rulings. Her administration also filed a criminal complaint against them and cut ¢35.33 billion (US$78.5 million) from the judiciary, provoking mass protests on August 6.

Decree 45870, published without announcement on August 10, imposes a blanket "state secret" over the files, contracts and operations of the intelligence directorate (DIS) and the police "Elite Force"—raising well-founded fears of covert spyware purchases such as Pegasus. Chaves, now minister of the presidency and head of the DIS, plans to deploy Mossad technology.

Justice Minister Gabriel Aguilar, referring to meetings of left-wing organizations, warned: "We have them identified."

The turn to dictatorship and further subordination to Trump have advanced apace. In March, the government agreed to take 25 deportees a week from the United States.

In April it designated Hamas, Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and Ansar Allah as terrorist organizations, criminalizing opposition to imperialist war. The previous month, police detained the coordinator of the Costa Rican Movement in Solidarity for Palestine, Tatiana Gamboa Freer, on spurious charges of threatening Chaves and Fernandez on social media. In July, Costa Rica deported the Palestinian-Spanish worker Nader Abuawad Abuadeh, offering no evidence of Hamas ties beyond his origin.

No section of the opposition offers a defense against these attacks. The Broad Front (Frente Amplio), historically connected to the Stalinist Vanguardia Popular, entered the 2026 elections in a de facto bloc with the oligarchic National Liberation Party and Citizen's Agenda—the parties that imposed IMF austerity, built the free trade zone regime and signed the security agreements Fernández now extends.

Having spent decades suppressing the class struggle, they denounce the militarization they prepared as an assault on "democratic institutions," offering workers only appeals to the courts.

The target is not the cartels. On the one hand, Costa Rica was the first Central American state to recognize Beijing over Taipei, in 2007, opening a wave of recognitions Washington now means to reverse by force.

More fundamentally, the infrastructure being assembled across the hemisphere—joint task forces, secret police, foreign troops on national soil—is aimed, as in the Operation Condor era, at a working class far larger, more urban and more interconnected than the one crushed in the 1970s.

Costa Rican workers can defend themselves only by breaking with every faction of the capitalist political establishment and uniting with workers in the United States and across the Americas on a socialist program, through the construction of a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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