

US troops deploy to Colombia as Washington forges new Operation Condor across the Americas

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The announcement that more than 300 US soldiers are arriving in Colombia this week for joint military exercises at the Tolemaida base, coming on the heels of the “Coalition of the Americas Against Cartels” (A3C) conference in Santo Domingo, marks a decisive escalation in the Trump administration’s drive to re-colonize Latin America. What is being presented to the world as a campaign against “narco-terrorism” is the construction of a hemispheric military apparatus, integrating the region’s armed forces under US command, aimed simultaneously at the working class of the Americas and at Washington’s imperialist rivals, above all China.

The A3C, launched in March 2026 at US Southern Command headquarters in Florida, now brings together 19 nations of the Western Hemisphere. The Santo Domingo conference, organized by the Dominican Ministry of Defense and US Southern Command, was convened to “operationalize” the coalition, to approve a military campaign plan and a governance charter that will define the organization and to coordinate joint operations.

The official communiqué issued by the Dominican government and US Southern Command states the coalition’s purpose with chilling clarity: “These efforts will help strengthen the exchange of intelligence and information, expand bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and develop joint operations aimed at dismantling criminal networks, protecting borders and critical infrastructure, and preserving collective security.”

This is the language of a new Operation Condor. As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in its analysis of the March summit, the Shield of the Americas gathering was directly reminiscent of the “First Inter American Meeting on National Intelligence” held in Santiago, Chile, in November 1975, under the Pinochet dictatorship, which established the integrated network of murderous state repression and coup plotting known as Operation Condor. The difference is that Pinochet’s meeting was held in secret. Trump’s is conducted in the open, with the full participation of the region’s governments.

The 19 nations now enrolled in this coalition are, with few exceptions, ultra-right and fascist regimes ideologically aligned with Trump. In addition to the US, the pact includes Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, Belize, Chile, Guatemala, Jamaica, Peru, and most recently Colombia, following the August election victory of the far-right president Abelardo de la Espriella. These are the political heirs of the military dictatorships of the 1970s, now back in power throughout the region.

The fascist language of the Pentagon

The keynote address at Santo Domingo was delivered by Eric Geressy, who served as Secretary of War Pete Hegseth’s company first sergeant in the illegal war of aggression against Iraq and is today his senior advisor for strategy.

Geressy laid bare the fascist character of this enterprise. “This coalition does not manage threats. We eliminate them,” Geressy declared. “I look across this table and I do not see a political committee. I see a combined war fighting council.”

Geressy’s speech was a sustained assault on the very concept of legality. The cartels, he proclaimed, are “the al-Qaeda and ISIS of the Western Hemisphere”—the same formulation Trump has used to justify the murder of fishermen in the Caribbean and the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Having “lost parity on the physical battlefield,” Geressy claimed, the cartels have opened an “asymmetric line of effort: lawfare”—which he defined as “the calculated weaponization of legal systems to achieve kinetic and operational effects.”

The target of this tirade is not the cartels but law itself. Geressy denounced “spurious human rights petitions,” “corrupt transnational legal networks,” and the International Criminal Court (ICC), which he called “an illegitimate extrajudicial instrument that threatens sovereign defense.” He announced that the US and its partners would deploy “ironclad bilateral protections, including comprehensive Status of Forces Agreements and Article 98 non-surrender pacts,” and demanded the “institutional rejection of the Rome Statute,” which created the ICC.

This is the program of the Trump administration in its essence: the obliteration of democratic rights, due process, and any mechanism of accountability, in the United States and across the hemisphere. The so-called lawfare Geressy denounces is nothing other than the attempt to hold the US military and its allies accountable for those who have already been killed—the more than 220 extrajudicial executions in the Caribbean by US forces since September 2025—and for any future crimes. The fascist officer corps assembled in Santo Domingo is demanding immunity for mass murder.

The troops arrive in Colombia

The deployment of 300 US soldiers to Colombia is the concrete expression of this program. The exercise, Southern Vanguard 2027, will run from October 30 through November 11 at the Tolemaida military base in Nilo, Cundinamarca, bringing together US Army mountain infantry with Colombia's Counter-Narcotics Battalion No. 1. The training will focus on maritime interdiction, ground security operations, cyber defense, and responses to drone attacks.

The deployment follows by one month a meeting between Gen. Francis L. Donovan, head of US Southern Command, and Colombian Defense Minister Jorge Mora, and only a week after the first contingent of a 600-soldier unit from the 10th Mountain Division arrived for training in the Panamanian jungle. Joint training between US forces and the Honduran army is expected in the coming days. *El País* reported last September that Donovan had visited Colombia to discuss maritime surveillance, intelligence sharing, and operations along the Ecuadorian border.

This is not merely a training exercise, but rather the integration of the Colombian armed forces into the US war machine. Colombia has been, for decades, the single largest recipient of US military training and aid in all Latin America, with over 10,000 graduates of the School of the Americas/WHINSEC, more than \$13 billion in assistance since Plan Colombia, and a Major Non-NATO Ally designation granted in 2022. The Colombian military was, in significant measure, built by the United States in the US image. The “false positives” scandal—in which soldiers executed thousands of civilians and dressed them as guerrillas to meet kill-count quotas—was the product of an army shaped, financed, and trained by Washington, with a documented correlation between US military aid and the incidence of extrajudicial killings.

The choice of Tolemaida itself is an obscenity. It was at and around this base that US soldiers and contractors sexually abused children between 2003 and 2007, protected by bilateral immunity agreements that have never been struck down. Not one US soldier or contractor has ever been prosecuted in Colombia for any crime.

The comprador regime in Bogotá

The arrival of US troops is critical to the counterrevolutionary agenda of Colombia's President Abelardo de la Escriella, who took office in August. He has staffed his government with retired and active military officers, including the reinstatement of generals discharged under his predecessor Gustavo Petro, and has deployed the term “narco-terrorist” against both criminal groups and his political opponents.

His government has authorized joint US-Colombian military operations, a decision whose constitutional legality is contested, since the transit and operation of foreign troops on Colombian soil requires congressional approval. It was this same constitutional problem that sank a basing agreement reached with the Pentagon under right-wing president Alvaro Uribe in 2010.

The accommodation to US imperialism under de la Escriella was prepared by the “Pink Tide” government that preceded him. The arrival of US troops is hardly unprecedented. Southern Vanguard 23 was held at Tolemaida in November 2022, three months into Petro's term.

Petro, Colombia's first president from the nominal left, ended his

term having approved a \$3.54 billion military modernization program, the largest in the country's history. In January 2026, after the US assault on Venezuela, Petro agreed with Trump on “joint actions” against the ELN, and weeks later ordered the first bombing of ELN camps under his government.

Colombia devoted the highest percentage of public spending to its armed forces in the Americas. Like Lula in Brazil, Sheinbaum in Mexico, and the other representatives of the bankrupt Pink Tide, Petro accommodated himself to Washington, authorizing joint operations with the US and Ecuador before leaving office. The pseudo-left's “nationalist” alternative to fascism was always an illusion: the Pink Tide governments prepared the ground for the fascists who now rule in their place.

The Fraudulent Narco-War

The entire US strategy in Latin America rests on a big lie. The “war on narco-terrorism” is a pretext, and a particularly cynical one. The US military-intelligence complex has financed, trained, and armed the very forces now involved in narcotics trafficking. The CIA's own documents have linked Colombian army chiefs to right-wing paramilitaries classified by Washington as terrorists and to cocaine traffickers. The previous dictatorships of the region, and their heirs in today's right-wing governments, are intimately acquainted with the drug trade, which has historically flowed through the same state and paramilitary structures that Washington cultivated as instruments of counterinsurgency.

The importance of Colombia for Washington lies not in its cocaine but in its geostrategic position: a country with both Atlantic and Pacific coasts, bordering Venezuela, astride the gateway to the Andes and the Amazon. It is the pivot of Washington's drive to dominate the hemisphere's resources—lithium, copper, oil, rare earths—and to counter Chinese influence. The billions poured into Colombia over eight decades have served not the Colombian people, but the interests of US imperialism and its comprador bourgeois clients.

Colombia is a country that has suffered so much like the rest of Latin America from US imperialist intervention, from the 1964 bombing of Marquetalia, which gave birth to the FARC, through Plan Colombia and the false positives, to the present deployment.

The answer to this renewed assault is the international unity of the working class of the Americas—Colombian, US, and throughout the hemisphere—against their common enemy. The same capitalist oligarchy that seeks neocolonial dominion over Latin America is abolishing the social and democratic rights of workers in the United States itself. The struggle against the new Operation Condor is inseparable from the struggle for socialism.



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