

Chile's Boric and Argentina's Milei join exercises of US Southern Command

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The pseudo-left government of Gabriel Boric in Chile and the fascistic administration of Javier Milei in Argentina have closed ranks in military exercises this week that constitute part of the war preparations of US imperialism and the NATO Alliance. Both regimes are fully committed to supporting the NATO war in Ukraine against Russia.

The armies of Chile, Argentina and the United States began joint military exercises in Tarapacá, northern Chile last Wednesday, August 28.

Several hundred soldiers, members of the Chilean and Argentine Armed Forces, together with US troops belonging to the 11th Airborne Division, 75th Field Artillery Brigade, 1st Security Forces Assistance Brigade and Texas Army National Guard are currently involved in this operation called “Southern Phoenix.” The war games were originally planned in April at a conference in Iquique between President Boric, the US Southern Command and the Chilean military.

They are now being joined by their Argentine counterparts. The 10-day exercise will make use of advanced and heavy US weaponry, such as the M142 High Mobility Artillery System (HIMARS), a precision rocket system capable of firing rockets up to 50 miles.

The original Operation Phoenix, created by the US Central Intelligence Agency in 1967 for the Vietnam War was a civilian assassination program much like its South American counterpart Operation Condor in the 1970s. That this military exercise now goes by a similar name is no coincidence and reveals, in part, the role that US imperialism envisions for its Latin American junior partners. This became evident at a two day “defense conference” that took place in Santiago last week.

On August 27, the day before the military exercises began, South American military leaders met in Santiago, Chile's capital city, with representatives of the US Southern Command at the “defense” conference (SOUTHDEC 24) to discuss how to cooperate against “regional threats to democracy,” in the words of a report from the US Southern Command.

This year, SOUTHDEC 24 included military representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Surinam and Uruguay. Also present were officials from Canada, France, and the United Kingdom, all leading NATO members. While not full partners, several Latin American countries have working relationships with the US-led alliance, including Chile, Brazil, and Argentina, while Colombia is a full “global partner.”

US National Guard leaders from Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, New York, South Carolina, and Texas also took part. These represented states whose national guards have so-called “state partnerships” with South American governments. Representatives from the Inter-American Defense Board, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), the William J. Perry Center, the Inter-American Defense College, and U.S Space Command also attended.

Leading the US delegation were Army Gen. Laura Richardson, commander of the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force Gen. Charles C. Brown.

Both Brown and Richardson took advantage of their presence at the conference to hold private meetings with Chile's Defense Minister, Maya Fernandez Allende, and military chief Vice Admiral Pablo Niemann.

Venezuela

SOUTHDEC 24 focused on “Leveraging New Technologies for the Common Defense of Hemispheric Sovereignty.”

The Southern Command website described the 2-day conference as follows: “During panels, dialogue, briefings, roundtables and bilateral meetings, leaders discussed ways to work together to leverage new technologies—like artificial intelligence and machine learning—and strengthen collaboration in space, to confront unfolding threats in South America and the Western Hemisphere.”

Addressing the opening ceremony, General Richardson aimed her guns at Venezuela:

“Democracy and its fundamental values remain under attack globally. And we don’t have to look any further than Venezuela, where Nicolas Maduro continues to undermine the democratic will of the Venezuelan people—having already caused 7.5 million Venezuelans to flee—increasing irregular migration throughout South and Central America.”

She added: “SOUTHDEC is an opportunity to come together and ensure we remain laser-focused on working across all domains and boundaries to ensure a free, secure, and prosperous Western Hemisphere.”

The conference is the latest step by Washington to align the armed forces of the SOUTHDEC attendees behind ongoing efforts to oust the government of President Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela, which are currently centered around claims that the US-funded opposition led by the fascistic CIA “asset” Maria Corina Machado and her stand-in, retired diplomat Edmundo Gonzalez, won the July 28 elections.

At the same time, the substantial armed forces in Latin America are being goaded into preparations for war in the Pacific against China.

The 11th Airborne Division of the US Army joined the Southern Phoenix military exercises. It is a division specifically dedicated to the Indo-Pacific region and the Arctic, and has the capacity of quickly projecting troops throughout the Arctic, the European and Indo-Pacific theaters, according to the Southern Command statement.

The close relationship between the Chilean and Argentine militaries and the US Armed Forces goes back decades, including during the fascist dictatorships under Gen. Augusto Pinochet in Chile and Gen. Rafael Videla in Argentina. In Chile, those ties continued seamlessly after the Pinochet regime and are being renewed in Argentina by the fascistic Milei administration, which is attempting to refurbish the legacy of the murderous military junta that ruled the country between 1976 and 1983.

In May and June of this year, Chile’s Navy participated in the US-led “Rim of the Pacific” or RIMPAC24 Indo-pacific exercises together with personnel and ships of 28 other nations [Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, Canada, Australia, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, the United Kingdom, the United States]. The theme of this naval exercise was “Partners: Integrated and Prepared.”

For the first time in RIMPAC history, a member of the Chilean Navy, Commodore Alberto Guerrero, served as deputy commander of the exercise’s Command Task Force, working in the command center alongside officers from the US, Japan, Canada and Australia.

Boric, elected in 2021 in the aftermath of the savage

repression of student protesters in 2019, with the support of the Morenoite pseudo-left and the Stalinist Communist Party, has betrayed all of his promises of democratic and social reform. In 2023, he rammed through draconian police state measures against workers and immigrants, which so far have been more extreme than those being imposed by his “partner” Milei on the other side of the Andes.

Earlier this year in Switzerland he warmly embraced Ukrainian dictator Volodymyr Zelinsky. While critical of the genocide in Gaza, Boric did not oppose that the Chilean Navy partnered with its Israeli counterpart in RIMPAC24.

President Boric and Milei have not yet embraced each other. Milei denounces Boric and other nominally “left” leaders across the world. Nonetheless, so-called leftists Boric, Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador in Mexico, Lula da Silva in Brazil, and others in Latin America have lined up with US imperialism together with extreme rightists and fascists such as Milei, Zelinsky and Netanyahu.

Boric and Milei are both militarizing their own societies in partnership with the US Southern Command and strengthening their military partnerships with US imperialism, which has implications for Latin America, NATO’s war on Russia, the brutal war in the Middle East and the naval provocations against China.

The militarization of Chile, Argentina and Latin America, and the growing influence of the US Southern Command are clear signs of a developing global third world war, which threatens to destroy human civilization. At the same time, the close relations being forged between the Pentagon and the Latin American military commands is creating the foundations for a new wave of US-backed coups, whenever Washington sees them as necessary.

It is imperative that the working class on both sides of the Andes mountains and across the Americas unite in struggle to stop war and the threat of dictatorship through the fight for a world socialist revolution.



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