
The Plot to Annihilate Ibero-America's Armed Forces: A Status Report

Betrayed Argentine military is being 'restructured' into oblivion

by Cynthia R. Rush

Picture this: Army soldiers grow food in gardens near their barracks, to feed themselves; the Air Force rents out its airstrips, to race car drivers to practice; the Navy rents out its docks, for use by private launches; the Naval Prefecture uses its boats to give rides to children from private daycare centers, charging a small fee; and the Gendarmerie rents its mules to tourists. At one base, youngsters who have signed up for the new volunteer army are sent home, because there is no place to house them, or funds with which to train them.

Scenes from a movie? No. This is the shocking portrait of Argentina's Armed Forces. Once one of Ibero-America's most highly skilled militaries, with a proud tradition of nation-building, they are now degraded to performing the activities described to eke out funds the defense budget no longer provides. Under President Carlos Menem's administration, which began in July 1989, Harvard-trained Finance Minister Domingo Cavallo has applied the International Monetary Fund's austerity dictates, such that, as Defense Minister Oscar Camilión recently admitted, there is no nation in Ibero-America, "except perhaps a small Caribbean country," whose defense budget is *smaller* than Argentina's. In discussing what he called the "imaginative" methods to which the Armed Forces had resorted to generate funds, Camilión told the daily *Página 12*, "but we have to be careful that the human element doesn't prostitute itself."

Over the last two years, Argentina's defense budget has fallen by one-third in absolute terms, to no more than 1.5% of Gross Domestic Product, the lowest on the continent. During 1975-83, the defense budget was at least 6% of GDP. During 1987-94, the Army's budget dropped from \$560 million to \$130 million—a 75% decline. Today, the Army's \$120 million budget is *smaller* than that of the British Army's garrison on the Malvinas Islands! Argentina is one of the largest economies in Ibero-America, yet its troop strength of 72,000 is among the smallest.

A strategic defeat

In 1982, Argentina's Armed Forces were defeated by the British in the Malvinas War, with the help of the Reagan-Bush government in the United States. Treason and betrayal

among their own high command also contributed to that defeat. But the humiliation the institution suffered in 1982, is nothing compared to what it has undergone over the past 13 years, as Anglo-American policymakers, and their collaborators inside Argentina, have systematically dismantled the Armed Forces in accord with the policy known informally as the "Bush Manual." This strategy of eliminating the continent's armed forces, under the guise of "restructuring" and "modernization," took form under the Bush administration, and remains largely intact today, as seen in the mid-July meeting of Ibero-American defense ministers in Williamsburg, Virginia.

In testimony before the Buenos Aires Federal Court in August 1991, Col. Mohamed Alí Seineldín, a hero of the 1982 war, documented the process of "de-Malvinization" of Argentina's military: its physical disintegration, and how the attack on its philosophical and ethical underpinnings succeeded in destroying it as "a fundamental institution of the nation . . . as the military arm of the Fatherland, and . . . safeguard of the highest interests of the nation." Seineldín, who was sentenced to life imprisonment because he told the truth, and because he acted to defend the Armed Forces, warned that "the Armed Forces, and police and security [forces] will continue to be weakened, because, as I have explained, this is a foreign project, by which we will enter the 'new order.' "

For years, *EIR* had been exposing the policy of which Seineldín spoke, which we elaborated in our 1993 book *The Plot to Annihilate the Armed Forces and Nations of Ibero-America*. As the articles which follow show, efforts by pro-British factions in Washington, such as those associated with the Inter-American Dialogue (IAD) think-tank, to redefine the mission of Ibero-America's armed forces away from the defense of national sovereignty, and the activities of the British-backed international human rights cartel to annul amnesties which protect military officers who fought narco-terrorism, from prosecution, are all part of this *Plot* to do away with the military institution continentally.

But Argentina's case remains the most dramatic. Camilión, a member of the IAD, which speaks for demilitarizers in

Williamsburg: Plot against military meets obstacles

The defense ministers of the democratically elected governments in the Americas met in Williamsburg, Virginia on July 24-26, convoked by the Clinton administration to further coordination on regional security matters. The agenda was dominated, however, by the program for regional demilitarization and globalism known as the "Bush Manual," drafted under the George Bush administration. That utopian, anti-national agenda met with continued resistance in Williamsburg from many of the major countries of the region.

The three themes on the agenda were: so-called "transparency" of military plans and capabilities, based on revealing all to the United Nations; promotion of international "peacekeeping" deployments; and insistence on civilians running shrunken defense capabilities.

Prior to the meeting, U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry stated that the goal of the conference was to identify measures which would make it "possible for each country in Latin America to reduce its military spending," and so "free up economic resources" which would enable Ibero-American countries to "carry the burden of peacekeeping around the world." Perry asserted that the militaries of the region have an "obligation" to assist such international missions.

The Argentine delegation, led by Defense Minister

Oscar Camilion, a member of the Inter-American Dialogue, came into the meeting proposing that Ibero-America send so many troops out under U.N. command, that the region "becomes a quarry for Blue Helmets"—even as the world watched those Blue Helmets *directing* Serb genocide and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia!

U.S. Defense Department officials announced in advance that they would not seek formal agreement on these themes from the other delegations, and, according to reports of participants, listened during the meeting to what others had to offer. But the keynote speech, delivered by Vice President Al Gore (whose views do not always match those of President Bill Clinton), insisted on the utopian idiocy that the time has come for a "major rethinking of what constitutes national security," and for nations to "look beyond the traditional concept of security to new missions," such as international peacekeeping and protecting "eco-systems."

Mexico sent the strongest signal that this agenda is unacceptable, sending only an observer delegation, led by its ambassador to the United States, not even a lower-level official sent up from Mexico. According to press accounts, Venezuela and Brazil argued strongly that military defense cannot be separated from economic defense.

Perry announced that, at the urging of other delegations, he added combatting "narco-terrorism" to his final "Williamsburg Principles." Collaboration between U.S. and Ibero-American forces in fighting drugs is one area where substantial advances have occurred, to the benefit of all.—*Gretchen Small*

Washington and London, was named defense minister in March 1993 to carry out the Dialogue's plans. He has performed well. In early August, the government announced the fourth military budget cut *this year*, cutting another \$31 million on top of the \$160 million already mandated in the 1995 budget. Military sources told the daily *Clarín* that if these went through, the result could be a situation of "ungovernability within the Armed Forces." The commanders of the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a message to Camilión saying that "with this new cut . . . our forces are no longer in conditions to operate."

In the Aug. 4 *La Nación*, military analyst Eduardo Barcelona reported that the cuts would mean cancelling the annual U.S.-Argentine *Unitas* naval maneuvers, and closing down the Naval College and the Naval Mechanics School. The Air Force has canceled all flights until September, and all other flights in the Army and Navy will be halted as well. The new volunteer army, which the government inaugurated after obligatory military service was eliminated, will be stillborn. The young men and women volunteers will be housed and

fed, but will receive *no military training*, because there are no funds to pay for it!

Revealing of the environment within the Armed Forces is the fact that, four years after Colonel Seineldín elaborated how the *Plot* against the institution had been carried out, some military leaders are being forced to admit that he was right. A case in point is the Aug. 10 speech on Air Force Day by Brig. Gen. Juan Paulik, chief of staff of the Air Force. It is clear to the leadership of the Armed Forces, Paulik said, that "the development of defense cannot be disconnected from the global development of the State, and at the same time respond definitively to the country's concrete possibilities." In a reference to the *Plot*, he pointed to the "existence of theories which generate a strong current of opinion which encourages everything, from an arbitrary reduction of the Armed Forces to their transformation into pseudo-national guards." It would be totally "reckless, to completely rule out [the Armed Forces]," Paulik said, "or excessively minimize them, at the risk of seriously mortgaging vital interests of the Nation."