



Siguiendo el conflicto: hechos y análisis

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The Colombia-US Military Agreement: A Strategic Bet

By: Security and Defense Studies Area

- Last July the national government the agreement that it had been negotiating since early this year to allow the United States military to use seven Colombian Air Force and Navy bases to support the fight against drug trafficking. This agreement has given rise to all sorts of speculation and criticism, both inside the country and outside.
- Within the country the debate has been marked by misinformation because of the government's lack of specificity in and its reluctance to reveal the details of the agreement. Likewise, rather than resolving questions about this agreement, the extensive media coverage has served to polarize the debate.
- Meanwhile, on the outside, neighboring countries –particularly Ecuador and Venezuela– have automatically repudiated the agreement, essentially because of their political differences with Bogota.
- The other Latin American countries, with the exception of Bolivia, have maintained a cautiously respectful position with regard to Bogota, considering this to be a sovereign decision by the Government of Colombia to enter into a military agreement with the United States. This has even been the case of Brazil, that initially asked the Colombian Government emphatically to provide greater clarity on the true scope of the agreement, as expressed by Foreign Minister Celso Amorim who voiced concern about increased military presence by the United States in the region.¹
- Meanwhile, the U.S. Government's lackluster participation in this debate has left Colombia alone defending the agreement before the other countries in the region.
- Angry reactions were expected from the governments of Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Their rejection of Bogota's decision would be consistent with their support for the Bolivarian Revolution and 21st century Socialism. The strategic objective of Bolivarian foreign policy is to build Latin American unity through Bolivarian, Socialist, and anti-imperialist identity.²
- Pursuing this objective involves extending the model to the other countries in the region, challenging the traditional presence of the United States in Latin America, a country that is considered to be the main enemy of the revolution. The expulsion of U.S. diplomats and embassy staff has been the norm in these countries,³ while security cooperation with Washington has been reduced to a minimum. These countries have eliminated the U.S. Embassy Military Groups (Milgroups) responsible for advising, training, and providing resources to countries in the region. In the same way, the fight against drug trafficking has been affected. Venezuela ended all cooperation with the DEA in August 2005; Bolivia followed suit in November 2008. The latest blow was Rafael Correa's decision in September to evict the United States permanently from Manta.
- The fact that Colombia will receive the base that was closed in Manta is not only seen as a slap in the face of the Bolivarian Revolution and its struggle to free Latin America from the "imperialist yoke," but also as a potential threat to the Bolivarian project.
- In Colombia, much of the difficulty may be attributed to, as many have noted, the absence of an official information policy on the agreement and its implications. The negotiations, revealed by *Cambio Magazine* in July,⁴ produced objections and hypotheses about hidden agendas. These suspicions were further strengthened by the erroneous reports that seven U.S. military bases would be established in Colombia.
- President Uribe undertook a whirlwind tour of Latin American countries during the first week of August in an attempt to counter this effect. At the regional level it may in fact be said that the presidents of Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina know more about the terms of the agreement than Colombians themselves, which is understandable insofar as that it was the external shock that put a huge amount of pressure on the national government to explain said agreement.
- To the extent that this heated debate has cooled, both internally and in the region, it is worthwhile reviewing three key aspects. First, analyzing the scope of the agreement in terms of sovereignty; secondly, considering its implications for military cooperation between Bogota and Washington in the fight against drug trafficking and illegal armed groups in Colombia and; thirdly, assessing its impact on the arms race that is being predicted in the region.

U.S. Bases in Latin America: From Howard to Manta

- With the closure of the Howard Air Force Base in Panama in 1997, the U.S. Government negotiated the use of similar bas-

es in order to continue its missions of detecting, monitoring, and tracking drug trafficking aircraft and vessels, which it had been doing from a unified operations platform that enabled it to oversee the Caribbean and the Pacific. For the U.S. Southern Command to continue this type of operation, it would be necessary to establish at least three forward operating locations (FOLs), which should be distributed in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. This strategy would be used to continue to prevent narcotics from being dispatched, transiting, and arriving at the U.S. coasts.⁵

- Three strategic points were chosen: the air bases located at the Queen Beatrix and Hato International Airports in Aruba and Curacao (Netherlands Antilles), and the Comalapa International Airport (El Salvador), and the Eloy Alfaro International Airport in Manta, Ecuador.
- The United States paid for the renovation of the facilities, investing \$70 million in Manta alone, mainly on repairing the airport's runway, which is now considered to be first-rate, capable of receiving heavy cargo aircraft.⁶ This investment was to ensure the safety of the aircraft and the teams needed to pursue the operations for detection, monitoring and tracking, thereby reducing the opportunities for drug shipments to depart from Ecuador or transit in the Pacific.
- It is worth noting that on these bases, whereas the U.S. staff operates the equipment to provide real-time intelligence information, the interdiction operations themselves are carried out by the security forces of the host country, within its borders and airspace. This means that the host country is responsible for these. In other words, the equipment used provides intelligence, but the United States does not have the capacity or the authorization to fire warning shots or bring down and destroy aircraft or boats that are transporting narcotics.
- The FOLs in Latin America are not U.S. bases per se. In no way did the Netherlands, El Salvador, or Ecuador cede their territory. This is different from the case of the Guantanamo Naval Base (Cuba), where Washington has had complete control of the area since 1903, and U.S. bases in Europe, where they have permanent presence. Washington, for example, has total control of two air bases in Germany (Spangdahlem and Rammstein), from which it provides support to NATO, carrying out conventional military missions, with strategic equipment, in support of the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.
- Those who object to the Colombia-U.S. military agreement do not differentiate between it and those in other countries; to them it is all one and the same. But it is precisely the failure to distinguish between these different arrangements that has given rise to a number of distortions on the subject, the main one being the alleged succession of sovereignty to the United States.

No Surrender of Sovereignty

- In terms of the debate over the surrender of sovereignty to the United States, it is worth recalling the discussion that took

place when Ecuador was considering the establishment of the Manta base, in order to note the substantial differences in this area.

- Manta was an air base designed exclusively for U.S. use, at which the personnel had full autonomy over their mobility, and as such substantial grounds and reasons existed in the debate concerning the surrender of Ecuadorian sovereignty.⁷ According to the information that has been made public to date, Colombian military presence on the bases does not appear to be negotiable, and all organizational structure and decision-making in the operations will remain in Colombian hands.
- Second, the legal status granted to the personnel on the Manta base was the same as that of the Embassy personnel in Quito, meaning that they were immune from prosecution in the local jurisdiction. Plan Colombia granted the same benefits to U.S. military and civilian personnel operating in the country. However, due to unfortunate incidents, such as that of a girl who was allegedly raped U.S. personnel,⁸ the Colombian negotiators of the current agreement have rejected this status, and it is not expected that they will backslide on the matter. From this perspective, the current agreement could represent a significant step forward, compared with what had been implemented under Plan Colombia.
- Finally, a considerable number of those opposed to the establishment of the Manta base maintained that this situation would drag Ecuador into Colombia's conflict. In effect, Manta was used as the base of operations to pursue campaigns in the Pacific within the framework of Plan Colombia.⁹ In the current context, this argument is undermined because the agreement is meant for pursuing operations in Colombia, using Colombian military bases, although with U.S. aircraft. As President Uribe said at the UNASUR summit in Bariloche this past 28 August, the agreement is governed by the principle of the territorial integrity of states, as with the prohibition "against the use of intervention in the internal affairs of other states."¹⁰

The Continuity of Colombia-US Military Cooperation: More of the Same?

- It was not until 28 August, at the supplementary UNASUR summit, when the reluctant Uribe saw the need to publicly clarify the matter of the agreement to his counterparts on the continent, that its implications were made clear.
- President Uribe explained that the military agreement is based on co-responsibility in the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism. The United States has been the only country that has contributed largely and concretely to the strengthening of Colombia's security force, which has been key to the country's fight against drugs and the illegal armed groups. Indeed, since 1999 with the signing of Plan Colombia, a strategic alliance has been built with Washington to confront the threats of drug trafficking and terrorism. This alliance has an important precedent, in that Colombia has maintained close ties of security

cooperation with the United States since the mid 1950s.

- It is clear that the Colombian Government's main interest in the new military agreement is to maintain the existing security cooperation with Washington as part of the Democratic Security Policy. In 2008 the future of cooperation with Washington for fighting terrorism and drug trafficking was shrouded in a cloak of uncertainty.
- Firstly, many doubts were being aired about the effectiveness of Plan Colombia, which were resoundingly confirmed in the report on the future of Plan Colombia that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) presented to the U.S. Senate in October 2008.
- The report concluded that while Plan Colombia had helped to improve security conditions in the country, it had failed meet its goals for reducing drug crops, processing, and distribution. The GAO recommended at the time that the plan rethink the role and responsibility of the United States, and work toward the nationalization of the different programs.
- Secondly, the rise of the Democratic majority in the U.S. Congress, Barack Obama's victory in the November elections, coupled with the international economic crisis, presaged a reduction in U.S. security collaboration.
- Between the year 2000 and 2008, the Colombian Armed Forces received about U.S. \$4.9 trillion as part of Plan Colombia to pursue the objectives of security and fighting drugs. This sum went to both the Police and the Military Forces. The former agency received funds to improve its drug-fighting capabilities (eradication, airborne operations and interdiction), and to increase its presence in areas where control was being consolidated.
- The Military Forces, in turn, received funds for its three branches.¹¹ The Army received advising, training, and equipment, which greatly improved its combat capability, mobility, and ability to pursue operations. It facilitated the creation of the Mobile Brigades, the Joint Command units, and the strengthening and expansion of the Army's Aviation Brigade. The Navy received funding to improve its interdiction capacities on the coasts and rivers, and the Air Force was strengthened in its air interdiction capacities, under what is known as Air Bridge Denial (ABD).¹²
- The GAO reported that these resources were supremely effective at stabilizing the internal security situation by reducing the illegal armed groups' power to control territory.¹³ However, the report reiterated the concerns of U.S. and Colombian officials who maintain that although the security situation has improved, it is necessary to continue providing military and socially cooperation so that these achievements will not be undone. In this vein, whereas what remains of Plan Colombia will be invested mainly in the social components, the key for the Colombian Government is to give continuity to military cooperation.
- In this light the new bilateral agreement shall be a mechanism for giving continuity to the military cooperation begun under

Plan Colombia, in accordance with the strategic interests of the Colombian Government.

Whose Arms Race?

- Although only three FOLs were installed in Latin America, according to the Base Structure Report, published annually by the Department of State of the United States, currently U.S. bases of different sizes and with different missions exist in 37 countries around the world, serving the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Germany and Italy alone host more than half of the forces deployed in Europe.¹⁴
- This is a useless fact if taken out of context as an argument in support of the Colombian Government's position regarding U.S. presence in Colombia. However, a detailed and comparative examination of U.S. presence on these bases, and an analysis of the military balance in the region, calls into question the declarations by Chávez that the military agreement between Bogota and Washington gives Colombia a big military advantage over its peers in the region and makes it the spearhead for a U.S. military venture into Venezuela.
- The Venezuelan Government has expressed the most reservations to the military agreement signed by Washington and Bogota; this to the extent that President Hugo Chávez has been declaring since 2005 that the United States has devised a plan to invade Venezuela in order to overthrow the revolutionary government. "Operation Balboa," as Chávez has dubbed it, would entail U.S. forces using Colombian territory to invade Venezuela.¹⁵
- The allegations of a U.S. invasion, and Colombia's role in this, is the claim that Chávez has been using in the past year as the trump card when he wants to portray himself as the victim of a destabilization plan. When there are winds of binational crisis, when he wants to argue with Washington, or when he simply wants to lash out at his country, against what he refers to as the "petit Yankee" oligarchy that he says is on its knees at orders of the empire, Chávez brandishes his main fear: that of being thrown out of the Miraflores Palace as happened to him for 72 hours in April 2002. Precisely, this precedent means that the specter of a coup against him resurfaces constantly, and he uses this theatrically to exaggerate the implications of the Colombia-U.S. agreement.
- Since late 2007, Chávez has referred more than once to his fear of U.S. invasion. First, when President Uribe terminated Chávez's role as mediator for the release of FARC hostages, including the child Emmanuel in December 2007. At that time the Venezuelan president made serious accusations against the Colombian president and his government. He accused Uribe of being a "pawn of the empire" and he "alerted the world" that Colombia was becoming "the U.S. aircraft carrier," where "a military aggression against Venezuela" was being prepared:¹⁶ the famous Operation Balboa. From that time and until March 2008, when the regional crisis over Operation Phoenix was re-

solved, which had led to the death of Raul Reyes in Ecuadorian territory, Chávez repeatedly claimed that Colombia and its government were undermining regional stability through military actions against its neighbors. Chávez reprised the subject of a U.S. invasion in July 2008, after the United States announced the reactivation of the 4th Fleet in the Caribbean.

- Similarly, since May 2008 the Venezuelan president has been emphatic in rejecting any possible establishment of U.S. bases in Colombia. At that time, when the debate began over the future of the Manta base, U.S. Ambassador to Bogota William Brownfield said in an interview with the newspaper *El Espectador* that operations could be moved from Ecuador to Colombia.¹⁷ The diplomat was then asked if the Manta base could be transferred to La Guajira Department, a question that he did not want to answer. Venezuela's reaction to the unanswered question was swift, and the Venezuelan president said that if a U.S. base were established in La Guajira, he would be forced to reclaim sovereignty over that territory¹⁸ which, according to Chávez, Venezuela had lost.¹⁹ The controversy over the lack of specificity in U.S. ambassador's interview grew to such an extent that the Colombian Government had to step in and state that the Manta base would not be moved to La Guajira.²⁰
- The agreement to allow the United States to use Colombian bases has revived Chávez' specter of the United States invading Venezuela. Chávez insists that Colombia's Armed Forces would be strengthened incredibly by the agreement and that therefore his country would be at a serious disadvantage, making it necessary to revisit the rearmament process begun in 2004. For example, he said that it would be necessary to double defense capability by purchasing several battalions of tanks, a deal that was signed on his last trip to Russia, in September 2009.
- For various reasons, paradoxically Caracas' fears are based on a small but significant grain of truth –from Chávez' point of view– and a huge dose of histrionics. In any case, the Venezuelan president's attitude gives rise to several concerns.
- First, the United States is not going to install military bases in Colombia, and as far as is known it will not bring into the country strategic military equipment that the neighbors could consider as a threat. Even Colombian Air Force commander General Jorge Ballesteros has said that there will be no U.S. combat aircraft on the Colombian bases.²¹
- Second, the Venezuelan president's fear seems to be unfounded when taking into account that the Curacao FOL has existed just a few miles off the coast of his country since 1999. Why does the Venezuelan president not consider that U.S. presence in the Netherlands Antilles constitutes a latent threat as a spearhead for Washington to attack Venezuela?
- In October 2008, two Russian strategic bombers with nuclear capacity, plus the federation's biggest nuclear-powered ship, arrived in Venezuela at Chávez' invitation,²² and hung about for two weeks in the Caribbean waters, something that had not

taken place since the Cold War. President Chávez has taken advantage of his close ties to the Kremlin, not only through large purchase of armaments, but signing contracts worth millions for energy cooperation,²³ to seal what he has referred to as a "strategic alliance." In March 2009, President Chávez announced that he would allow Russian Air Force strategic bombers to use the air base on Orchila Island in the Venezuelan Caribbean. In the words of Major General Anatoly Zhikharev, chief of staff of Russian Strategic Aviation, "Chávez offered us an entire island with an aerodrome that we may use as a temporary base for our strategic bombers."²⁴

- These facts and many more that are public knowledge concerning the alliances and military purchases made by Venezuela since 2004, are evocative of that country's destabilizing potential, and it is surprising that no one in the region has questioned the Chávez government in the same way that the military cooperation agreement between Colombia and the United States has been questioned. Clearly, the specter of U.S. invasion still reigns in the region and obscures the potential threat that is developing in Venezuela.
- Moreover, although Colombia has allegedly spent 4% of its GDP and imposed extra taxes²⁵ to increase its military capacity over the past seven years, this reinforcement has been meant to build capacity to effectively fight the illegal armed groups.
- The main thrust of the effort has been to significantly increase manpower, provide mobility with helicopter personnel carriers, and equip the Air Force with ground attack aircraft. In this sense, Colombian military spending has not been directed at the acquisition of conventional capabilities, which could be construed as a threat by the neighbors. In fact, it was precisely in order to avoid friction with them that discussions about the procurement of military equipment for national defense ended up completely bogged down. Especially the intention to buy war tanks to defend La Guajira, which has been postponed indefinitely.
- Venezuela, meanwhile, has redefined the role of its military forces, outfitting them with a significant supply of state of the art conventional weapons, making them the means of safeguarding the Bolivarian Revolution from any outside attempt at destabilization. To do so, Venezuela has tripled military spending over the past five years, going from US \$1.12 trillion to \$3.3 trillion between 2003 and 2008.²⁶
- Additionally the Venezuelan president has turned to Russia to conduct a full process of modernization and re-equipping of its military forces. In effect, Venezuela's arms purchases have meant that Russia's arms exports increased from US \$3.68 billion in 2000 to more than US \$7.5 billion in 2008.
- The process of modernizing and refurbishing Venezuela's Armed Forces has included, since 2004, the purchase of 100,000 AK-103 assault rifles and the establishment of two factories in Venezuela, one to produce 50,000 AK-103s annually, and one to produce ammunition; both to be operative

by 2011. The purchase of 12 TOR-M1 surface-to-air missiles and “several hundred” Iglá-S portable anti-aircraft missiles. It has also purchased carrier planes, artillery helicopters, attack helicopters, and the much-discussed acquisition of 24 state-of-the-art Su-30MK fighter jets. As well as these purchases, it must be mentioned that in September 2009 the Venezuelan president agreed with the Kremlin on a loan for US \$2.2 billion for 92 T-72 tanks to equip two battalions, and an unknown number of BM-30 Smerch multiple rocket launchers.

- Certainly the acquisition of all this conventional military equipment gives Caracas significant strategic capability by the standards of the region, which no doubt should be cause for concern.
- For Colombia, beyond the fact that Venezuela is building a large-scale conventional military apparatus, there are some very disturbing minor purchases that could affect the outcome of the conflict with the guerrilla groups, in particular with the FARC.
- First, the establishment of gun and ammunition factories is very sensitive when taking into account that in 2005 the Venezuelan Government backtracked on the decision to bring the caliber of the ammunition for its guns into accord with the NATO standard of 5.56 x 45mm, and curiously decided to keep the old caliber of 7.62 x 39mm for its new AK-103 rifles.²⁷ As it turns out, this gauge is exactly the same as that taken by most of the long guns that the Colombian guerrillas use. In addition, the acquisition of the Iglá portable anti-aircraft missiles is equally sensitive, bearing in mind that this weapon is easy to move, easy to use, and highly accurate against aircraft, something that the FARC would love to have.

Colombia's Strategic Bet

- One of the main objections that has been raised in the country to the military agreement being negotiated with the United States is that it has worsened Colombia's isolation in Latin America. As such, different entities have urged the government to correct its foreign policy.
- Without getting into the discussion of the degree to which Colombia is actually isolated –which would be better addressed in a more informed manner and without dramatics– or what better foreign policy would entail, the key is to identify the strategic options that Colombia currently has in terms of collaboration in the fight against drugs and to build democratic security.
- In terms of the neighboring countries, the best case scenario would be one of fluid cooperation to secure the borders. Border security cooperation with Brazil and Peru has so far remained intact. In fact Brazil has a policy of zero tolerance for the FARC, gunrunning, and drug trafficking. In this sense, the statements that Brazilian Defense Minister Nelson Jobim made in March are very telling, “In Brazilian territory, the FARC will be greeted with gunfire.”²⁸ In the case of Ecuador, the way seems to be clearing gradually toward the restoration of relations.

- The same thing is not happening with Venezuela. The truth is that a considerable level of mutual mistrust exists with Bolivarian Venezuela. Chávez believes that the United States intends to use “Operation Balboa” to invade through Colombia, and Colombia has ample evidence of cooperation between the echelons of power in Venezuelan and the Colombian insurgency. Under these circumstances, progress on an agreement for border cooperation and security issues seems highly unlikely.
- Under these circumstances, the government of President Uribe seized the window of opportunity that presented itself with the closure of the Manta base, and agreed to allow the United States to use seven bases in Colombia, with U.S. technical cooperation in intelligence as a way to ensure military cooperation with this country, which is key in strengthening the internal security policy. It is an offer that is difficult to refuse, which makes some uncomfortable and others find threatening, presenting Colombia with the eternal dilemma: how to look to the north without turning its back on the south?

¹ “Nos preocupa una presencia militar fuerte de Estados Unidos, afirmó canciller del Brasil.” *El Tiempo*, 3 Aug 2009.

² Roman D. Ortiz, “La raíces del comportamiento de Hugo Chávez,” *Siguiendo el Conflicto*, No. 53. 1 April 2008, p.3. Available online at: http://www.ideaspaz.org/secciones/publicaciones/download_boletines/siguiendo_el_conflicto_num_53.pdf

³ Bolivia expelled Philip Goldberg, U.S. ambassador to La Paz, on 10 September 2008, after accusing him of plotting against the government. Forty-eight hours later Hugo Chávez did the same to Patrick Duddy, U.S. Ambassador to Caracas, out of solidarity with Evo Morales. In February 2009, Rafael Correa expelled Mark Sullivan, embassy first secretary in Quito, accused of being the head of the CIA office in that country. One week earlier the Ecuadorian president had expelled another embassy official, accusing him of being a member of the Central Intelligence Agency.

⁴ “Los enviados del Pentágono.” *Cambio*, No. 835, 2 to 8 July 2009. Available online at: http://www.cambio.com.co/portadacambio/835/ARTICULO-WEB-NOTA_INTERIOR_CAMBIO-5569679.html

⁵ See statements by Jess T. Ford, Associate Director, International Relations and Trade Issues, National Security and International Affairs Division, before the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources. Drug Control. DOD allocates fewer assets to drug control efforts. 27 January 2000. Available online at: <http://www.gao.gov/archive/2000/ns00077t.pdf>

⁶ According to the United States Southern Command, lighting was installed on the runway to make it possible to use 24/7, and emergency equipment was provided –firefighting and specialized rescue equipment– as well as renovations to the airport's facilities.

⁷ On the subject, see radical writers such as: Salgado Tamayo, Manuel. *La base de Manta, el Plan Colombia y la Iniciativa Regional Andina en El Plan Colombia y la Intensificación de la guerra*, pp. 267-308. National University of Colombia, Faculty of Law, Political and Social Sciences, Department of Political Science. Political Observatory. Bogotá, D.C., 2002.

⁸ “Congreso silencia a una madre de niña violada por soldados de EE.UU.” *El Espectador*, 12 August 2009.

⁹ Bonilla, Adrián. *Percepciones de la amenaza para el Ecuador en América Latina y el (des) orden global neoliberal. Hegemonía, contrahegemonía, perspectivas*. José María Gómez (Comp.), CLACSO, Buenos Aires, April 2004.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

- ¹¹ “Plan Colombia. Drug reduction goals were not fully met...” GAO-09 71, United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), October 2008. p. 27-39. Available online at: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-09-71>
- ¹² Air Bridge Denial is an interdiction strategy that involves the use of high tech equipment, such as radar, satellites, and interception planes to monitor the movement of aircraft working for drug traffickers
- ¹³ *Ibid.* p.70-71
- ¹⁴ Along this line see, for example: Base Structure Report. Fiscal Year 2007 Baseline. Department of Defense, Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations and Environment).
- ¹⁵ Along this line see: “El Plan Balboa tiene su Contra-Balboa.” Available online at: <http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/index.php?act=ST&f=29&t=19640>
- ¹⁶ “Chávez acusa a Uribe de preparar una provocación bélica contra Venezuela,” *El Mundo*, 26 January 2008. Available online at: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2008/01/26/internacional/1201305000.html>
- ¹⁷ “Estados Unidos podría poner una base en La Guajira.” *El Espectador*, 11 May 2008.
- ¹⁸ “Presidente Chávez: Si EE.UU. instala base en La Guajira pelearemos por ella.” Radio Nacional de Venezuela (RNV), 14 May 2008. Available online at: <http://www.rnv.gov.ve/noticias/?act=ST&f=2&t=68174>
- ¹⁹ It is important to note that according to article 10 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela: “The territory and other geographic locations of the Republic are those that corresponded to the Capitanía General of Venezuela prior to the political transformation begun as of 19 April 1810.” This article implies de facto that Venezuela may take possession of Colombian territory.
- ²⁰ Then Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos explained in May 2008 that there would be no need to establish a U.S. base in La Guajira. “Colombia está jugando con fuego: Chávez,” *Semana*, 14 May 2008.
- ²¹ “No habrá aviones de combate de EE.UU. en Colombia: Comandante de la Fuerza Aérea,” *El Tiempo*, 12 August 2009
- ²² “Aviones Tu-160 volaron sobre aguas del Caribe por segunda vez,” *El Universal*, 16 September 2008.
- ²³ “Rusia y Venezuela: Alianza Estratégica entre los gigantes energéticos,” Agencia Bolivariana de Noticias (ABN), 14 August 2008. Available online at: <http://www.abn.info.ve/noticia.php?articulo=195340&lee=3>
- ²⁴ “Chávez propuso a Rusia utilizar isla de Orchila para misiones de sus bombarderos estratégicos,” RIA Novosti, 14 March 2009.
- ²⁵ Military Balance 2009, IISS
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ “Guayana caliber 7.62,” *Siguiendo el Conflicto*, Number 6/ 22-31 March 2005. Available online at: http://www.ideaspaz.org/secciones/publicaciones/download_boletines/boletin_conflicto06.pdf
- ²⁸ “Monitoreos satelitales de hasta 60 kilómetros en territorio vecino, acuerdan Colombia y Brasil.” *El Tiempo*, 12 March 2009.

