

U.S. troops deployed in Guatemala in attempt to stop migration



Guatemala City, June 4 (RHC)-- Guatemalan Defense Minister Luis Miguel Ralda confirmed on Monday that U.S. troops are already in the country, specifically on the Guatemala-Mexico border near Huehuetenango.

Speaking with reporters in Guatemala City, Ralda said: "The troops are already here, as has happened in the last 15 years, with programs such as 'Strong Roads' and now [with] the one that is being developed, 'Beyond the Horizon.'" He refused to reveal the exact number of troops or further details on their deployment.

On Friday, U.S. congressman Vicente Gonzalez said he met with Guatemala's ambassador to the U.S., Manuel Espina, and that the ambassador assured his government would welcome the troops. This came as Gonzalez wrote a letter on April 16 to U.S. President Donald Trump urging him to intervene.

"Guatemalan president Jimmy Morales has indicated that he would welcome the introduction of U.S. troops on Guatemala's northern border," Gonzalez wrote, adding that "if you want to see fewer apprehensions at the U.S.-Mexico border, I would strongly encourage you to seriously consider President

Morales' offer.”

Meanwhile, the Minister of the Interior, Enrique Degenhart, has downplayed the presence of foreign troops saying that “this is a civil solution with police support from both governments, it is not a solution aimed to national and regional security troops,” claiming they will be there for "humanitarian" reasons.

As these forces amass on the Guatemalan border, “several dozens” of agents and investigators from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have also been sent to Guatemala to act as "advisers" to the national police and the country's immigration authorities. According to Rep. Gonzalez, sending “100 U.S. agents to Guatemala is insufficient,” thus the need for military personnel.

Trump's foreign policy, with regards to migration, seems to be aiming to create “plug” states that will halt Central American flows of migrants, and the U.S.-backed Guatemalan government fits the bill. Although, the U.S. head of state is also pressuring Mexico, by threatening with tariffs, to comply with this strategy.

According to the National Institute of Migration of Guatemala, between January and April of 2019, 31,344 Guatemalans were deported; 18,999 from U.S. and 12,345 from Mexico. More than half are from the departments of Huehuetenango, San Marcos, Quiche, Quetzaltenango, and Alta Verapaz.

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