

Bolivian President Praises National Anti-Drug Police Force



La Paz, July 28 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Bolivian President Evo Morales told police officers from the Special Forces Fighting Drug-Traffic (FELCN) which were celebrating their 28th anniversary on Monday: "You represent Bolivia in this difficult task."

"I want to congratulate you for your hard work; we know however criminals remain out there... Now we must prepare ourselves even better to counter this plague," he added from the headquarters of the police body. He said that in the 1990s the anti-drug police depended on the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and other foreign security forces that operated in Bolivia.

These foreign bodies were more concerned in going after leaders of social political and movements opposed to the former neo-liberal government, rather than in eradicating drug consumption and traffic in the country, Morales added.

In December 2014, the president claimed that the so-called War on Drugs pushed by Washington was just one of the many means the United States uses to pressure and control governments in Latin America. "They even named me the 'Andean Bin Laden' and accused us of being terrorists and drug traffickers and at the same time United States is the top-nation that backs and benefits from drug traffic," he said.

Foreign-led drug operations were only motivated by outside interests he said, adding “when we took power we decided to nationalize our security force to fight drug-traffic.” President Evo Morales expelled the Drug Enforcement Agency in 2008 after a WikiLeaks cable revealed it was spying on his private life. “Today, Bolivia is internationally recognized for the work we have carried out in this field,” he added.

According to a report of the United Nations against Drug and Crime (UNODC), the coca crops have decreased from 25,300 hectares in 2012 to 23,000 in 2013, which is about a 10 percent reduction. This success is mainly due to the Bolivian government's efforts of rationalization and eradication, according to the report.

Since Morales election as President in 2006, Bolivia has been in dispute with Washington over the coca leaf production in the South American nation, which the country's indigenous majority use for a range of non-narcotic purposes, including religious ceremonies. The coca plant is considered sacred in several Andean countries.

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