

# *US-sponsored military drill in Colombia threatens regional peace*

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Caracas, August 30 (RHC)—A US-sponsored joint military naval exercise is underway in Colombia with the participation of 13 countries. Argentina, Brazil, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Canada, and England are participating in the 58th edition of the United States Southern Command-sponsored drill known as "Unitas."

The exercises first took place in Venezuela in 1960, in the context of the Cold War and U.S. anti-communism. This year, it will take place in Cartagena from August 30 through September 11.

Although the event presents itself as promoting "hemispheric solidarity," some countries see it as a threat to Venezuela and peace in the region.

Earlier this month Bolivian President Evo Morales warned that US military presence in the region "does not guarantee dignity or sovereignty."

The exercises take place on the backdrop of increasing threats by the US government against the elected government of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela. These threats range from economic sanctions to openly calling for a military coup.

During Unitas 2018, navies will carry out different operations such as surface maneuvering, anti-aircraft defense, disaster response along with submarine and diving training.

The exercises Unitas multinational naval exercises are organized every year in the framework of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR).

In 2012 Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela (then members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) withdrew from the TIAR, denouncing it for furthering US geopolitical interests in the region.

Ecuador, which recently withdrew from ALBA-TP is among the South American countries that have joined Unitas after years of refraining from participating in the maneuver. In 2007, former president Rafael Correa decided to withdraw from the joint military exercises with the United States.

Human rights groups have denounced US training for Latin American militaries because alumni of institutions like the Inter-American Defense College have participated in human rights violations in their countries of origin.

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