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## EDITORIAL

We begin this edition by expressing to our kind readers our best wishes regarding the pandemic and its effects. We hope everyone is safe, and hopefully vaccinated.

In the article that opens this edition, our senior analyst Guadi Calvo makes a magnificent analysis of France's role in the Sahel. This writing gives us another perspective of the situation, different from what the mass media have, normally at the service of political and economic powers, but not of the truth. By the way, in the second contribution of this edition, the issue of the coup in Burma is addressed, and the different euphemisms that are used in that country and internationally to deal with the issue, in which there is even a Nobel Prize winner of peace, paradoxically questioned for contributing to the extermination of the Rohingya people .

In the following article, the Colombian general in the reserve, Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, presents us with a geostrategic analysis of the Colombian department of Arauca, a region of many contrasts, bordering Venezuela, and where narco-terrorist groups and all kinds of criminals operate. This contribution will allow us to understand some of its dynamics.

Guadi takes us back to Africa, to review the latest developments in the Tigray conflict, and the unholy relations of the Ethiopian and Eritrean governments. From there we go to troubled Yemen, where the civilian population also suffers the perverse consequences of a war that does not end, and in which the geopolitical interests of the Western powers, the monarchies of the Middle East, and those of the "Zionist enclave that occupies illegally to Palestine. Guadi refers particularly to the change of course that the new president of the United States of America will apparently carry out. It has no waste.

We close this edition of Triarius, its security and prevention bulletin against terrorism and new threats, with a review referring to the cavalry of the Colombian Army.

Know to win!

*Douglas Hernández*

Editor



This newsletter has a Spanish version.

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## TRIARIUS

Without social justice there will be no peace. Phrase repeated ad nauseam, which contains in its simplicity an incontestable wisdom. An unjust, unequal society can be maintained in pax, in the Roman way, in a stability forced at gunpoint, but in which there will always be outbreaks of rebellion, signs of discontent, and people willing to resort to violence, even violence, extreme violence, to change the status quo. This reality also applies to the international community, in which the governments of global or regional powers impose their position on other nations and governments. That is then a permanent source of conflicts. It is necessary to solve the real causes of the problems and not only repress their most dramatic manifestations. You have to see beyond the obvious.

On the cover, *Troop of the Mexican Army*.

See more information at the end of the magazine.

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Very special thanks to the international analysts who have sent us their articles for this issue free of charge.



# France in the Sahel, lies and dirty war

By Guadi Calvo (Argentina)



*French troops of the Barkhane operation in Africa.*

The French troops that since 2012 were stationed in the north of Mali, first known as Operation Serval and as of August 2014 as Operation Barkhane, in which some sixty troops have already died, have still not found a solution to the problem. that brought them there: the fundamentalist insurgency, which at that time threatened not only the north of Mali, but has spread to Chad and Burkina Faso, where it operates with great virulence, putting those two states and several in the region (Niger, Mauritania and Algeria) on high alert, so that every day, Paris seems to be approaching an outcome as humiliating as that of Diên Bien Phu , the battle that, in 1954, marked the end of the French presence in Indochina (Laos, Cambodia and Viet Nam).

There are no longer a few voices in France that are demanding the withdrawal of the nearly five thousand troops, which also has 22

helicopters, 290 armored vehicles, 380 logistics vehicles and 240 LAV-25 (infantry fighting vehicle) to a daily cost of around one million euros, which, despite the support of the United States, the United Kingdom and other nations of the European Union, do not find a way to cover up their failure and return home without being too noticeable.

That hecatomb of the Vietnamese jungle would precipitate the Algerian war of liberation, which would finally turn into a new and tragic defeat, accelerating France's gradual abandonment of the rest of its African colonies, which would end, now for good, the French colonial empire.

What could this new failure bring to France, since there are many economic interests that Paris maintains in Africa, beyond the political ones, which only serve to cover up the former. In fact, France has never lost a presence on the

continent even though its colonies formally ceased to be in the early 1960s. Since then, its presence on the continent has never waned, encouraging dictatorships and "democratic" governments. Corrupt and fighting, at any rate, popular and revolutionary processes , to maintain their system of looting the inexhaustible natural resources of the continent, particularly those related to hydrocarbons and minerals, such as lithium, uranium or coltan among many others.

So, although Paris never recognized what would be the ultimate goal to end its military presence in northern Mali, there are more and more problems that hold it to its old colony. With Operation Barkhane, in addition to categorically failing to control terrorism, it has been forced, or not so much forced, to replace the FAMa (Force armées Maliennes), given their inexperience and responsibility for war crimes and

massive human rights violations, not only against terrorists, but fundamentally against the civilian population.

in many areas, particularly on the border with Chad and Burkina Faso, in addition to carrying out police functions to control organized crime; to the self-defense forces created by the Sahelian communities; the separatist movements, particularly the Tuareg, which was the touchstone of this new reality; gendarmes and police who live thanks to extortion, traffickers of all kinds, cattle thieves, in addition to having to mediate, in the increasingly bloody clashes over access to land between the different tribes in the center of the country .

Faced with this panorama, the French government insists on denying it and continues affirming that the only objective of Operation Barkhane is "only to fight against armed terrorist groups (GAT)" which specifically are two, the al-Qaeda franchise known as Jamā'at nusrat al -islām wal-muslimīn or JNIM (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims or GISIM) and the one that responds to global Daesh known as Daesh of the Great Sahara, for which its strategy consists of extirpating the mujahideen, interrupting the flow of financing, much of it came from the Wahhabi monarchies of the Persian Gulf; suffocate their ability to attack and reduce their influence on the population to a minimum, creating economic alternatives, to counteract the presence of fundamentalists who are deeply rooted in the population in this matter.

France is at an iron crossroads, for its economic benefits it must maintain in the different governments of its influence, the corrupt and inefficient castes, associated with its looting policies, which have also had enough of violating all kinds of rights human beings to their peoples and on the other they know that it is impossible to defeat the mujahideen if they do not assume the responsibility of detonating that caste, so vital to their interests.

### The bounty cases

The French incursion into these territories, over the last few years, is increasingly perceived as an occupying force, instead of as an ally that comes to protect them from "jihadist" terror, and this feeling is accentuated the more stuck in the conflict seem to be the Barkhane , which makes their withdrawal more complex.

What was initially believed that its colonialist experience in the territory was going to be an advantage for Paris, since it knows the terrain and its populations, satisfying the most urgent needs of its G5-Sahel allies, the military force formed by the armies of Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad., the opposite has been the case.

Although Paris has maintained military cooperation with Chad and Niger since the 1960s, it seems not to have taken into account that, throughout the Cold War, its relations with Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania were at least distant, since these three nations seemed to be closer to Moscow, via Tripoli, than to the Western bloc, so once President George W. Bush launched his strenuous and useless "Global War on Terrorism" in 2001, Paris was impelled to revive its ties with the former colonies and particularly with those three former colonies that had been fractious at the time. The status of a former colonial power also fuels many demands in the Sahel. To which ten years later the preponderant role of France in the realization of the Libyan holocaust, since Colonel Gaddafi, with his pros and cons, was much more beloved than the Bush-Sarkozy-Cameron trident.

Given the results and actions of France in those territories, for many African politicians and intellectuals, the old metropolis would support the terrorist gangs to continue destabilizing those countries in an attempt to continue taking advantage of their weaknesses and in search of establishing a neo-colonialism in the Sahel, the coup last August in Mali, was nothing more than a clear sign of the

disillusionment that many Malians have for the ruling class.

There are not a few voices that accuse France of carrying out a dirty war in the Sahel, in which it hides not only its premeditated actions, but even its blunders. Recently, one of those "blunders" was revealed, which could have been made on Sunday, January 3, when in broad daylight, a meeting where a group of villagers were celebrating a wedding was attacked by helicopters belonging to Operation Barkhane. The massacre would have occurred in the village of Bounti, in the Mopti region, about 600 kilometers north of Bamako, the country's capital, which would have left at least twenty civilians dead. At the same time that the French commanders speak of an action within the framework of Operation Eclipse, which took place between January 2 and 20, in which a terrorist camp would have been located, where after the action some ten insurgents.

Given the difficult access to that area, since one of the main focuses of the war has been established there, there are only cross accusations between the villagers and the French and Malian authorities.

Other French versions speak of a combat aircraft patrol that "neutralized" dozens of terrorists, who had been detected after an intelligence operation that had lasted several days. According to the command of the Barkhane: "The information on a marriage does not coincide with the observations made".

The silence maintained by the authorities has further exacerbated the spirits of the citizens and after two weeks of silence , several hundred people have come out to demonstrate in Bamako, demanding a clarification of the Bounti case in search of an answer, which kindly It was given by the police with tear gas and baton blows.

It was learned that given the stagnation of the situation, French President Emmanuel Macron, who understands as a partial success of his men and the arrival of some military contingents from the

European Union, announced an "adjustment" to the presence of his forces in the Sahel, which will be resolved at the next joint summit between France and the G5-Sahel, which will take place in Chad's capital N'Djamena next month, some sources believe that the partial withdrawal could take place as of mid-February.

Macron faces the possibility of renewing his mandate next year, so there is no doubt that he will do everything possible to hide the failure.

Image Source:

[https://www.armyrecognition.com/images/stories/news/2020/january/Operation\\_Barkhane\\_assessment\\_of\\_operations\\_2019\\_against\\_Islamist\\_terrorists.jpg](https://www.armyrecognition.com/images/stories/news/2020/january/Operation_Barkhane_assessment_of_operations_2019_against_Islamist_terrorists.jpg)

**Guadi Calvo**

(Argentina) Argentine writer and journalist. International Analyst specialized in Africa, Middle East and Central Asia.



**fuerzasmilitares.org**  
el portal militar colombiano

# Burma, cared for by its real owners

By Guadi Calvo (Argentina)



*The deposed Aung San Suu Kyi (left), and coup leader Min Aung Hlaing (right).*

With the excuse that the Burmese presidential elections on November 8 were fraudulent since the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party had won 396 of 476 seats in parliament against the 33 seats of the Union Party, Solidarity and Development, supported by the military. On the day that the new Parliament was to be formed, the powerful Tatmadaw , as the army is known, decided to disregard the electoral act and dissolve the always weak democracy in the country, in the last hours of Sunday, January 31, arresting its main figures, assume the government and declare a "state of emergency" for one year, when they would call elections again.

Among those detained is the main political figure in the country and the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, who was serving as a State Counselor, although she was in fact the head of the government.

Naypyidaw, the capital of the country, is practically paralyzed, barricades have been established

on the main avenues and military vehicles have been parked. Banks are closed across the country, while endless queues have formed in front of ATMs. Although the internet service was inoperable during the first hours of the coup, at the beginning of Monday, it was restored and many Burmese were able to access a statement circulating on social media by Aung San Suu Kyi , which she broadcast before she was arrested, calling on citizens to resist the military coup, although the veracity of the message is in doubt.

After ten years of a democratic process, always coerced by the absolute military power, what many considered impossible, happened, and despite the fact that last Saturday the 30th the chief of the General Staff, Min Aung Hlaing , had promised to respect the Constitution, the army stormed into power after a week of heightened political tension between the Tatmadaw and the ruling party, which had actually been going on for several months. The trigger for

the coup would have been the rejection of the accusations of fraud presented by the army, by the "Electoral Commission" last Friday the 29th, where it said that about 8.5 million voters would have had the opportunity to vote on several occasions. According to some observers, the commission's refusal would have humiliated the military, who have maintained tight control throughout democratic times with the power to veto any constitutional reform, and 25 percent of the seats in the Parliament.

Some analysts refuse to call the military uprising a "coup d'état" and limit themselves to calling it simply a "coup", given the "emergency power" granted to them by the constitution, which is why in reality it is still in force, although the arrests of NLD leaders, opposition leaders, candidates elected in November, the current leaders of the student movements and even many who had been in the past and grassroots militants, continue to be produced constantly and for nothing "constitutional rights", for fear that

mobilizations and protests will be called. In the last military coup in 1988, the demonstrations led by students left more than 10,000 dead, obviously the vast majority of them young university students.

The Tatmadaw had many points of confrontation with the NLD, which were based, fundamentally, on the constitutional reform, which threatened to remove important attributes from the armed forces such as control of key industries and the right to appoint a significant number of representatives in parliament. The peace talks that were taking place between the national authorities with an important spectrum of armed organizations , which include nationalist , Marxist, ethnic, separatist and religious claims and, last but not least, is that the General Min Aung Hlaing , in office since 2011 and who should go into retirement in six months, which would force a profound renewal within the armed forces.

The army has removed President U Win Myint and appointed in charge of the executive on a provisional basis, to the vice president, until Sunday night, U Myint Swe , a retired general, who must order the transfer of power.

Different governments, including the United States and Australia, and international entities such as the United Nations have come out to demand that the new Burmese power roll back its actions, in addition to avoiding the repetition of the violent repressions with thousands of deaths with which the Tatmadaw has cemented do your story.

### **The Tatmadaw and his circumstances**

The Tatmadaw has been built in the style of the Pakistani army, as a

state within the state, where not only firepower, security agencies, a key player in politics, but also an important economic factor, converge. since it manages several important national industries. Therefore, after learning of the military coup, US President Joe Biden and his Secretary of State, Antony Blinken , will have to face their first important test at the international level, and they have demanded the solidarity of the world community, to box up the military, so that the South Asian country can return to "normality", when that country from 1962 to 2011 lived under dictatorial governments, supported by Washington.

In addition, Biden announced to the new Naypyidaw authorities that if they did not back down, they would reapply the economic sanctions that had been lifted in October 2016, after establishing a democratic government, although he maintained sanctions against some military chiefs of the country.

Although Nobel laureate and shadowy head of government Suu Kyi , was considered a guarantee of political correctness and a champion of Human Rights, it was under her government that the Rohingya people , the Muslim minority living in the Rakhine state , were going to live their darkest hour, although that ethnic group already for 2015 , had just over one million 200 thousand members, many, in successive extermination campaigns, had had to flee their country, to take refuge mainly in Bangladesh.

Historically, the different governments of Naypyidaw have considered the Rohingyas as foreigners and they have never been recognized any kind of rights, for which they have been customarily persecuted by the Burmese authorities.

The country with almost 55 million inhabitants, of which 90% are Buddhists of the violent Theravada school, whose members group in organizations such as Ma Ba Tha (Patriotic Association of Myanmar (Burma)) and the 969 Movement, which allude to the nine attributes of the Buddha, the six attributes of his teachings, and the nine attributes of the order, led by the fearsome monk Ashin Wirathu , a fundamentalist fanatic, who has not hesitated to encourage his followers to participate, together with the police and the Tatmadaw , in veritable pogroms against the small Rohingya villages , where, in addition to destroying their plantations, burning down their houses, in many cases torturing and murdering men and raping women, for which these communities were forced to abandon their lands and seek shelter in Bangladesh , where refugee camps had already been installed for decades, becoming, currently, about a million and a half, and less than 500 thousand remain in Burma, where they continue to be martyred according to the political needs of the government. In this context, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi has validated and supported every operation of his military partners against the Muslim minority, without listening to international criticism and even threats that the Swedish award would be withdrawn.

Suu 's Responsibilities Kyi, not only do they end the Rohingya issue, but they also have imprisoned more than 600 political activists. Although his party had promised in 2016 to define the term "political prisoner" and review each case, what was not fulfilled and as far as is known, will now be impossible, since Burma has once again been cared for by its true owners.

# Arauca a prosperous border

By Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Díaz, Brigadier General Rva (Colombia)



## Generalities

The department of Arauca before the Spanish conquest was inhabited by the Araucas , Yaruros , Chinatos , Betyos , Giraras, Tunebos, Airicos , Macaguanes , Eles , Lipas, Guahíbos , Achaguas , Cuibas , Chiricoas , Lucalias , Piapocos, Maipures and Cuiotos tribes . In 1536, the German conquerors Nicolás de Federman and Jorge de Espira arrived in this area, passing through the eastern mountain range; Later, around 1659, the Jesuit missions of Francisco Jimeno, Francisco Álvarez and Antonio Monteverde arrived, who advanced towards the lands of the Guahíbo , Tunebo , Airico and Chiricoa tribes , where they founded new populations. In the 18th century, Viceroy Pedro Mesía de la Zerda expelled the Jesuits, who were replaced in their evangelizing mission by the Augustinian Recollects, who founded new catechist centers.

In 1781, a community movement concentrated in Tame, which, with Fray Ignacio Mariño, emerged as a subversive group against Spanish rule. Mariño signs

the Act of Independence of the province of Tunja on December 10, 1813 and by 1816 the town of Arauca temporarily became the capital of New Granada, with Fernando Serrano as president. At that time, General Francisco de Paula Santander returned to Tame after his campaign in Venezuela, where he established his headquarters; Later, General Simón Bolívar arrived in Arauca on June 4, 1819 and Tame on June 11, to continue the march on the 16th of that month towards Pore, where Santander's army joined the Liberator's. This expedition continues its march until reaching victory in the Pantano de Vargas and in the Puente de Boyacá.

In the 19th century Arauca, whose name was derived from a regional bird called Arauco, belonged to the province of Casanare, which in 1819 became part of the Department of Boyacá of Gran Colombia. Then, in 1831 with the dissolution of Gran Colombia, Arauca continues to be part of the Casanare province. On November 5, 1910, Luis Felipe Laverde led a popular movement that forced the Arauca government to resign, in

protest at the marginalization of the region. Laverde managed to get the Colombian government to create the Arauca special police station in 1911, separating it from Boyacá and which had General Pedro León Acosta as its first president; being the city of Arauca the regional capital since that year. The discontent of the Araucanians arose due to the administrative errors of the local government and they rose again with Humberto Gómez at the head; As a result, on December 31, 1917, the independence of the territory was declared under the name of the Republic of Arauca.

Under the guidelines of the Political Constitution of 1991, the Government of Arauca has a cabinet made up of the governor, an advisory office, a contracting department, a departmental Treasury and a legal office. Similarly, thematic functions are delegated to 7 ministries: government and citizen security, institutional development, agricultural and sustainable development, physical infrastructure, finance and social development. In addition, 4 decentralized entities carry out

specific actions: Coldeportes, Idear (Development Institute), Empresa de Energía , and Cumare (Aqueduct, sewage and sanitation).

### Spatial structure

In addition, it is one of the 32 departments of Colombia, located in the extreme north of the Orinoquia region of the country. Its territory occupies an area of 23,818 km<sup>2</sup>, it is made up of three morphological groups: the Eastern Cordillera, the foothills and the alluvial plain. The Cordillera Oriental in the west, represents approximately one fifth of the departmental area; the piedmont area is made up of cones, alluvial fans and terraces of flat and inclined relief; finally, the alluvial plain that extends from the foothills to the limits with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Arauca is its capital and the other 6 municipalities that make up the department are Arauquita, Cravo Norte, Fortul, Puerto Rondón, Saravena and Tame. It also has a corregimiento and 77 Police inspections. The population in the department for 2015 is 262,318 inhabitants (DANE 2005 projection), of which 61% live in the municipal capitals and 39% in rural areas. This region, then, occupies a Mediterranean geographical position, far from the most important urban areas of Colombia and surrounded by jungle and savannah territories that make it difficult to access.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the geographical conditions of the department of Arauca present important spatial challenges for the Colombian Military Forces. On the one hand, it contains a combination of very steep mountainous areas, such as the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy, and on the other hand, the extensive eastern plains. Both environments represent access difficulties for military units, a situation that in turn has been used by guerrilla terrorists to hide behind this inhospitable territory. It is not surprising that the same area was used by Bolívar and Santander, as an access corridor, to surprise the Spanish battalions that

were sheltering in Boyacá and the Sabana de Bogotá.

### Physiographic conditions

The morphology of Arauca is made up of three orographic groups, the Eastern Cordillera, the foothills and the alluvial plain. The Eastern Cordillera on the border with Boyacá includes elevations from 500 m. in limits with the foothills, up to 5,380 m. in the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy; It is characterized by high mountains, moors covered by grasslands and frailejones, steep slopes, strongly dissected, and low slopes with sub-Andean forest .

Most of the Araucanian rivers are born in the foothills and the Eastern Cordillera, making their way in a west-east direction. In that region the rainfall is 1,500 mm, which is why it is the rainiest area of the department. The hydrography is formed by the Arauca, Casanare, Bojabá , Ele, Lipa, Cravo Norte, San Ignacio or Tame, Tocoragua , Cusay , Satocá , Tigre, Calafita , San Miguel, Capanaparo, Cinaruco , Limón, Banadía and Tocancia rivers . In addition, there are pipes, lagoons and estuaries. The entire river system drains west - east towards the Orinoco through the Arauca, Casanare, Tocoragua, Tame, Cravo Norte, Ele, Lipa, San Miguel and Negro - Cinaruco rivers.

The Arauca River rises in the Almorzadero paramo, with the name of Chitaga ; its length is approximately 1000 km. It receives its name from Arauca in the Sarare region and along its route it defines the limits with Venezuela, in a distance of 280 km. It is navigable in an extension of 750 km. In this hydrographic basin the Sacotá, Banadía, Royata rivers are born as sub-basins. and Calafitas and minor tributaries that run through different localities of the Sarare and Arauquita. They are providers of food sources and supplies for human consumption. The Casanare river basin rises in the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy, páramo de Canoa, in Boyacá, it has an approximate length of 300 km, being navigable 200 km, until it delivers its waters to the Meta river,

which runs through the department of Arauca in a length of 50 km, separating it from the Department of Vichada. The sub-basins of the Casanare River correspond to the slopes of the Tame, Cravo Norte, Ele, Lipa, Cusay and numerous streams. The two basins of the Department of Arauca belong to the Orinoco basin.

Regarding the physiography of the department, it can be concluded that despite being a rugged geography with high contrasts, ranging from the cold climate of the paramo, to the warm climate of the plains, it is a territory that must have a new vision regarding its progress. Beyond being considered the refuge of the FARC and ELN dissidents, this department should be seen as a promising region where the oil in its subsoil and the fertility of its soil should contribute to improving the conditions of its surroundings. of 300,000 inhabitants. Likewise, it is an area of opportunity to generate a bilateral economic dynamic with the country with which Colombia has the longest land border.

### Social aspects

According to DANE projections, the department of Arauca has a total population for the year 2015 of 262,315 inhabitants, of which 112,551 are children and adolescents between 0 and 17 years old, which represent 44.39% of the total population. In addition, it is evident that the concentration of the population is found in men, with approximately 6.3%, in children between 10 and 14 years old, while in women their percentage is given in 6.8% by concentration in girls with ages between the 10 and 14 years. Similarly, the infant mortality rate decreased, in relation to the total population for the year 2011, compared to previous years.

The total indigenous population of the department is estimated at 5,106 people as of 2014. In its territory there are 26 reserves in an area of 128,167 hectares, where seven indigenous peoples live: the Uwa , located in the eastern buttress, north of the eastern mountain range, against the

Nevado del Cocuy; the Betoyes community , on the banks of the Cravo river and in Tame; in addition, there are the indigenous Sikuani , Hitnú , Kuiba , Chiricoa and Piapoco. In addition, there is a significant presence of Afro-Colombian communities in the department, with some 9,285 people.

Now, with 95,493 inhabitants, the rural population represents 37.66% of the total population of the Department for the year 2014. The biggest problem of this population consists of the underdevelopment of the rural sector with respect to the urban sector, since they are more UBN indicators are critical, low coverage in all household public services, greater extreme poverty, low quality housing, difficult access roads, reduced quality of water for human consumption, greater insecurity, among others. Although the department of Arauca went from having 43% UBN in 1993 to 35.91% in 2005, it is an indicator above the national average, with the rural sector of Arauca being the most affected according to data from the 2005 Census of the DANE.

The health sector of the department of Arauca, since previous years has been affected by corruption, due to the autonomy of the UAESA, in which financial infeasibility was evidenced, due to high operating costs and oversizing of human resources. Then, due to the observance of these administrative shortcomings, during 2013 the current UAESA was affected by a forced intervention by the National Superintendence of Health, due to the continuity of mismanagement or administrative processes that were being developed.

### Economic environment

Arauca's economy is based mainly on oil exploitation and livestock and agricultural production. Livestock activity focuses on the breeding, rearing and fattening of cattle; its commercialization is directed towards Puerto López, Bucaramanga and Cúcuta. Agricultural production is mainly

intended to meet local demand; Among the crops, bananas, cocoa, traditional corn, cassava, mechanized dry-land rice, coffee, panela cane and beans stand out. The fishing of catfish, bocachico and cachama constitutes a line of certain importance; its production is distributed to Cúcuta, Bucaramanga, Ibagué, Cali and Bogotá DC

The sectoral composition of the department's GDP has also been changing. In 1990, the branch of economic activity made up of agriculture, forestry and fishing had a share at current prices of 12.25% and went to 26.99% in 2013 (gained 14.74 points in the period); On the other hand, oil lost 42.5 participation points, going from 80.89% to 38.39% in the same period. In addition, services, transport and trade gained importance. Arauca is a department that has not contributed much to the country's GDP. This represented for the year 2011 0.76% of the total national GDP, a fairly small percentage, likewise in the last 3 years there has been a decrease in GDP of 4.1%, demonstrating the low participation of its industries.

Oil is the most important economic activity in the department and has determined the rapid changes and the game of interests in the region. Through the exploration and exploitation contract, Ecopetrol has been developing the Caño Limón complex in the rural area of the municipality of Arauca, which geographically shares extensions with the districts of Todos Los Santos and Arauquita. By 2013, approximately 18% of the national oil was produced in Arauca, which represented for the department, according to the Comptroller General of the Republic, for the period 2000-2010 close to 1 trillion 79 billion pesos in royalties, from which 831 billion went to the department, 200 billion to the municipality of Arauca, 43 billion to Arauquita, 4 billion to Tame and 330 million to the municipality of Saravena.

It must be remembered that Arauca, Casanare and Meta, as a whole, receive 45.3% of the oil royalties. Frequently, these

resources have been diverted from their social investment purposes, that is, the mismanagement of royalties has been systematically manifested. On the other hand, the border situation of the department of Arauca should be mentioned, which in strategic terms has been a fundamental element for the implementation of the irregular armed groups in the department.

Arauca's road network has a total length of 955 km, of which 318 km correspond to national roads, 38% paved; while 637 km are departmental roads, 24% paved. The main national and departmental roads are Arauca-Yopal, Tame-Saravena and Cabuya-Tame-Arauca, respectively, which cross the department diagonally and cover an area of 243 km, 85% paved. The section that connects the departments of Casanare and Arauca to their capital, passing through Tame, is in good condition; a series of branches that lead to Saravena and Puerto Rondón are connected to it; From the municipality of Arauca there are 3 roads that lead to the center of the department, to Cravo Norte and to the Republic of Venezuela.

From the territorial point of view, the Arauca River constitutes the main geographical landmark that marks the border line, with a common area of plains, with elevations of barely 200 meters above sea level, flooded areas in the winter season. This area is crossed by a few rivers, among which the Arauca stands out, which, for a large part of its course, serves as a boundary between the two countries. It is a cattle territory par excellence and with abundant fishing fauna. It has two river axes of great importance: the Orinoco-Apure, which would connect this area and that of Táchira Norte de Santander with the Atlantic Ocean, and the Meta Orinoco, which would go to Puerto López.

As a conclusion of the geoeconomic factor, we can point out that the high dependence on the oil sector generates a protruding imbalance in the socioeconomic dynamics of the department. With the aggravating circumstance that, in the last two decades, the royalties

received by the territorial entities have been squandered, so that the communities have not received the benefits of this natural wealth. Additionally, infrastructure works have been presented more by national initiatives and social responsibility programs of the oil companies themselves than by local government entities. It is urgent then that in the new international scenario of a price of a barrel of oil below US\$50, the department strengthens the other lines of the economy, based on the agricultural production chains.

### **political structure**

The functions defined for the Government of Arauca, given their nature, correspond to development and prosperity activities, which are carried out within the legal framework defined by the Constitution and the laws. According to the Political Constitution of Colombia, the functions are: "Article 298. The departments have autonomy for the administration of sectional affairs and the planning and promotion of economic and social development within their territory in the terms established by the Constitution. The departments exercise administrative, coordination, complementary functions of municipal action, intermediation between the Nation and the Municipalities and provision of services determined by the Constitution and the laws." The administrative division of Arauca comprises 7 municipalities, thus: Arauca, Arauquita, Cravo Norte, Fortul, Puerto Rondón, Saravena and Tame.

The ELN's presence in Arauca took on great importance as of 1982, when the Domingo Lain front was formed as an armed structure, an aspect that, added to the important economic resources it obtained, gave it special weight in said armed organization. With the taking of Betoye in 1981, this front made its first appearance, later more notorious through the kidnapping of ranchers and the development of extortion against oil companies and contractors.

Currently, in addition to Domingo Lain, the companies Simacota, Pomares, Pedro Arturo Téllez, Elacio Barón and Alexis Villamizar, networks of militiamen, and the Adonay Ardila front in the Sierra Nevada del Cocuy are demonstrating in the department. The presence of the ELN has been diminished due to the increase in the presence of the self-defense groups, the continuous military operations against them, and as of 2006, due to the direct dispute it has had with the FARC.

The presence of the Farc in the department is historical, with the establishment of the Guadalupe-Salcedo front or 10. This irregular group expanded its presence after the decision to seize oil revenues, put pressure on local administrations and convert the porous border into a fortress. Added to the flow of oil money was the dispute over coca revenues, the strategic decision to expand their presence, and the challenge imposed by the self-defense groups. In this scenario, the mobile columns Reinel Méndez and Julio Mario Tavera and militia groups under the command of Germán Briceño, alias Grannobles, emerged, which make up a mini-bloc that extends towards Boyacá and Casanare, with the fronts 56, 28 and 38. After the signing of the peace agreement, the dissidences that are present throughout the department are still in force.

Similarly, the indigenous communities of Arauca have been affected by the development of the confrontation, with 13 victims of homicide during the years 2000 to 2010. The year 2003 is the most critical, when 3 events were recorded, all in Tame, which threw 7 victims. Two indigenous people were killed by unknown persons during the months of January and March and on May 13, as reported by the Cria, five indigenous people of the Betoye ( Guahibo ) ethnic group were murdered and twenty more kidnapped by an alleged self-defense group. The homicide of 4 indigenous people was presented in 2005, in Tame and Saravena, 2 of which were perpetrated by unknown persons, and the same number by

the FARC. Likewise, in March 2006, for not complying with the armed strike order issued by the guerrillas, Juan Ramírez Villamizar, former indigenous governor of the Makaguan de Caño Claro reservation (Arauca), was assassinated by the FARC as he was returning from Tame to his community.

Operation Nemesis in the year 2000 is the beginning of a strategy of the Public Force aimed at weakening and, as far as possible, expelling or substantially reducing the guerrilla force, through a sustained increase in the military capacity of the Public Force, which coincided with increased firepower and improved combat readiness. Faced with the asymmetry of the armed confrontation, the guerrillas opted for the systematic use of explosive devices and antipersonnel mines.

As a conclusion of the political factor, we have that the conditions of poverty, the low institutionality, the differences in political and economic models and the situation of the armed conflict, exacerbate the issues of precariousness, citizen follow-up and exclusion. economic and social. As part of the regional integration processes, infrastructure construction agendas have been proposed that allow the country to connect with its South American neighbors, such as multimodal transport systems, energy generation projects, service infrastructures, ICTs and international roads. ; however, Arauca, despite these potentialities, continues to maintain a condition of the periphery, disjointed from the national competitiveness networks.

### **Geostrategic conclusions**

The confluence of two important elements potentially hinders the work of the Colombian Military Forces in the department of Arauca. One is related to the border with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the other is related to the exploitation of oil in Arauca. With regard to Venezuela, it has been shown that this area of the border is used by the guerrillas to have camps in the territory of the

neighboring country, thereby neutralizing the actions of the Colombian Army; Similarly, the presence of oil companies creates the setting for extortion and plagiarism practices, developed both by members of the guerrilla and by criminal gangs.

Also, despite the advances with oil exploitation, the backwardness of the national and departmental infrastructure network is evident, which is characterized by its precariousness and by its dependence on the roads developed at the national level. It is important to note that, from some municipalities, such as Arauca and Saravena, it is more efficient to use the Venezuelan road infrastructure to travel to other regions of Colombia. This fact reflects the deficiency of the department's road network and, consequently, the degree of disconnection of Arauca with important reference markets for

products from the region, such as Bogotá and the north of the country. Therefore, this is a special opportunity to initiate joint operations between the military forces and government entities, in such a way that the road interconnection can be expanded within this territory.

Due to the foregoing, it is important to develop a containment strategy in the region, in such a way that the achievements made in terms of neutralizing the guerrilla groups are consolidated. Due to the characteristics of the region, related to the oil riches, the land suitable for agricultural activity and the distance from centers of government and control, the scenario is conducive to the proliferation of activities outside the law. Therefore, the presence of the Military Forces is essential in securing the region and restoring a relative order that allows the development of citizens and their

democratic participation. Likewise, as a way of guaranteeing the free will of the ancestral indigenous communities of the region.

Likewise, in association with the decentralized institutions of the national order and the programs of international agencies, the Armed Forces will be able to support the promotion of programs that structure economic activities that ensure the development and balanced progress of the area. This will be accompanied by the strengthening of local authorities, who, with the protection of the public force, will be able to restore the trust of citizens in democratic institutions. This strategy will be focused on the search for alternative development projects that limit dependence on the oil economy, in such a way that the equitable redistribution of wealth is promoted.

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Image Source:

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# Ethiopia in the mists of war

By Guadi Calvo (Argentina)



*Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia (left) Isaias Afwerki , President of Eritrea (right).*

Three months after the start of the conflict in Tigray, which continues to threaten the balkanization of Ethiopia, (See: Ethiopia: From an ethnic war to a regional conflict), hundreds of thousands of civilians continue to struggle in the uncertainty of a stalled war, that could restart at any time, while this instability is bringing them closer to a food crisis, as they experienced between 1983 and 1985, after a diabolical combination of drought and war, which caused nearly one and a half million deaths, 500 1,000 refugees and some 2 million internally displaced persons; which could be repeated if the Prime Minister of the country and Nobel Peace Prize 2019, Ahmed Abiy , does not reverse the critical situation, to which his armed forces, who were only going to "a police operation", have plunged the entire province of Tigray and its six million inhabitants.

Abiy, who had promised that there would be no civilian casualties in the conflict, at this time, despite the scant information, there is already talk of thousands of deaths and disappearances among

the local population. In addition, of the 100 thousand inhabitants, who have had to take refuge in Sudan, as a result of the "police operation". This has overwhelmed the capacity of the camps and hospitals financed both by Khartoum and by the different NGOs that operate in the area, such as those in Hamdayet, Village No. 8 and Um 's Rakuba, among others. It is estimated that the number of refugees would have been much higher had the safe passages not been blocked by Ethiopian and Eritrean forces, who are also operating in the conflict in support of Addis Ababa and who have occupied several Tigrayan villages since the beginning of the conflict, next to its border.

Both the federal forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), whose main leaders have already been arrested, accuse each other of massacres of civilians, such as the one in the city of Maïkadra , of about 40 thousand inhabitants, in the west of Tigray, where at the beginning of November, hundreds of civilian members of the Amhara ethnic

group were assassinated by blows of clubs and machetes, of which neither the number nor the force of the attack is still known. responsible for the slaughter. Although some versions point to members of the Samri group, the youth branch of the TPLF.

dispute, which has led Tigrayans to suspect the intention of the Abiy government to resolve this conflict and end the independence struggle in that province, dividing the region between the province of Amhara and Eritrea. Addis Ababa has done nothing to dispel these rumors, which is why Tigray's separatist spirits are increasingly reinforced with the passage of time and the actions of the central government.

While the armed confrontations seem to have reduced their intensity, their consequences will not be easy to control, both the refugees in Sudan and the internally displaced persons, a total of close to 4.5 million souls, are suffering from lack of food, which causes constant looting against the surrounding populations, added to sexual violence, suffered mainly by

women and minors, which there is no way to control, since it is the belligerent forces that carry it out; To which are added the crimes due to ethnic rivalries, all this turns the region into a real hell for civilians, of whom, according to Prime Minister Abiy , he continues to maintain "none have died". The shelling, including against the provincial capital Mekelle, has also devastated water supplies and hospital infrastructure in the fighting sector. These vectors, extremely difficult to measure since the restrictions imposed by Addis Ababa, make eighty percent of Tigray's territory inaccessible to both journalists and international observers, although some of the organizations, which were already operating in the area, As well as interviews with refugees in Sudan and analysis of satellite images, it results that the Ethiopian army has committed widespread and systematic war crimes and crimes against humanity against the civilian population. Although, it was known, that those who are acting the most viciously are the Eritrean forces and the Amhara militias.

For its part, the Regional Government of Tigray, in the middle of last January, warned that: "the fight would continue until the enemies are forced to leave the territory." At the same time, some reports speak of young Tigrinians leaving their homes to join the TPLF and continue with the woyane (rebellion, in Tigrinian).

### The Eritrean Factor

Although at the beginning of the Tigray war, the participation of the Eritrean army in the conflict was denied by Addis Ababa and Asmara, over the course of these three months, the evidence of that presence was overwhelmingly

accumulated. Both countries share a border of about 1,930 kilometers and a visceral hatred for the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which led the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, between 1998-2000, after decades of friction, and which left 125,000 dead. and 650 thousand displaced.

According to satellite images studied by the British DX Open Network, from November 24 to January 27, two of the four Eritrean refugee camps, Hitsats and Shimelba , where there were an estimated 25,000 people before the war, appear as "razed", almost ninety percent of the 800 structures erected by the UN, including a hospital, schools and hundreds of "homes", were destroyed. In the study of images, a military presence is also clearly detected, craters produced by bombardments and without the presence of the civilian population, which is believed, in the best of cases, to have been evacuated. Without their fate being known, official versions say that they have been transferred to the Adi camps. Harush and Mai Ayni, where humanitarian workers, would have better accessibility. If this transfer is not confirmed, it is presumable that the Eritrean refugees have been murdered by their own compatriots and others kidnapped and returned to Eritrea, where, without a doubt, a better end awaits them.

The Eritrean "collaboration" had been arranged between Prime Minister Abiy and President Isaias Afwerki, thus effectively becoming a fighting force as hundreds of special forces men, dispatched by Asmara, have engaged in combat against the TPLF in northern Ethiopia. This presence, not admitted by either of the two countries, obviously prevents the recognition of Eritrean casualties in

Tigray, which, although it is impossible to have an approximate number, has caused concern among the relatives of the soldiers who have not returned to their country.

Given the dictatorial government of President Isaias Afwerki, in power since 1993, has prevented the creation of control bodies so that the relatives of the military have nowhere to express their claims.

Military service in Eritrea, which can be extended for as long as the government considers, as there are recruits, can be under the flag indefinitely, without rights to anything, which has caused thousands of young people to flee abroad, some of them They are undoubtedly the ones who are missing today from the Hitsats and Shimelba camps .

Afwerki, who has always aspired to become a regional factotum, so Tigray is not the first war involving his country, his men have participated in different conflicts and wars such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Sudan.

It was for achieving a peace agreement for the 1998-2000 war that Abiy Ahmed, who, after taking office as Prime Minister in April 2018, entered into negotiations with Afwerki, which awarded him the Nobel Prize the following year. Although the TPLF never recognized the agreement, beginning the tension between Mekelle and Addis Ababa, which erupted last November.

According to reports, the entire armed forces of Eritrea are at Abiy's disposal, while the Ethiopian army can freely use the territories under Asmara's control, which has caused concern among the locals, who are increasingly lost. in the mists of war.

### Image Source:

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/ethiopian-premier-in-eritrea-to-discuss-regional-issues/1914767>

# Are there new winds over Yemen?

By Guadi Calvo (Argentina)



Saudi Arabian troops in Yemen.

Last Thursday the fourth, in his first speech as president of the United States, regarding guidelines on foreign policy, Joe Biden announced a remodeling, we will see how deep, regarding the relationship with the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, for which some Things could change in Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East.

The most relevant was the announcement of the possibility of reversing Donald Trump's decision, taken on the last day of his term, regarding the designation as a terrorist organization of the Shia organization Ansar-Allah (Supporters of God) more known as Houthi , after the name of its founder, assassinated in 2004, Hussein Badreddin al - Houthi . Mike Pompeo, Donald Trump's hallucinated Secretary of State, justified his boss's measure by blaming the Houthis for cross-border attacks and to dissuade the Republic of Iran from their "evil" activity, in the direction of Ansar-Allah . At the same time that a few weeks earlier, the Trump administration had lifted the designation of a terrorist group from the Chinese fundamentalist militia of the Uyghur ethnic group, Islamic

Movement of East Turkestan (MITO), responsible for hundreds of terrorist attacks both against the security forces of Beijing as against ordinary citizens, seeking to break up China's western Xinjiang autonomous region and establish an Islamic state.

In order to organize the Trumpist blunders in the Middle East, Biden has chosen veteran diplomat Timothy Lenderking, as special envoy to Yemen, to promote the "new" times that seem to be approaching on the Arabian Peninsula. Lenderking, a career diplomat has served, among other assignments, in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Morocco

The new US administration would reverse Trump's decision, precisely as a result of the humanitarian crisis, which has more than ten million people in a state of famine. Within this measure, and no less relevant, is the confirmation by the State Department of ceasing military support to Riyadh, for the continuation of its operations in Yemen.

All in all, Washington does not change its vision of the group, which it considers to be "reprehensible conduct" and specifies that its

action is fundamentally aimed at alleviating the consequences on the civilian population, that 80% of its almost 30 million inhabitants depend on the food and health assistance from international organizations and commercial imports to cover their main subsistence needs.

Trump, in his measure of January 19, had freed humanitarian aid organizations from that designation, in addition to the United Nations, the International Red Cross and exports of agricultural and health goods. Although those exceptions were not broad enough to cover the most critical needs of the Yemeni population.

The United Nations is trying to reactivate the peace talks, since in addition to the situation caused by the war, the country must also urgently face the pandemic, whose development has not been able to be evaluated given the war situation.

Although the White House's new attitude towards the conflict is encouraging, a resolution is still far away, which is why the Yemenis have received the information with extreme caution. And the actions in

consequence of Biden's first speech on international politics remain to be seen, since Tel-Aviv, the Jewish lobby in the United States and the big deals arranged between Trump and fundamentally Saudi Arabia, have enough room for maneuver to reverse Biden's intentions. Although in his speech he was categorical in saying: "This war has to end", and emphasizing that his commitment to ending all US support for Saudi Arabia's offensive operations in the war, including the sale of missiles high-precision guided aircraft, for use against Yemen. Although nothing was said about another of the great players in the war, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), since its support in the fight against al-Qaeda for the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen is key. Although, if the United States, it will prioritize its collaboration to stop the incursions into Saudi territory, of the deadly Yemeni drones, which have caused real havoc, such as the remembered attack of September 2019, on the Abqaiq and Khurais oil plants in the east of the kingdom, which made the world's financial markets temper.

Nothing is known about the position of the United Kingdom, regarding the restrictions that Biden could be imposing on Riyadh, since London, after the United States, is the main supplier of weapons to the Saudis and continued to sell them weapons despite the fact that the appeal court ruled in 2019 against it. Although it almost goes without saying that if Biden's move, if it were truly "sincere", neither the British nor the Saudis, who are desperately looking for a good excuse to abandon the war, without having to admit their failure, would hold their ground against to the State Department's change of course.

It is important to point out that when this war began in March 2015, the president of the United States was Barack Obama and his deputy Joe Biden, and then they did nothing to prevent the foreseeable

holocaust, which the Yemeni people are experiencing today and it was the Houthis who have borne the full weight of the resistance, in the war declared by Saudi Arabia, which has already caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, a humanitarian and health crisis unprecedented since the Second World War, which includes the largest outbreak of cholera ever recorded. In addition to the devastation of practically the entire infrastructure of the country.

### **How to end a long friendship?**

Yemen has been one more example of the close relationship between the United States and the different fundamentalist organizations, with which they have been able to use each other as well as in Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Syria and many other scenarios where they shared the same objectives. In the case of the war in Yemen, fundamentalist groups, fundamentally al-Qaeda, have become extremely entrenched in the south of the country, which have grown in the shadow and shelter of Washington, since the Houthis, strategic allies of Iran, represent a real brake on the main partners of the United States in the region: Saudi Arabia and the Zionist enclave, which illegally occupies Palestine, one of the fundamental reasons why the Trump-Pompeo duet designated them as a terrorist group, media that has just been reversed by Biden.

The very origin of the Ansar Allah movement lies in the need of the Yemenis, particularly the Shiites, to stop the expansion of the al-Qaeda khatibas (brigades) in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), in fact, Wahhabis, that had begun operating on the northern border of Yemen more than ten years ago, with the wink of Riyadh and tolerated by then President Abed Rabbuh Mansour Hadi and his predecessors established in Sanaa

and backed by the United States, Riyadh and Abu-Dhabi, until in September 2014, after the triumph of the Houthis, Mansour Hadi had to seek refuge in Saudi Arabia, giving him a pseudo legal support, for the start of the war in 2015.

Despite the fact that AQAP is considered one of the most extreme and brutal affiliates of the organization led by Ayman al-Zawahiri at a global level, the Ansar-Allah movement, it has managed to keep them at bay and confine them to the south of the country, from where they launch increasingly weak operations, despite the support of Abu Dhabi, through which North American support reached them, at least until January 20.

In July 2015, AQAP mujahideen collaborated with the military who remained loyal to Mansour Hadi and UAE troops backed by the United States to drive Houthis out of Aden, the country's main southern city, now under the control of a UAE-backed separatist group known as the Southern Transitional Council (STC, for its acronym in English), with which the United States will have to negotiate if it really intends to stabilize the region, in addition to neutralizing al-Qaeda, which will undoubtedly not accept the recommendations of its former partners, who say be carrying out operations in order to neutralize their actions, so it was known a few weeks ago that at the end of December the emir of AQAP, Khalid Batarfi, a tough veteran of Afghanistan and handed over to Riyadh, although no media outlet has been able to confirm the news. It was also known that in the same action in which Batarfi was arrested, his second Saad Atef al-Awlaki would have died. Perhaps the time has come once again for the United States to ditch an old partner. Something so dark and difficult to verify, not only for international observers, but for Biden himself.

Image Source:

<https://www.adhrb.org/2019/02/hrc40-written-statement-human-rights-and-the-war-in-yemen/>

# Cavalry in the Colombian Army

By Douglas Hernandez (Colombia)



Military ceremony at the Cavalry School, ESCAB, of the Colombian National Army.

The Colombian Cavalry employs four different types of armor: the EE-9 Cascavel, the EE-11 Urutú, the ASV M-1117 "Pegaso" and the MRAP RG-31 Nyala. All wheel drive vehicles, with off-road capability, albeit limited. Its best performance is obtained if the vehicles travel on the road.

The four models reviewed can be transported by the C-130 Hercules aircraft of the Colombian Air Force, or aircraft of greater capacity of allied Air Forces.

Of the four models, only the EE-11 Urutú has amphibious capacity, being able to float and propel itself in the water by its own means and with a minimum of preparation.

All vehicles in service can be embarked on the amphibious ships (BDA) that operate with the National Navy, and can be transported by these means to a coastal area and deposited on the beach by means of a ramp.

## Fire capacity of the Colombian Cavalry

The heaviest weapon that equips the armored Colombian Cavalry is the 90 mm EC-90 cannon. This is the Cockerill Mk.3 model manufactured under license in Brazil. These guns equip the Engesa EE-9 Cascavel reconnaissance armored vehicles.

Second, there are the .50-caliber M2HB machine guns, and the Mk19 40mm grenade launcher machine guns, which are mainly supplied to the ASV M-1117 and the Engesa EE-11 Urutú.

Then come the 7.62mm caliber machine guns. equipment in the different models, either integrated into the vehicles (and removable), or as equipment for the exploration squads.

Among the anti-tank support weapons are mainly the 106 mm Recoilless Rifles. M40A1 on M-462 Abir vehicles and Spike anti-tank missile launchers on HMMWV vehicle. There are also anti-tank sections that are mobilized by motorcycle, and more recently in ultralight vehicles of national manufacture called "Cobra".

For indirect fire support, each Cavalry Group Squadron has an 81mm Mortar Platoon. mounted on M-462 Abir or HMMWV trucks. They are normally long-range Soltam mortars.

## **The acquisition of the Tanks**

For several years it has been known that the Colombian Army has been interested in acquiring war tanks, however, this process has been very eventful and without results.

On the one hand, the lack of political decision in the Government has delayed the necessary acquisition. It seems to be a constant that Colombian leaders prefer to believe that in the event of an international conflict, their allies in the United States will send troops to support the Colombian Armed Forces, without understanding that in reality there is no guarantee that this will happen. On the other hand, within the technical commissions that have been set up at different times within the Colombian Army to carry out the corresponding studies, there has been no agreement on what the vehicle to acquire should be, and there have even been conflicts between groups that promote different interests. Finally, diplomatic relations have also had a negative influence, preventing the acquisition of war tanks. Such was the case when the Government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela pressured the Government of Rodríguez Zapatero in Spain to torpedo Colombia's acquisition of a batch of second-hand AMX-30E tanks, which were in good condition and would have allowed to Colombia to strengthen its cavalry.

Paradoxically, Colombia's relations with the United States have been of great help in modernizing the Armed Forces of the South American country, but at the same time they have resulted in the subordination of national interests to Washington's strategic interests. For example, at a certain moment the Colombian Government had the economic resources already reserved to acquire a batch of tanks, and after a series of meetings with high-level advisers sent by the Pentagon, Colombia redirected those resources and ended up buying another class of armored vehicles, specifically the M-1117s and LAV-IIIIs, both armed with .50 machine guns, which is hardly a deterrent in context.

It is clear that the acquisition of these armored models contributes to interoperability with the US Army, in addition to the fact that their purchase injected resources into the US economy. It is reiterative that, in any kind of exchange with Colombia, the Americans always end up getting the better part.

## **The delayed acquisition of Tanques and the Matamoros Group**

The acquisition of war tanks was considered a fact within the National Army, to the point that the unit that would receive them as endowment was created and activated in 2004. This is the "General Gustavo Matamoros D'Costa" Armored Cavalry Group, located in the town of Albania, on the La Guajira peninsula.

Later, when it became clear that the tanks would not arrive soon, several Cavalry Groups were ordered to send one of their Armored Squadrons to be added to the Matamoros Group, which was better equipped than any of the other Cavalry Groups in the country.

The Matamoros Group kept its title of "armored" despite not having tanks, which is why the word "medium" was added. In this way, the tactical unit destined to receive the first tanks that Colombia acquired is the "General Gustavo Matamoros D'Costa" Medium Armored Cavalry Group, which for now uses Cascavel and Urutú armored vehicles.

In January 2020, the Army's road safety companies, attached to the Meteor Plan, were grouped into a unit called the Light Cavalry Brigade. This circumstance means that the armored vehicles assigned to the Meteoro companies are now considered cavalry, a material that is quite heterogeneous.

## **Douglas Hernandez**

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## MEXICO

### Mexican Army

The Mexican Army is the land branch of the Mexican Armed Forces and reports to the Secretary of National Defense. It is in charge of defending the territory and national sovereignty, guaranteeing internal security and implementing the DN-III-E Plan in case of disasters.

Its Supreme Command, and the only one empowered to dispose of it, partially and totally, is the President of Mexico, who holds the title of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces; however, its administration and operation are the responsibility of the General Secretary of Defense. For this reason, it can at any time be coordinated with one of the other two branches of the armed forces, or any police authority, for the fulfillment of its general missions. Its members come from the voluntary military service and the national military service, which is also its reserve force. The army has about 215,000 men and women.



#### The Conflict Hypotheses

The Mexican Army has implemented three strategic plans called: **Plan DN-I**. - Designed to confront an enemy country or foreign force that invaded Mexico, a problem that, although it could arise, continues to be a remote possibility because Mexico is a country surrendered to the peace in accordance with the Estrada Doctrine of non-intervention in the affairs of other countries and the principle of Benito Juárez when he stated: "Among individuals as among nations, respect for the rights of others is peace"; the **DN-II Plan**. - The fight against the internal forces that undermine the stability of the institutions as at the present time when it is fighting drug trafficking head-on, which has drastically increased the visible military presence in several states of the country when carrying out tasks police routinely and the **DN-III Plan**. -which assists the civilian population in cases of natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes.

## **Subversive groups**

In 1994, the Mexican Army fought for 12 days against the subversive group called the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in the state of Chiapas. The EZLN was really a small and lightly armed guerrilla group compared to the size and resources of the Mexican army. In this conflict, the strongest confrontation was during January 3 and 4, 1994 in the municipality of Ocosingo. To avoid massacres, the president ordered a ceasefire and the EZLN was reduced to zones of just a few kilometers in the state of Chiapas. Although for years the EZLN has tried to be identified as an armed movement, there was never really any more fighting and the insurrection movement never expanded beyond the areas in which it was confined.



Military ceremony in the capital of the Republic of Mexico.

## **Humanitarian Missions**

Today, the main functions entrusted to the Mexican Army are, as has already been mentioned, the war against drug trafficking and aid to the population in the event of disasters (Plan DN-III-E). An example of the execution of Plan DN-III-E by the modern Mexican Army is the support that the Mexican Government gave the United States during the flooding of New Orleans, when the community kitchens of the Mexican Army traveled overland to New Orleans. Orleans to support several thousand victims, this being the first military-humanitarian incursion from Mexico to the United States. Similar missions have been carried out on several occasions by the Mexican Army to various countries in Latin America and Asia

The Mexican Army is the only army in Latin America that in more than three quarters of a century has not been the protagonist of a coup, attributed according to scholars, to the fact that its officers do not come from the oligarchic layers, but from the proletariat and social sectors. media. A recently introduced novelty is allowing women to participate in all areas of the army.

## **Combat of drug trafficking**

The war against drug trafficking officially launched on December 11, 2006, under the mandate of then President Felipe Calderón, was implemented to combat the high rates of violence and crime. The first actions consisted of doubling the salary of low-ranking Soldiers (Soldiers, Corporals, Sergeants); In addition to the deployment of Federal Police troops and elements of the Sedena in the most conflictive state of Michoacán at that time, causing reprisals by La Familia Michoacana. There was also a deployment of troops in the northern states of the country such as Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Durango, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Baja California. Delivering important blows to drug trafficking and organized crime in joint operations with the Federal Police and SEMAR, resulting in the rupture and confrontation between the drug cartels. What to date (February 2014) has

resulted in the arrest or death of almost all the great drug lords such as Joaquín Guzmán Loera, in addition to 225 soldiers, 51 marines, and 215 fallen Federal Police.

### Command Levels

The Mexican Army is organized through a hierarchical and vertical command structure, with four levels of command:

- 1st Supreme Command
- 2nd High Command
- 3rd Superior Commands
- 4th Unit Command

**Supreme Command:** It is deposited in the President of Mexico, who for this purpose, will have the name of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. It is exercised through the Secretary of National Defense. In the event of war or the movement of troops outside national territory, the Chief Executive must appoint a Commander to represent him in the Combat Force. Only the president will be able to dispose of all or part of the army. They are also exclusive powers of the head of the executive, to appoint the Secretary of Defense and the main officials of the administrative and operational organization chart of the army. Also, upon recommendation of the previous officials, he may designate the entire chain of command, as well as special units, which in the same way only he can create. In addition to the creation of new units, you will be able to determine modifications to the military division of the country.



The Secretary of National Defense, SEDENA, integrates the Army and the Air Force, and coordinates joint operations with the Secretary of the Navy, SEMAR.

**High Command:** Its only repository is the Secretary of National Defense, however, it is exercised with the respective functions of the main positions of the administrative and operational structure of the same secretariat. Being these:

1. National Defense General Staff.
2. Inspection and Comptroller General of the Army and Air Force.
3. Bodies of the War Court.
4. General Directorates of the Secretariat of National Defense.

The powers and responsibilities of the secretary are those expressly conferred on his office by article 29 of the Organic Law of the Federal Public Administration. Direct the training, programming and projection of all actions related to the possible use of military personnel for their main tasks (defense of the territory and national sovereignty, guarantee internal security and implement the DN-III-E Plan in case of disasters); organize military service; lead the army and air force in case of war; manage the labor relations and rights of civil and military personnel who work for the secretariat; run the country's military industry; inspect the construction and conservation, as well as dispose of all the military infrastructure required for the fulfillment of the primary obligations of the office, including advising on civil communication channels that have an eventual use for defense; advising other ministries when, in the exercise of their functions, national security is involved; appoint the officials of the military education and health systems; authorize the issuance of licenses for the carrying of firearms, and the manufacture, purchase and handling of dangerous substances or explosives.

The most relevant internal body, for military purposes, is the *National Defense General Staff*; It is the operational technical instrument, in charge of designing the plans, projects and programs aimed at establishing defense and national security strategies, military intelligence, internal security and collaboration of military personnel in disaster situations in the civilian population. This includes the organization, training, operation and development of the Armed Forces on land and in the air (The Navy depends on the Secretary of the Navy, SEMAR).

**Superior Commands:** The superior commands are divided into operational and services; the latter are the Commanders of the Logistics and Administrative Groups, that is, those who lead the units that meet specific needs in goods and services for army logistics. While the operatives are, in hierarchical order:

1. *The Commander of the Air Force.*
2. *Commanders of Military Regions.*
3. *Commanders of Military Zones.*
4. *Commanders of the Large Land or Air Units.*
5. *Commanders of Joint or Combined Units.*
6. *Commanders of the Circumstantial Units that the High Command determines to implement.*

**Unit Commands:** The unit commands are all those commanders designated for the operational troop groups that carry out specific missions or activities; being these: *Squad, Platoon, Section, Company, Grouping, Battalion, Regiment, Brigade, Division, Army Corps, Army in operations and Army Group.*



The Mexican Army has different armored vehicles, but not tanks, which is curious as Mexico is one of the largest economies in the world, as curious as the fact that its air force does not have modern fighters, and its navy does not have submarines.

### **Composition**

The Mexican Army is made up of organized, equipped and trained units for land military operations, and is made up of Arms and Services. Weapons are the components of the Mexican Army whose main mission is combat, which will be executed by each of them depending on how they combine weapons, the predominant way of moving, their shock power and way of working. The services are components of the Army whose main mission is to satisfy the needs of life and operation, through administrative and logistical support, forming organized, equipped and trained units for the development of these activities.

#### Weapons

1. *Infantry.*
2. *Cavalry.*
3. *Artillery.*
4. *Armored.*
5. *Engineers.*

#### Services

1. *Engineers.*
2. *Cartographic.*
3. *Transmissions.*
4. *War material.*
5. *Transportation.*
6. *Administration.*
7. *Intendancy.*
8. *Health.*
9. *Justice.*
10. *Veterinary and Trace.*
11. *Computer.*
12. *Meteorological.*



The presence of women in the different units and specialties is important in the Mexican Army .

#### Special Corps

The Special Corps of the Army are the organisms that are assigned missions, for the fulfillment of which their components must have specific knowledge and preparation for the management of the material means with which they are endowed and for the application of the corresponding technique or tactic. These are:

**1. Presidential Guards Corps:** Its mission is to guarantee the security of the President of the Republic, his residence and other related facilities, as well as to render him the corresponding honors alone or jointly with other Units. It must be coordinated at all times with the Presidential General Staff.

**2. Aerotropas Corps :** They are organized units, equipped and trained to carry out elite operations and in case of emergency, to be used in the search and rescue of personnel and material. They carry out direct and indirect action combat missions. Direct action operations are offensive operations and cover a wide spectrum of operations. Indirect operations are usually reconnaissance, aimed at obtaining

information. They operate on the basis of small groups, depending on the mission, with great autonomy. It is primarily made up of the Parachute Rifle Brigade and the Special Forces Corps.

**3. Military Police Corps:** It is the body dedicated to collaborating in the maintenance of order and the surveillance of compliance with laws, regulations and other military dispositions of a disciplinary nature, within the units, dependencies, installations and land areas belonging to the Army.

**4. Military Music Corps:** They are in charge of the organization, operation and administration of the Music Bands and Orchestras, which may form an organic part or be in reinforcement of the units or dependencies of the Army and Air Force.

**5. Rural Defense Corps:** Formed by volunteers and ejidatarios, its purpose is to safeguard, when required by regular troops, the security of their area.



Mexico has a very important number of HMMWV vehicles of US origin, in different versions.

#### Structure of the Units

- Squad: It is integrated with 3 troops and a Corporal.
- Platoon: It is made up of 2 squads and a Second Sergeant.
- Section: it is integrated with 3 Platoons and their Command.
- Company/Squadron/Battery: integrates with 3 Sections and their Command.
- Group: it is integrated with 2 Companies and their Command.
- Battalion/Regiment: 3 Companies, Staff and its Command are integrated.
- Brigade: it is integrated with 3 Battalions, Staff and Command.
- Independent Brigade: it is integrated with 3 Battalions, Artillery, General Staff and Headquarters.
- Division: made up of 2 or more brigades and/or regiments. Staff and Headquarters.
- Army Corps: made up of 2 or more divisions and/or independent brigades. Staff and Headquarters.

#### Staff and Services Company

- 1 Health Platoon;
- 1 Transmission Platoon;
- 1 Administration Platoon;
- 1 Quartermaster Platoon;
- 1 Platoon of War Material;
- 1 Transport Platoon.

Command Group: the group of organic personnel, immediate collaborator of the Command. Its mission is to transform its decisions into orders, ensuring their transmission.

SPAA, Section of Personnel, Supplies and Assistance;

SIIO, Information, Instruction and Operations Section;

Detail (Statistical Department of Administrative Processing of Books and Lists) is the file, parts and paperwork office of a military troop body.



Helicopter School for the Armed Forces of the Colombian Air Force.

The use of the army in police tasks occurs in Mexico due to the corruption present in the municipal and state police forces, and the fact that the organization and arming of the drug cartels exceeds the capacities of the police forces.

Under cooperation schemes against drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, Mexican officers have been training in Colombia as helicopter pilots, at the Helicopter School for the Armed Forces, attached to the Colombian Air Force, but which has support and funding of the United States of America, whose government donated a batch of 60 TH-67 Creek helicopters to Colombia, in 2019, to be used in the training of Colombian personnel, but also of allied countries.



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