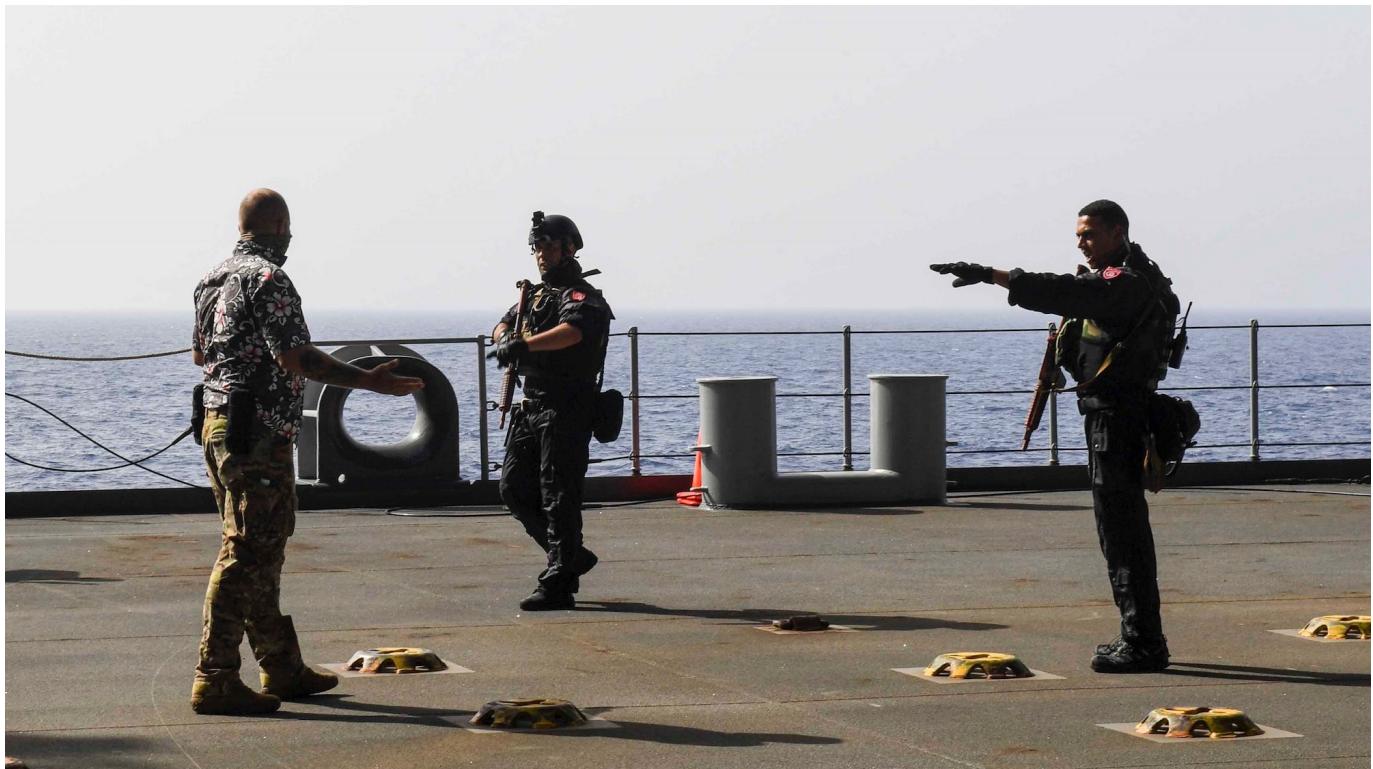


AFRICOM military's exercise: The art of creating new pretexts for propagating U.S. interests

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 7, 2021



Tunisian navy personnel aboard USS Hershel "Woody" Williams (ESB 4) on May 23 when the Phoenix Express 2021 was underway. Photo: AFRICOM

Phoenix Express 2021 (PE21), a 12-day U.S.-Africa Command (AFRICOM)-sponsored military exercise involving 13 states in the Mediterranean Sea, concluded on Friday, May 28. It had kicked off from the naval base in Tunis, Tunisia, on May 16. The drills in this exercise covered naval maneuvers across the stretch of the Mediterranean

Sea, including on the territorial waters of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania.

The regimes in these countries, which cover the entire northern and northwestern coastline of Africa, participated in the drill - one of the three regional maritime exercises conducted by the U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF). Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain were the European states that participated in the drill.

Among the heavyweights deployed in the exercises was the [U.S. navy's U.S.S Hershel "Woody" Williams \(ESB 4\)](#). The 784-feet-long warship is a mobile military base which "provides for accommodations for up to 250 personnel, a 52,000-square-foot flight deck.. and supports MH-53 and MH-60 helicopters with an option to support MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft," [according to the Woody Williams Foundation](#). "The platform has an aviation hangar and flight deck that include four operating spots capable of landing MV-22 and MH-53E equivalent helicopters."

When the warship entered into its maiden service with the U.S. navy in 2017, Capt. Scot Searles, strategic and theater sealift program manager at the Program Executive Office (PEO) Ships, [said](#), "The delivery of this ship marks an enhancement in the Navy's forward presence and ability to execute a variety of expeditionary warfare missions.

The [Algerian National Navy frigate El Moudamir \(F911\)](#), [Egyptian Navy frigate Toushka \(F906\)](#) and [Royal Moroccan Navy multi-mission frigate Sultan Moulay Ismail \(FF 614\)](#) were also [part](#) of PE21, bringing with them a range weapon systems including surface-to-surface and surface to air missiles, torpedo launchers, heavy naval guns and naval radars.

According to a [press release](#) by the U.S. navy, the purpose of this exercise was to test the ability of the participants "to respond to irregular migration and combat

illicit trafficking and the movement of illegal goods and materials."

Smugglers moving goods across the border also illicitly traffic migrants fleeing war or economic crisis in their home countries. AFRICOM has on multiple occasions acknowledged that instability in Libya is the driving force behind the migration crisis.

Who is destabilizing the region?

While ['Russian intervention' is blamed](#) for the instability in Libya, [AFRICOM played a key military role in the Libyan war](#) in 2012, deposing Muammar Gaddafi, who was a staunch opponent of expanding U.S. military footprint in the region, with the help of radical Islamist organizations. With the exception of Algeria, all the other north African states which participated in PE21 had supported this war in Libya, which has led to mass distress migration.

Many Islamist organizations which emerged amid the anarchy caused by the war were also used by the U.S. and its allies in the Syrian war in a bid to overthrow president Bashar al-Assad, triggering another major wave of destabilization and migration.

Noting that "Syrians.. have (also) entered Libya from neighboring Arab states seeking onward transit to refuge in Europe and beyond," a [U.S. Congressional Research Service report](#) states: "The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that nearly 654,000 migrants are in Libya, alongside more than 401,000 internally displaced persons and more than 48,000 refugees and asylum seekers from other countries identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)."

The report in 2020 acknowledged that with "human trafficking and migrant smuggling.. trade has all but collapsed compared with the pre-2018 period."

This migration wave, caused in no small part by AFRICOM-coordinated military interventions in Libya, has since been purported as a reason for further militarization of the region through such exercises as PE21 sponsored by AFRICOM.

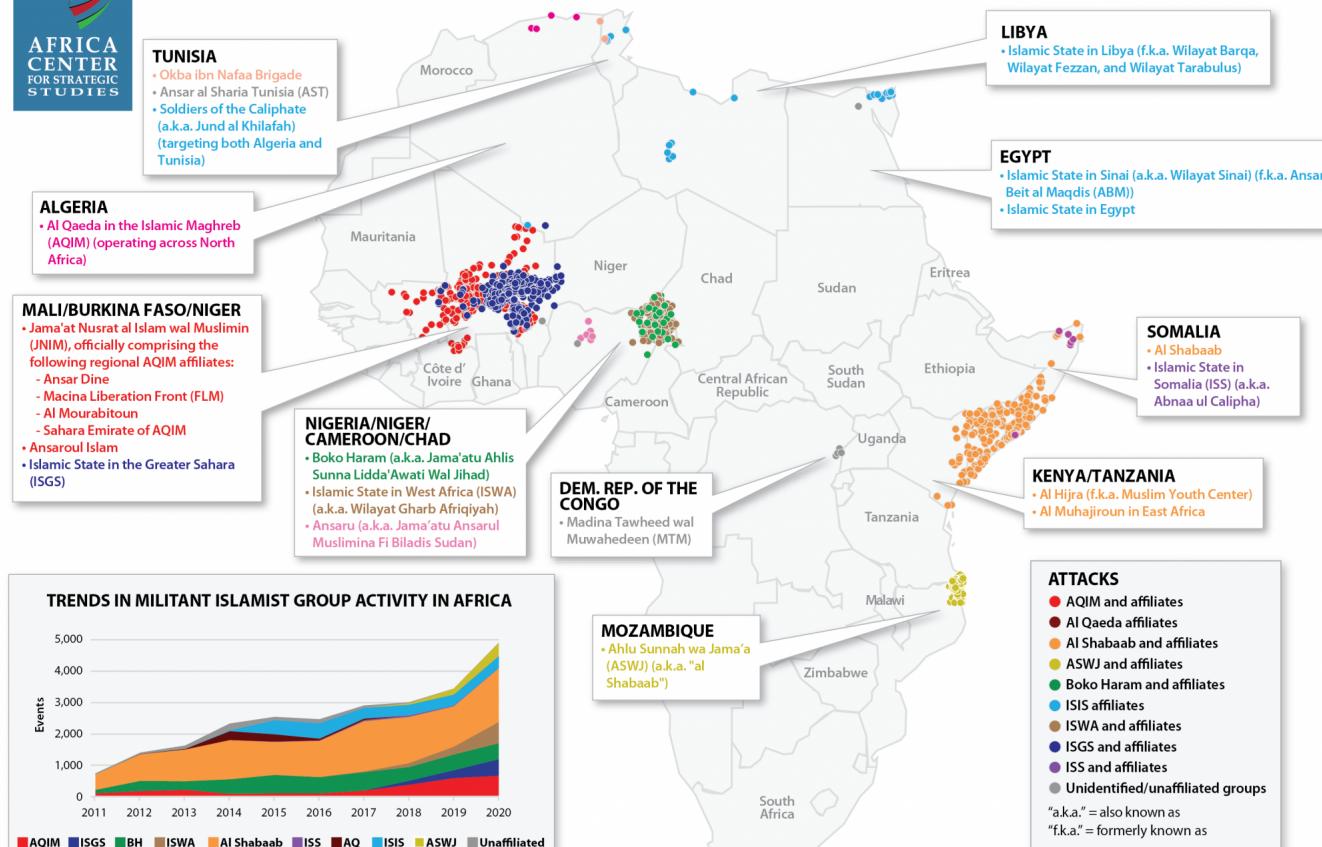
The hysteria surrounding migration whipped up by right-wing parties has provided politically fertile ground for the U.S. to mobilize state militaries for such drills. This is despite a fall in undocumented migration.

The need to respond to 'irregular migration' with warships is one of the official pretexts which, like the 'war on terror', has been used to further the militarization of Africa through AFRICOM since it was established in 2007.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding the fact that the main cause behind the explosion of terrorist organizations in the region was the 2011 Libyan war in which AFRICOM itself was an aggressor, it continues to be portrayed as a bulwark against terrorist organizations. Its operations in Africa over the last decade, including hundreds of drone strikes, correlate with a [500%](#) spike in incidents of violence attributed to Islamist terrorist organizations.



AFRICA'S ACTIVE MILITANT ISLAMIST GROUPS



Updated: February 2021

Note: Compiled by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, this graphic shows violent events involving the listed groups over the 12-month period ending December 31, 2020. Data on attacks or fatalities does not attempt to distinguish the perpetrators of the events. Group listings are intended for informational purposes only and should not be considered official designations. Due to the fluid nature of many groups, the listed affiliations may change.

Sources: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED); Daniel Byman; HumAngle; Thomas Joscelyn; SITE Intelligence Group; The Soufan Group; Stanford University's Mapping Militants Project; Stratfor; Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium (TRAC); and Aaron Y. Zelin.

Credit: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, U.S. Department of Defense

The Chinese boogeyman

Another justification given by the U.S. for AFRICOM is the perception of a growing Chinese influence. “Chinese are outmaneuvering the U.S. in select countries in Africa,” General Stephen Townsend, commander of AFRICOM, [told Associated Press](#) late in April, less than three weeks before the start of PE21.

He went on to claim that the Chinese are “looking for a place where they can rearm

and repair warships. That becomes militarily useful in conflict. They're a long way toward establishing that in Djibouti. Now they're casting their gaze to the Atlantic coast and wanting to get such a base there."

Calling out the lack of credibility of this claim, Eric Olander, a veteran journalist and co-founder of *The China-Africa Project*, [wrote](#): "The Chinese are looking for a base but he doesn't provide any specifics or any evidence to back up the claim. Again, we've heard this before... for years in fact. For all we know the general doesn't have any more refined intelligence than the same speculation that's been floating around African social media all these years about a new Chinese base in [Namibia](#) or was it [Kenya](#) or maybe [Angola](#)?"

Townsend also pointed to the Chinese investments in several development projects in Africa. "Port projects, economic endeavors, infrastructure and their agreements and contracts will lead to greater access in the future. They are hedging their bets and making big bets on Africa," he claimed.

This has been disputed by Deborah Bräutigam, director of the China Africa Research Initiative at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, who [concluded](#) that China's economic engagements in Africa are not of a predatory nature.

Bräutigam argues that Chinese economic engagements on the continent are very much in line with the economic interests of these African states, providing jobs to locals and improving public infrastructure.

Neither the concocted threat of Chinese domination of Africa, nor terrorism and irregular migration add up to the *raison d'etre* of AFRICOM. As former AFRICOM commander Thomas Waldhauser [explained to the House Armed Services Committee](#) in 2018, the purpose of AFRICOM is to enable military intervention to propagate "U.S. interests" across the continent, "without creating the optic that U. S. Africa Command is militarizing Africa." However, the 5,000 U.S. military personnel and

1,000 odd Pentagon employees deployed across a network of [29 bases](#) of AFRICOM in north, east, west and central Africa present a different picture.

AFRICOM has its headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, which sponsored PE21. While this exercise was still underway, [preparations for African Lion 21, Africa's largest military exercise, had already begun](#).

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)



Puerto Rico unions close ranks against LUMA Energy

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 7, 2021

June 1 — Union organizations today warned Gov. Pedro Pierluisi and the Financial Oversight and Management Board that they will paralyze the country if the LUMA Energy contract that increases rates, allows the consortium to leave Puerto Rico if a hurricane strikes, and displaces thousands of workers, is not canceled.

"We are warning the attorney for the Financial Oversight and Management Board, Pedro Pierluisi, that there will be no peace in Puerto Rico if the contract is not repealed and they listen to the people who demand, not only a public and more efficient Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), but also one free of fossil fuels.

"Right now there is a favorable atmosphere for paralyzing the country and if the governor continues to ignore the people, we will do so. We have already held several meetings to coordinate logistics and dates, and this week we will meet again to finalize details. Make no mistake, this summer will be one very similar to that of 2019," said Carlos Rodríguez, coordinator of the Frente Amplio de Camioneros (Broad Front of Truckers).

"Today, we tell LUMA not to bother settling in our country since we will not leave them alone until they leave Puerto Rico. And the workers who they intend to bring in from abroad should know that if they cross the picket line, they will face a people willing to defend their energy sovereignty and their access to water. There is no life without water and electricity!

"In the next few days we will not only be in front of the gates together with our comrades in struggle to prevent the entry of the LUMA parasites, but we will continue calling for activities that will lead to a National Strike if the intransigent Pierluisi does not stop the contract. The ball is in their court," stressed María del Mar Rosa, organizational coordinator of the Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios (Puerto Rican University Professors Association).

The spokespersons insisted that the governor wants to deprive the people of Puerto Rico of their main resource for economic development, the Electric Power Authority, to give it up to LUMA Energy for nothing and without any guarantee for the country, and they will not allow it.

"We are not going to allow our main industry to be taken from us and even more so, knowing that the people will be the ones who will pay the consequences. To this must also be added the humiliating and abusive way in which they have treated the workers of the corporation, stripping them of their positions and rights and even the possibility of attending to the service needs of citizens.

"In the same way, we express our total and unconditional solidarity to the Alliance of Active Employees and Retirees, who have been bulldozed, abused, humiliated, and belittled by the government of Pedro Pierluisi and the dictatorship that governs the country," she added.

The group reiterated its support and solidarity with the PREPA employees who have been transferred, to whom they advised to keep their calm.

"This will be something temporary. We have lived through very difficult times, but we have also shown that the struggle of the people of Puerto Rico is our most effective tool; if the people removed a governor, they may have the will to remove all the vultures that invade our country.

"We reiterate our support, solidarity and the commitment to make sure that LUMA's days are numbered," stated Antonio Cabán, president of the Federación Central de Trabajadores (Central Federation of Workers), Local 481/UFCW.

Union leaders maintained that they will fight alongside the Active Employees Alliance and the people to oust LUMA Energy from the country.

"The so-called rulers should have no doubt that they will have an effective response from the working people. We are not sitting by, nor are we going to do so.

"You, arbitrarily, have closed the doors to dialogue, you have closed the doors to the search for equitable solutions in the courts of justice, you have legislated to undermine our rights, you have done everything you can to guarantee their

domination. Now, face the consequences. You drew the line. We know how to cross it," said Lizbeth Mercado, president of the Unión de Empleados de la Corporación del Fondo del Seguro del Estado (Union of the State Insurance Fund Corporation).

Signing organizations: Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), UNETE, Central Puertorriqueña de Trabajadores, Movimiento Solidario Sindical, Federación Central de Trabajadores Local 481/UFCW, Prosol-UTIER, Asociación Puertorriqueña de Profesores Universitarios, Sindicato Puertorriqueño de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras, EDUCAMOS, Frente Amplio de Camioneros, Hermandad de Empleados Exentos no Docentes (Heend), Federación Puertorriqueña de Trabajadores, UIASAL, UITA, Unión de Empleados de la Corporación del Fondo del Seguro del Estado, UASAL, UAASL, USW and HEOAMA.

<https://www.facebook.com/PrimerodeMayoPR/videos/314846860121702/>



Germany must pay reparations to

Africa

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 7, 2021

May 31 — Members of the December 12th Movement held a news conference today in front of the German mission to the United Nations in New York City to demand reparations for Namibia.

“From 1904 to 1908, the German colonial army murdered 75,000 of the Herrero and Nama inhabitants of what is present-day Namibia in South West Africa,” declared Roger Wareham, a member of the D12 International Secretariat.

“Last week, after over a century of denial, Germany formally admitted its genocide,” said Wareham. “We are here today, as Malcolm X often said, to ‘make it plain.’ Germany must pay reparations.”

The people of Namibia fought for decades to win independence from the apartheid regime then existing in South Africa. The South West African People’s Organization — now known as the SWAPO Party — led this heroic armed struggle.

The late Pan-African teacher and organizer Elombe Brath, a co-founder of the December 12th Movement, worked closely with SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma.

While South Africa took over Namibia following World War I, the German colonists remained. Some white shopkeepers in Namibia’s capital of Windhoek would close their stores on April 20, Hitler’s birthday.

One of the German colonial governors of Namibia was Heinrich Göring, whose son Hermann Göring was the No. 2 Nazi and the No. 1 war criminal at the Nuremberg trials.

Roger Wareham, who as a lawyer has initiated several suits for reparations, pointed out the connection: "We also must note that the genocide which the Germans had perfected by the Holocaust had its beginnings in South West Africa, where they hanged and shot thousands of Africans, forced thousands more into the desert without supplies while poisoning the existing waterholes, and made thousands die in concentration camps.

"The Germans admit that they drew on the United States' historically criminal mistreatment of its Indigenous peoples and its enslaved Africans in developing their genocide campaigns. Africans on both sides of the Atlantic have faced the devastation of white supremacist genocidal government action.

"Ironically, today, May 31, marks the 100th anniversary of the extermination of the Black community in Tulsa, Okla., which was popularly known as 'Black Wall Street,'" noted Wareham.

Also speaking was Bill Dores, from Struggle for Socialism-La Lucha por el Socialismo newspaper. He said that he was honored to be there and demanded that Germany and all the other colonial powers must pay reparations.

Dores pointed out that Germany's Deutsche Bank that plundered Namibia also helped finance Donald Trump. "If debts are supposed to be sacred," said Dores, "then reparations have to be paid for Namibia, Tulsa and all the other crimes. There's no justice without debts being paid."

The rally ended with the chant, "Germany must pay! Reparations now!"

As the December 12th Movement says, "They stole us, they sold us, they owe us!"



'No limits': U.S.-Greek military ties threaten region

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 7, 2021

Presentation at online forum "The New U.S. Aggression, Turkish-Greek Relations and the Popular Movement," hosted by Coordination of Action and Dialogue between Communist Forces on May 9, 2021.

This year's commemoration of the Nazi's defeat by the anti-fascist struggle of the people is increasingly important, because U.S. imperialism is again recruiting its reactionary-fascist proxies as part of a new phase of aggression.

Among other things, the aggression takes place through the escalation of military intervention in Europe to restore the doctrine of imperialist encirclement of Russia. The primary aim is restricting Russian Gazprom's pipeline (Nord Stream 2), unipolar control of Europe's energy market by U.S. transnational companies, and the gradual conquest of former Soviet markets.

In this context, the strengthening of the U.S. presence in the southeast section of NATO is particularly important.

When Russia incorporated Crimea in response to pogroms following the Maidan coup in Ukraine, the U.S. strengthened NATO's eastern and central wing, sending heavy weapons to the Baltic countries, Germany and Bulgaria, and launching North Macedonia's accession in the Euro-Atlantic bloc.

The restriction of intervention in Europe by the Trump administration, because of other priorities such as the escalation against Iran, led the southern strategy to be held back, as NATO's deputy secretary acknowledged in 2019.

On the other hand, one of Biden's first moves was to renew the U.S. commitment to NATO at the Munich Conference and to extend the alliance to the former Soviet area, namely Ukraine and Georgia. (["NATO 2030: United for a New Era"](#))

Growing U.S. presence

In the eastern Mediterranean, we have a gradual and growing U.S. presence.

Turkey, despite tensions with the U.S., remains an (undisciplined) NATO agent in the region.

According to an article of the Atlantic Council, the regional potential of Turkey could be exploited by the Euro-Atlantic bloc. The article urges Ukraine to copy how Turkey restricted Russia in Nagorno-Karabakh, where Moscow was forced to accept a NATO country as a watchdog in the former Soviet territories.

In Syria, the U.S. military and mercenaries organize the pillaging of Syrian oil together with Kurdish militias. They do so while giving the appearance of no longer supporting right-wing Islamist factions, leaving this role to Turkey, which imposed a control zone on Syria.

The U.S. plans to build a NATO center on the Black Sea, where Turkey has a role as the regulator of military transit (under the Montreux Convention). The Erdogan administration uses this as a bargaining chip with the West.

The Turkish government also entered into agreements with the Ukrainian regime concerning drone sales, the establishment of the Crimean Platform, and according to reports, the transportation of pro-Turkish mercenaries from Syria to Ukraine. Let's not forget that Turkey has a special relationship with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)-funded Tatar movements, which supported the Maidan fascist coup.

Similarly, in 2014, former Chechen battalions and ISIS terrorists fought by the side of Ukraine's Right Sector, using U.S. weapons.

'No limits' to U.S.-Greek military relationship

In Greece, the U.S. presence takes place in two ways.

First, through the ExxonMobil-Total-Hellenic Oil cartel and what this promises for a status upgrade for the Greek bourgeoisie. Even though Greek capitalists do not take the lion's share.

At the same time, the Greek-Egyptian-Israeli alliance is planned, along with the Ukrainian "Naftogaz" in the Black Sea, as a gas gateway to Europe, against Russia's Gazprom.

There are a number of traps behind this. It is not at present a question of environmental costs. I'll say only that according to ExxonMobil's leaked documents, the company plans to increase its annual carbon dioxide emissions with the aim of doubling its profits by 2025.

We've had the largest U.S. troop landing since the Cold War during the Defender

Europe 2021 military exercise. Thousands of troops and military resources from 26 countries are moving to the Black Sea, based from the port of Alexandroupolis, in a literal war rehearsal against Russia.

Greece is participating in this exercise together with Turkey, and I clarify this so that we do not have any illusion that the U.S. presence has anything to do with defense of the country.

We recently had the Iniohos Exercise, during which the Greek air force was flying with planes from the U.S., Israel, United Arab Emirates, France, Spain and Cyprus, with the aim of gathering forces in the eastern Mediterranean region and restricting Russia to the south.

Between April 19-23, on the upgraded military base of Souda in Crete, training of snipers from Greece, Belgium, Italy, the U.S., Netherlands and Malta took place. At the same time, U.S. Lockheed spy planes carried out missions from Libya to Crimea and the Black Sea.

During eastern Ukraine's military crisis, U.S. drones flew from an Italian base to the Black Sea via Greece, while the U.S. missile destroyers Donald Cook and Roosevelt were in the Aegean Sea (also supported by the Souda base).

On May 5, the giant vehicle carrier called Liberty Promise docked in Alexandroupolis, and we are waiting for the Green Ridge.

At the 110 Combat Wing base in Larissa, twelve U.S. Eagle F-15 fighters landed, with plans to remain in Greece for two weeks to participate in joint exercises with all air force divisions.

This is the transformation of our country into a base of operation for the imperialist powers against the peoples of the region.

This echoes U.S. Ambassador to Greece Geoffrey Payatt's recent statement, "There is no limit to the Greek-U.S. military relationship."

This is true. Greek governments have no limit to their allegiance to the murderers of the people. We must impose the limits, standing with peoples in our region who are attacked by imperialism, such as the people of eastern Ukraine, Syria, Libya and Palestine.

Daily struggles and imperialist intervention

An anti-war movement can only be anti-imperialist, because war prevention and peace in the region depends on the defeat of the imperialist plans of the Euro-Atlantic Axis and the crash of its war structure in our country.

For that reason, a few years ago we founded the Pan-Hellenic Anti-War Kinematic Coordination (PAKC), when the anti-war, anti-imperialist movement was starting to lift its head again.

Today, the struggles against the health crisis, for labor and democratic rights, and other social demands are overriding the internationalist agenda. But we must not let the struggle for peace take second place. We have to make clear that the problems of daily life are intertwined with imperialist intervention in the region.

The money for people's needs lacking from public funds is going to feed the war machine, through outrageous armaments programs that have nothing to do with defense of the country.

The Greek shipping of U.S. Patriot surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems to help the obscurantist Saudi petro-monarchy against the Yemeni people has nothing to do with defense of the country.

Greek armed forces have no place in the Strait of Hormuz near Iran or standing

behind France's imperialist war in Mali.

The disestablishment of university asylum is connected to imperialist pressure. Wikileaks revealed the U.S. pressure campaign, because of the anti-imperialist mood in Greek universities.

At the same time, what we need to say is that by transforming the country into a war base, these troops are a potential occupying army as NATO's doctrine of the "internal enemy" implies, if our people choose a different path than that of subordination to imperialism.

For all of these reasons, the struggle against this military complex, which stamps its feet on our country, is a matter of life and death for any progressive alternative, independent of imperialism, for our people and the peoples of the region.

Only a massive, unifying anti-war movement has the potential to block the way of these war plans.

Panagiotis Papadomanolakis is editor of [GuernicaEu](#) (Greece) and a member of the editorial team of the [Kommon](#) website. He's also a member of the coordinating committee of the Pan-Hellenic Anti-War Kinematic Coordination (PAKC), a founding member of the Greek Solidarity Committee "Todos Somos Venezuela," the Greek Campaign for a Nobel Peace Prize for Cuban Doctors honorary committee and Red en Defensa de la Humanidad (REDH)-Greek section. He is author of the book [COVID-19: Virus of Distinctions \(Bookstars\)](#).



Mali is just the latest: U.S. Africa Command trained troops behind at least seven coups in 13 years

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 7, 2021

While the U.S. Army School of the Americas is infamous for training right-wing guerrilla forces across Latin America, less well-known are the Pentagon's military training programs in Africa, including the Flintlock exercises for the G5 Sahel nations, nearly all of which have experienced military coups in the last 13 years.

On Thursday, Malian Vice President Assami Goita, a colonel in the Malian Army, completed his [second coup d'etat](#) in just nine months, overthrowing the interim government he helped install and declaring himself the country's interim president. A Western-trained soldier, Goita's is just the latest in an increasingly long list of coups d'etat in Africa by soldiers trained by U.S. Africa Command since its creation 13 years ago.

Since it was created in 2008, troops trained by AFRICOM have been directly responsible for at least seven successful coups d'etat in Africa, nearly all of which have occurred in West Africa, and one that was directly carried out by AFRICOM forces. Here are some of them:

- **Mauritania, 2008.** In August 2008, after Mauritanian Gen. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz overthrew the Mauritanian government of President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, a spokesperson for U.S. European Command told U.S. military publication [Stars and Stripes](#) that the U.S. had a “bilateral relationship” with Aziz and had coordinated security cooperation programs with him. Aziz had also assisted in a previous coup three years earlier.
- **Libya, 2011.** The U.S. part of the NATO-led war in Libya in March 2011 to overthrow longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi was dubbed Operation Odyssey Dawn, and was AFRICOM’s first major military operation. The war eliminated the U.S.’ biggest opposition in Africa, with Gaddafi being responsible for [why no African nation](#) would agree to host AFRICOM headquarters.
- **Mali, 2012.** Amadou Sanogo, who led a coup against President Amadou Toumani Touré, had traveled to the U.S. several times for [advanced military training](#) via the International Military Education and Training program, including at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia. Driven by anger over Toure’s handling of a Tuareg uprising in northern Mali, Sanogo’s coup ironically created a vacuum allowing Tuareg control to expand rapidly, leading the country to ask for French military assistance the following year. The French mission, Operation Serval, eventually grew into the five-nation War on Terror style [Operation Barkhane](#).
- **2013, Egypt.** Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, the minister of defense and commander-in-chief of the Egyptian military, led the coup that deposed Egypt’s first democratically-elected president, Mohammed Morsi. [El-Sisi has](#)

[received](#) extensive training from the U.S. military, including a [basic training course](#) at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1981 and graduating from the U.S. Army War College in 2006. When Morsi was overthrown in July 2013, Washington avoided acknowledging it as a coup.

- **2015, Burkina Faso.** Gilbert Diendéré, the former military aide to the longtime Burkinabe ruler [Blaise Compaore](#), briefly deposed the interim government before being thrown out by a popular mass uprising. [Diendéré has participated](#) multiple times in AFRICOM's Flintlock all-domain training exercises the U.S. uses to school members of the G5 Sahel nations' armies, including Niger, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania, many of which have also seen their own coups over the last 20 years.
- **2020 and 2021, Mali.** [Goita has worked](#) for years with U.S. Special Operations forces and also trained in Germany and France, officials said after the August 2020 coup. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell at the time [attempted to deflect blame](#) by saying that "We don't train armies to be putschists," but wound up admitting that "90% of the army has been trained by our mission."

War on terror spurs army training

AFRICOM grew out of [War on Terror missions](#) begun by the Pentagon in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, including the Pan-Sahel Initiative, which became Operation Juniper Shield, also known as Operation Enduring Freedom - Trans Sahara; and Operation Enduring Freedom - Horn of Africa. As a result, although AFRICOM was formally organized into a separate U.S. command based in Stuttgart, Germany, in 2008, there were already forces scattered across more than a dozen African countries that had been trained by U.S. forces.

he War on Terror created a hammer-and-nail-type situation, in which Washington suddenly became conscious of a vast number of paramilitary groups and of many

of them being based in religiously-identified communities, many of which were also Muslim. The U.S. itself undoubtedly created many of these networks itself by providing a crucible for various types of fundamentalism in the Mujaheddin insurgency it backed against the Soviet-backed socialist government of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Various Islamist insurgencies in the 1990s across the world, from Algeria to Chechnya [and Kosovo](#), sprung out of fighters returning from Afghanistan with the motivation to carry the fight against secularism or European influences into their home countries.

Money poured into training programs and armaments for militaries in fragile states the U.S. judged to be at risk of a repeat of Afghanistan, where the Taliban fundamentalist group had seized power [after the Soviet exit](#) and provided safe haven for terrorist groups like al-Qaeda to plot their attacks against the United States. The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists (AUMF) passed by Congress gave the U.S. military wide leeway to carry out strikes in [undeclared war zones](#) if they believed the targets to be from or linked to al-Qaeda.

The U.S. isn't the only country to do this, though: the European Union also runs training programs in many of the same African nations, as do several member states, such as France, which operates its own programs in conjunction with former African colonies. China and Russia also train personnel from interested African nations.

'Fabergé Egg Militaries'

Experts say that these comprehensive training programs [create the very problems](#) they aim to avoid: prestigious, highly-trained, well-armed military forces see the opportunity to impose their will on the vulnerable governments they're supposed to be protecting from Islamist takeover. The Western connections these

officers bring with them ensure that once in power, their cadres will have friends in high places, globally speaking, and in many cases Western governments win either way: a more stable government provides a new partner for lucrative business deals, and whether more stable or less, they get an opportunity to expand their military presence in yet another part of the globe.

One [U.S. military academic](#) criticized these kinds of militaries as “fabergé egg militaries: expensive and easily broken by insurgents.”

However, in recent years the U.S. hasn't looked away from this technique, it's actually turned further towards it. The demands of Washington's new focus - great power confrontation with Russia and China - has the Pentagon considering shifting troops away from training missions in Africa and toward European and Indo-Pacific bases. In response, the U.S. is ramping up a surrogate training program [known as 127-Echo](#), with a \$100 million annual budget.

Maj. Gen. James Hecker, vice director for operations from the joint staff at the time, [told House lawmakers](#) in early 2019 that 127-Echo “provides us viable surrogate forces designed to achieve U.S. CT [counterterrorism] objectives at relatively low cost in terms of resources and especially risk to our personnel ... The small-footprint approach inherent in 127 Echo ... in addition to lessening the need for large scale U.S. troop deployments, fosters an environment where local forces take ownership of the problem.”

Source: [Sputnik](#)



Colombia's blood on U.S. hands: National strike marches on

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 7, 2021

May 27 — [Jhon Erik Larrahondo](#), 21, of Cali. [Alison Meléndez](#), 17, of Popayán. [Camilo Arango](#), 19, of Tuluá.

These are but a few of more than 60 victims confirmed dead of government terrorism against protesters by the U.S.-armed and funded Colombian Armed Forces, police and death squads since the national uprising against the regime of President Ivan Duque began on April 28.

Thousands have been arrested. Hundreds more have “disappeared” — and bodies have begun to turn up, washed up on the banks of rivers and buried in hastily-dug mass graves.

Colombia is called the Israel of Latin America, and like its counterpart in West Asia, the country's brutal capitalist rulers loyally serve their masters in Washington, D.C.

Colombia is a member of the U.S.-dominated NATO military alliance — the only one in Latin America.

The elite Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) of the Colombian National Police — [established on the initiative of U.S. President Bill Clinton](#) in 1999 to repress leftist movements — is carrying out murders, police brutality, sexual assaults, and, in the style of its Israeli Defense Force trainers, has blinded numerous protesters with shots to the eyes.

In Cali, the epicenter of state violence, a warehouse owned by the Éxito Supermarket chain stands revealed as a bloody torture center.

“When human rights organizations were finally able to enter to do oversight, they found pools of blood in the underground parking lots, blood even on electrical appliances in the warehouse, a nauseating smell. And they were totally prevented from visiting one of the floors of the parking lot,” according to reports [compiled by Resumen Latinamericano](#).

“For two days, live protesters were brought to this shopping center, families and the community denounced in anguish, shouts were heard, repressive forces and garbage trucks circulated incessantly.” As of May 23, more than 200 people have disappeared in Cali alone.

In a statement demanding an end to the disappearances, the Legal and Humanitarian Team of the [Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission reported](#): “Since May 14, the first reports of the existence of mass graves were known in the rural area of the municipalities of Buga and Yumbo, where [the police] would take the bodies of many young people from Cali.”

“Since the start of the strike, the Colombian State has kidnapped and disappeared more than 600 people,” Resumen reported. “Some of them have appeared floating in

the Cauca River, others buried. In recent days the police have been increasing the practice of enforced disappearance, taking away protesters who then do not reappear.”

Duque, assassin!

President Duque and the media label the protesters “terrorists,” even while his government draws out talks with some groups in the leadership of the national strike movement, including the National Unemployment Committee (CNP) and Central Union of Workers (CUT).

Duque & Co. accuse Cuba and Venezuela, the FARC-EP and ELN guerrillas, even faraway Russia, of causing the uprising — anything, anyone but their own greedy, repressive policies that have left 42.5 percent of the people in poverty and a quarter unable to eat three meals a day, [according to Colombia Informa](#).

The government decries protest roadblocks as an attack on human rights, even as its armed goons [attack Indigenous groups](#) working with protesters to ensure that food, fuel and medical assistance needed by the people can get through.

Even as his government assassinated the blind guerrilla [Commander Jesús Santrich](#) in neighboring Venezuela, in violation of international law, as a warning to those youth and workers who might move from rebellion to resistance, and take the path of social revolution.

Even as his government carries out crimes against humanity like those of Chile’s dictator Augusto Pinochet, installed by the U.S. in 1973.

According to Resumen, human-rights groups are advising protesters: “It is very important that detainees try to shout their names and surnames and that people in the neighborhood film the events, to try to prevent those kidnapped by the police from being victims of the state crime of enforced disappearance.”

And yet, amidst the terror, the people fight on.

Victories won in the streets

What began April 28 as a protest against the president's proposed tax hike on the populace, despite widespread unemployment caused by the pandemic and the global capitalist crisis, has mushroomed in the past four weeks into a national uprising that has left no city, town or village in this diverse country untouched.

The movement first forced the government to withdraw its "tax reform." Then, on May 19, it forced Congress to vote down a plan to further [privatize the health care system](#). Now the national strike movement demands the firing of Defense Minister Diego Molano, who commands the National Police.

A congressional debate on Molano's removal was [broken up by the police](#) on May 25.

Officials in Washington and Bogotá are betting on exhausting the people with merciless repression. But so far the protesters show no signs of slowing down, only drawing more and more layers of the populace into the streets.

In a development paralleling last year's Black Lives uprising in the U.S., a group called the Front Line Mothers has taken to the streets of the capital with shields to defend youthful protesters from police attacks.

Whatever happens next, it's clear that a new generation of activists has taken the stage in Colombia. Many of them are not content with piecemeal reforms, but want to see Duque's government — and those pulling the strings — toppled for good.

They have seen their rulers' betrayal of the 2016 Havana Peace Accords and subsequent slayings of hundreds of former guerrillas, activists and community leaders by right-wing death squads. They see clearly the bloody hand of U.S.

imperialism directing, arming and financing their oppressors.

They are learning invaluable lessons, and many of those who survive will bring fresh energy and hard-won experience to Colombia's revolutionary struggle for national liberation and socialism.



The assassination of Colombian revolutionary Jesús Santrich

written by Struggle - La Lucha

June 7, 2021

When a respected revolutionary dies, the impact reverberates around the world. Or, as Chinese communist leader [Mao Zedong said](#), "To die for the people is weightier than Mount Tai, but to work for the fascists and die for the exploiters and oppressors is lighter than a feather."

Commander Jesús Santrich, a communist and member of the National Directorate of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), Second Marquetalia, died for the people.

Santrich was reportedly [assassinated by a Colombian military squad](#) on May 17. The killing took place on Venezuelan territory near the Colombian border.

After murdering Santrich, the killers cut off his left pinkie finger to verify his death (and collect a \$1.5-million bounty placed on his head jointly by the Colombian and U.S. governments), then fled back into Colombian territory aboard a helicopter.

The assassination, carried out on another country's territory in blatant violation of international law, was reminiscent of a similar operation in 2008, when Colombian troops killed FARC Commander Raúl Reyes in Ecuador.

It came just four days after the Colombian Supreme Court ruled in favor of Santrich's extradition to the United States. His fellow FARC Commander [Simón Trinidad](#) has been held incommunicado since his extradition to the U.S. at the end of 2004. Political prisoner Trinidad is currently serving a 60-year sentence in a Colorado supermax prison.

"The court carries out the orders of the gringos," [Santrich said](#) in a statement released the day before his death.

It's no coincidence that the court ruling and assassination took place during [Colombia's unprecedented month-long popular uprising](#) against the right-wing regime of President Iván Duque. It was meant as a warning to those fighting in the streets who might consider taking the movement to a higher level, from rebellion to sustained resistance.

Such a high-level hit could not have taken place without the approval and involvement of the Pentagon and the Biden administration. All are guilty of Santrich's murder.

A fighter for the people

Jesús Santrich was one of the most renowned revolutionaries in Latin America, a popular and influential spokesperson for revolutionary Marxism and the path of armed struggle.

He was a leader of the Bolivarian Continental Movement (MCB), an alliance of revolutionary parties and movements in South America.

An internationalist to the core, Santrich was usually seen wearing a keffiyeh as a symbol of solidarity with the Palestinian people. The Israeli apartheid regime plays a big role in training and steering Colombia's repressive forces, as directed by the United States, and Santrich felt the connection with Palestine's struggle deeply.

Santrich was legally blind from a young age and walked with the aid of a cane. But his disability was no match for his revolutionary determination. After joining the FARC in the early 1990s, he quickly proved himself a capable organizer and strategist, and gained the rank of commander.

His closest friends and comrades, who called him Trichi, spoke of his humor, thirst for knowledge and wide-ranging interests. Santrich played the saxophone, composed poetry, and painted despite his visual impairment.

He was also a prolific author. At the time of his death, Santrich was writing a series of articles on the relationship between Marxism and Bolivarianism, the national-liberation outlook uniting peoples across Latin America.

U.S.-Colombia betray peace accords

Santrich was a member of the team that negotiated the 2016 Havana Peace Accords between the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP. While working for several years in Cuba on the peace agreement, Santrich met and befriended many visiting activists and revolutionaries from around the world.

As the negotiations dragged on and pressure for a resolution grew, Santrich and fellow negotiator Iván Márquez warned that the FARC should not agree to disarm before the Colombian regime met its obligations. However, they were overruled.

When Santrich returned to Colombia, it quickly became apparent to him that Duque's government and its Washington masters had no intention of honoring the Havana Accords, using them only as an excuse to disarm and divide the guerrilla movement.

Santrich himself, though guaranteed a seat in Congress and legal immunity under the agreement, was [thrown into prison](#) on false "drug trafficking" charges. He was held in torturous, life-threatening conditions.

A mass movement fought for and won his release. But the threat of extrajudicial killing or extradition to the U.S. still loomed.

Santrich went underground. In August 2019, Santrich, Márquez and others announced the formation of the FARC-EP, Second Marquetalia, an initiative to rebuild the revolutionary guerrilla movement following the betrayal of the peace agreement by Bogota and Washington.

"Either a slow death in a maximum security prison in some hot desert in the U.S., 30 meters underground, without any human rights, like his youthful friend, his fellow from Caribe Simón Trinidad, or shot down in a confrontation," [wrote Alberto Pinzón Sánchez.](#)

"With this perspective ... he returned to arms — this time a little more 'symbolically,' in order to accompany with his knowledge, ideas and far-seeing vision, a group of former comrades who shared with him the idea that it was better to die fighting counterinsurgent fascism than kneel before the perfidy and deceptions of the regime."

Death squads kill former guerrillas

Between the signing of the Havana Accords in 2016 and April 2020, [at least 271 former FARC guerrillas](#) were murdered by right-wing death squads, along with hundreds of community activists, student leaders, trade unionists, journalists and representatives of the Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

Santrich had seen it before.

As a student activist in the late 1980s and early 1990s, young Seuxis Pausias participated in organizing the Patriotic Union movement, an earlier attempt to transform the decades-long civil war and build a powerful social-justice alternative to the political parties dominated by Colombia's oligarchy and U.S. imperialism.

Then, too, the response of Colombia's ruling class, big landlords and U.S. backers was to unleash death squads to exterminate their political opponents.

In fact, Seuxis Pausias's close friend, a fellow student leader, was one of those executed in 1991. He took the name of his slain friend — Jesús Santrich — in tribute, and left to join the guerrillas.

"Was it necessary to execute a blind revolutionary militant?" asked Argentinian revolutionary [Néstor Kohan](#). "Were the U.S. Pentagon, the Israeli Army and the Colombian Armed Forces so afraid of a blind person who walked with a cane?

"Yes, they were afraid of him. And now that he's dead ... they are going to be even more afraid, because the unwavering example of this communist revolutionary will surely take on other dimensions, as happened in their time with Camilo Torres, Che Guevara and with so many other revolutionaries of Our America."

In his honor, the Bolivarian Continental Movement has declared May 17 the "International Day of Global Insurgence Against Decadent and Criminal

Imperialism."

¡Comandante Jesús Santrich, presente!



Belarus detains neo-Nazi, and imperialists howl

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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On May 23, Roman Protasevich was detained by authorities in the eastern European country Belarus after the plane he was riding made an emergency landing in Minsk. Protasevich's detention [set off howls of protest](#) from governments and corporate media in the U.S. and European Union, as well as threats of sanctions and a [ban on air travel](#) to or from Belarus.

The arrest of Protasevich, who was earlier declared a terrorist threat by the Belarus government, is being presented as "Exhibit A" of President Alexander Lukashenko's abuse of human rights, and in favor of regime change by the pro-Western opposition headed by Svetlana Tikhanovskaya.

The EU has announced a [\\$3-billion “bailout” plan](#) for Belarus if the opposition successfully topples Lukashenko’s government.

A few key facts are missing from the Western powers’ narrative.

Who gets to divert flights?

First, the diversion of flights and detention of air passengers is hardly unprecedented.

Recall, for example, that a plane from Moscow [carrying Bolivian President Evo Morales](#) over EU airspace in 2013 was refused the right to refuel, threatening the life of Morales and other passengers, and was then grounded on U.S. orders in Vienna, where the plane was searched by Austrian authorities. Morales — a head of state — was detained for 14 hours.

Supposedly Washington thought that “wanted” NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden might be aboard the plane. But the real reason was to threaten Morales and other anti-imperialist leaders by showing them that the U.S. could murder or capture them at its whim.

In 2016, a Belarusian flight over Ukraine was [forced to turn back](#) because Kiev’s right-wing government suspected anti-fascist supporters of Donetsk and Lugansk might be aboard. One person was detained before the plane was allowed to leave.

What is different in the Protasevich case — and objectionable to the imperialists — is that it was not done by them or a regime loyal to them.

Coup attempt thwarted

Second, just six weeks ago, in mid-April, a violent coup attempt against the government of Belarus was thwarted by Russian and Belarus intelligence services.

Two people were arrested in Moscow after opposition figures were [captured on video](#) plotting to murder President Lukashenko and his sons, and kill or detain 30 top officials. One of those arrested was a U.S. citizen. The coup attempt received virtually no coverage in the U.S. media.

The plot came after the failure of protests dominated by far-right and pro-Western forces last year to unseat Lukashenko's government. ([Read Struggle-La Lucha's coverage here.](#))

The Western powers' objections to Lukashenko's government have nothing to do with "human rights," but rather that this former Soviet republic has retained some of the social gains of the socialist period. Belarus has not privatized fast enough and has maintained too much independence for their liking.

Who is Roman Protasevich?

Third, and perhaps most damningly, there is Roman Protasevich himself.

Held up as an "independent journalist" by the West, he is in fact a known fascist who participated in the 2014 coup in neighboring Ukraine and aligned himself with neo-Nazis there waging war on the independent republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. He also has strong ties to the U.S. government.

Here's how Ukrainian anti-fascist activist and journalist [Dmitri Kovalevich describes](#) this character:

"In 2014 Roman Protasevich was one of the active participants of Euromaidan in Kiev. He participated in toppling Lenin's monument in Kiev along with the Ukrainian far-right and posed with the toppled statue.

"In 2015 [Protasevich] volunteered with Azov - a neo-Nazi Ukrainian regiment. He was trained there and fought against the Donbass republics. [He] was promoted to

deputy commander of an Azov detachment. Then helped Azov to receive sponsorship from the U.S. and Poland.

"Now the team of imprisoned Russian liberal Alexei Navalny also supports Protasevich, claiming that there was nothing wrong in his fighting in the ranks of Azov because he 'helped to restore Ukraine's control over its territory.'

"In other words, we see in this case a 'lovely' company: Western powers, Belarus and Russian liberal opposition, and Ukraine's armed white supremacists."

Protasevich's affiliation with the ultra-right and servility to the Western imperialists is [well-documented](#), including much photographic evidence of his open flaunting of neo-Nazi ties.

A U.S.-EU provocation?

The Western media and governments claim that the Ryanair flight from Athens to Vilnius was forced to land completely on the initiative of the Belarus government. However, there are reasons to question this story.

According to Belarus, the decision to land in Minsk came from the flight crew because of a bomb threat. A Belarus fighter plane was then dispatched to guide the plane into the airport.

No bomb was found aboard the plane. But authorities discovered there was in fact a wanted terrorist suspect aboard — Protasevich — and he was detained.

Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs [Vladimir Makei](#) described the subsequent outcry from Western capitals as a deliberate provocation.

The flight's city of destination is enough to create suspicions about the U.S.-EU narrative. Vilnius is the capital of Lithuania, a NATO member ruled by a fascist-

sympathizing government dominated by Washington, as is neighboring Baltic state Latvia.

As if on cue, after Protasevich was detained in Minsk, the mayor of Riga, Latvia's capital, ordered a display of flags at a international sports event in the city to [replace the official red-and-green Belarus flag](#) with the white-and-red "BCBH flag" — the flag of fascist collaborators during the Nazi occupation of Belarus during World War II. This was the flag waved at last year's anti-government protests.

Outraged Belarus residents quickly organized a rally at the Latvian Embassy in Minsk on May 24. [Minsk Pravda](#) correspondent Nadezhda Sablina reported:

"Belarusians ardently expressed their indignation and demanded the embassy staff answer, but they did not come out.

"Among the picket participants were members of the Patriots of Belarus, Belya Rusi, the Belarusian Republican Youth Union, the Communist Party of Belarus, the Liberal Democratic Party, ordinary citizens of our republic, and partisan veterans.

"Participants of the event sang 'Katyusha' [an anti-fascist Soviet song] and the anthem of Belarus, chanted 'Fascism will not pass!' and 'Shame!'

"Right there, near the Latvian Embassy, the audience voted to bring the mayor of Latvia to justice."

Workers and oppressed people here and around the world have good reasons to question the claims of the imperialists — and to support the struggle of people in Belarus to maintain their independence and keep their country from being turned into another weapon for U.S. imperialism.



Pablo Hasél: Repentance is not freedom

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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In February, Spain's Supreme Court sentenced leftist Catalan musician Pablo Hasél to 2 years and 9 months in prison for his outspoken activism against the monarchy, fascist movements and police terror. Later, the court added 16 months to his sentence for non-payment of a fine. [Read more about Pablo Hasél's case here](#).

As soon as they imposed the additional 16-month sentence for telling proven facts about the monarchy and police brutality, the prison psychologist came to offer me a treatment program to be able to access the third degree permits that they give to the majority of prisoners (once a quarter of the sentence has been served). These permits consist of leaving prison for a few hours, then a few days, and thus progressively shortening the sentence. But they are not in exchange for nothing, especially in the case of political prisoners for whom “reintegration” means jumping through hoops by denying the just and necessary struggle for which we were kidnapped.

The psychologist, extorting me with a long stay in prison if I did not accept, intended to strip me of my principles by making me accept this insulting program based on “reviewing my expressions and emotions” to “empathize with the victims” of armed self-defense — a dishonest regret that from the first day I made very clear that I will never assume.

Therefore, I replied that I was being disrespected and that if I am incarcerated, it is precisely because I have great empathy with the real victims of the oppressors’ terrorism. They do not hesitate to impose all kinds of criminal policies, misery, exploitation and lack of freedoms with armed force. My response was to go to them and speak about the empathy they lack. That’s too much for them. They imprison you for solidarity and above all they want you to pretend to empathize with those who oppress you! Wanting to control even our emotions is outright fascism. How delusional if they believe that I can stop feeling hatred against the oppressors who beat us in so many ways! It would be to stop feeling love for the oppressed.

The twisted blackmail focused on “you have to worry about yourself and take care of yourself,” meaning that this is only possible if I agree to spend less time in prison in exchange for crawling. As if I could care for myself and take care of myself without being true to my conscience, which is the most valuable thing I possess! They don’t understand that we revolutionaries are not driven by individualistic interests. We would feel much worse out on the street, having given them the repentance that their repression seeks, than in prison with our heads held high for continuing to defend our principles. This false concern for me is also offensive when they do not care about the dire conditions we suffer in prison or the unjust conviction. The only thing they care about is taming you.

There are those who do not understand this consistent attitude in the face of repression, influenced by the opportunistic positions of domesticated organizations that do not pose any danger to the regime. They encourage people with the idea that

to get out of jail, anything goes. However, this strengthens the forces of repression, because not only do they get their enemies to delegitimize the struggle, but by recognizing that they have done wrong, it legitimizes them to repress others. To do that in the name of the struggle is intolerable.

Logically, I am the first one who wants to see myself out of jail, but not in any way or at any cost. Political prisoners must leave as we enter: revolutionary and unrepentant. If we are freed early, it is due to the pressure of solidarity and not by submitting. So if the struggle doesn't prevent it, I will have to serve the entire sentence, but I will not renounce my integrity. Leaving earlier by agreeing with them would be a victory for the state, a false freedom. We don't fight for that, but quite the opposite. That is what the demand for total amnesty includes: freedom of all political prisoners without any surrender.

Translated by Greg Butterfield

[Source: Insurgente](#)



Colombia is bleeding to death: Duque responds with violence to the people's demands

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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The Colombian people have been in the streets protesting against President Ivan Duque for 14 days in a row. Social anger erupted over a tax reform that sought to increase the price of basic products, such as milk and meat, amid an unprecedented economic and health crisis.

On April 28, the people marched through the main avenues of the country with banners and pots. Duque, from his luxurious residence in the Casa de Nariño, the seat of government in Bogotá, ordered the military and members of the Mobile Anti-Riot Squadron (ESMAD) to stop these “rioters” at any cost. ESMAD is a US trained and funded attack unit connected to the Colombian Army and designed to repress movements for social justice throughout the country.

The death toll from those first nights of protests, especially in Cali, is terrifying. On May 3 alone, at least five people were killed and 33 injured with firearms throughout the country, according to local authorities.

Police brutality began to get out of Duque's hands from then on. It is no coincidence that on May 3 he decided to withdraw his controversial tax reform from his desk. Hours later, Finance Minister Alberto Carrasquilla resigned from office. Still, nothing placated the protests.

Colombians continued to take to the streets, this time rejecting police brutality, growing social insecurity, massacres, systematic assassinations of social leaders,

and poverty, increasingly exacerbated by the pandemic.

Since April 28, at least 47 people have died during the demonstrations. Thirty-five of the victims were killed in Cali, the city that has become the epicenter of the protests. The Ombudsman's Office and the Attorney General's Office put the number at 27, of which only 11 were directly linked to police brutality.

Social and human rights organizations also count over 900 arbitrary detentions by ESMAD and Colombian Army agents against demonstrators.

"We are living through terrifying days. Only life in an armed conflict zone resembles what I have experienced in the last few days in Colombia," a journalist from Cali, who preferred to remain anonymous, told the Mexican daily Sin Embargo.

As soon as night falls, "helicopters start flying overhead. We hear detonations and bursts of gunfire... I had only felt this fear in Cauca, a border territory dominated by criminal gangs and paramilitary groups," the journalist explained.

In the daytime, helicopters fly overhead, and ambulance sirens sound, "but at night those sounds get louder and the gunfire, as well as the detonations, the sped-up footsteps, the shouts of 'they're killing us,'" he added.

Lucas Villa, the demonstrator who was shot eight times during a peaceful protest last week in Pereira, died on Monday night. Doctors at the San Jorge University Hospital informed that the 37-year-old man was brain dead after remaining in critical condition for six days. Immediately after the news spread, he became a symbol of one of the worst social crises the country has experienced in the last decade.

Villa, who was a university student of Sports Sciences, is the most visible face of the protests. He was attacked by unknown armed men while marching peacefully along the Pereira viaduct on the night of May 5. In some videos recorded before the

attack, Lucas is seen dancing in the streets, waving to police officers, and shouting messages such as “they are killing us”.

“Lucas did not die, he was killed by the Uribe dictatorship disguised as a genocidal democracy. The corrupt and cowardly government will pay for this crime,” Colombian activist Wilson Tovar tweeted.

As the victims of State Terrorism continue to grow in Colombia, Duque insists on finding culprits outside his borders. He looked to Cuba and declared the First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy in Bogota Omar Garcia an “unwelcome person in the country.”

The new media campaign promoted by Colombia’s right-wing newspapers claims that the Caribbean island deployed undercover agents to fuel the protests against Duque. The administration only limited itself to say, without any specifics, that Garcia “was carrying out undue actions in the country.”

Cuba rejected the fake news, condemned the attitude of the Colombian president, and demanded that the Duque administration explain the real reasons for this political move.

Last week, from the Casa Nariño, Duque also blamed Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro for being the “big inciter and financier” of the violence that is shaking Colombia.

“They had taken too long to hold Venezuela responsible,” Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza tweeted in response to Colombia’s accusations. “Duque is seeing how his policy is in the process of extinction. He has underestimated his people, and today he wants to evade his faults and incompetence. What a shame,” he added.

Colombia’s U.S.-backed oligarchy has brought nothing but pain and misery to the people, while it has threatened the peace and stability of the entire region.

“The current uprising is the Colombian administration’s responsibility. It is the cry of the people determined to end decades of suffering and build a new Colombia, based on social justice and peaceful relations with its neighbors,” US journalist Greg Butterfield said.

Source: [Resumen](#)

