



Venezuela

The Legal Framework and the Defence System

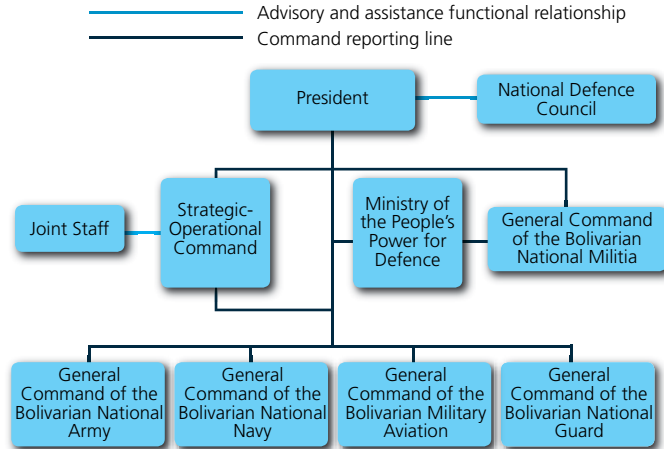
National Legislation

Systems and Concepts

- National Security Organic Act (GO N° 37.594 - 2002/12/18)

Military Organization

- Organic Code of Military Justice (GO N° 5.263 - 1998/09/17)
- Organic Act of the Bolivarian National Armed Force (GO N° 5.891 - 2008/07/31. Last amendment: GO N° 5.933 - 2009/10/21)
- Act of Military Service and Enrolment (GO N° 5.933 - 2009/10/06)



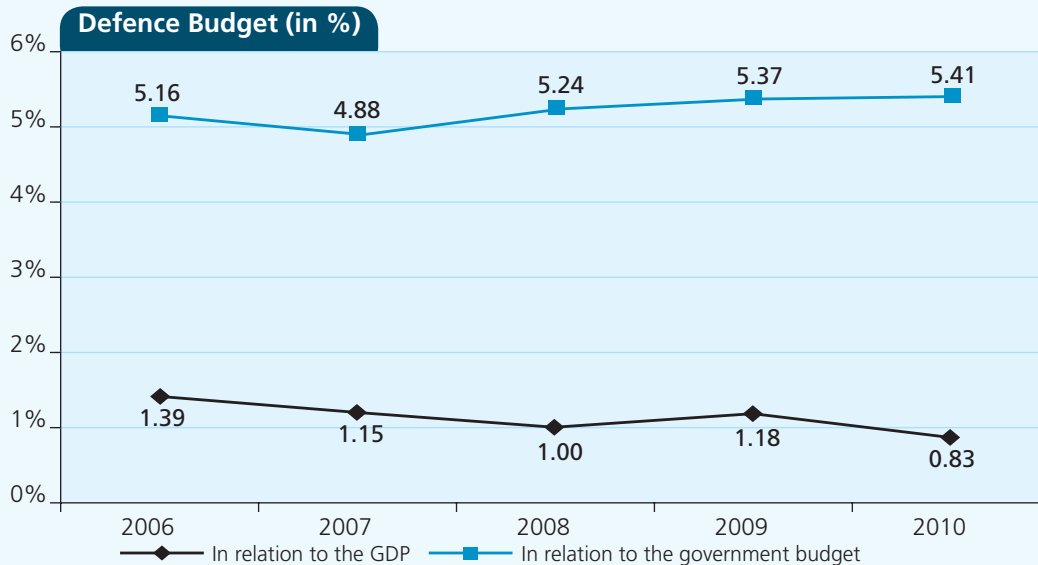
The President is advised by the National Defence Council, composed of the Vice President, the Presidents of the Assembly, the Supreme Court of Justice and the Republican Moral Council, and the Ministers of Defence, Internal Security, Foreign Affairs, Planning and the Environment. The Strategic Operational Command is directly subordinate to the President and is the highest planning and management organ of the Armed Forces and the Bolivarian Militia. The Joint Staff is its planning and advisory body. The Strategic Operational, the Military Components (Army, Navy, Military Aviation and National Guard), the Bolivarian Militia and the Military Regions (as operational organization), are administratively under the Ministry of Popular Power for Defence. The Assembly holds the powers granted by the Constitution and permanently monitors defence related issues through the National Defence and Security Committee.

Source: Compilation based on the Political Constitution, *Ley orgánica de seguridad de la Nación* (GO N° 37.594 - 2002/12/18) and *Ley orgánica de la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana* (GO N° 5.891 - 2008/07/31. Last amendment: GO N° 5.933 - 2009/10/21).

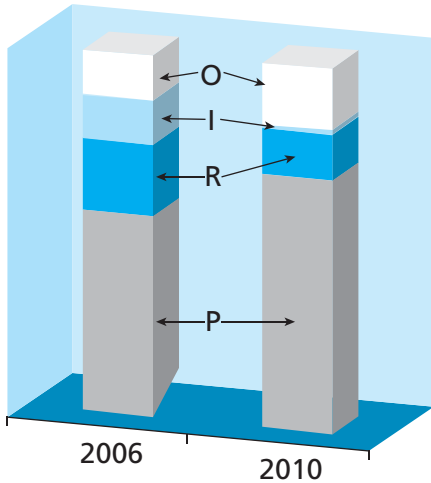
Source: Compilation based on the legislation above mentioned. For constitutional provisions see Chapter 1

The Budget

Year	Defence Budget (in US\$)	Government Budget (in US\$)	GDP (in US\$)
2006	1,867,024,633	36,217,120,783	134,628,000,000
2007	2,612,441,958	53,571,207,838	226,922,000,000
2008	3,351,756,259	63,984,953,854	334,726,000,000
2009	4,185,502,812	77,894,964,467	353,469,000,000
2010	2,501,244,477	46,204,655,586	301,012,000,000

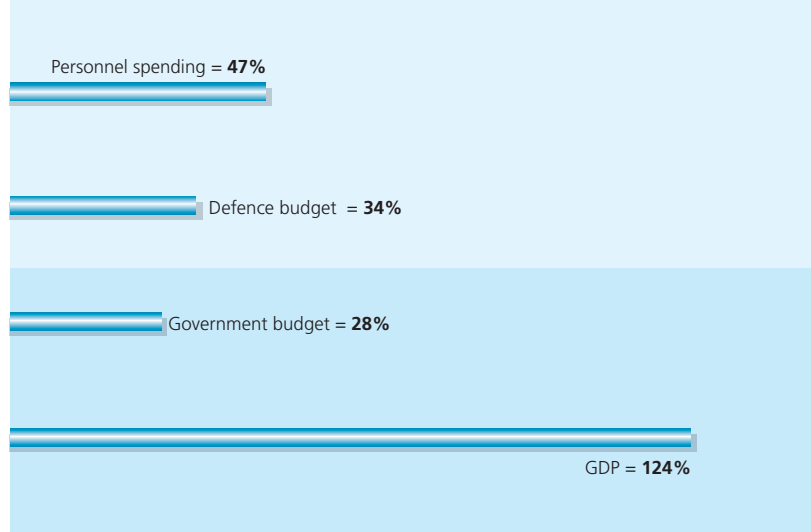


Defence Budget Breakdown



P: Salaries and other benefits
R: Retirement and pension funds / **I:** Investment
O: Other expenses

Comparative Increase (% variation 2006-2010)



Defence Budget 2010 (in Local Currency)*

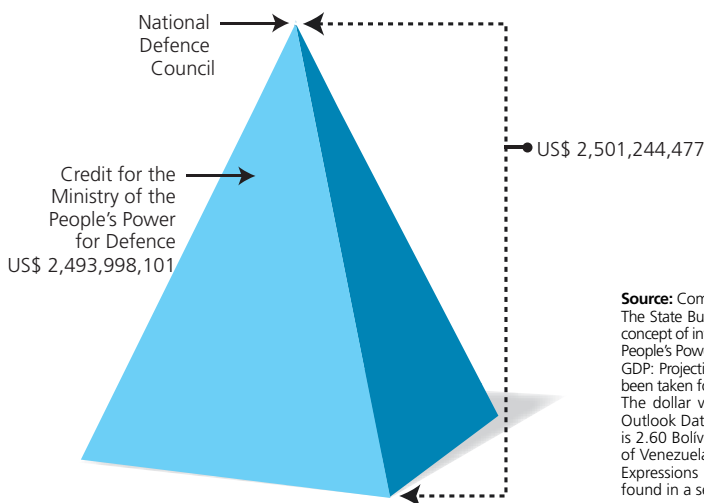
Credits	Consumer Goods and Services Expenses**	Real Assets	Others***	Personnel Expenses	TOTAL
Ministry of the People's Power for Defence					
Military Attorney General	899,160	0	0	0	899,160
Operational Strategic Command	309,193,814	0	0	0	309,193,814
Office of the Vice-minister of Services	139,488,361	0	0	0	139,488,361
Information (Military Intelligence Directorate, D.I.M.)	3,641,017	0	35,504,249	0	39,145,266
Presidential Honour Guard	17,383,981	0	0	0	17,383,981
Military Public Defender's Office	2,762,239	0	0	0	2,762,239
Acquisitions Directorate of the Army	15,296,175	0	0	0	15,296,175
Naval Logistics Command	0	90,690,183	0	0	90,690,183
Senior Directorate of the Military Criminal Legal Circuit	1,497,528	0	0	0	1,497,528
Acquisitions Directorate of the Aviation Logistics Command	0	14,024,611	0	0	14,024,611
General Comptroller	1,664,145	0	0	0	1,664,145
Office of the Vice-minister of Education for Defence	60,392,209	0	0	0	60,392,209
Directorate of Militia Services	17,367,049	0	0	0	17,367,049
Statistics	257,538	0	0	0	257,538
Military Health Directorate	241,588,762	0	0	0	241,588,762
Administration Office	0	0	1,107,944,032	0	1,107,944,032
Centralised Actions					
Management and Coordination of Workers' Expenditures	25,791,292	0	0	6,074,208,708	6,100,000,000
Administrative Management	167,009,086	31,990,657	97,240,720	0	296,240,463
Social Security and Protection	0	0	130,000,000	0	130,000,000
Military Attaché's Offices	0	0	18,457,931	0	18,457,931
Ministry of the People's Power of the President's Office					
National Defence Council	3,847,160	170,000	594,415	20,388,425	25,000,000
TOTAL	1,008,079,516	136,875,451	1,389,741,347	6,094,597,133	8,629,293,447

* As of 31 August 2010, the Ministry of Defence was allocated additional Credits for 1,837,648,426 Bolívares (US\$ 532,651,718). Such amount has not been included above.

** It includes Materials, Supplies and Goods as well as Non-Personnel Services.

*** It includes Defence and Security Expenses of the State, Transfers and Donations. Decrease of Liabilities and other expenses. Transfers to the Institute of Social Services for the National Armed Forces (IPSA) account for 1,057,242,440 Bolívares.

Composition of Defence Budget 2010



In 2007, the government signed the following military acquisitions agreements with:

- Belarus: US\$ 1,051,475,811
- China: US\$ 199,018,000
- Iran: US\$ 71,159,751
- Russia: US\$ 3,794,380,777

Such numbers account for 40% of the defence budget in the last 4 years.

Financing terms vary from case to case. As of 2010, the payment schedule and delivery of acquired units are still under way.

Source: Compilation based on *Ley de presupuesto para el ejercicio fiscal 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010*. The State Budget passed by the Congress by means of the above mentioned Act is considered herein. The concept of investment is that expressed in "Real assets". Acquisitions: *Memoria y Cuenta 2007*, Ministry of the People's Power for Defence. Additional credits: *Gaceta Oficial de Venezuela*.
 GDP: Projection of the World Economic Outlook Database, IMF, of each year under review. This source has been taken for comparative purposes. Each country prepares the budget based on its own GDP estimation. The dollar value considered corresponds to the exchange rate determined by the World Economic Outlook Database, IMF, for each year under consideration. As of July, the 2010 exchange rate average is 2.60 Bolívares (type 1) and 4.30 Bolívares (type 2), based on the data provided by the Central Bank of Venezuela. For further calculations, figures are provided in local currency.
 Expressions in Bold Type (Table) make reference to the various defence budget items, which can be found in a sector-based or institutional classification of the Budget Act.



The Ministry of the People's Power for Defence

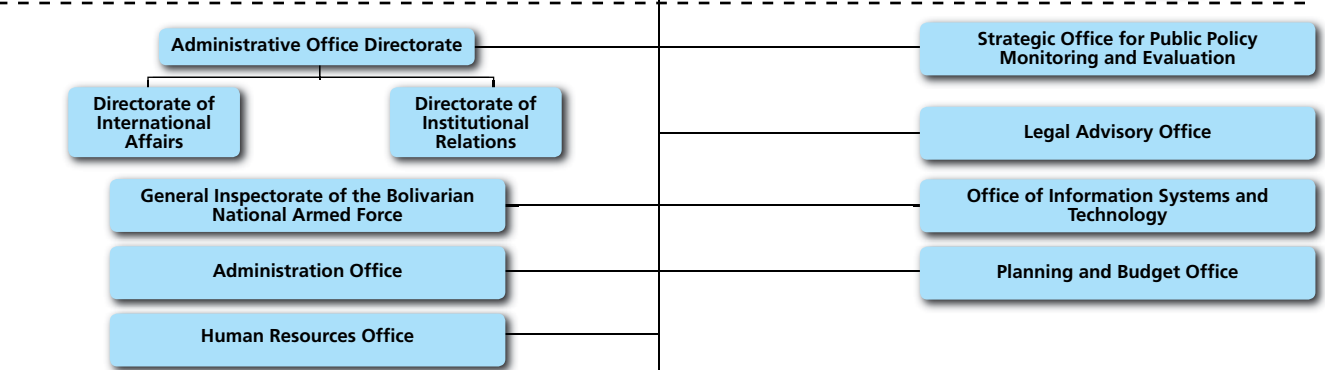
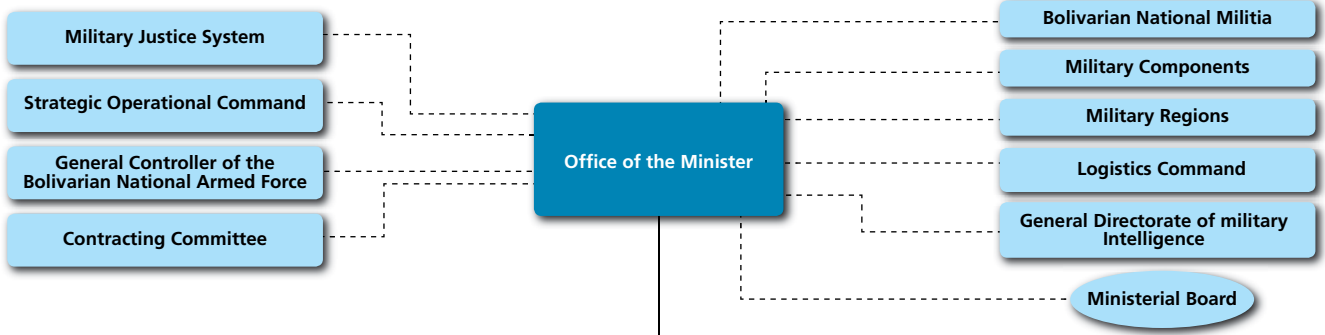
Responsibility:

It is the highest administrative body as regards the military defence of the Nation, responsible for the formulation, adoption, monitoring and assessment of the policies, strategies, plans, programs and projects of the defence sector. The President and Commander-in-Chief is entitled to issue operational orders through the Ministry of the People's Power for Defence.

(Ley orgánica de la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana, GO N° 5.891 - 2008/07/31. Last amendment: GO N° 5.933 - 2009/10/21, Sec. 11 and 20)

Organization Chart

Higher Level



Support Level



Substantive Level

Date of Foundation: 1946
Current Minister (September 2010) : Carlos José Mata Figueroa
Can military members be Ministers of Defence?: Yes
Number of military members who were Ministers of Defence: 39
Number of civilians who were Ministers of Defence: 1
Have there been any women in charge of the Ministry of Defence?: No
Average permanence in the Minister of Defence position: 1 year and 7 months

[The Minister currently in charge is not considered. The creation date is related to the moment in which the term "Defence" becomes part of the Institution's name]

Source: Ministry of the People's Power for Defence.

Political Definitions

Policy Guidelines

New International Geopolitics:

Building a multipolar world implies creating new poles of power that may represent a break from the unipolar hegemony, in the search for social justice, solidarity and peace assurance, deepening a fraternal dialogue between the peoples, self-determination and respect for the freedom of ideas.

The development of a new world geopolitical era is based, among other things, on the following assumptions:

- Identify and define a new development policy and articulation of the new geopolitical poles of power in the world.
- Strengthening common political interests between countries.
- Deepening friendship, trust and solidarity for a peaceful cooperation and co-existence among peoples.
- Determine energy development as a key foundation for the creation of a new geopolitical map.

To make Venezuela a global refining centre and a petrochemical power is yet another guarantee –and a very important one– for the defence of national sovereignty. National sovereignty is never a given conquest; it must always be defended and there may a risk of losing it. The sovereignty of a country rich in hydrocarbons is always at stake. However, it is also a potentially powerful defence weapon. The best defence is, without doubt, to tap such resource and fully develop it in all its phases, within and outside the national territory.

Institutional Objectives of the Defence Sector

- Organize, maintain, equip and train National Armed Force units for the development, deployment and employment of the military component, so as to secure national defence.
- Build the necessary human resources to meet the requirements of the National Armed Force (FAN), and train them to comply with the assigned mission.
- Provide the necessary socio-economic conditions and welfare for the members of the National Armed Force, for the purposes of improving the life quality of FAN's members and their families.
- Be prepared to support and guarantee the stability of democratic institutions, within the standing legal framework of the National Armed Force.
- Execute and support actions destined to contribute to national development.
- Design and strengthen management activities for the purpose of ensuring an optimum operation of FAN's units and dependencies.
- Effectively manage human resources, material and financial resources from foundations, public institutes, partnerships and corporations, decentralized services and civil associations linked to the defence sector, so as to ensure compliance with the social purpose and objective for which they were created, and support the efficient management of the National Armed Force.

Projects

1. Ensure military operations execution to contribute to defence and to the Nation's integral development.
2. Support logistic activities to enable National Armed Force operational capacity.
3. Intelligence operations to preserve National security.
4. Develop actions inherent to the organization of Venezuela's civil society, contributing to the integral defence of the Nation.
5. Integral healthcare provided through the military healthcare system.
6. Educate, develop and train human talents of the National Armed Force and the people in general.
7. Presidential security, custody and protection services.
8. Services and infrastructure to ensure the operational level of the National Armed Force.
9. Military Legal Criminal System.
10. General Military Prosecutor.
11. Military Public Defenders.
12. Exercise control, surveillance and oversight of public revenues, spending and assets assigned to the sector.
13. Statistical information system.

Source: *Proyecto Nacional Simón Bolívar. PPS – Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social de la Nación 2007-2013 and Ley de presupuesto para el ejercicio fiscal 2010.*

Reports Submitted to the United Nations and the OAS

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
✘					✘							
		✱										

Register of Conventional Arms: ✘ Register of Military Spending: ✧ Application of measures for confidence and building and security: ✱

Source: Compilation based on reports submitted to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and the United Nations Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures and reports submitted to the OAS on the Implementation of Confidence and Security-Building Measures.



The Armed Forces

General Mission

The National Armed Force, organized by the State and regulated by the principles of territorial integrity, cooperation, solidarity, concurrence and co-responsibility, has the mission to guarantee the independence and sovereignty of the Nation, ensure territorial integration, security of the Nation, active participation in national development, cooperation in maintaining internal order, and the defence of the democratic exercise of the people's will embodied in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the laws of the Republic.

The Bolivarian National Armed Forces of Venezuela shall:

- Ensure the domain of vital spaces which may allow the circulation of people and assets across the different regions of the country and the international environment.
 - Defend the strategic sites that guarantee the development of activities in various areas such as economic, social, political, cultural, geographic, environmental and military areas, and take precautions necessary to prevent any invasive power from controlling them.
 - Prepare and organize the people for an integral defence, with the purpose of cooperating and collaborating with the independence, sovereignty and territorial integration of the Nation.
 - Participate in alliances or coalitions with the Armed Forces of Latin American and Caribbean countries for integration purposes within the conditions established in treaties, agreements and accords, previously approved by the National Assembly.
 - Take part in peace missions within the framework of UN Charter provisions, as previously instructed by the Head of State and approved by the National Assembly.
 - Support the government institutions at a national, regional or local level, for the execution of tasks associated with the economic and social development of the people, as well as in civil protection operations in disaster situations.
 - Contribute with law-enforcement agencies at the national, state and municipal levels, to preserve or restore internal order in cases of serious social disturbance, as previously approved by the Head of State.
 - Organize, operate and direct the National Armed Force intelligence system as well as counterintelligence system.
- (Ley orgánica de la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana, GO N° 5.891 - 2008/07/31. Last amendment: GO N° 5.933 - 2009/10/21).

Specific Missions

Army

Ensure the defence of the land; contribute to the stability of democratic institutions and respect for the laws of the Republic; support national development and integration; and prepare to take part in international peacekeeping programs.

Navy

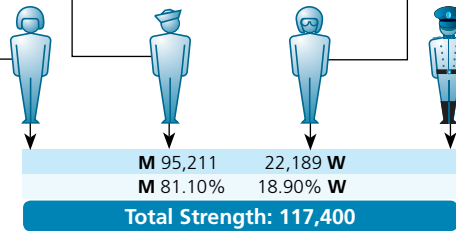
Ensure naval defence and compliance with the Constitution and laws in effect; cooperate in maintaining internal order and actively participate in national development, in order to guarantee the independence, sovereignty and integrity of national water spaces.

Air Force

Ensure national defence by controlling the national air space, contributing to the sustainment of public order and actively participating in the development of the country, employing the national air power to guarantee the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of the Nation.

National Guard

Conduct the operations necessary for maintaining the country's internal order, cooperate in the development of military operations to ensure the defence of the Nation, exert administrative law enforcement and criminal investigation activities assigned by law, and actively participate in national development within the territory and other geographic spaces of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

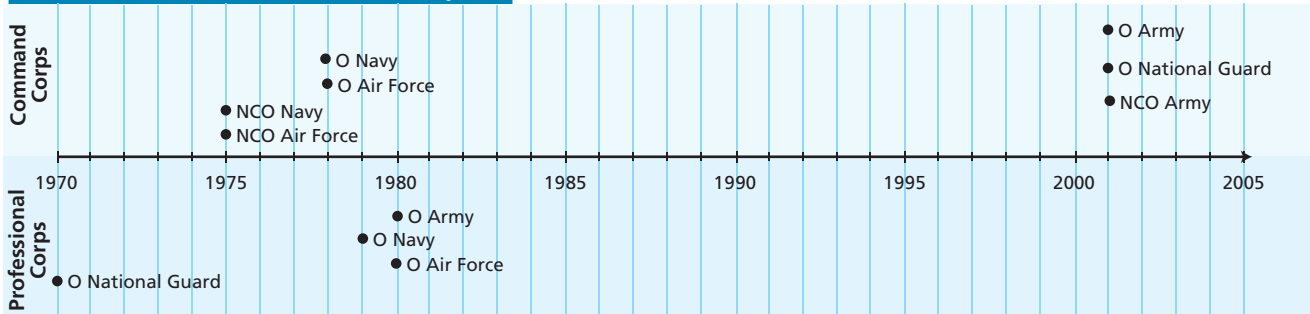


M: Men / W: Women

Source: Websites of the Armed Forces (missions) and Ley de presupuesto para el ejercicio fiscal 2010 (Regular Force).

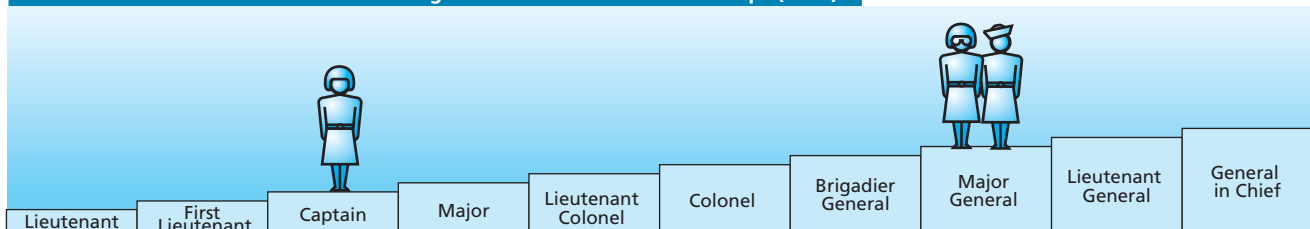
Women in the Armed Forces

Women's Admission to the Armed Forces (year)



Notes: Under the National Bolivarian Armed Force organization bylaw (GO N° 6,239 – 13/08/2009), professional enlisted NCO's are transferred to the technical officer career. The Command corps includes officers who have been educated at military academies from the beginning of their professional careers. The Professional corps refers to those who develop a career in the civilian sphere and are then incorporated to the armed forces.

Women Officer who have reached the highest rank in the Command Corps (2010)



Note: These ranks correspond to the Army, as an example. The equivalent ranks for Major General are Vice-Admiral (Navy) and Major General (Air Force).

Source: Compilation based on information provided by the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces.

Bolivarian National Militia

The Bolivarian National Militia (Milicia Nacional Bolivariana) is a special corps organized by the Venezuelan State which includes the Military Reserve and the Territorial Militia responsible for supporting the Bolivarian National Armed Force in the integral defence of the Nation, in order to contribute to ensuring its independence and sovereignty.

It reports directly to the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Commander in Chief of the Bolivarian National Armed Force in all matters relating to operational aspects; as for administrative affairs, it shall report to the Minister of People's Power for Defence.

Its mission is to train, prepare and organize the people for the integral defence of the country, in order to supplement the operational readiness of the Bolivarian National Armed Force, contribute to maintaining internal order, security, defence and overall development of the Nation, with the purpose of contributing to the independence, sovereignty and integrity of the Nation's geographic spaces.

It is organized under a General Commander, a Deputy Commander, a Chief of Staff, an Inspector General, General Directors, General Director of Conscription and Readiness of Integral Defence, Groups, Military Reserve Battalions, Territorial Militia Units, Combat Bodies and operational and administrative offices as required.

It main missions are to:

**Bolivarian National
Militia Strength (2010)**
48,010

- Prepare, organize, equip, instruct, train and retrain the Bolivarian National Militia established.
- Create ongoing links between the National Armed Force and the Venezuelan people, so as to contribute to ensuring the overall defence of the Nation.
- Organize and train the Territorial Militia, to carry out the overall defence operations aimed at guaranteeing national sovereignty and independence.
- Provide the replacements necessary to supplement and reinforce active units of the Bolivarian Armed Force in its military operations.
- Coordinate the activities required for the conscription, according to the laws and regulations in effect.
- Keep the National Registry of Conscripts and prepare the regular annual contingents for the Bolivarian National Armed Force.
- Receive from Military Components, an updated record of professional military personnel who have completed the active duty service, as well as the record of licenced troops.
- Support the Operational Strategic Command in the elaboration and execution of the national integral defence plans and national mobilization.
- Participate and contribute to the development of military technology and industry.
- Guide, coordinate and provide support in its areas of competence to the Community Councils (Consejos Comunales) in order to contribute to the attainment of public policies.
- Contribute to, and advice on, the creation and consolidation of Integral Defence Committees of Community Councils, in order to strengthen civil-military relations.
- Collect, process and disseminate information from the Community Councils, public and private sector institutions, necessary for the elaboration of integral development plans, programs and projects for the Nation as well as national mobilization efforts.
- Coordinate with public and private sector bodies, entities and offices, the establishment and organization of the Reserve Combat Corps (Cuerpos Combatientes de Reserva).
- Oversee and train such combat corps, which shall operationally fall under the National General Command of the Bolivarian National Militia.
- Elaborate and keep an updated record of reserve personnel with residence in strategic defence regions including members of the Territorial Militia.

The Military Reserve:

The Military Reserve includes all Venezuelan men and women of adult age who have fulfilled the military service duty or may voluntarily join the Reserve Units or Combat Corps.

The Territorial Militia is composed of citizens, both men and women, who voluntarily organize themselves to fulfill the Integral Defence functions of the Nation, in accordance with the principle of co-responsibility between the State and civil society.

Both shall be registered by the General Command Headquarters (*Comandancia General*) of the Bolivarian National Militia, and shall thus act under its command and conduct.

Military Service

The Venezuelan people, according to the Constitution of the Republic, have the duty to register at the Military Registry, but the service is optional for one year.

It offers two modalities:

- Full-time: regular service performed in a continuous and uninterrupted way at operational and administrative military units established by the Bolivarian National Armed Force.
- Part-time: they stay in the barracks for a specific time, enabling them to study or have a job, thus ensuring their professional growth and economic and social stability for themselves and their families.

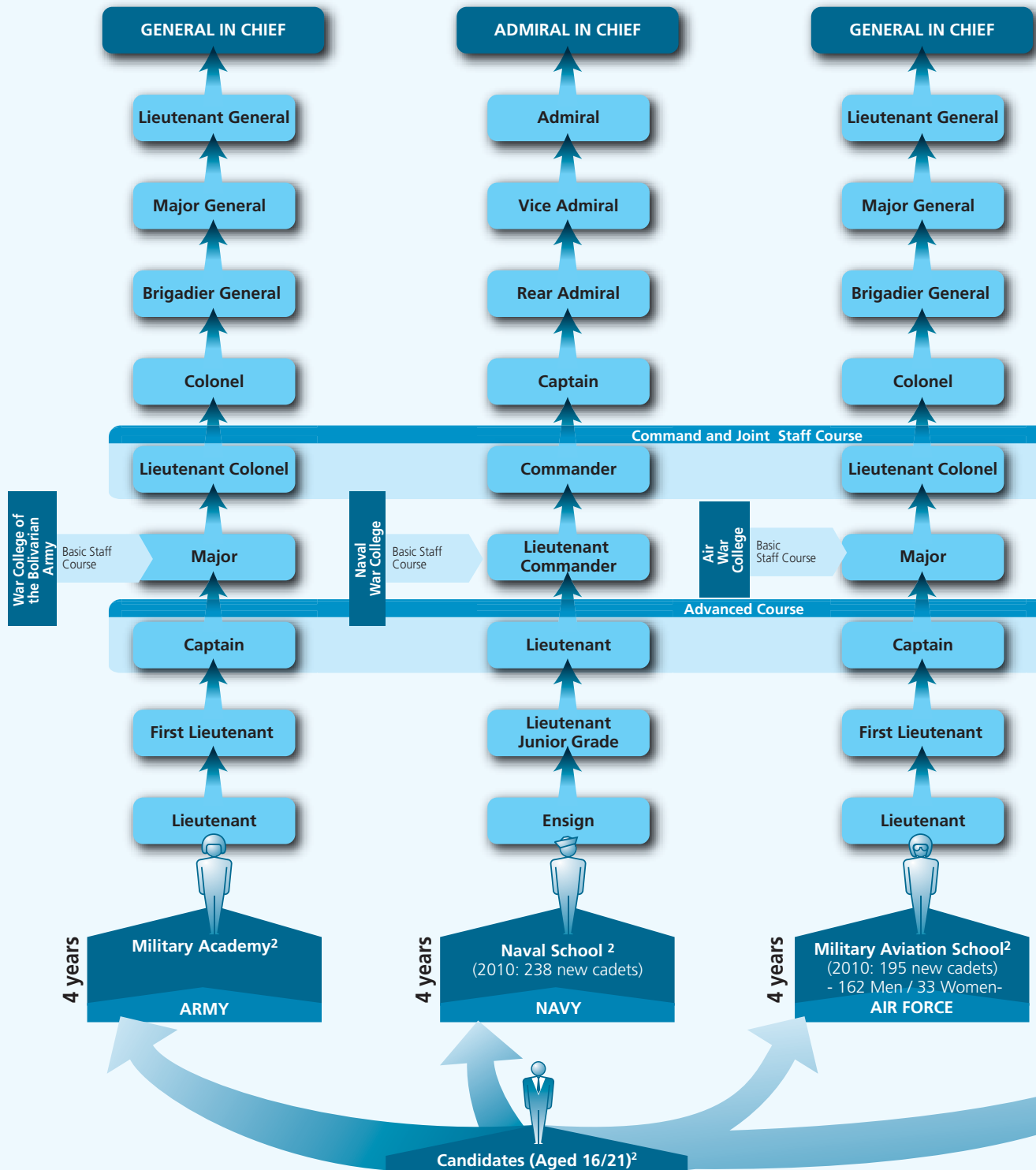
The military service can be provided at the Bolivarian Armed Force Components, the Bolivarian National Militia or at other units under the scope of the Ministry of the People's Power for Defence.

Source: *Ley de conscripción y alistamiento militar* (GO N° 5.933 – 2009/10/06), *Ley orgánica de la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana* (GO N° 5.891 - 2008/07/31. Last amendment: GO N° 5.933 - 2009/10/21), *Ley de presupuesto para el ejercicio fiscal 2010* and website of the Bolivarian National Militia.



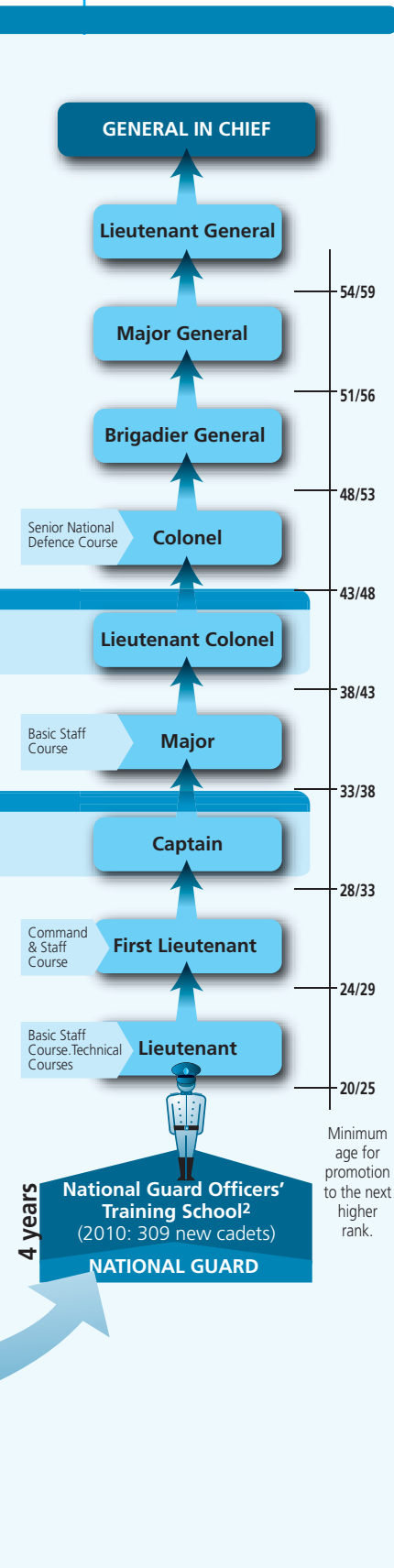
Military Career

Commissioned Officers' Career Path¹



1 Command corps includes officers who have been educated at military academies from the beginning of their professional careers. The graph makes a theoretical reconstruction of officers' promotion through the completion of mandatory courses. Further requirements for promotion have not been considered.
 2 The Bolivarian Military University has been created by Decree N° 7.662 - 2010/09/03. Said institution will be in charge of the National Bolivarian Armed Force education.
 3 The age of 16-21 has been considered for comparative purposes. Entry age varies depending on the services: Army: 16-21, Navy: 18-23, Air Force: 16-21. The minimum age for promotion will depend on the age of graduation from the appropriate military education institution.

Source: Compilation based on the *Ley Orgánica de la Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana* (GO N° 5.891 – 2008/07/31. Last reform: GO 5.933 – 2009/10/21). New cadets: Information provided by the Ministry of Defence website and the military academies.



Defence and National and International Community

Support Actions

The Bolivarian National Armed Force, in conjunction with national, state and city agencies, actively engages in the integral development of the Nation

Examples of actions undertaken in 2010

<p>Churuguara</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and dental checkups: 844. • Surgeries: 13. • Medicine distribution: 592. • Food at low prices: 21 tons, benefiting 3,200 people. 	<p>Santa Cruz de Bucaral</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and dental checkups: 520. • Medicine distribution • Food at low prices: 21 tons, benefiting 2,686 people..
<p>Tocópero</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and dental checkups. • Medicine distribution. • Food at low prices. 	<p>Borojó</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical services. • Food at low prices
<p>Boca de Aroa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and dental checkups: 100. • Medicine distribution: 145. • Food at low prices: 14 tons, 1,600 beneficiaries 	<p>Las Cumaraguas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and dental checkups. • Medicine distribution. • Cleaning of facilities at Basic School and ambulatory one. • Cleaning of Médano Caribe beach: 1,6 tons of solid waste collected. • In total, 1,200 people benefited.
<p>Puerto Cabello</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical and dental checkups. • Medicine distribution. 	<p>Alto Orinoco</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to 1,800 indigenous people from the Yanomami group. • Medical and dental checkups. • Medicine distribution. • Vaccination.

Defence of Natural Resources

The Armed Forces have the mission to protect strategic-interest industries including, most especially, the oil industry. Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. is the state-owned corporation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in charge of exploration, production, manufacturing, transport and sale of hydrocarbons.

Integral Defence System of the Orinoco Oil Basin

In March 2010, the Corporación Venezolana de Petroleo, an affiliate of Petroleos de Venezuela S.A., which controls and manages all business operations carried out with other national or foreign capital oil companies, announced that it is planning to implement an Integral Defence System for the Orinoco Oil Basin, with a view to provide for the security and sovereignty of the liquid hydrocarbon reserve source. A cross-functional team from the Operational Strategic Command of the Bolivarian National Armed Force and Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. was entrusted with the mission to design the pilot project.



Orinoco Oil Basin
One of the largest sources of liquid hydrocarbon reserves in the world, covering 55,314 km² and a current production area of 11,593 km².

	1989	1999	2009
	59	76	172

At present, Venezuela is the second world country in oil proven reserves, with 12.9% of total reserves in the world.

Counter-narcotics Actions

Anti-Narcotics Offices

Each of the Armed Forces components has an Anti-Narcotics Office, set up at the headquarters of their respective General Commands, which operate under the scope of the Inspection Division of each Force. Their mission is to provide support to the different units and internal offices regarding prevention, evaluation, treatment and investigation in relation to the illegal consumption, possession and trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances.

Service	Drug seizures (in kg)						Detenidos
	Cocaine	Marihuana	Heroine	Bazuco	Crack	Total	
National Guard	19,864.36	13,640.41	79.11	8.45	10.23	33,602.56	723
Navy	2,262.00	-	-	-	-	2,262.00	8
Army	40.00	-	-	-	-	40.00	5

Source: Ministry of the People's Power for Defence, the Ministry of People's Power for Energy and Oil, the Armed Forces and the National Anti-Drug Office. *British Petroleum Statistical Review of World Energy*, 2010.



Analisis:

Venezuela's Defence Sector: National and International Landmarks (2008-2010)

Francine Jácome

Executive Director of the Venezuelan Institute of Social and Political Studies (INVESP) and coordinator of the Venezuela Working Group of the Friedrich Ebert Regional Security Program.

Changes have been witnessed since 2008 in terms of initiatives undertaken by the Venezuelan government for the defence sector, both domestically as well as in the international arena, through various proposals and international participation. In the former case, the main highlights include legal reforms and military equipment procurement and, internationally, several proposals within the framework of the recently-created South American Defence Council (CDS) and concurrent inputs at the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples at Our Americas, *Alianza Bolivariana para Nuestros Pueblos de las Américas* or ALBA).

Over the last few years, a so-called *de facto* reform has been introduced through a series of laws adopted by the Presidency of the Republic, enabled by an Authorizing Act that empowers the Executive to legislate at certain periods, as well as by the National Assembly. This includes the adoption in July 2008 of the new Organic Law of the Bolivarian National Armed Force.

One of the most relevant changes has been the use of the term "Bolivarian", which has raised a debate around the substitution of the professionalization aspect for ideology, claiming that the military's acceptance and endorsement to the socialism project of the 21st century demonstrates the predominance of one concept over the other.

Another fundamental element has been the introduction of the Bolivarian National Militia, defined as a special body created to complement the Bolivarian National Armed Force (FANB), which includes the National Reserve, and the newly-created Territorial Militia. Some of the responsibilities of the militias include that of establishing the link between the FANB and the people

for the nation's defence; organize and train the Territorial Militia; coordinate, support and guide the work of the Community Councils¹, and contribute to the creation of the Community Councils' Defence Committees to strengthen civil-to-military relations. Furthermore, militias will play a role in compiling information from Community Councils, a duty that has been interpreted as an indirect way of assigning them intelligence tasks.

Other functions include preparing and organizing citizens for an integral defence, participating in alliances or coalitions with other countries' military for the purposes of integration –previously approved by the Assembly, cooperating for the preservation or reinstatement of public internal order, as well as designing a strategic development plan for the FANB in line with the national economic and social development plan. These transformations, coupled with others developed since 1999, have led to a considerable shift in civil-military relations, by assigning the military a new role while weakening civilian control. The design of defence and security policies is basically in the hands of an elite of active-duty and retired military and, in practice, considering all these mentioned roles, the military have an active participation in relevant aspects in the life of the country, including public administration, infrastructure, health, and key state-owned companies.

As for conflict scenarios, the need for the country to prepare for a scenario of asymmetrical warfare, likely to be headed by the United States, which could result in a military intervention, has been strongly maintained. In this sense, the proposed counteraction has been a so-

¹ Grassroots community organizations promoted by the central government.

called “war of all the people”. However, high-ranking government officials have recognized that the possibility of a direct intervention by the US is low and, therefore, they have widened the notion that such intervention could follow two modalities that could eventually be simultaneously implemented. The first mode would emanate from different domestic sectors, thus reinforcing the concept of the “internal enemy.” The second modality is associated with the assertion that the northern-hemisphere country could advance in a “surgical” action, as it did in Panama –the Noriega case- or help in the planning of a “magnicide”.

Faced with these scenarios, the Venezuelan government has developed, in the last couple of years, a military procurement strategy that, combined with that of other countries, has raised intense debate on whether a new “arms race” has been launched in the region, or whether it is merely a matter of reequipping the military. In this case, there are contradictions between conflict scenarios and the type of equipment acquired. The ruling government has insisted in that these purchases have a defensive purpose, basically to be used for a conventional offensive from an enemy with similar power, thus contradicting the hypothesis of a “war of resistance”.²

South American Council and ALBA

The South American Defence Council (CDS) was set up within UNASUR’s framework and has focused on establishing a mechanism for dialogue and conflict prevention, particularly during the first half of 2010. Participating governments have assumed commitments and, therefore, as in the case of the other member countries, the fundamental question is whether the Venezuelan government will deliver on such commitments; especially given the strained and conflictive relations with its neighbour, Colombia.

In January 2008, the Venezuelan government stated the need for creating a joint military force, as well as an ALBA’s defence council, which would allow a joint action in the event of a hypothetical aggression from the United States to one of the members of the Alliance.³ This, in turn, was reinforced by the government’s direction towards establishing an anti-American axis and its rapprochement with countries such as Iran, China, Russia, Syria, Libya and Belarus, among others.

These actions come as a response to the different perspectives on integration in general, and, more spe-

cifically, to security and defence. Ten years after taking the first steps towards integration of the twelve South American countries, UNASUR has prioritized political dialogue and focused on the defence matter. By contrast, four years after its creation, ALBA is raising the need for defence against imperialism. Its focus lies on the relationship between the region and the United States and on a joint response in the face of an aggression by the latter. During the VII Summit in Cochabamba (October 2009), a Permanent Committee for the Sovereignty and Defence of ALBA was created, for the purposes of defining a popular joint and integrated defence strategy and establishing the School of Dignity and Sovereignty of the Armed Forces of ALBA member countries, which could be considered a parallel institution to the recently-created UNASUR’s South American Center of Strategic Defence Studies, headquartered in Buenos Aires.

In conclusion, some of the short-term trends (2010-2011) could include:

At the domestic level:

- Strengthening of a narrow and authoritative idea of security based on statist and military response vis-à-vis a democratic perspective aimed at introducing non-state actors and civilian predominance in decision-making processes.
- Greater involvement of the military in the current political and economic elite of the country.
- Internal tension within the FANB between the sector accepting the political-partisan perspective and those upholding a professional and institutional vision of the Armed Force.
- Debates on civil-military relations, particularly in view of the increasing militarization of society.

At the international level:

- Intensification of the regional disintegration process, particularly as regards defence and security. For instance, it seems unlikely that confidence-building measures agreed upon in the last CDS meeting could be implemented in the short-term.
- Attempts to create a parallel institution through ALBA, although this will be impacted by the seemingly growing weakness of the Venezuelan government proposals in the international arena.
- Tension will remain between the Venezuelan Government and the Colombian and US governments, but within the framework of the pragmatism that differentiates rhetoric from trade relations.

² González, David (2009): *Las armas de la discordia*, *El Nacional*, Caracas, October 4, pg. 1-2-Siete Días.

³ Madero, Elinor (2008): *Chávez plantea creación de fuerza militar conjunta del ALBA*, *El Nacional*, January 28th, pg. 2.

