

Military Coverup: Washington alters US Air Force document to hide intentions behind military accord with Colombia

By [Eva Golinger](#)

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In an explicit attempt to hide Washington's military objectives in South America, a US Air Force document submitted to Congress in May 2009 that provoked deep concerns in the region has been modified and re-published on November 16, 2009. The official US Air Force document, revealed and denounced by this author on November 4th, explained the justification for a \$46 million request to improve the military installations in one of the seven bases Washington will occupy under the military accord signed on October 30th between Colombia and the United States. The modified document has eliminated all mention of war and military operations in the region, as well as offensive language directed at Colombia's neighbors, Venezuela and Ecuador. Nevertheless, Washington's intentions remain the same.

The original Air Force document dated May 2009 outlined the importance of the military base in Palanquero, Colombia to enable "full spectrum military operations" in South America. The original military document also detailed the necessity of investing \$46 million to improve the airfield, ramps and other essential installations on the base, converting it into a Cooperative Security Location (CSL) for US military missions in the region.

Original US Air Force document, May 2009:

"Establishing a Cooperative Security Location (CSL) in Palanquero best supports the COCOM's (Command Combatant's) Theater Posture Strategy and demonstrates our commitment to this relationship. Development of this CSL provides a unique opportunity for full spectrum operations in a critical sub-region of our hemisphere where security and stability is under constant threat from narcotics funded terrorist insurgencies, anti-US governments, endemic poverty and recurring natural disasters."

The US Air Force document dated November 16, 2009 and sent to the Congress under the title, "Addendum to reflect terms of the US-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement signed on 30 October 2009", alters the original controversial language, eliminating key terms and references that provoked grave concerns in the region. The November 16th Air Force document makes no mention of establishing a Cooperative Security Location (CSL) in Palanquero, Colombia, however it does consistently refer to Palanquero as a "location", retaining the original intentions. Furthermore, the monetary request is reduced by a mere \$3 million to \$43 million, evidencing that the original project remains almost 100% in tact. Congress had previously approved the initial \$46 million request made by the Pentagon last Spring, conditioning the funds on the final signing of the US-Colombia military accord, which

was solidified on October 30th. But the November 16th US Air Force document makes a clear attempt to disguise the original intentions by eliminating the provocative language referring to “full spectrum military operations in a critical sub-region...where security and stability is under constant threat from...anti-US governments.” That language in particular sparked immediate concerns and accusations regarding Washington’s intentions to utilize Colombia as a launching pad to attack countries such as Venezuela, considered erroneously “anti-US” by many.

The modified US Air Force document of November 16, 2009:

“This project at Palanquero best supports the Combatant Command’s (COCOM) Theater Posture Strategy and demonstrates our commitment to this relationship [with Colombia]. Development of this project provides a unique opportunity to support an important partner in a region of the western hemisphere where security and stability are under constant threat from narcotics funded terrorist insurgencies, endemic poverty and recurring natural disasters.”

The original US Air Force document identified Palanquero as the perfect place to enable the implementation of the US global mobility strategy because it “provides access to the entire South American continent.”

Original US Air Force document from May 2009:

“Palanquero is unquestionably the best site for investing in infrastructure development within Colombia. Its central location is within reach of...operations areas...its isolation maximizes Operational Security (OPSEC) and Force Protection and minimizes the US military profile. The intent is to leverage existing infrastructure to the maximum extent possible, improve the US ability to respond rapidly to crisis, and assure regional access and presence at minimum cost. Palanquero supports the mobility mission by providing access to the entire South American continent with the exception of Cape Horn...”

The modified document dated November 16, 2009 eliminates all references and language referring to the “mobility mission” and “access to the entire South American continent”. However, the global mobility strategy remains an official military policy and defense strategy of the Pentagon, evidenced in the White Paper: Global en Route Strategy of the Air Mobility Command of the US Air Force, and the Pentagon’s budget request and justification submitted in early 2009. Both documents specifically refer to the urgency and necessity of occupying the Palanquero base in Colombia in order to guarantee US global mobility for military operations and missions.

The modified US Air Force document of November 16, 2009 additionally erases all original language referring to Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance operations that would take place from the Palanquero base. Furthermore, all references to “regional access”, “theater security cooperation” and “expeditionary warfare capability” in the region have been eliminated.

Original US Air Force document, May 2009:

“Development of this CSL wil further the strategic partnership forged between the US and Colombia and is in the interest of both nations...A presence will also increase our capability to conduct Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), improve global reach,

support logistics requirements, improve partnerships, improve theater security cooperation and expand expeditionary warfare capability.”

Modified US Air Force document, 16 Noviembre 2009:

“Access to Colombia will further its strategic partnership with the United States. Palanquero is unquestionably the best site for investing in infrastructure development within Colombia. Its central location is within reach of counter narco-terrorist operations areas; the runway and existing airfield facilities will reduce construction costs; its isolation maximizes Operational Security (OPSEC) and Force Protection and minimizes the US military profile. The intent is to leverage existing infrastructure to the maximum extent possible, improve the US ability to respond rapidly to crises, and assure access and presence at minimum cost. The taxiway and ramp/apron areas are deficient and in their current configurations severely limit the operational capabilities of this location. Additionally, the operations and support facilities need to be expanded to service a wide array of aircraft that mutually agreed activities may entail.”

Despite the modifications to the US Air Force document more than six months after the original was sent to Congress, the intentions behind the US military agreement with Colombia remain the same. No evidence exists demonstrating a change in the Pentagon’s global mobility strategy – it is an official state policy included in the Global Defense Posture Strategy, in place at the present time. The military base in Palanquero, Colombia has been identified several times in different Pentagon documents as the perfect site – a unique opportunity – to guarantee continental access in South America, facilitating “full spectrum military operations” in Latin America.

Washington can try to erase its language regarding intentions of war, espionage and military operations in Latin America, but the US can’t erase the truth. The original US Air Force document from May 2009 remains the principal justification behind the US-Colombia military accord.

Original US Air Force document, May 2009 available here:

Original document in English:

http://www.centrodealerta.org/documentos_desclasificados/original_in_english_air_for.pdf

Traducción no oficial al español:

http://www.centrodealerta.org/documentos_desclasificados/traduccion_del_documento_de.pdf

Modified US Air Force document, 16 November 2009 original and translation available at:

http://www.centrodealerta.org/noticias/ultima_hora_washington_alte.html

This article is also published in Spanish. Español: http://www.centrodealerta.org/noticias/ultima_hora_washington_alte.html

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