

Brazil and Guatemala Cement Military Ties

Contributed by Nelson Motta
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Brazil and Guatemala signed an agreement to work together in the area of defense. The agreement, which will permit the exchange of information and experiences between the two countries with respect to military operations, was signed by diplomatic officials in the presence of president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the president of Guatemala, Óscar Berger.

The signing ceremony took place after an official luncheon offered to Berger in the Itamaraty Palace (the seat of the Ministry of Foreign Relations) on Monday, March 13.

According to the document, Brazil and Guatemala may work more closely in fields related to defense planning, research, and development, with support in the area of logistics and the acquisition of defense products and services.

Cooperation between the two countries may take the form of mutual visits by civilian and military missions, as well as exchanges involving teachers and students at military academies and visits to warships.

During their work meeting at the Itamaraty, the two presidents also discussed Brazil's technology for the production of biofuels, especially ethanol.

In their joint declaration, Lula and Berger state that Brazilian and Guatemalan ministers have already initiated conversations in the energy sphere to expand trade links and exchange experiences in the field of electricity generation by small hydroelectric plants and in the discovery and exploration of oil resources in Guatemala.

Regarding trade relations between Brazil and Guatemala, president Lula's summary demonstrated that there has been substantial growth. Lula said that trade between the two countries this year has exceeded all previous records.

"This year we broke a record, attaining US\$ 335 million. In January and February, Guatemala's exports to Brazil increased 300%. I know that Brazil still enjoys a favorable trade balance, but, in my Administration, a good trade relationship is one that works both ways, for us to sell our products and to buy, too, making trade between the two countries more balanced," Lula informed.

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