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FEATURED Q&A

What Will a U.S. Security Agreement Mean for Brazil?



Brazil and the United States this month agreed to enhance cooperation on anti-trafficking initiatives. U.S. President Donald Trump and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva are pictured last October in Malaysia. // File Photo: Brazilian Gov't via Flickr [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Q Brazil's government on April 10 announced a new security partnership with the United States to fight criminal networks and crack down on the trafficking of drugs and weapons. The agreement includes sharing data between Brazil's federal tax authority and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. What is driving Brazil and the United States to move forward with this agreement, and who are the main targets of the initiative? What does the agreement entail in practice, and to what extent will the sharing of financial data help the countries fight crime? What does the agreement suggest about the current state of Brazil-U.S. relations and where they may be headed?

A David Marques, program manager at the Brazilian Forum on Public Safety: "The agreement between Brazil and the United States signals that the two largest democracies in the Americas are willing to advance cooperation in addressing organized crime. Operational cooperation has existed for decades. What this initiative does is increase institutionalization and bring in new actors, such as Brazil's Federal Revenue Service and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Another key aspect of the agreement is its focus on arms trafficking. This is particularly relevant because recent seizures by Brazilian authorities show that a significant share of high-powered firearms originates in the United States. These weapons supply criminal organizations that seek to control territories, threaten markets and violate the rights of local populations. The agreement also facilitates the exchange of information to identify shipments containing weapons and drugs, allowing authorities to trace origins, destinations and actors involved,

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Mexican Military Captures Top Cartel Leader

Mexico's military on Monday captured Audias Flores Silva, also known as "El Jardinero," a top leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

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BUSINESS

China's CMOC Signs Deal With Ecuador for Gold Mine Project

China-based CMOC Group has signed a \$1.7 billion deal with Ecuador's government for the development of the Los Cangrejos gold mine. CMOC acquired the mine last June.

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ECONOMIC

Colombia Buys Back Debt Ahead of May 31 Election

Colombia's government has finalized a deal to buy back \$4.4 billion in debt in a bid to drive down borrowing costs, Colombian public credit director Javier Cuéllar announced on Monday.

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Cuéllar // File Photo: Nanolivita via Wikimedia Commons [CC BY 4.0](#).

POLITICAL NEWS

Mexican Military Captures Top Cartel Leader

Mexico's military on Monday captured Audias Flores Silva, a top leader of the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), the country's security secretary, Omar García Harfuch, announced in a post on social media site X. Flores Silva, known as "El Jardinero," or "The Gardener," for whom the United States had offered a \$5 million reward, was detained in the state of Nayarit, García Harfuch said. Flores Silva had been hiding in a ditch alongside a road near the community of El Mirador when he was captured, Mexican officials said Monday, the Associated Press reported. No one was killed or injured in the operation, Mexico's government said. Flores Silva's capture came two months after Mexican soldiers killed the cartel's leader, Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, also known as "El Mencho," in a shootout that left more than 70 people dead, including cartel members, soldiers and civilians. Flores Silva had been seen as a possible successor to Oseguera Cervantes, the AP reported. The operation that led to Flores Silva's capture on Monday involved more than 500 troops, six helicopters, several planes and months of surveillance, Mexico's navy said, Al Jazeera English reported. [Editor's note: See [Q&A](#) on the killing of Oseguera Cervantes in the March 5 issue of the Advisor.]

Mexico's Sheinbaum Warns U.S. Against Actions by CIA

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum told reporters Monday that she expects no further unauthorized action in Mexico by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency following an incident earlier this month in which two CIA operatives and two Chihuahua state police officials were killed in a car crash, Politico reported. "Let us

hope this is an exceptional case ... and that a situation like this never happens again," she said at her daily press conference regarding the crash. Mexico's government recently sent a diplomatic cable to the United States stating that U.S. officials are not to be present without authorization at anti-narcotics operations, Sheinbaum added, Reuters reported. The incident marked a disruption in what has been an otherwise relatively calm relationship between Mexico and the United States in the area of security cooperation under Sheinbaum and U.S. President Donald Trump, who took office within four months of one another, El Universal reported. Sheinbaum has long stated that while she welcomes intelligence sharing and cooperation with the United States, she strongly opposes U.S. agents or military forces being deployed in Mexico without the approval of Mexico's government, Reuters reported. Sheinbaum on Monday called for further investigation into the April 19 car crash; Chihuahua state Governor María Eugenia Campos, a prominent critic of Sheinbaum, is set to give testimony later today before Mexico's Senate, El Universal reported. The CIA has declined to comment on the matter, Politico reported.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Colombia Settles \$4.4 Billion in Debt Before Election

Colombia's government has finalized a deal to buy back \$4.4 billion in outstanding debt in a bid to drive down borrowing costs, Colombia's director of public credit, Javier Cuéllar, announced on Monday, Bloomberg News reported. The deal to buy back bonds, which was managed by Citigroup, is scheduled to close later today, Cuéllar said. The buyback represents 11 percent of Colombia's total outstanding dollar- and euro-denominated bonds, according to Bloomberg News. Earlier this month, Cuéllar said that Colombia's government would also "unwind" a \$9.4 billion return swap agreement that was signed last

NEWS BRIEFS

Lula, Flávio Bolsonaro Remain Deadlocked in Brazil Presidential Race

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and conservative challenger Flávio Bolsonaro remain deadlocked ahead of the country's October presidential election, according to a poll published today, Bloomberg News reported. Bolsonaro, the son of former right-ring president Jair Bolsonaro, had 47.8 percent support in the survey that AtlasIntel conducted for Bloomberg News. Lula had 47.5 percent. The slim gap falls well within the poll's margin of error of one percentage point.

Venezuela's Rodríguez Meets With Mottley in Visit to Barbados

Acting Venezuelan President Delcy Rodríguez met on Monday in Bridgetown with Mia Mottley, the prime minister of Barbados, to discuss economic cooperation between Venezuela and Barbados, the Associated Press reported. Rodríguez and Mottley discussed increasing tourism and bilateral trade between the two countries in the closed-door meeting, the AP reported. The trip marked Rodríguez's second trip to the Caribbean this month; she visited Grenada on April 9.

Shell Acquires Shale Oil Firm in Western Canada

Oil supermajor Shell has acquired ARC Resources, a Calgary-based shale oil and gas producer with operations in Alberta and British Columbia provinces, in a \$16.4 billion deal, Shell announced on Monday. ARC's natural gas production already feeds the LNG Canada export terminal along Canada's Pacific coast, of which Shell owns 40 percent, Reuters reported. Shell said the acquisition, which is expected to close in the second half of this year, will boost the firm's global daily oil and gas production capacity by 13 percent.

September sometime before Colombia's general election, Bloomberg News reported. Colombians head to the polls on May 31; the government of term-limited President Gustavo Petro is hoping to cool inflationary pressures and boost the candidacy of left-wing Senator Iván Cepeda, who is running for president with the support of Petro's Pacto Histórico party, Bloomberg News reported. Petro's has faced low approval for his handling of the economy; inflation in Colombia reached an 18-month high of 5.6 percent in March, which prompted the central bank last month to raise the country's benchmark interest rate by 100 basis points to 11.25 percent. Amid this, a poll from Invaer released on Sunday showed Cepeda leading all presidential candidates with 44.3 percent support in a first-round scenario, Reuters reported. The top-two right-leaning candidates, businessman Abelardo de la Espriella and Senator Paloma Valencia, combined for less support than Cepeda, with De la Espriella leading Valencia by a margin of 21.5 percent to 19.8 percent. A presidential candidate would need to receive 50 percent of the vote or more in the first round in order to avoid a runoff election, which is currently scheduled for June 21. Cepeda leads both De la Espriella and Valencia in runoff scenarios, Reuters reported.

BUSINESS NEWS

China's CMOC Signs Deal With Ecuador for Gold Mine Project

China-based CMOC Group has signed a \$1.7 billion deal with Ecuador's government for the development of the Los Cangrejos gold mine, Ecuador's environment and mining ministry said in a statement, Bloomberg News reported today. ODIN Mining del Ecuador, a subsidiary of the Chinese company, finalized the conditions for the development of the mine, which is located in Ecuador's El Oro province. CMOC took control of the mine last June through its acquisition of Canada-based Lumina Gold. The agreement between CMOC and the government

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and increasing the capacity to conduct more qualified criminal investigations against transnational organizations. This measure alone will not solve the problem, but it is a positive first step, especially from a preventive perspective. It should be followed by additional measures involving a broader set of institutional actors in both countries, particularly to address money laundering linked to these activities, and it should also engage other relevant regional actors."

A Robert Muggah, co-founder of Igarapé Institute: "Brazil and the United States' latest anti-crime partnership reflects a convergence of security interests, domestic pressures and diplomatic pragmatism, even after the recent diplomatic spat over expelled law-enforcement attachés. The episode underscores how police and intelligence cooperation can become entangled with wider disputes over sovereignty, reciprocity and domestic politics. Yet the dispute has not derailed a shared determination to step up the fight against organized crime. Both governments are alarmed by the scale and reach of transnational criminal networks, and both face pressure to show results in an election year. Security is high on the agenda ahead of Brazil's 2026 election, and cooperation with Washington helps Lula deflect criticism that he is soft on crime. In the United States, the political stakes are less central but still present, with crime, borders, drugs and migration likely to feature in the

will "accelerate the project's implementation," a spokesman for the Chinese company told Bloomberg News in a text message. The Ecuadorean government will receive approximately \$4.4 billion in economic benefits from the project, including royalties, patents, profits and tax revenues, the environment and mining ministry said, Bloomberg News reported. The Ecuadorean state will receive \$54 million in advance royalties, \$34 million of which is to be paid at the agreement's signing, Reuters

midterm campaign. The initiative targets not only criminal groups themselves, but also the transnational logistics and laundering structures that sustain them. Yet, a deeper tension lurks behind the deal. Washington is threatening to classify the criminal groups PCC and CV as foreign terrorist organizations, whereas Brasília strongly prefers to treat them as criminal syndicates to be weakened through policing, intelligence and financial disruption. Many on the Brazil-

“ Relations between Brazil and the United States are becoming more functional and pragmatic, even if sharp differences remain.”

— Robert Muggah

ian right, by contrast, would welcome the terrorist label. In practice, the agreement is a customs-and-intelligence pilot project. It centers on information-sharing between Brazil's federal tax authority and the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency. Brazilian officials say such exchanges have already helped uncover guns and drugs, including on routes from the United States to Brazil. This kind of cooperation can reveal recurring routes, suspicious counterparties

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reported. Other payments are connected to construction milestones, such as the start of mining operations and the launch of the mine's processing plant, Reuters reported. Under the agreement, Ecuador will retain 50 percent of the value of the project, the ministry added. Community opposition to mining projects, as well as regulatory changes and litigation, have frequently slowed the development of Ecuador's mining sector. Ecuador has two large-scale mining projects currently in operation.

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and fraudulent trade patterns. But while intelligence can disrupt trafficking and improve interdiction, it cannot dismantle entrenched criminal organizations, which are adept at shifting routes and laundering money through legitimate sectors. Diplomatically, the deal suggests that relations between Brazil and the United States are becoming more functional and pragmatic, even if sharp differences remain. Both appear willing to cooperate where their interests converge. The result is a bilateral relationship shaped less by grand strategy than by selective, transactional collaboration.”

A **Carolina Ricardo, executive director of Sou da Paz Institute:** “This agreement is relevant because it creates an agile mechanism to identify the illegal flow of weapons between the United States and Brazil. It establishes a system that allows, from the seizure of weapons or their parts, rapid communication between the two countries to trace the origin of these materials. In practice, this makes it possible to attack more intelligently the source of weaponry that supplies organized crime, especially in Brazil, where there is evidence that long guns and their components come from the United States. Thus, the agreement goes

beyond the simple application of criminal law. It means that when a seizure occurs in Brazil, U.S. authorities are quickly alerted to investigate the origin of these weapons and take action at the point of exit. It is, therefore, a concrete and effective tool to

“**The agreement goes beyond the simple application of criminal law.”**

– Carolina Ricardo

combat organized crime, and more strategic than symbolic measures such as the reclassification of criminal groups, as the U.S. government has threatened to do with the CV and the PCC. By focusing on tracking and international cooperation, it directly contributes to reducing the illegal flow of weapons and weakening the firepower of criminal organizations.”

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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Upcoming Events

Brazil's Digital Governance Moment

April 29, 2026 | 10:00 a.m. ET | Online

Nicaragua's Democratic Crisis: Consolidation of Authoritarian Rule and the Future of U.S. Policy

May 5, 2026 | 10:00 a.m. ET | Inter-American Dialogue



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