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SOUTHCOM donated 20 reconnaissance vehicles to the Colombian Army on December 2, 2021, the first of a total of 145 that will be delivered in the first half of 2022, to strengthen national security and the fight against narcotrafficking. (Photo: Colombian Army)

By Julieta Pelcastre/Diálogo

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The United States, through U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), donated 20 M1117 armored security vehicles (ASVs) to Colombia, the first of a total of 145 that will be delivered in the first half of 2022. The vehicles, set to join the Colombian Army's fleet, will contribute to strengthening national security and defense, the Colombian Ministry of Defense said in a statement. The handover took place on December 2, 2021, at the Buenavista Military Fort, in Guajira department.

"This cooperation guarantees mobility to face the threats of narcotrafficking and explosives, arms, and ammunition trafficking," Colombian Minister of Defense Diego Molano said at the handover ceremony. "Let the illegal armed groups, FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] dissidents and the ELN [National Liberation Army] know that their attempts to attack our soldiers, or to intimidate the population and cause displacement, will be fought with greater force."

In June 2021, FARC dissidents carried out a bombing attack with a truck against the Colombian Army's 30th Brigade, the Colombian National Police reported on Twitter.

High mobility

The new fleet of vehicles "offers incredible cost savings for the Colombian Army, and will improve the protection of soldiers while working in critical areas of the country," U.S. Ambassador to Colombia Philip Goldberg said. "These vehicles can be used for humanitarian or military operations," the U.S. Embassy added.

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The Colombian Army will deploy the SOUTHCOM-donated M1117 ASVs in the departments of Arauca, Norte de Santander, Cesar, and La Guajira, to strengthen the fight against narcotrafficking and organized crime. (Photo: Colombian Army)

Notable characteristics of the M1117 ASVs are their technology, interoperability, firepower, and high mobility through rough and extensive areas in less time, the Colombian Army reported. In addition, they can withstand impacts from mines and explosive devices. Their weapons include MK 19 grenade launchers, as well as M249 SAW and Browning M2HB machine guns, the Colombian newspaper El Tiempo reported.

More capabilities

As part of cooperation agreements, U.S. authorities donated two C-130 Hercules aircraft to the Colombian Air Force on September 20, with a load capacity of 16 tons and the ability to transport 110 soldiers, 64 paratroopers, and 72 stretchers, the Colombian magazine Semana reported.

On April 17, five UH1H Bell Huey helicopters that the U.S. government donated to eradicate illicit crops joined the Colombian Army, the Colombian news portal RCN reported.



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