

# Argentina Militarizing Fight Against Crime with Help from US, Israel

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Argentina's government is cooperating with the United States and Israel as it pushes ahead with an increasingly militarized approach to internal security, despite the uneven track record this type of strategy has had in other Latin American countries.

During an official visit to [Argentina](#) on August 4, US Secretary of State John Kerry [spoke](#) about the United States and [Argentina's](#) "revitalized efforts to cooperate in the arenas of security and peacekeeping," calling organized crime and drug trafficking "one of our priorities."

Kerry announced that the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs was "immediately" dedicating \$1.5 million in assistance to [Argentina](#) to support a "law enforcement and criminal justice sector reform initiative." According to [data](#) compiled by the research organization Security Assistance Monitor, that figure is approximately equal to the total amount of US security aid to [Argentina](#) for the past three years combined.

Kerry also said that the United States had recently accepted "more than a dozen Argentine participants in the State Department's International Law Enforcement Academy," adding that "cooperation between us is absolutely going to intensify in the coming months."

In another sign of increasing security cooperation between the two nations, the United States recently [approved](#) the sale of up to two dozen military aircraft to [Argentina](#), similar to those pictured to the right. The \$300 million package would be the [largest US arms sale to Argentina](#) in more than a decade, according to Security Assistance Monitor's data.

Kerry's comments come several months after US President Barack Obama traveled to [Argentina](#) for a visit that included the signing of [several](#) bilateral security cooperation agreements.

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President Mauricio Macri's administration has also been deepening its security relationship with Israel, [La Nación](#) recently [reported](#).

According to unnamed foreign ministry officials cited by the news outlet, [Argentina](#) has established an agreement to share "sensitive information" with the Israeli government, and Security Minister Patricia Bullrich recently traveled to Tel Aviv to participate in a conference on cyber and internal security.

[La Nación](#) also indicated that Argentine officials have discussed security cooperation deals with their Spanish and Brazilian counterparts.

These developments coincide with an expansion of the military's role in [Argentina's](#) internal security scene, as exemplified by [recent cooperation](#) between the military and police on security operations in border areas.



At an annual dinner event on July 31 celebrating the armed forces, President Mauricio Macri echoed [previous statements](#) calling for the military to play a greater part in the fight against crime.

"Argentiniens need an active participation by the [armed] forces," Macri said in a speech [reported](#) by La Nación. "In order to grow, to develop ourselves and to generate employment, there has to be peace and tranquility."

However, Macri's administration has been careful to cast the military in the role of providing support to law enforcement, rather than directly carrying out crime-fighting operations. According to Defense Minister Julio Martínez, Argentine law [prohibits](#) the armed forces from assuming a direct role in internal security.

## InSight Crime Analysis

The Macri administration's apparent desire to deepen cooperation with Israel and the United States on security matters raises a number of concerns, especially when viewed in conjunction with the ongoing militarization of the country's anti-crime efforts.

For one, militarized security policies like the US-backed [Plan Colombia](#) and [Merida Initiative](#) have [far from perfect](#) track records. In fact, some evidence suggests that deploying the military to fight crime can [actually increase violence](#), rather than making citizens safer.

Additionally, members of the military are trained to eliminate opposing forces. They are not typically trained to protect civilians' rights or to carry out complex investigations that lead to arrests and prosecutions. Some security experts have [suggested](#) that this could be the reason that militarized internal security strategies are often accompanied by human rights abuses.

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In the Argentine case, such concerns take on added relevance given the country's apparent desire to cooperate closely with the United States and Israel -- two countries whose internal security forces have repeatedly been [condemned](#) for their use of militarized policing tactics that critics say lead to violations of citizens' rights. [Argentina's](#) history of at times brutal military dictatorships may also be relevant.

Nevertheless, there appears to be substantial support among the Argentine people for more militarized security policies. Perceptions of insecurity are [on the rise](#) in [Argentina](#), a factor that likely contributed to Macri's election given that a "tough on crime" approach was a key plank in his campaign platform. Moreover, a 2014 survey by the Latin American Public Opinion Project found that [more than 60 percent](#) of Argentines supported the idea of involving the military in anti-crime operations.