



# Commanding General of the [Brazilian] Army Denies Possibility of Military Intervention

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**Editor's Note:** *Until fairly recently, one of the historic recurring features of many countries in Latin America has been the tendency for the military to seize power and establish military dictatorships during periods of perceived instability and unrest, unfortunately often aided and abetted by the United States for its own political purposes. However, as the various nations have become more cosmopolitan in their global connections and matured their democratic institutions and economies, including the values and internal character values of the militaries themselves, military coups have largely become a thing of the past. Irrespective, during periods of rising domestic uncertainty in some countries, there are still voices that emerge calling for active military intervention into the province of civilian rule to ensure security, order, and calm. Recently, Brazil has been facing a tumultuous political crisis as many of its democratic institutions have coalesced around an effort to impeach and remove from office President Dilma Rousseff on charges of corruption and abuse of office. One result has been calls in some quarters of Brazilian society for the Brazilian military to seize power and prevent civil unrest as supporters of the president from potentially clashing with detractors demanding her removal. It is against this background that the recent comments of the current commander of the Brazilian Army, General Eduardo Villas Bôas, are salient. They may be a possible metric of how the region's militaries now perceive their role relative to the other institutions of democratic governance as compared to what the perceived role was in previous eras.*

**T**he commanding general of the [Brazilian] Army, General Eduardo Villas Bôas, today (19 April 2016) rebutted the possibility of the Armed Forces intervening in the country as a result of the current political crisis. The declaration was made during a speech about Army Day, at the private university Centro Universitário de Brasília (UniCeub).

“The Armed Forces do not exist to watch over the government, nor to knock down governments. We have to contribute to the legitimacy of government, creating the conditions in which such institutions continue working and finding ways to overcome what we are experiencing. We have seen that the [political] clashes have been vicious, but the institutions are working,” he said.

Villas Bôas stated that the military intervention of 1964 was an error of the Armed Forces. “Brazil from the 1930’s to 1950 was the country that grew most in the world, with Getúlio [Vargas] and Juscelino [Kubistchek]. With the military governments of the 1970’s and 1980’s, we committed an error. We allowed the division of the Cold War to affect us, which resulted in our country that had come about with a sense of progress losing cohesion,” he assessed.

The military overthrow of March 31, 1964, led Brazil to the Republic’s longest period of interruption to demo-



(Photo by Tiago Corrêa - Dircom/ CMM [Diretoria de Comunicação - Câmara Municipal de Manaus])

Gen. Eduardo Dias da Costa Villas Bôas, commanding general of the Brazilian Army, meets with fellow officers and civilian staff on 26 March 2014.

cratic development. Remembered as “the years of lead,” the period of the dictatorship was marked by the cancellation of civil rights, control of the press, violent repression of popular demonstrations, torture, and assassinations.

### **United to Get Out of the Crisis**

With respect to current times, Villas Bôas exhorted national unification to confront the crisis. “We have to recuperate national cohesion, place the interests of the country, the nation, above all these squabbles that dominate the current day to day environment. Concerning 1964, there were two basic differences, first was the Cold War period, with extreme positions; and, in 1964, the country did not count on well established democratic institutions. Today, our country has developed institutions; institutions with weights and counterweights that remove the necessity of being supervised,” the commanding general emphasized.

The general also denied rumors that President Dilma Rousseff considered decreeing a state of emergency in the country. “In Congress, some representatives spoke on this subject. On the president’s part, there was no such initiative. It would be a comprehensive measure, but

difficult to be implemented. With difficulty, she would be able to implement it, but it would create an extreme situation. It would impede demonstrations and would appoint the Army to be employed in activities where public forces are not able to do security,” he explained.

In his closing comments, Villas Bôas said that it is necessary to find ways to overcome the country’s political crisis. “We are sure that the society is capable of overcoming this crisis, which is of an economic, political and ethical nature. [However] we have seen that all the parameters are fading away and we are losing our ethical and esthetic references, and the discussions we see about finding ways to overcome the crisis worry me. These discussions do not have depth; they remain in the economic field. It worries me that deeper things—the [ethics at the] foundation of our country—are not being considered.”

During the speech, the commanding general of the Army highlighted the performance of [Brazilian] military personnel in areas such as the Amazon and Haiti, in addition to the intellectual involvement of the force in solving questions of national security as well as contributions to the scientific and technological development of strategic projects. ■