

# BOLIVARIAN REVOLUTION'S ARMS BUILD-UP

## *El armamentismo de la Revolución Bolivariana*

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**Abstract:** Since 1999, Venezuela has developed a sustained process of purchase of offensive weapons with high firepower. These weapons systems give Venezuela an important regional strategic advantage. This process occurs whether or not it is officially recognized by the revolutionary political leadership. The central goal of this paper is to show in, as much as possible detail, the development of this process and the immediate consequences that it may have in the area of influence of Venezuela.

**Key words:** Venezuela, Arms Race, Militarism, Military Forces.

**Resumen:** A partir de 1999, Venezuela ha desarrollado un proceso sostenido de compra de armas ofensivas con alto poder de fuego. Estos sistemas de armas le dan a Venezuela una importante ventaja estratégica regional. Todo ello ha ocurrido más allá de que haya sido oficialmente reconocido por la dirección política revolucionaria. El objetivo central de este ensayo es mostrar, en la mayor medida posible, el desarrollo de la situación descrita y las consecuencias inmediatas que puede tener en el área de influencia venezolana más cercana.

**Palabras claves:** Venezuela, Carrera armamentista, Militarismo, Fuerzas Armadas.

## **Introduction**

Venezuela imported more weapons than the first military power in the world between 2005 and 2006. According to data from *The Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily of the Global Information System*, Venezuela imported weapons in a total sum of US \$ 3,174,000,000 in



those years while the United States imported weapons for a total of US\$ 1,052,000,000.<sup>1</sup> Of course, it needs to be noted that the most of US weaponry is produced by domestic factories. What were the reasons for this rearmament? Former President Chávez said why his government was spending so much money on weapons in a speech delivered in 2004. He said verbatim at that time that no army is sustained with a defensive strategy.<sup>2</sup> Namely, he made it clear that this rearmament of the Venezuelan Armed Forces has an offensive goal. In other words, the main goal which the Venezuelan State seeks with this rearmament is to turn Venezuela into a military power capable of altering the correlation of military forces in the immediate area of influence of Venezuela (Andean and Caribbean region) and provide the country with sufficient military capability to project into strategic terms beyond their borders and to militarily defend the Bolivarian Revolution and the political allies of the Venezuelan government if necessary. For these reasons, Venezuela has purchased primarily offensive weapons.

On the other hand, since the mid-fifties of the last century, it has been the policy of the Venezuelan State to buy weapons from different suppliers around the world (British, French, Israeli, Italian, Belgian, etc.). U.S.A. has not been the only supplier of weapons to Venezuela and maybe it has never been the most important one. With this in mind it is valid to say that the process of Venezuelan rearmament has nothing to do with the weapons embargo that the U.S. imposed on Venezuela since 2006. In any case, since 2005, for example, former President Chávez made it clear that the U.S. is the main enemy of Latin American countries.<sup>3</sup> In closing, it is obvious that no one sells weapons to its worst enemy and that no one buys weapons from its main enemy.

In the following pages, I will try to explain this process of purchases of weapons developed by the Venezuelan Government during the Bolivarian Revolution and I will try to

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<sup>1</sup> Narela Acosta Ramírez y Celina Carquez. «Venezuela es el mayor comprador de armas en América Latina». *El Nacional*. Caracas, February 21, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Mario Carratú Molina (2005). *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, para la defensa, de ocupación y expedicionarias: a la luz de la Nueva Doctrina Militar del Gobierno*. [http://www.urrut.org/papers/2005\\_varios/MICM\\_RESUMEN\\_EJECUTIVO\\_GSL\\_12\\_Texto\\_final\\_charla\\_Mcabo%5B1%5D.pdf](http://www.urrut.org/papers/2005_varios/MICM_RESUMEN_EJECUTIVO_GSL_12_Texto_final_charla_Mcabo%5B1%5D.pdf) Accessed: March 27, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Hugo Chávez. «Condiciones políticas de la integración militar latinoamericana». Heinz Dieterich (ed.). *La Integración Militar del Bloque Regional de Poder Latinoamericano*. Caracas: Instituto Municipal de Publicaciones Alcaldía de Caracas, 2005. pp. 7-25.



explain the character of these weapons systems: the majority of these weapons are offensive in nature. In other words, the Venezuelan Government did not tell the truth when it said that these weapons are only defensive weapons and that it just wanted to change the obsolete weapons systems. I will also try to show that Venezuela has diversified its sources of supply and the type of weaponry acquired: Venezuela already not buys weapons from the U.S.A. Now, Russia, China and Spain are the major sellers of weapons to Venezuela.

### **What kind of weapons has Venezuela bought?**

Since 1999, Venezuela has steadily developed a large and expensive weaponry purchasing program so much so that the country increased its weapons purchases by more than 500% between 2002 and 2006 and it was the fifteenth largest weapons importer in the world and the first in South America in 2012.<sup>4</sup> This process has two faces. First of all, the Venezuelan Government has diversified its supplier sources. In the second instance, the Venezuelan Government has also diversified the type of armaments purchased, giving special priority to the purchase of offensive weapons systems. That is to say the Venezuelan Government has been buying weapons that give a regional strategic advantage to the Venezuelan Armed Forces. By doing so, it has tried to change the correlation of military forces in the region by increasing the quantity and quality of its weapons.

In the context of this policy, Venezuela bought from Russia twenty four fighter-bomber aircrafts SUKHOI 30MK2 (SU-30). The unit cost of these aircrafts was US\$ 45,000,000 for a total of US \$ 1,080,000,000. To assess the magnitude of this contract we must take into account several elements. First, these aircrafts were purchased in 2006. Second, the Venezuelan central government budget was approximately Bs. 87.2 billion in that year. Third, the official exchange rate of the period was Bs. 2.15 per US\$. After making the appropriate calculations, we can observe that in the purchase of the SU-30, the Venezuelan government spent almost 3% of its budget in 2006. In any event, that expenditure was absurd for a country like Venezuela that is at peace with its neighbors. Israel, for example, spends

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<sup>4</sup> Isafas Bello. «Rusia proveyó 66% del armamento que compró Venezuela desde 2008». *El Nacional*. Caracas, March 19, 2013.



about nine percent of its GDP on defense every year and everyone knows that the State of Israel has been at war against multiple enemies since its creation.

The military experts consider SUKHOI aircrafts among the most advanced of its kind worldwide and they certainly are offensive weapons. A SU-30 aircraft can fly at a speed of 2,550 km/h and has capacity for autonomous flight of 3,000 km without refueling and 5,500 km with refueling. This means that a SU-30 can go from Caracas to Havana in 70 minutes, to Managua in 80 minutes, to Bogota in 40 minutes, to Quito in 60 minutes and to La Paz in 80 minutes and punish their targets without having to refuel in action. A SU-30 could detect a target the size of a truck at 100 km and a group of tanks from 75 km away. Similarly, in the air-to-air mode, a SU-30 could simultaneously track 10 targets and can load more than 8,000 kg of cutting-edge weaponry. Among these weapons are air-to-air long-range missiles (160 km), air-to-surface long-range missiles (230 km) and remote control bombs of 500 kg. Considering all of the above, it becomes immediately obvious to anyone what the strategic idea of the Venezuelan Government was. The covert reason: the theater of operations is not only in Venezuela, it may be in the Caribbean, in Central America or in The Andes. In April 2014, the Venezuelan Defense Minister announced the purchase of more SUKHOI aircrafts.<sup>5</sup> In this case, a more advanced model: SUKHOI 35 (SU-35). Indeed, in July 2012, former President Chavez said:

He enviado el mensaje al gobierno ruso que estamos interesados en evaluar la posibilidad de adquirir en los próximos años una flota de Sukhoi 35 para seguir modernizando y fortaleciendo el poderío militar defensivo de Venezuela (...) Con esa independencia asegurada, bien defendida, bien garantizada continuar logrando la Venezuela nueva, la patria nueva, el horizonte nuevo (...) Quien se podía imaginar que nosotros íbamos a tener el avión de caza más moderno del mundo y ahí lo tenemos.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> José M. Ybarra. «Venezuela considera la compra de cazabombarderos Sukhoi». <http://www.venezueladefensa.com/2014/04/venezuela-considera-la-compra-de.html> Accessed: June 24, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Sandra Izarra. «Gobierno venezolano está interesado en adquirir flota de aviones SU-35». *Correo del Orinoco*. Caracas. July 18, 2012 <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/nacionales/gobierno-venezolano-esta-interesado-adquirir-flota-aviones-su-35/> Accessed: July 15, 2014. Translation: ...«I have sent the message to the Russian government that we are interested in evaluating the possibility of acquiring in the next years a fleet of Sukhoi 35 to continue modernizing and strengthening the military defensive power of Venezuela (...) With that independence assured, well defended, well guaranteed to continue achieving the new Venezuela, the new homeland, the new horizon (...) Who could imagine that we would have the most modern fighter aircraft in the world and there we have it»...



In addition to the SUKHOIS, Venezuela also bought from Russia more than sixty combat helicopters. These helicopters are models MI-17V5, MI-35M and MI-26T. The MI-17V5 has a cruising speed of 250 km/h, can carry four tons of cargo, has a flight range of 590 km and can carry up to thirty-six soldiers with all their weaponry. This helicopter can load 1,500 kg of weapons which include 57 mm rockets, conventional bombs, antitank 9M 17 PHALANGA missiles and IGLA air-to-air missiles. The MI-35M is also known by the nickname «flying tank» (it is shielded against light weapons). The MI-35M proved to be very effective during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1978-1992). In fact, it was one of the weapons that caused severe casualties to the Afghani rebels. For this reason, the Muslim insurgents had a saying: ...«we don't fear the Russians, but we fear their helicopters»...<sup>7</sup> This rotary-wing aircraft has a YAKUSHEV-BORZOV machine-gun caliber 12.7 mm (YB 12.7), four launchers with thirty-two rockets of 57 mm each and four anti-tank guided missiles.

The MI-26T is the world's largest helicopter. It can carry 20 tons of cargo and up to eighty soldiers with all their weaponry. This helicopter has capacity for autonomous flight of 800 km and it can fly 1,900 km with auxiliary tanks of fuel. The weapons experts agree that these helicopters (MI-17V5, MI-35M and MI-26T) have great offensive capabilities. Certainly, these helicopters can penetrate in areas of difficult access and have great fire power. There's no doubt about the versatility, scope and performance of these rotary-wing aircrafts. Among the strategic allies of the Venezuelan Government, the Cuban Air Force and the Nicaraguan Air Force have these same types of helicopters. Each of these helicopters that Venezuela bought from Russia in 2006 had an estimated cost of US\$ 15,000,000. That is, the total contract was worth US\$ 900,000,000. In comparison, the budget of the largest Venezuelan university (Universidad Central de Venezuela) was US\$ 360,858,729 in 2014 (official exchange rate: Bs. 6.30 per US\$). The conclusion is obvious: in this case, the Venezuelan government repeated the same nonsense observed with the SU-30 aircrafts.

Regardless of all the weapons mentioned above, as reported by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Venezuela also bought the following weapons

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<sup>7</sup> Bill Ardolino. «Soviet workhorses, ISAF training form the backbone of a developing Afghan Air Force». *The Long War Journal*, August 20, 2010. [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/08/soviet\\_workhorses\\_tr.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/08/soviet_workhorses_tr.php)  
Accessed: June 23, 2014.



from Russia during the presidencies of Chávez and Maduro: 2,000 IGLA-SN missiles; 1,000 9M 117 Bastion missiles; 150 R-73 missiles; 100 R-27 missiles; 50 Kh-29 missiles; 50 Kh-31 missiles; 50 Kh-59 missiles; 550 missile systems SA-3B Goa; 200 missile systems S-A N-6 Grumble; 200 KAB-500 guided bombs; 123 BMP-3 combat vehicles; 114 8x8 vehicles BTR-80A; 92 tanks T-72 M1; 40 self-propelled artillery pieces 2S19 MSTA; 24 multiple rocket launchers BM-21 Grad; 20 missile launchers 9M317; 24 mortars 2S11 of 120 mm; 18 self-propelled mortars 2S23 Nona SVK; 11 air defense systems S-125 Pechora 2M; 5 defense systems S-300PMU-1; 1 missile systems 9K40 BUK and 12 rocket launchers BM-9A52 SMERCH.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the Bolivarian Revolution has been negotiating with Russia to buy even more weapons. For example: ANTONOV An-74 aircrafts (tactical transport aircrafts), ILYUSHIN Il-76 aircrafts (heavy transport aircrafts) and Mil Mi-28 helicopters (helicopter gunships, especially used as anti-tank weapons).<sup>9</sup> Since 2007, Venezuela is negotiating with Russia to buy submarines of Project 877 VARSHAVYANKA or Project 636 VARSHAVYANKA, considered by experts in military affairs among the best diesel-powered submarines in the world. These submarines are designed to attack from a distance without having to penetrate enemy defense lines.<sup>10</sup> Some researchers think that the aim of the Venezuelan leadership is to acquire a total of nine submarines of this type. This would allow Venezuela to build the biggest submarine fleet in Latin America and the South Atlantic.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Venezuela bought from Russia 100,000 Kalashnikov 103 (AK-103) assault rifles; 5,000 DRAGUNOV sniper rifles and 74,000,000 7.62 x39 mm rounds in 2005. This purchase included the spare parts for rifles, manuals, several simulators for training rifle shooting and accessories for rifles, such as bayonets and magazines of cartridges. The contract also included the installation of a factory in Venezuela to produce 25,000 AK-103 and 70 million of rounds of ammunition per year. The cost of this factory was estimated at

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<sup>8</sup> Isaías Bello. *op.cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Paul Holtom, Mark Bromley and Pieter D. Wezeman. «International arms transfers». *SIPRI Yearbook 2007*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Arcangel Vulcano (2007). *Chávez confirma la compra de cinco submarinos rusos*. <http://epicentrohispánico.blogspot.com/2007/06/chvez-confirma-la-compra-de-cinco.html> Accessed: March 23, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Clarín. «Chávez compra 9 submarinos y tendrá la mayor flota de la región». *Clarín.com*. February 25, 2007. <http://edant.clarin.com/diario/2007/02/25/elmundo/i-02001.htm> Accessed: March 23, 2009.



US\$ 300,000,000 at contract signing.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, by now, it hasn't started producing ammunition but the Venezuelan Military Company (CAVIM) has assembled 3,000 AK-103 and produced several shipments of gunshot grenades GRLA PB-40 of 40 mm (these grenades are complements of AK-103).<sup>13</sup> The production of these rifles and ammunition in Venezuela worries other Latin American countries because the AK is the more used weapon by subversive groups like the FARC and ELN. SIPRI has warned that in Africa and Latin America the illegal flow of weapons in a country is a threat to the national security of other countries. In view of this situation we must remember that, in the past, Colombian guerrillas came to use assault rifles called Light Automatic Rifle (FN FAL) produced by the Belgian armaments manufacturer which initially belonged to the Venezuelan Armed Forces. That is, if proper control measures are not taken, the smuggling of AK-103 and 7.62 x 39 mm ammunition from Venezuela to Colombia could aid the Colombian guerrillas.

The plan of reinforcement of Venezuelan air power also included the purchase of KARAKORUM 8 (K-8) aircrafts from the People's Republic of China. The K-8 was developed jointly by China and Pakistan. It is a two-seater plane that reaches a height of 40,000 feet and has an operating radius of 400 km. The K-8 has autonomy of flight of 1,450 km without external fuel tanks and it can reach 1,900 km with external fuel tanks. The K-8 is a training aircraft that can also be used for air-to-air combat and in support of operations to ground troops (air-to-ground combat).<sup>14</sup> Venezuela had bought twenty seven K-8 until October 2013 at the price of each K-8 at US\$ 10,000,000 for a total of US\$ 270,000,000 spent on these aircrafts to date.

On the other hand, Venezuela (the Bolivarian Revolution) also bought the following weapons from China: 100 missiles PL-5E (air-to-air); 7 radars JYL-1 (at least) and 9 radars JY-11 (at least) and eight Y8 aircrafts. The price of each Y8 was US\$ 37,500,000. That is to

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<sup>12</sup> Francine Jácome. «Venezuela 2006: avances en la doctrina de seguridad y sus impactos regionales». Carlos Romero (ed.). *Venezuela en el contexto de la seguridad regional*. Caracas: Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales, 2007. pp.81-104.

<sup>13</sup> CEH. «CAVIM inicia entrega de fusiles de asalto Kalashnikov AK-103 a la Fuerza Armada de Venezuela». *INFODEFENSA*. June 3, 2013. <http://www.infodefensa.com/latam/2013/06/03/noticia-cavim-inicia-entrega-de-fusiles-de-asalto-kalashnikov-ak-103-a-lafuerza-armada-de-venezuela.html> Accessed: July 31, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Yajaira Jaimes. «K-8. Poderosos entrenadores básicos muy pronto en Venezuela». *Ámbito Cívico-Militar*. Número 19, 2008. pp. 22-23.



say, Venezuela paid for these aircrafts a total of US\$ 300,000,000. For comparison the purchase of these aircrafts equals to the annual basic education expenditure of the Venezuelan government for 132,567 students (2,263 U.S. dollars per child). The Y8 aircrafts can load up to 20 tons of war material or over 80 paratroopers with all their weapons and they have a flight range of 7:30 hours among other features. The Commander General of Venezuelan Aviation explained the strategic objective of these aircrafts as capable to fly all over South America and even Spain.<sup>15</sup>

Incidentally, President Maduro traveled to China and negotiated the purchase of fifteen additional aircrafts (K-8) at the end of 2013. On that occasion, he also began negotiating to buy more than one hundred riot control vehicles, infantry weapons, tactical vehicles and troop transport vehicles. In total, Venezuela was willing to buy from China weapons totaling US\$ 700,000,000 in 2014.<sup>16</sup> The rationale for the purchase of the weapons of internal control pointed out, like NORINCO riot control vehicles (VN-4 armored vehicles), popularly known in Venezuela as «tanquetas» and manufactured by China North Industries Corporation, was clearly demonstrated in 2014 and 2017. These weapons served as the main element of the government's strong repression against the popular demonstrations of those moments. In this regard, it is important to remember that the governments of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro bought tons of tear gas pumps from Chinese (NORINCO), Russian, Brazilian (CONDOR TECNOLOGÍAS) and Spanish (FALKEN) companies. For example, the Brazilian company sold to Venezuela 143 tons of riot ammunition between 2008 and 2011. The cost of this operation was US\$ 6,500,000.<sup>17</sup> Venezuela paid to China US\$ 40,000 a day for tear gas pumps during 2017.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> AVN. «Venezuela fortalece su aviación militar con aviones de carga chinos Y-8». *Correo del Orinoco*. Caracas, November 26, 2010. <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/nacionales/venezuela-fortalece-su-aviacion-militar-aviones-carga-chinos-y-8/> Accessed: July 27, 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Frank Lopez Ballesteros. «Venezuela expande su lista de compras militares con China». *El Universal*. Caracas, February 16, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Nelson Bocaranda. «Los runrunes de Bocaranda de hoy 16.05.2017». *Runrun.es*. Caracas, May 15, 2017. <http://runrun.es/runrunes-de-bocaranda/runrunes/309480/los-runrunes-de-bocaranda-de-hoy-16-05-2017-alto-mas-inhabilitaciones.html> Accessed: July 4, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Sabrina Martín. «Venezuela compra 23 toneladas de bombas lacrimógenas a empresa de Brasil». *PANAM.POST*. June 15, 2017. <https://es.panampost.com/sabrina-martin/2017/06/15/venezuela-compra-bombas-lacrimogenas-brasil/> Accessed: July 4, 2017.





Venezuela also bought forty-eight DA42 Multi-Purpose Platform (DA42MPP) aircrafts for border surveillance (day and night) from Austria between late 2008 and late 2013.<sup>19</sup> These aircrafts have a gyro-stabilized POLYTECH Cobalt 350 turret equipped with TV camera and forward-looking infrared and they can communicate (images and data) in real time with land units through its Scotty Satcom communications satellite system. These aircrafts are perfectly suited for jungle areas and have wide flight range. What's more, the DA4 operates with very low cost to the point that it can fly for 12 ½ hours without refueling and reaches up to 2,500 km using only 50% of the engine power.<sup>20</sup>

Venezuela's naval power was also increased with this new arms race since the arrival of the Bolivarian Revolution to power. Venezuela bought from the Spanish company NAVIANTA four Littoral Surveillance Ships and four Ocean Patrol Ships. The payment for these boats exceeded the amount of US\$ 1,134,000,000 and their construction meant five million hours of work for Spanish employees.<sup>21</sup> The Littoral Surveillance Ships (their names in Spanish: GC-21 ANBV GUAICAMACUTO; GC-22 ANBV YAVIRE; GC-23 ANBV NAIGUATÁ and GC-24 ANBV TAMANACO) can carry up to seventy-five troops (between officers and enlisted personnel or passengers and crew). They are equipped with the following weapons: OTO MELARA 76 mm bow cannon, two other cannons of 20/25 mm and two 12.7 mm machine guns on the bridge wings. These ships have an overall length of 79.9 meters and their autonomy of action reaches 4,000 miles at 16 knots (this is an economical speed because the maximum speed exceeds 22 knots) with displacement of 1,453 tons. Meanwhile, the Ocean Patrol Ships (their names in Spanish: PC-21 ANBV GUAQUERÍ; PC-22 ANBV WARAO; PC-23 ANBV YECUANA and PC-24 ANBV KARIÑA) can carry up to ninety two troops (between officers and enlisted personnel or passengers and crew). The armament of these vessels consists of a cannon OTO MELARA 76 mm, two other cannons of 35 mm, anti-ship missiles,

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<sup>19</sup> CEH. «Venezuela adquiere aviones de entrenamiento Diamond DA40 y DA42». *INFODEFENSA*, February 10, 2014. <http://www.infodefensa.com/latam/2014/02/10/noticia-fuerza-aerea-venezolana-adquiere-aviones-diamond.html> Accessed: June 30, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> INFODEFENSA. «Venezuela recibe cuatro de los seis aviones de vigilancia fronteriza DA42MPP». *INFODEFENSA.com*. Number 14, January, 2009. <http://www.infodefensa.com/lamerica/noticias/noticias.asp?cod=981&n=Venezuela-recibe-cuatro-de-los-seis-avionesde-vigilancia-fronteriza-DA42-MPP> Accessed: January 13, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Joaquín Mirkin. «Navantia bota el segundo Buque de Vigilancia Litoral para la Armada de Venezuela». *INFODEFENSA.COM*. Number 24, March, 2009 <http://www.infodefensa.com/lamerica/noticias/noticias.asp?cod=1223&titulo=2259> Accessed: March 21, 2009



anti-aircraft missiles and two 12.7 mm machine guns. They have an overall length of 98.90 meters and autonomy of action of 3,500 miles at 15 knots (maximum speed: 24 knots) with displacement of 2,419 tons.

Both Littoral Surveillance Ships and Ocean Patrol Ships can carry a helicopter on deck. In fact, in 2015, the Venezuelan government announced that these ships would be equipped with eight Harbin Z-9 helicopters purchased from China.<sup>22</sup> Among other features of these rotary-wing aircrafts, the armament of Harbin Z-9 consists of air-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles, antitank missiles, torpedoes ET52 and two cannons of 23 mm. In other words, Harbin Z-9 is an anti-submarine helicopter: a weapon primarily designed to search, detect and destroy enemy underwater. Likewise, the Venezuelan government announced that it would also buy another eight Harbin Z-9 helicopters in its version of combat support to units of marines by 2015.<sup>23</sup> The price of each Harbin Z-9 is US\$ 4,950,000 according to expert sources. In sum, by 2015, Venezuela was willing to pay for these helicopters US\$ 79,200,000. This means the purchase of these sixteen Harbin Z-9 helicopters was equal to the annual health expenditure of the Venezuelan government for 288,000 people in 2015. In light of the above, it is clear what the priorities of the Venezuelan ruling elite are.

## Conclusions

Venezuela spent US\$ 3,763,200,000 only on warplanes, combat helicopters and warships between 2006 and 2014. This was almost the entire budget of the WHO for the years 2013-2015; it was three times the budget of the FAO for the years 2014-2015; it was more than five times the budget of UNESCO for the years 2012-2013 and it was nearly a thousand times the UNHCR budget for 2013. If in the last two decades has unleashed an arms race in Latin America there's no doubt that the Venezuelan State is one of its most determined drivers. What is the reason for this? In my opinion, since 1999, the Venezuelan State has been

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<sup>22</sup> Carlos Hernández. «Armada recibirá helicópteros chinos antisubmarinos (Z-9)». *Notitarde.com*. Valencia (Venezuela), August 27, 2013. <http://www.notitarde.com/Pais/Armada-recibirahelicopteros-chinos-antisubmarinos-Z-9/2013/08/27/247930> Accessed July 17, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> CEH. «La Armada de Venezuela negocia la adquisición de nuevos helicópteros de ataque Harbin Z9WA». *INFODEFENSA*, September 16, 2013. <http://www.infodefensa.com/latam/2013/09/16/noticia-la-armada-de-venezuela-negocia-la-adquisicion-de-nuevoshelicopteros-de-ataque-harbin-z-9wa.html> Accessed: July 30, 2014.



designing and implementing a policy of acquisition of weapons with a clear and unique goal: the so-called Bolivarian Revolution wants to accumulate enough fire power to deal with external and internal threats that endanger the survival of the Venezuelan political-economic model (Socialism of the 21st Century). What are those threats? Of course, that is subject for other papers. Meanwhile, the old and current dilemma for an underdeveloped country, as Venezuela, remains unsolved: bread or cannons, medicines or warplanes. Given all the above, the Bolivarian Revolution seems to have chosen the weapons and ignored the people.

