

# Massa alone over Army drug plan

All other candidates reject proposal to engage Armed Forces in fight against crime

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Drug-trafficking has dominated the electoral agenda ahead of this month's presidential vote, but pro-

posals from the candidates on how to tackle the issue have been quite different. None, however, has been as shocking as Sergio Massa's plan to use the Armed Forces.

"In order to face the powerful, global army led by druglords, we

need to use the entire power of the state and all the tools at our disposal," the Renewal Front leader said during the Argentina Debate panel earlier this month. "I won't hesitate to call on the Armed Forces to support the work of security

forces in the borders... or to ask them for assistance on logistics in some regions like Rosario and Greater Buenos Aires."

Massa's statements were greeted with derision by his main rivals for the Pink House. Victory Front (FpV)

candidate Daniel Scioli has vowed to continue many of the policies of the Cristina Fernández de Kirchner government, which includes resisting the domestic deployment of the military to fight crime.

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# Scioli, Macri: Army should not go after dealers

All candidates but Massa say Armed Forces must stay away from fight against illegal trade

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Advisers from Let's Change contender Mauricio Macri also dismissed the idea yesterday, saying that putting the Armed Forces in charge of something they have not been trained for would aggravate, rather than alleviate, the problem.

Massa's move has in fact united the entire political spectrum against him, as became clear in the televised debate in which Federal Commitment leader Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, centre-left candidate Margarita Stolbizer and Workers' Leftist Front (FIT) contender Nicolás Del Caño all expressed their open opposition to the idea.

Experts, for their part, said the proposal by the dissident Peronist leader is at odds with two major federal regulations that govern the military's involvement in domestic law enforcement.

"Both the National Defence Law 23,554 and the Domestic Security Law 24,059 state that it is illegal to give powers to the Armed Forces to deal with domestic threats. Its main mission should be to secure the country from external threats from other countries' Armed Forces," sociologist Paula Canelo, a researcher at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (Conicet) and the National University of San Martín (Unsam), told the *Herald*.

## 'NOT TRAINED FOR THAT PURPOSE'

Months ago, expanding on his proposals regarding the "war against drugs," Massa called for the military to be deployed across the country's borders.

"I want an extended security law, so as to allow the security forces of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force to attack (sic) and block the borders," the former Tigre mayor said in a campaign spot. These forces, he added, will "help" those from "the poorest neighbourhoods" by entering the slums and enforcing a clampdown.

Scioli, who has ruled Buenos Aires province since 2007, does not agree with going so far, but has instead suggested a more tough-on-crime approach than what has been the norm in CFK's presidency. For instance, he promised to implement his municipal police model — which he passed by way of decree in 2014 in BA province — if he is elected and has suggested his current Security Minister Alejandro Granados in the province would become a part of his Cabinet, should he win.

Granados, a former mayor of Ezeiza known for his tough-on-crime approach, has criticized Massa's plan, saying it was too much, even for him.

"The Army is not prepared to enter the neighbourhoods, it has not been trained for that purpose. It may help, though, with the task of securing our borders," the FpV official said.

Buenos Aires City Security Minister Guillermo Montenegro, Macri's top adviser on the matter, told the *Herald* that using the Army, the Navy and the Air Force to fight drug-traffickers was a bad idea.

"They weren't trained for that type of situations," Montenegro told the *Herald*.

Instead, he argued, the government should create "a federal agency, far from the control of traditional politics, whose members would be appointed by the Senate.

"Our idea is that the top brass (in such an agency) should outlast the period of actual administration," he added, stressing that should the Let's Change candidate win the vote, Macri would create a special security force "with more brains than muscle," similar in style to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States, which would deal with drug-trafficking and organized crime.

During the October 4 presidential debate, the Let's Change candidate argued that a new Border



Victory Front presidential nominee Daniel Scioli announces the deployment of 300 new local police officers in the Buenos Aires province city of Mar del Plata yesterday.

Guard unit should be created in the northern Formosa province, but Macri failed to provide specific details on whether he would deploy the military on the streets.

Last year, Macri agreed with Scioli that the government should revise the role of the Armed Forces in the fight against illicit drug trade, after the CFK administration deployed more Border Guards in some areas of BA province to fight crime. But according to Montenegro, the Let's Change candidate would actually work to reverse this trend, saying that Border Guards should return to their previous role.

## DRAWING THE LINE

For Canelo, the temptation for politicians to involve the Army in the fight against drug-trafficking stems from their "tough" line on the issue, which says that violent crimes should be tackled with the most extreme option available to the state.

Other candidates had been somewhat more responsible in their proposals.

"While Rodríguez Saá has called on (the government) to continue the current tasks of the security forces, Stolbizer and Del Caño have become the only two candidates who have vowed to deal with this problem in a comprehensive way," the sociologist argued.

Del Caño had denounced police complicity in trafficking cases at the Argentina Debate forum, saying "police mafias" have to be tackled instead of just repeating the tough-on-crime mantra.

Stolbizer, for her part, recalled that Scioli has already deployed 80,000 police officers on the streets of the country's largest district.

"What are the results of having the province full of policemen and prisons overflowing with inmates?" she asked herself. "We have more crime, more violence and more dangerous, organized criminals."

Since then, Stolbizer has repeated that line insistently. "The separation of roles between the Armed Forces and the police has become a rule in Western countries," the Progressives' leader post-

ed on her Twitter account yesterday.

Marcelo Saín, the head of the National Intelligence School, stressed that the CFK administration is also to blame for the current zeitgeist-like approach.

"The military had begun to intervene in the fight against trafficking following a resolution by (former Army chief César) Milani, which is to my understanding at odds with the laws of National Defence and Domestic Security," Saín said. "He has deployed 4,000 Armed Forces members to patrol the borders and nearby places... Milani has laid out a red carpet for the right-wing."

According to Canelo, the experience of other Latin American nations, especially Mexico, "should be enough proof that getting the Armed Forces involved in domestic law brings serious risks for democracy," especially concerning the safety of citizens.

"They should not be distracted from their main task: national defence," she concluded.