

January 26, 2009

## **U.S. Government Continues Supporting Bolivian Peacekeeping Forces**

Today, the Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Embassy in Bolivia, Kris Urs, donated 150 high- security military helmets to Bolivian Peacekeeping forces that participate in United Nations-sponsored programs. During the donation ceremony, Urs symbolically handed over one of the new blue helmets to Bolivian Defense Minister Walker San Miguel. So far, the support provided by the U.S. Government through the Embassy's Military Group and other agencies to Bolivian peacekeeping forces is estimated at \$1.5 million.

The Bolivian Peacekeeping Force (BOLCONT) stationed in the Democratic Republic of Congo was relocated to a new base near the city of Goma a few weeks ago. The new destination is much more dangerous because of recent acts of violence and confrontation. Given the new challenges, the Bolivian government requested additional support from the Chargé d'Affaires, including improved military helmets and bulletproof vests. The Military Group of the U.S. Embassy in La Paz provided the vests to Bolivian peacekeeping forces. Other U.S. military cooperation agencies located 150 new blue helmets in a warehouse in Germany and delivered them to the Peacekeepers in Goma on January 9, 2009.

Bolivia has participated in U.N. Peacekeeping Operations since the early '80s. Currently, there are 449 Bolivian troops supporting U.N. peacekeeping operations in Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Liberia, Darfur, Kosovo, Sudan, and Cote d' Ivoire.

The U.S. Government also helped Bolivia create a Center for Peacekeeping Training (COMPEBOL in Spanish), to provide training to the Bolivian peacekeeping forces that support U.N. peacekeeping operations around the world. COMPEBOL trains approximately 700 troops annually.

The U.S. Departments of State and Defense have allocated 1.5 million dollars for the overall training program of Bolivian peacekeeping forces. The funds have been used to finance several training projects that include seminars, onsite visits to areas in conflict, and training.

A related agreement between Bolivia and the United States allows the U.S. Military Group to provide additional support to COMPEBOL, including the construction of a conference hall and a computer network with state-of-the-art technology.

The U.S. Embassy's Military Group will continue supporting Bolivia in its valuable initiative of participating in peacekeeping operations.