

# US-Colombia Military Accord Challenged in Bogota Court

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Bogota — Colombia's Constitutional Court has decided to review an agreement giving US forces access to seven Colombian military bases after a group of lawyers filed a complaint arguing it is unconstitutional, court officials said Saturday, AFP informs.

The lawsuit claims the October 2009 military accord is invalid because it was signed by the government of President Alvaro Uribe without prior discussion in Congress, as mandated by the constitution.

The military pact, part of a joint effort to counter drug trafficking and insurgencies, has been denounced by neighboring Venezuela as US interference in the region, raising tensions between Bogota and Caracas.

The "Jose Alvear Restrepo" group of lawyers argues the military accord should have been discussed by lawmakers since it involves stationing foreign troops on Colombian soil, a court official said.

They also accuse Uribe of ignoring the advice of the State Council — the highest court on administrative matters, which also urged that the congress take up the agreement before it was signed.

The Uribe administration deemed the State Council's opinion non binding, and said the accord was not new but merely an extension of a 1974 military pact with the United States, and as such required no legislative oversight, government officials said.

The Constitutional Court has referred the matter to Attorney General Alejandro Ordonez, who as Public Minister also serves as government watchdog, the court official said.

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