

Dominican Farmers Accuse Military Brass of Land Grab



Santo Domingo, April 20 (teleSUR-RHC)-- A farmer's advocacy organization in the Dominican Republic accused the military on Friday of carrying out forced land disposessions.

The *Campesino* Movement of United Communities (MCCU) alleged top military officials have ordered troops to force small farmers off their land in eastern provinces including Monte Plata.

The MCCU claimed “generals and colonels” have seized swathes of land for their own personal use. The farmers group argued much of the land taken was used by subsistence farmers.

Around half of the Dominican Republic's rural population live in poverty, and many families survive by growing food crops on small plots of land.

The allegations of illicit land expropriations are the latest in a series of high profile corruption accusations leveled at the military in recent years. Between 2009 and 2011 over 5,000 soldiers and police officers were fired amid accusations of widespread corruption, mostly in relation to links to drug cartels.

The government has vowed to crack down on corruption, though in March Santo Domingo's prosecutor Yeni Berenice said state security forces are still complicit in more than 90 percent of crimes. “It's alarming and very concerning that the people taking part in crimes are the same people called to investigate (these same crimes),” she stated.

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