

# The U.S. military's real intentions in Ecuador

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Galápagos Islands outcry after Ecuador allows U.S. military to use airstrip.

History repeats itself. For centuries, the United States has sought ways to intervene in Latin America to strengthen its military presence and dominance in the region

whenever a country is in crisis. And it is happening again. The current security crisis in Ecuador is presented as an opportunity for the United States to deepen its military presence in the Andean country. Under the guise of “contributing together to a safer and more stable region,” Washington announced on January 12 that it was sending the head of the Southern Command, General Laura Richardson, and other senior counter-narcotics and diplomatic officials to Ecuador to discuss with the government of President Daniel Noboa how to combat organized crime. According to the U.S. State Department, this visit seeks to “promote dialogue among the region’s defense chiefs to exchange ideas, experiences and perspectives in order to achieve consensus on security and defense issues, and to promote the strengthening of cooperation among the armed forces.”

But what is happening in Ecuador? In this country, one of the most violent ones in the world, with 45 intentional homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2023, organized crime has since mid-January led an escalation of violence, with riots in several prisons, kidnappings, explosions, attacks, and even the armed assault on a television station in the city of Guayaquil.

Given this situation, the government of newly inaugurated President Daniel Noboa has declared an “internal armed conflict” and has considered these gangs to be terrorist groups and military targets. The escalation of violence occurred amid efforts by the young president, 36, to regain control of Ecuador’s prisons, many of them internally dominated by these groups.

In this context, the U.S. government was one of the first to express its explicit support for the Ecuadorian president’s declaration of “internal armed conflict.”

Although Washington ruled out sending troops, Ecuador is currently the country that receives the most U.S. military assistance in the region, according to experts.

A study prepared by the Latin American Center for Geopolitics (CELAG) identified that between 2021 and 2022, Ecuador received U.S. military assistance in the

amount of 172 million dollars. In addition, former president Guillermo Lasso, shortly before leaving office, signed a military cooperation agreement with President Joe Biden.

Tamara Lajtman, Ph.D. in Social Sciences, one of the authors of the report, explained in declarations to the local press that the cooperation agreement is oriented, broadly speaking, to the fight against illicit drug trafficking and related crimes. “However, there is no official document disclosing the details of the bi-national exchange. It is known from the U.S. embassy in Quito itself that Washington foresees the investment of some 3.1 billion dollars over the next seven years in Ecuadorian affairs.”

According to the report, military cooperation has as a counterpart a series of permissions that both military personnel and U.S. officials will have. The analysis states that the U.S. envoys will have the same “privileges and exemptions” traditionally assigned to diplomats. U.S. personnel will also not be required to pay any taxes within Ecuadorian territory. The agreement also allows the U.S. Southern Command to move into Ecuadorian territory and patrol the maritime and airspace, all under the pretext of combating drug trafficking and organized crime.

For Lajtman, signing this type of exchange at a time of security crisis is also evidence of the interest Ecuador has for the U.S. “in the context of a hegemonic dispute with China and Russia.” The expert pointed out the “key role” of the Galápagos Islands, located in the Pacific Ocean, a little more than 900 kilometers from the Ecuadorian coast and under its administrative control.

The analyst and co-author of the study, Aníbal García, also pointed out that “the U.S. Department of Defense has been trying for some time to establish a military base in the Galápagos” because it would allow it “to control a certain part of the Pacific in a war scenario with these powers.”

Meanwhile, the Ecuadorian people pay for the consequences of a poorly managed internal conflict. Terror is there to stay, and the U.S. military presence, far from being a relief, poses greater risks to the tranquility of the citizens and the sovereignty of the country. History repeats itself once again with a new page from the Monroe Doctrine.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano - English](#)

