
Noboa: Entering Through the Exit

By: Arnaldo Musa / Cubasi
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Until just over mid 2010 -2017 Ecuador had singularly low levels of homicides, the second safest on the continent and the fifth safest worldwide. Now the small Andean country is one of the most dangerous in South America. Shaken by the return of conservatives to power seven years ago, this abyss of violence favored their candidate in the second round of elections less than two months ago, considers the Parisian newspaper *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

It doesn't matter that they call it center-left or that the opposition and progressive Correa followers supports it constructively, when there's a soaring violence, almost unavoidable, which mainly hits those who can help solve important cases and that could expose dirty dealings of those who really control the politics and economy of the country.

Thus, without a protective escort, they just shot down prosecutor César Suárez this Wednesday, who was investigating the recent takeover of a television channel and who was in charge of other high-profile investigations related to the "Metástasis" case.

The country's attorney general, Diana Salazar was also threatened with death, stated that her colleague directed a special unit of the Public Ministry in charge of investigating transnational organized crimes in the province of Guayas. "I am going to be emphatic: organized crime groups, criminals, terrorists, will not stop our commitment to Ecuadorian society," she warned.

For the official, the crime against Suárez, which she described as an "atrocious act," was intended to send "a message" for the work being carried out by the Ecuadorian justice system and, in that regard, she urged law enforcement forces to "guarantee security" of prosecutors, something that is not happening.

The crime occurred a day after the arrest in Panama of Daniel Salcedo Bonilla, one of those accused of organized crime in favor of the deceased drug trafficker Leandro Norero, alias 'El Patrón', as revealed by the investigations of the Prosecutor's Office related to the Metastasis case.

We must remember that, in January 2023, the victim brought a case against four people for their responsibility in the commission of embezzlement in a Social Security hospital in Guayaquil and also led the investigations into the fraud on the funds of the Police Social Security Institute.

This recalls the recommendations of former President Rafael Correa to the current president that he has to purge corrupt elements enthroned in the Armed Forces, the Police and in positions of the previous government that are still or influence in power.

ERRORS THAT CAN COST

There's talk of Daniel Noboa's inexperience, and one can have his opinion on the matter, but serious doubts arise when he refused to receive help from Brazil and Venezuela to contain the growing violence and he accepts that of the United States and Argentina, what will be his legacy?

In this context, the head of the Southern Command, General Laura Richardson, and the police agents sent by Javier Milei must be arriving in Ecuador.

Several analysts warn that the security crisis this South American nation undergoes could constitute a chance for the United States to deepen its military presence in the Andean country.

In this sense, Noboa pointed out, according to Prensa Latina, that in Ecuador it's unconstitutional to open foreign bases, and mentioned that he accepts collaboration from countries like the United States, with the possibility of working with intelligence organizations such as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and anti-narcotics units, in training, equipment, weapons management and intelligence.

Likewise, Noboa insisted that his government declared war on terrorism, since these groups currently have a structure that includes weapons and financing elements that make it easier for them to terrorize entire regions and take control of prisons.

WHAT'S BEHIND THAT?

Ecuador suffers an unquestionable security crisis that began long before the recent events, however, the escalation of violence in recent days marked a turning point and some question what's behind it.

Prison riots, prison breaks, kidnapped prison officers, explosions, and the live broadcast of the attack on a television channel, all in less than 48 hours, led the Executive to declare a state of emergency and recognize the existence of a domestic armed conflict.

Ecuador is currently the State in the region that receives the most US military assistance, according to a study by the Latin American Center for Geopolitics.

This investigation, which cites official figures from the northern government, indicates that between 2021 and 2022, that is, during the government of Guillermo Lasso, Ecuador received US military assistance for 172 million dollars.

On top of that in October, two weeks before the presidential elections that gave Noboa victory, Lasso signed a defense cooperation agreement with Joe Biden's administration, of which not many details are known.

However, it's known that the agreement grants privileges, immunity and guarantees to US military personnel and civilian personnel of the DOD and contractors, while guaranteeing free movement in Ecuadorian territory of US aircraft, ships and vehicles.

For his part, the president of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro, warned his Ecuadorian counterpart on Monday about the dangerous actions of the US Southern Command, if it allows the US military to take control of the Ecuadorian security forces.

Maduro denounced that Washington intends to "put up a military base again," an action that would mean "a violation of the sovereignty of South America" and that, furthermore, would not be a "solution."

“President Noboa, if you want to have a security system and a penitentiary system, look for us, do not look for the Southern Command, what the Southern Command is going to do is interventionism, colonialism,” said the Venezuelan president.

Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff
