

President Lasso Calls for “Plan Ecuador” Amid Growing Security Concerns

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

“Ecuador alone cannot get ahead...I have raised the possibility that it is time for a ‘Plan Ecuador’...‘That plan,’ he added, ‘demands the support and backing of friendly countries, the United States, the European Union’... Ecuador, which shares borders with Peru and Colombia, has in recent years gone from being a transit country for drugs to the United States and Europe to a storage and processing country.”

Following several weeks of gruesome prison riots and a string of hundreds of murders, Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso has called for European and U.S. assistance in the country’s fight against criminal organizations. Ecuador is experiencing a spate of homicides and other crimes related to drug trafficking, reports Quito-based center-right daily newspaper *El Comercio*. Much of the recent insecurity stems from the entrance of some of the largest Mexican cartels—the Sinaloa and Cartel Jalisco, specifically—into Ecuador. Ecuador’s ability to combat these groups may determine whether Mexican cartels have a meaningful presence throughout South America.

Recently, Lasso decreed a “state of exception” to provide him with more latitude to address rising violence in the short term. Center-right Panamanian newspaper *La Prensa* reports that Lasso even went so far as to propose a “Plan Ecuador,” likening his request for security funding to the well-known security cooperation program in Colombia. The media outlet reports that in recent years, Ecuador has transformed from a transit point in drug trafficking routes to a location for storing and processing drugs.



Guillermo Lasso, President of Ecuador.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guillermo_Lasso_inauguration_\(4\)_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guillermo_Lasso_inauguration_(4)_(cropped).jpg)

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Source: “Lasso pide apoyo a Europa y EE.UU. contra narcotráfico (Lasso asks for support from Europe and the US against drug trafficking),” *El Comercio* (daily newspaper based in Quito seen as center-right in political orientation), 5 November 2021. <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/politica/lasso-plan-europa-eeuu-narcotrafico.html>

Lasso has insisted that “without international support he cannot move forward,” which has led him to propose a plan for Ecuador that “demands the support of friendly countries.” The President has affirmed that there is an “absence of the State” in the country, something that is “being addressed with concrete actions.”

Source: “Lasso quiere un ‘plan Ecuador’ contra el narcotráfico con ayuda de Estados Unidos (Lasso wants an “Ecuador plan” against drug trafficking with the help of the United States),” *La Prensa* (Panamanian newspaper described as center-right), 5 November 2021. <https://www.prensa.com/mundo/lasso-quiere-un-plan-ecuador-contra-el-narcotrafico-con-ayuda-de-estados-unidos/>

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