

# *USAID agents hold meetings with political groups in Ecuador*

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Quito, August 22 (RHC)-- The U.S. governmental organization USAID has announced that they will return to Ecuador following their expulsion in 2014, and held meetings with political groups at the U.S. embassy in Quito on Tuesday. Former President Rafael Correa had expelled them in 2014 for interfering in national politics by funding right-wing opposition groups.

Following a meeting between the Ecuador's Deputy Foreign Minister Augusto Saa and USAID official John Barsa, USAID announced it would reestablish operations in Ecuador after their expulsion five-years-ago, when former President Correa accused them of being a CIA front looking to destabilise progressive governments in the region.

The cooperation agreements signed recently between the two countries include \$30 million in funds, much of which is going to political projects, with the three priorities being "human rights, strengthening of democracy and migration."

However, USAID agents also met at the U.S. embassy with NGOs and 'civil society organizations' that were opposed to former progressive President Rafael Correa. They posted via Twitter saying: "Honored to meet last week w/civil society orgs that maintained a democratic voice for Ecuadorians when past governments restricted their freedoms. We salute them & President Moreno for working together for the Ecuadorian people."

USAID and the Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA, have found a more welcoming environment with the current administration who have shifted to the right and welcomed a restoring of relations and military cooperation with the United States.

Correa expelled USAID agents after it was discovered that they were funnelling cash to right-wing opposition groups, among them were Grupo Faro, Fundamedios, Fundación Esquel and the Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio.

At the time, Correa denounced USAID saying: "This is serious. There is direct interference from external groups in countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), progressive countries that do not bow our heads to the empire... They are financing pseudo NGOs , under the pretext of 'strengthening democracy' and being interlocutors between political power and citizens to destabilize governments "

USAID was also expelled from Bolivia by President Evo Morales in May 2013. He also accused USAID of being a front organization for the U.S. embassy, and which financed opposition groups and was aiding and abetting U.S. embassy and DEA officials in attempting to eradicate the Coca crop, which is sacred in Indigenouys culture.

Commenting in 2013, Evo Morales said: "There are still some institutions of the U.S. embassy that continue to conspire against our process, against the people and especially against the national government...I'm sure that [the United States] still thinks that they can manipulate us politically and economically, but that's in the past."

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