

# *Ecuador hands over Galapagos Islands to build U.S. military base*

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Quito, December 18 (RHC)-- The president of Ecuador, Daniel Noboa, ordered the handover of the Galapagos Islands for the construction of a U.S. military base, due to the approval of the "Comprehensive security project in the island region" and the "Instructions for the application of cooperation agreements between Ecuador and the United States" on December 10.

With this decision, also arranged by the Governing Council of the province of Galapagos, the military cooperation treaties between the United States and Ecuador signed by Noboa on February 15, 2024, come into force.

By means of the decree signed in February of this year, Quito ratified the Agreement with Washington on the Status of Forces, signed on October 6, 2023, during the Government of Guillermo Lasso, in which the military and civilian personnel of the Department of Defense were granted privileges, exemptions, and immunity, equivalent to those received by the administrative and technical personnel of the diplomatic missions under the Vienna Convention, the above constitutes the establishment of a military base.

In this sense, ships, military personnel, weapons, equipment and submarines will be able to be installed in the Galapagos Islands, an archipelago declared a World Natural Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1978.

According to the document, the objective of the US military installation in the archipelago is to "operationalize the project in order to face the shared security challenges in the province of Galapagos, 600 miles (965 kilometers) from the Ecuadorian continental coast."

The document also proposes "combating drug trafficking, illegal fishing and other illicit maritime activities in this region of Ecuador," as well as "preventing violent conflicts and other related crimes between narco-terrorist groups fighting over drug export routes."

#### World Heritage Site under imperialist claws

In an interview with teleSUR, sociologist Natalia Sierra explained that the decision of the Noboa government to hand over these islands goes against what the Ecuadorian people decided in the referendum to approve the Constitution in 2008 regarding the prohibition of military bases in the country.

"It is a wound to the sovereignty of the country, but also to a good of humanity, because the Galapagos Islands are World Heritage Site. It is absolutely illegitimate," Sierra said.

In the opinion of representatives of social and environmental organizations on Galapagos, the rule flagrantly violates resolution 258 of the Ecuadorian Constitution, which establishes that it is strictly mandatory not to carry out activities that may put the fragile ecosystem of Galapagos at risk.

Former Deputy Foreign Minister Fernando Yépez said: "The National Assembly must request information and oversee the security cooperation agreements signed with the United States and their execution protocols, which respond to the strategic interests of that country and reflect the shameful submission of our foreign policy. Wake up Ecuador!"

Some experts say that this event is part of a military base that imperialism began to construct at the end of World War II as a strategy by the United States to impose itself in the Latin American region, a key territory in terms of natural resources.

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