

At least 24 killed in Ecuador prison gang riot

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At least 24 prisoners have been killed in a battle between inmates equipped with firearms and grenades at a prison in Guayaquil

Quito, September 29 (RHC)-- At least 24 prisoners have been killed in a battle between inmates equipped with firearms and grenades at a prison in Guayaquil, according to Ecuador's national bureau of prisons (SNAI), which added that at least 42 others were wounded in the deadly riot.

Guayas state Governor Pablo Arosemena said at a news conference on Tuesday outside the Litoral prison that order had been restored. "The presence of the state and the law must be felt," he said.

The regional police commander, General Fausto Buenano, said that toll included prisoners shot to death and killed by detonating hand grenades.

President Guillermo Lasso retweeted an announcement from the prison bureau, saying order “has been restored at the Littoral Penitentiary after the Tuesday incidents.”

The violence involved gunfire, knives and explosions and was caused by a dispute between the Los Lobos and Los Choneros prison gangs, officials said. Television images showed inmates firing from the windows of the prison amid smoke and the detonation of firearms and explosives.

Ecuador’s prison system has become a battleground between prisoners linked to Mexican drug gangs – mainly the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels.

Guayaquil, Ecuador’s main port city, is a main hub for shipping South American cocaine to points north, especially the United States.

Last week, police confiscated two pistols, a revolver, some 500 rounds of ammunition, a hand grenade, several knives, two sticks of dynamite and homemade explosives at one of the Guayaquil prisons.

Two weeks ago, Guayaquil’s Prison Number 4 was attacked by drones, part of “a war between international cartels,” prison authorities said. There were no casualties in the attack.

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