

Mayor blocks plane from landing in Guayaquil due to COVID-19



Guayaquil, March 19 (RHC)-- Guayaquil authorities blocked the airstrip of the airport in the Ecuadorian city on Wednesday to prevent the arrival of a plane from Spain on the suspicion that it was carrying passengers infected with COVID-19.

The Airbus of Iberia, which had departed from Madrid with 11 passengers, intended to land on the runway of the José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport in Guayaquil; however, it was prevented by the authorities at the airport.

The sudden deployment of police cars along the runway was decided unilaterally by the mayor of the city of Guayaquil, according to local media. The flight was forced to be diverted to Quito, the Ecuadorian capital. The event occurred without authorization from the country's aviation authorities.

"I authorized the deployment of vehicles to prevent the landing of passengers who might be infected with coronavirus," city mayor Cinthia Viteri told reporters. "I also decided to do so because Guayaquil is an infection and risk area. If they are healthy, they could be infected in the city," she added.

"It is inconceivable that the highest authorities of the country would allow the arrival of an Iberia plane," Viteri said angrily.

Meanwhile, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Transport and Public Works rejected the decision. "It is a violent act, which should not go unpunished," the entity said in a statement.

Ecuador's Attorney General's Office will investigate the blockade of the runway at the José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport. The invasion of the airstrip also affected the arrival of a Boeing 777 of the KLM company from Amsterdam.

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