U.S. Southern Command General Laura Richardson visits Ecuador
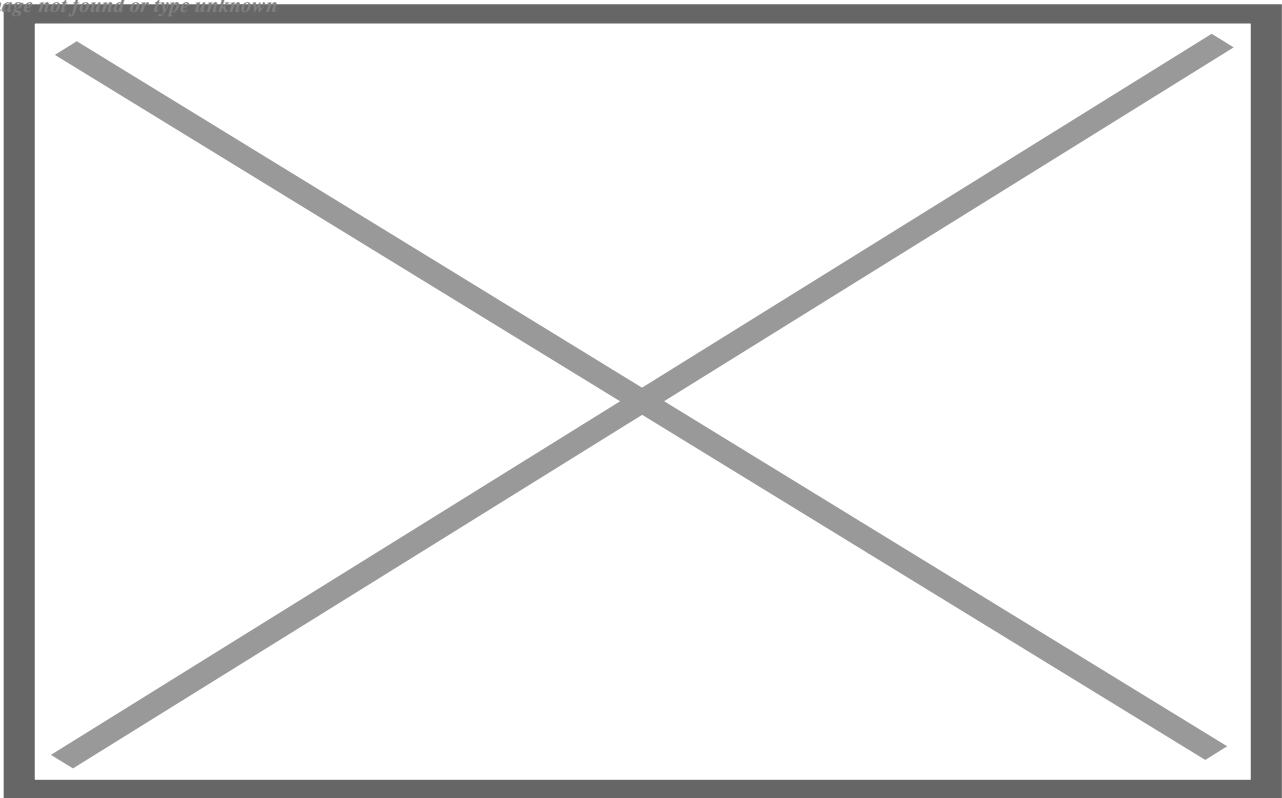

President Guillermo Lasso (L) and Gen. Laura Richardson (R), Quito, Ecuador, Sept. 13, 2022. | Photo: Twitter/ @RutaHoja

Quito, September 15 (RHC)-- On Tuesday, Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso met Gen. Laura Richardson, the commander of U.S. Southern Command (SouthCom). She arrived in Quito to participate this week in the Regional Defense Conference (SouthDec).

"The meeting was an excellent opportunity to articulate actions of cooperation and technical exchange in matters of national and citizen security," the office of the Ecuadorian presidency said without offering further details about the encounter.

On previous occasions, SouthCom commanders visited this Andean country. On this occasion, however, Richardson is leading the highest-ranking military delegation ever to visit Ecuador. She is accompanied by Gen. Daniel R. Hokanson, chief of the National Guard Bureau; Ambassador Jean Manes, the

SouthCom civilian deputy chief; and Gen. Julie Nethercot, the SouthCom director of Strategy, Policy, and Plans.

Also present in the U.S. delegation are other colonels, majors and Gen. David Mounkes, deputy chief of the Kentucky National Guard, who is in charge of cooperation with Ecuador through the Strategic Partnership Program (SPP).

Gen. Richardson is the first woman to lead the Southcom. She was trained as an aviator and holds a Master of Science in National Resource Strategy from the National Defense University's Dwight D. Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy.

Richardson commanded an assault helicopter battalion in combat in the 101st Airborne Division, deploying her unit from Fort Campbell Kentucky to Iraq in 2003, the Southcom recalls. She also gained experience in more political roles when she served as the U.S. Army's Liaison with the Congress in Washington DC.

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