

Ecuador Deploys 700 Troops to Combat Zika Virus



Quito, January 29 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Ecuador will send 700 troops to a coastal province to help the Health Ministry prevent the spread of the Zika virus, which has already infected 22 Ecuadorians and may have affected 67 more.

The virus, transmitted by mosquitoes, has spread across most of Latin America since a surge in infections was first detected in Brazil last October. Its symptoms include fever and joint pain that last about a week. It may also cause brain defects in children born to infected mothers.

Brazil also announced on Thursday that soldiers would spread awareness during a day of house visits. Ecuador's deployment will be farther reaching. Troops, including 200 marines, will spend two and a half months seeking out infected mosquitoes and destroying them by fumigating affected areas.

Soldiers will also teach communities to wash water tanks regularly and how to avoid attracting the insects. They will also host talks on the virus in health clinics, malls and public health centers.

Hot, wet climates tend to have more mosquitoes, and Ecuador saw higher rainfall than usual this month.

Ecuador, which has expansive rainforests and includes part of the Amazon, conducted a similar military operation last year, when it deployed over 1,500 troops to prevent the spread of chikungunya, a virus with

similar symptoms and transmission.

The first cases of zika in Ecuador were detected in a Colombian woman and her eight-year-old son who entered the country during the New Year holiday.

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