

# *Ecuador Reiterates U.S. Military Staff Must Leave Country*

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Quito, April 26 (RHC-NNN) -- Ecuadorian Deputy Foreign Minister Leonardo Arizaga has confirmed that a group of U.S. soldiers who remain at Washington's embassy in Quito will have to leave the country under the expressed request of the Ecuadorian Government.

The Ecuadorian official said the issue of the U.S. troop withdrawal was presented by President Rafael Correa and Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño months ago, when they expressed concerns about a beefed up U.S. military presence in Ecuador.

The Ecuadorian government noted that there was a group of U.S. soldiers whose role in Ecuador was unclear, including a military group that answered to the Southern Command and the U.S. Department of Defense.

Quito then requested on April 7th the scaleback of U.S. Department of Defense personnel, and gave the U.S. embassy until the end of April to do so.

Minister Arizaga stated that he tackled the issue with Deputy Undersecretary of State for the West Hemisphere, Alex Lee, when he visited Ecuador in late March.

The Ecuadorian official insisted that the withdrawal of the U.S. Southern Command troops does not affect

the personnel of the U.S. Military Attache's Office, which is subordinate to the State Department.

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