

Opposition Attempts to Prevent Arrival of Ecuadorean President



Quito, June 15 (teleSUR-RHC)-- A caravan of vehicles occupied by right-wing protesters descended Sunday on the highway leading to the international airport in Quito, Ecuador in an effort to prevent President Rafael Correa from being able to safely return to the country.

Posts on social media called those opposed to the democratically-elected government of Correa to flood the highway and attempt to take the airport to prevent his return. According to the opposition *El Comercio* newspaper, more than 200 cars participated in the convoy.

Meanwhile, other posts on social media made calls for the armed forces to intervene and possibly mount a military coup. A widely shared image calling for protests in front of the offices of the ruling PAIS Alliance also stated: "A call to the armed forces of Ecuador, be vigilant to defend peace, democracy, the homeland, liberty, and justice for Ecuadorean people."

However, according to the 2008 Ecuadorean Constitution, the country's armed forces are no longer responsible for maintaining constitutional order, instead their role is described in Article 158 as, "The fundamental mission of the Armed Forces is the defense of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The protest convoy along the *Ruta Viva* highway is part of what opposition activists billed as Black Sunday, where they called on Ecuadoreans to wear black and wave black flags. However, there were few signs of the public embracing the call-out. The Ruta Viva, one of the Correa government's feature infrastructure projects, runs through the affluent Quito suburbs of Cumbaya and Tumbaco, home to many of the protesters. The highway facilitates travel between the capital, the suburbs and the new international airport also built under the Correa government.

After the highway protest, many headed to Quito commercial district to demonstrate outside of the PAIS Alliance offices.

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