

Opposition March in Ecuador Turns Violent



Quito, July 3 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Anti-government protesters attacked police on Thursday in downtown Quito, the Ecuadorean capital, in an effort to reach government supporters — who had assembled in front of the presidential palace — and provoke violent clashes.

Interior Minister Jose Serrano had warned on Wednesday that intelligence officials had discovered a plot by right-wing opposition forces to overthrow the government, including a scheme to attack security forces and storm the presidential palace in Quito. They hoped to “occupy the Carondelet Palace by force, gather their people and distribute them on different sides, breaking police barricades,” Minister Serrano said.

“They planned to use pointed sticks to break police shields, to throw balloons filled with paint for police to lose visibility, to pepper-spray police horses and dogs so would panic.”

Opposition protesters appeared to follow that plan but were unsuccessful in their efforts to breakthrough police lines.

However, the Ecuadorean national police reported that four officers were injured as a result of the attacks. Images posted on-line showed injured officers being carried to an ambulance. A video posted by the ANDES news agency showed opposition protesters also targeting journalists. That video also showed shocking images of protesters using the national flag to strike police officers.

The recent round of protests against the government of President Rafael Correa have often resulted in violence with some protesters openly calling for the ouster of the democratically-elected government.

This led to Culture Minister Guillaume Long to characterize the current situation in the country as a struggle for democracy. "Today that we are facing this threat, this real threat of destabilization ... it is fundamental that the people of Ecuador come here and celebrate democracy," Long told teleSUR in an exclusive interview. "We're not going to allow more coups," he added.

In contrast to the violent clashes by opposition groups, government supporters staged a festive rally in the capital where President Correa led chants calling for coup-plotters to cease trying to overthrow the government.

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