

# *Hondurans Protest the Proposed Closing of Toncontin Airport*

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Tegucigalpa, May 12 (RHC)-- Dozens of Hondurans staged a protest against a plan to close Tegucigalpa's Toncontin International Airport in favor of a new airport in the central part of the Central American country.

The demonstrators, including opposition lawmakers and airport employees, are asking President Juan Orlando Hernandez's administration not to close the airport, fearing the loss of jobs.

The Hernandez government in March signed a contract with Inversiones EMCO for the design, financing, operation and maintenance of Palmerola Airport, which is located around 50 miles from Toncontin and would hasten the closing of the country's busiest civil airport.

Opposition congressman Amado Aguilar told reporters that the protesters were seeking to defend the interests of the more than 1.5 million people living in Tegucigalpa, adding that he supports Toncontin's continued operation for domestic and private flights.

Palmerola, which is currently a military base, is set to be built by a public-private partnership, with a 30-year concession, and will cost some \$163 million, of which Spain will contribute \$53 million as part of a debt conversion program. Another \$87 million will come from EMCO, while \$23 million will be contributed by the Honduran government.

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