

Rubio advances continental Plan Colombia 2.0 in Latin America tour

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US Secretary of State Marco Rubio carried out a whirlwind tour of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru from September 8 to 10, signing agreements that convert Washington's year-old campaign of extrajudicial killings at sea into a permanent structure of military, economic and police integration across South America's Pacific coast.

Rubio stated the purpose of the tour in an essay published as the tour began, titled "A Hemisphere that Delivers." Extra-hemispheric actors, "specifically from China," enter the region with promises masking predatory practices, opaque contracts and unsustainable debt; when critical national assets fall under another nation's control, countries lose the right to determine their own destiny.

This was written weeks after the Pentagon took an equity stake in Venezuela's oilfields, following the January abduction of that country's president Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. Washington's objection is not to foreign control of national assets. It is to anyone else's.

The same essay makes the transaction explicit: after the August 10 earthquake that killed at least 331 people in Colombia, the administration provided over \$27 million in emergency assistance, and "in turn" Colombia adopted a new stance on border security and immigration. Disaster relief is stated openly as leverage.

In Barranquilla on Tuesday, President Abelardo de la Espriella asked Rubio to fund what he calls the "21st Century Patriot Plan." The name is a deliberate reference. It is Plan Colombia 2.0, and it is being extended to the entire continent.

Plan Colombia was signed in 1999 by Bill Clinton and Andrés Pastrana as a counter-narcotics program. Washington poured in \$2.8 billion worth of military aid between 2000 and 2005, later raised to \$4.5 billion by the Pentagon, alongside aerial spraying of glyphosate over peasant crops and a vast expansion of the Colombian armed forces.

Cocaine production was never suppressed. What was built was a counterinsurgency machine aimed at the rural and urban poor. Colombia's Special Jurisdiction for Peace found in April that at least 7,837 civilians were murdered by the

armed forces between 1990 and 2016 and dressed up as guerrillas killed in combat—the "false positives"—to inflate body counts in exchange for promotions and leave. A total of between 450,000 and 800,000 people have died in the conflict and 8 million have been displaced.

De la Espriella's proposal revives and revamps this operation with investments in drones, radar, aircraft, helicopters, air defense, cyberdefense, special forces and troop deployments and the reactivation of aerial fumigation. Rubio received it favorably.

Two memoranda were signed outright in Colombia, and neither concerns drugs. One covers critical minerals and rare earths, aimed at positioning Colombia inside US battery and high tech supply chains. The other covers civil nuclear cooperation. The two governments also opened talks on a joint military base, and De la Espriella confirmed Colombia has joined the Shield of the Americas alliance established by the Trump administration, whose regional headquarters will sit in Medellín.

Rubio then traveled to Quito, Ecuador on Wednesday. There he announced the modernization of the bilateral extradition treaty, while a "safe third country" agreement is near completion under which Washington would deport asylum seekers to Ecuador, replicating the arrangement with El Salvador. He designated the gang Los Tiguerones a foreign terrorist organization, pledged a 110-foot Coast Guard cutter and five interceptor vessels, and promoted investment by Google, Palantir and SpaceX—all contractors deeply embedded in the US military-intelligence apparatus.

Washington also sanctioned seven Ecuadorians for taking bribes from gangs: a former prisons director, several judges and a former assembly member. Every one is a former official.

The sanctions were an attempt at covering up the pervasive corruption and drug ties of the people Rubio was meeting, which expose any pretense that US military operations and flagrant electoral interference to help install these governments are aimed at combating narco-trafficking.

Cocaine has repeatedly been seized in banana containers

belonging to Noboa Trading, the conglomerate of President Daniel Noboa's family, and the police reports were buried. Monika Silva Koniuszek, who was documenting those links, was found dead in June; the government called it suicide until the autopsy showed a blow to the head and strangulation. Gloria Alexandra Bravo Cedeño, the Manta prosecutor investigating US attacks on Ecuadorian fishing boats, was shot dead with her sister six days later. A BBC fixer, René Cobos Merchán, was killed on August 23 by hooded men in Ecuadorian military vests.

Rubio's host in Bogotá is no different. De la Espriella built his fortune as a lawyer defending AUC paramilitary chiefs long connected to drug cartels, and established a foundation in 2004 to promote the Alvaro Uribe government's negotiations and efforts to protect the paramilitaries. The CIA had uncovered ties of Uribe himself with Pablo Escobar, the famous leader of the Medellín drug cartel.

These are the men Washington presents as the answer to drugs.

Significantly, the groundwork for the visit by Rubio was laid by the Pentagon. Last week, U.S. SOUTHCOM Commander Gen. Francis L. Donovan met with the Colombian and Ecuadorian defense ministers and agreed on a plan to significantly expand their military cooperation along the Ecuador-Colombia border, moving past episodic US-partnered missions and toward sustained combined operations.

Rubio's tour coincided with the sixth US operation against Ecuadorian vessels in under two weeks. The method has changed: rather than incinerating boats with drones, troops now board them, detain the crews and sink the vessels. This is not humanitarian restraint, however. Boarding requires soldiers, and soldiers require basing and immunity.

Fishing families in Manta have contradicted every official account, insisting the "floating refueling stations" were their own boats, dedicated to fishing, not moving drugs. What is being rehearsed at sea is openly being planned for land operations, including the permanent US deployment along the Pacific coast, with local forces as auxiliaries.

This apparatus is not aimed at cartels. It is aimed at the working class of the entire hemisphere.

In October 2019, an uprising against IMF-dictated fuel subsidy cuts forced Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno to move the seat of government out of Quito. Mass strikes followed in 2022 and 2025. Today, over 70 percent of Ecuadorians disapprove of Noboa, and voters rejected foreign military bases by more than 60 percent in November—a referendum result he annulled by decree.

In Colombia, the 2021 national strike against Iván Duque's tax reform brought millions into the streets and was

answered with police killings. De la Espriella won June's runoff by less than one percentage point and is already facing mass anger over the botched response to the recent earthquake.

These are governments with no popular mandate, attempting to impose social austerity programs in the context of global economic breakdown. As such, they require an instrument to crush resistance.

Rubio travelled to set up the necessary political apparatus to defend bourgeois rule against opposition from below and advance the "Trump Corollary" to the Monroe Doctrine, which asserts US dominance over the hemisphere as a theater of great-power confrontation with China. Latin America is being integrated as a front in an emerging third world war.

Rubio's final stop was Lima, where he met President Keiko Fujimori—the daughter of the dictator in the 1990s who fused emergency powers, death squads and mass privatization.

The character of these partners disposes of the claim that any of this protects Americans or anyone from drugs. A lawyer for paramilitaries tied to organized crime, a banana dynasty whose containers carry cocaine and the corrupt daughter of a former dictator are being armed by Washington to bomb workers, peasants and fishermen.

Not one party in either country genuinely opposes the subordination of their countries to US imperialism, since they all defend capitalist interests and remaining "competitive" for investments, credits and trade. The nominally "left" forces led by former Presidents Gustavo Petro in Colombia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador have long supported and enforced the military buildup, closer ties to Washington, and attacks on social and democratic rights.

There is no way out of this within capitalist politics. Only the unification of workers across the hemisphere in an independent political struggle against imperialism and the profit system can stop the emerging third world war and the turn to fascism.



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