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Ecuador: Bananas Laced with Cocaine

By: Arnaldo Musa / Cubasí  
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No, we're not going to write about the televised debate between Luisa González and President Daniel Noboa about the presidential elections next April in Ecuador, although we will discuss some key points where the president's ill-treatment against drug trafficking has prevailed, taking advantage of his family's banana exports to sell cocaine.

For some time now, Indigenous leader Leonidas Iza has pointed out that "everyone knows that drugs come out in banana boxes," something that no regime, from Lenin Moreno to the current Noboa administration, including Lasso, has been interested in investigating, for obvious reasons. This has currently led to the flight of a well-known Ecuadorian journalist for having exposed the president's ties to drug trafficking.

Andrés Durán denounced the connection between the company Noboa Trading S.A. in the shipment of cocaine to Italy.

The journalist, who publishes his investigations on the Ecuador en Directo website and is popularly known as "El Chocolongo," received death threats after publishing his findings linking Noboa's family to drug trafficking. Durán himself posted on the X network: "There's allegedly a plan to attempt on my life in which members of the National Police are involved. The Prosecutor's Office, far from strengthening my security, expelled me from the Victims and Witnesses System."

He also reported that a shipment of 600 kilos of cocaine seized in Turkey in 2023 had arrived from Ecuador in banana boxes from the Banana Bonita company. This company is owned by Álvaro Noboa, father of the current president of Ecuador. It owns a 3,200-hectare farm, where 1,200 workers are employed, where unionization is not permitted and which has been repeatedly reported for not complying with the country's labor laws.

Durán is a renowned investigative journalist, widely read on social media, who has made strong allegations, such as the one he filed against the State Attorney General's Office for irregularities at Petroecuador, regarding the illegal theft of fuel with the complicity of Armed Forces members. In November 2023, he reported that Albanian mafia boss Fritan Resepa, a well-known drug trafficker who was arrested in Turkey, had contributed \$1.5 million to

Guillermo Lasso's presidential campaign.

Durán's incident is not an isolated incident. In recent years, other journalists investigating the links between crime, drug traffickers, and high-ranking Ecuadorian state officials have also emigrated. The most well-known cases are those of Andersson Boscán and Mónica Velásquez (La Posta), Karoll Noroña (GK), and Jorge Navarrete (La Posta).

The latter reported on September 30, 2024, the triangle involving the Sinaloa and Jalisco cartels, the state, and the Noboa family's companies with shipments of bananas laced with cocaine sent to Europe.

### **WHAT SUCCESSES?**

Although Noboa boasts of his successes in the fight against drug trafficking, he has enlisted the help of the United States, Brazil, and Argentina to supposedly fight it.

Ecuador has kept two military cooperation treaties with the United States since December 2023, signed by Noboa himself. These agreements include, among other things, the presence of submarines, armed military personnel, and equipment in the Galapagos Islands for maritime control of the Pacific.

Furthermore, a week ago, Noboa met privately with Erik Prince—a representative of a US military company known for its crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, among other countries—who is considered a mercenary with illegal activities in Afghanistan and Iraq. “They aren't necessarily mercenaries,” Noboa told the BBC. “We're talking about armies: American, European, and Brazilian special forces. This could be of great help to us,” he explained.

Prince reportedly agreed to pay \$150,000 for a three-month “consultation.”

**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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