
Ecuador Also Takes Measures at Border with Colombia

11/09/2015



The Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa described the border situation with Colombia as “tough” as contraband affected both sides of the frontier, as he announced Thursday that new measures to control imports will be implemented along the line that divides his country from the neighboring nation.

“The situation is tough. In Colombia, they have devalued the peso by 60 percent, but we will go forward,” explained Correa during a press conference held in the border city of Tulcan.

The president revealed a series of measures to help the Carchi province and to avoid people from crossing into Ipiales, Colombia, to buy cheaper products.

“We are taking specific measures to deal with smuggling at the border,” Correa said.

Correa explained that smuggling is becoming an issue, as the difference in prices between both countries widens.

To tackle the problem, the president explained that foreign-plated vehicles will be charged an international standard price for gasoline, instead of the subsidized price of Ecuadorean oil derivatives.

“We have to subsidize gasoline for Ecuadoreans, but why should we subsidize gasoline for foreigners?,” he asked.

Furthermore, the head of state revealed that television screens were entering the country without being charged the proper safeguard taxes. To avoid this and other situations, the government will reinforce surveillance cameras at the border crossings.

However, Correa clarified that the commerce at the border does not pose a threat to the country's economy.

"We reviewed numbers and from January to August, the formal sector – the declared value – reported purchases of about 3 million dollars, which does not affect the Ecuadorean economy at all," he explained.

At the end of August, the Ecuadorean government declared Carchi as an "economically depressed" border zone through two decrees which have exonerated local commerce and the transportation industry operating in the province from paying taxes.

The government is now analyzing a series of special prices for staple products in Tulcan, to equate them to the neighboring Ipiales, which would help avoid smuggling and would boost the local economy.

Venezuela began closing border crossings with Colombia late last month in order to deal with increasing crime and smuggling by Colombian paramilitaries and other criminal gangs from the neighboring country.

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