

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 6, 2022

The Honorable Todd D. Robinson
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Robinson,

We write to respectfully request that you take steps to expand United States security cooperation with Ecuador, including by increasing International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) assistance to the country. Having just returned from a congressional delegation to Ecuador, we strongly believe such assistance is critical to bolstering bilateral ties and ensuring that Ecuador's institutions have the capacity to address the growing and urgent security challenges facing the country.

Amid rising levels of drug trafficking, violence, prison riots, and the targeted killing of government officials, Ecuador faces an increasingly challenging security situation. Ecuador is the country with the third-highest amount of cocaine seizures in the world, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's World Drug Report 2022. The country's growing role as a transshipment hub for cocaine and other drugs has fueled the expansion of transnational organized criminal groups, particularly from Mexico and Colombia, in Ecuadorian territory. In 2021, the country's homicide rate increased faster than any other country in South America, which has only been exacerbated by deadly prison riots that have left around 400 people dead since February 2021, as well as ongoing targeted attacks against police officers, prosecutors, and judges.


The magnitude of these security challenges has forced Ecuadorian President Guillermo Lasso to declare several states of emergency, including just last month after several explosive attacks by gangs left at least five police officers dead. It has also led President Lasso to publicly request additional international assistance, particularly from the United States, in addressing these transnational security challenges, a request he reiterated in meetings with our delegation during our recent trip to Quito. While the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has provided Ecuador with approximately \$31 million in assistance to improve citizen security, counter illicit trafficking and transnational organized crime, and strengthen law enforcement cooperation since 2018, we believe this level of funding is no longer sufficient to adequately meet Ecuador's growing security needs.

The United States must ensure going forward that INCLE funds provided to Ecuador are commensurate with the scope of the country's security challenges, the threats these challenges pose to United States interests and the Ecuadorian people, and the Ecuadorian government's willingness to strengthen bilateral security ties. We hope you will take additional steps to expand our security and law enforcement cooperation in the coming months. By doing so, we can deepen cooperation with a key democratic partner in Latin America that is interested in strengthening bilateral ties with the United States. Thank you in advance for your engagement on this matter and for sharing information with our offices about your efforts.


Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Richard Burr
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Rob Portman
United States Senator