

Ecuador orders US Military Officers to Leave the Country

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Ecuadorian Deputy Foreign Minister Leonardo Arizaga confirmed today that a group of US military men that remained at the embassy of that country in Quito will have to leave the country by request of the national Government. Exactly, the Security Operation Office will be closed by the end of April, Arizaga told the news agency Prensa Latina.

The Ecuadorian official said the issue of the US South Command troops' withdrawal was presented by President Rafael Correa and Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño months ago, when both of them denounced an excessive presence of military men from that country at the US embassy.

Arizaga stated that he tackled the issue with Deputy Undersecretary of the US State Department for the West Hemisphere, Alex Lee, when he visited Ecuador in late March.

The Ecuadorian deputy foreign minister clarified that the US South Command troops' withdrawal does not affect the personnel of the US Military Attache's Office, which is subordinate to the State Department.

We are not going to continue having relations the United States regarding security, but Government to Government, through the attaches' offices, based on mutual respect, said Arizaga.

Correa, who after taking power in January, 2007, refused to renew the contract that allowed the United States using the military base of Manta, ordered in late 2013 to investigate into the presence of 50 US military men in Quito.

Correa also demanded then to know the reasons for four US military men were on board of a helicopter of the Ecuadorian Air Force that had been shot months before by a Colombian irregular group in an area near the border with Colombia.

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