

Andean Report by Cynthia Rush

Tensions mount between Peru, Ecuador

After pulling the plug on Peru's military, the U.S. is now encouraging Ecuador to send armed forces into Peru.

In August, the U.S. Congress suspended military assistance to Peru, charging "human rights violations." Shortly thereafter, the social democratic government of Ecuador chose to aggravate a border dispute with Peru. The way events are now proceeding, the dispute between the two Andean countries, which has led to armed conflict on two occasions in the last 50 years, could erupt into a military confrontation, and become the pretext for yet another intervention by multilateral forces, allegedly to "keep the peace," but in reality to further the Anglo-American bankers' agenda.

The most recent aggravation of tensions occurred when a 100-man Ecuadoran Army patrol illegally entered Peruvian territory on July 16, and set up a watchpost under the name Teniente Ortiz—the name of a watchpost already existing inside Ecuador. Information on the presence of the Ecuadoran patrol only started to leak out in Peru a month later. But the background to the dispute makes clear why this action was so provocative.

When Peru and Ecuador went to war in 1941 over territory in the Amazon region they each claimed, the dispute was resolved at a peace treaty signed in Rio de Janeiro in 1942, guaranteed by the United States, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. The Rio Protocol, as it is known, fixed the border between the two and called for the establishment of permanent border markers. In 1960, when 1,600 kilometers of border had been marked and only 70 km remained, the Ecuadoran

government refused to continue and effectively repudiated the Rio Protocol, which it claimed had been imposed on it by force. As recently as mid-September, Foreign Minister Diego Cordóvez stated that his government would not participate in any border demarcation procedure "in accordance with an instrument whose validity it does not recognize."

The current conflict is not just the eruption of an old dispute, but is closely linked to the Bush administration's policy goals toward Peru in particular, as is demonstrated by several developments.

Minimally, the Rio Protocol calls on the guarantors to determine whether Ecuador violated its terms, whether it entered Peruvian territory and destroyed a Peruvian border marker as charged, and to enforce the process of border demarcation in the 70 km area remaining. However, the four guarantors stated on Sept. 15 that they would only act if "invited" to do so by both the Ecuadoran and Peruvian governments. Since Ecuador doesn't recognize the Rio Protocol, it is not about to call on any of the four to intervene.

The guarantors' failure to act in any way at all has allowed the situation to deteriorate rapidly, giving free rein especially to the development of a hostile anti-Peruvian campaign inside Ecuador, promoted by the Armed Forces and by Socialist International-linked President Rodrigo Borja. Dovetailing with the U.S. Congress's Aug. 8 cutoff of military assistance to Peru, the campaign inside Ecuador portrays Peru as an "aggressor" out

to assault its neighbor. On Sept. 20, Ecuadoran press played up the hardly believable report put out by the United Nations in its *Military Strategy Yearbook*, which says that Peru spent more money in 1990 on weapons purchases than all other Ibero-American nations. A few days later, the vice president of Ecuador's Congress, Manuel Salgado, called on Peru to halt its "scandalous arms race."

Lima's *La República* reported on Sept. 29 that Ecuador's Armed Forces were readying weaponry, increasing their intelligence activities in the border area, and calling up reserves. On Oct. 4, the newspaper reported that Peruvian military intelligence had detected unusual movements of Ecuadoran troops on the border.

In the context of the Bush administration's campaign against Peru, these developments place the country in an untenable position. If it acts unilaterally to expel Ecuadoran soldiers, it will almost certainly be branded the "aggressor" and be subject to international action by the U.N. or the Organization of American States. If it does nothing, it must endure Ecuadoran assaults on its territorial integrity. As Peruvian Sen. Gustavo Mohme Llona stated on Oct. 3, if Peru and Ecuador together can't find a peaceful solution, "Peru will have no option but to act firmly to force respect for its legitimate rights and its unquestionable territorial integrity."

Anglo-American policy is to wait until an armed conflict occurs, in order to impose a multilateral solution. The U.S. ambassador in Lima, Anthony Quainton, said on Oct. 3 that sanctions could be imposed on "the aggressor," should an armed conflict occur; and Brazilian Foreign Minister Francisco Rezak suggested that troops from the guarantor countries could be sent to the border region to "prevent armed conflict."