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Ecuador: Government Places Bus Transportation Under Military Control

by Barbara Khol

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On July 6 in Guayaquil, bus drivers raised fares by up to 100%. Users protested, in some cases by rioting and breaking bus windshields. Police intervened, and arrested several drivers. In Quito on July 9, drivers launched a wildcat strike in solidarity with counterparts in Guayaquil. The government responded by public bus transport under military control. As of Thursday, police had arrested over 80 drivers in Guayaquil, and impounded about the same number of buses. Drivers insisted on authorization for a fare hike, after rejecting a monthly subsidy equivalent to US\$400 from the government. A month ago, the government implemented tax exemptions on imported buses to replace obsolete and worn-out vehicles. To the present, not one transport company has taken advantage of the exemption. Company owners argue say that because the business is unprofitable, they cannot afford new equipment. (Sources: Spanish news service EFE, 07/09/92, 07/10/92; Agence France-Presse, 07/10/92)

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