Ecuador: Update On Public Transport Crisis

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On July 30, bus transport in Quito was virtually paralyzed. Strike leaders announced that beginning Monday, Aug. 3, fares would be increased by 100%, from the government-authorized 50 sucres to 100 sucres (US$0.066). According to bus company owners and drivers, the current fare is inadequate to cover maintenance costs. (See Chronicle 07/16/92 for report on transport sector strikes, and government response.) In Guayaquil, transport activities appeared to be normal, but some bus drivers and most tax drivers were charging the "double fare." On July 29, police began arresting bus drivers found to be collecting the 100-sucre fare, and impounded their vehicles. Guayas department governor Oswaldo Molestina said the impounded vehicles were put back into service, and driven by military personnel. Guayaquil is the capital city of Guayas. On Tuesday, Aug. 4, urban transport in Guayaquil and Quito had returned to normal. Most buses carried one or two soldiers to "guarantee operations and officially-sanctioned fares." About 150 bus drivers were arrested in Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca and Machala on Aug. 3. The drivers were released the following day, with instructions to go to work as usual. Attempts to charge the double fare were thwarted by the soldiers' presence. (Source: Agence France-Presse, 07/30/92, 08/04/92)

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