5-9-1991

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Category/Department: General

Published: Thursday, May 9, 1991

In statements to daily newspaper Hoy published May 6, National Energy Institute (INE) director Horacio Yepez said that about 24,000 barrels of fuel per day are being smuggled into Colombia and Peru. The quantity is equivalent to nearly 20% of Ecuador's daily fuel consumption. Because of lower prices in Ecuador, fuel contraband has been a problem for years, said Yepez, but the current level is "extreme." According to the Latin American Energy Organization's economic energy information system, in Colombia, a gallon of regular gasoline costs 364 pesos ($0.62), and in Peru, 1.1 million intis ($2.13). Ecuador's price is 410 sucres ($0.37). Yepez said the contraband fuel is transported by ship, since a caravan of about 100 tank trucks would be necessary to carry 24,000 barrels per day of fuels to neighboring countries. An average 30,000 barrels of crude are used in processing 24,000 barrels of gasoline, diesel, kerosene and liquid gas. Ecuadoran crude oil production averages nearly 290,000 barrels per day, of which 160,000 bpd are exported. The INE director said that the only effective means of eliminating contraband is probably the application of real or international prices on fuels destined to the domestic market. In the past, anti-smuggling measures involving the police and customs officials have not provided expected results.

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