

Brazil Had Rescue Operation to Save Ousted Ecuador President

Contributed by Érica Santana
Monday, 25 April 2005

Ecuador's ex-president, Lucio Gutiérrez, arrived in Brazil this Sunday, April 24. Brazil's Ministry of Justice will conclude the political asylum formal process this week, with the concession of the visa.

The arrival was the culminating point of a tactical plan not to generate more protests in Quito, especially in front of the Brazilian embassy, where Gutierrez stayed since his removal from power by Congress, last Wednesday, April 20.

The strategy was classified by Brazilian Air Force Brigadier General Joseli Parante as a real rescue operation.

"There were difficulties, but we took off safely. We were only really sure of success in the last 30 minutes. The rescue decision was made by the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the Air Force, Brazilian embassy, and Ecuadorean Air Force," he reveals.

Gutiérrez was accompanied by his wife Ximena Bohórquez Romero and his daughter Viviana Estefania. The other daughter, Carina Ximena, is an Army cadet, and wanted to remain in Ecuador.

For security reasons, Brazilian government kept information about the ex-president's safe-conduct secret. The safe-conduct was granted Friday, but only officially confirmed after Gutiérrez' departure. The document was necessary to warrant Lucio Gutiérrez' integrity and freedom until his departure to Brazil.

The authorization was signed by Ecuador's new president, Alfredo Palácio, and by the Minister of Foreign Relations, Antonio Parra Gil.

The text cites the Brazilian diplomatic note, which explained the asylum grant as a proposal to "contribute to the democratic stability of Ecuador," and to the normalization of the country's internal situation.

In the political asylum request, formally sent to the Brazilian Ambassador in Quito, Sérgio Florêncio, the ex-president says he feels "personally threatened" and "incapable of guaranteeing" his freedom and physical integrity, in the country's current political situation.

Gutiérrez is being sued in Ecuador's common justice, accused of having authorized violent police action against protesters who demanded he left the government. Hundreds of Ecuadoreans were wounded during the conflicts, and at least one person died - photographer Julio Garcia.

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