

USA's Drug War Biological Weapon Banned by Ecuador



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Project

ALBRIGHT'S GUNS AND MICROBES DRUG STRATEGY GETS COOL RECEPTION IN SOUTH AMERICA

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Hamburg and Seattle, 18 August – The Sunshine Project welcomes the decision by the Ecuadorean government to ban the US-developed microbial agent *Fusarium oxysporum*. Called “Agent Green” by the Sunshine Project, the *Fusarium* pathogen is a biological weapon intended to eradicate illicit coca crops in the Andes.

Highly controversial negotiations are currently underway to field test and use *Fusarium* agents in Colombia. (Please see previous Project news releases for more information.)

The Colombia talks have been publicized in Ecuador by Quito-based non-profit Acción Ecológica, resulting in an angry public reaction. The Ecuadorean government moved quickly, fearful that *Fusarium* - a genus that is a major agricultural pest - would inevitably leak over the border if applied in Colombia's coca growing areas.

Many in Ecuador also fear the US might seek to spray the fungus directly in its territory, especially if coca cultivation spills over into Ecuador as a result of the counterinsurgency war in Colombia.

Regional opposition to the use of biological warfare agents is solidifying. The law's enactment highlights regional concern with the policies of US Secretary of State Madeline Albright, who arrives in Quito today on her tour of South America.

Ecuador is the second South American government to voice concern about the spillover effects of US support for Plan Colombia's guns and microbes strategy to eradicate coca. In Brasilia on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Lampreia told Albright that “*We are concerned about Plan Colombia's possible effects on Brazil, in terms of the military and in terms of drug trafficking.*” At a stop in Chile yesterday, Albright heard that Chile supports peace in Colombia; but got no backing for USA's drug war vision.

In Ecuador, Environment Minister Rodolfo Rendón was first to act against the fungus, clarifying on July 18th that he would not permit *Fusarium* tests and contacting other Amazonian Environment Ministers to raise regional concerns. Two days later, Ecuador's Agriculture Minister Mauricio Dávalos Guevara enacted a law, published in the official registry on Monday (August 14th), banning introduction and use of *Fusarium oxysporum*.

Ecuador joins Peru in taking legal action to forbid the US-developed agent. Earlier this year, by Presidential Decree, Peru specifically forbid the use of biological agents in aerial crop eradication. Environment Ministers from Amazonian countries are discussing possible additional actions, which could include similar bans in other countries.

The Ecuadorean law, *Acuerdo Ministerial 162*, concludes that “knowing the danger of strains of the fungus *Fusarium oxysporum* that can cause serious injury to the environment, human beings, animals, and plants... Prohibits the entry and use of the pathogen *Fusarium oxysporum* in the entire national territory for the purpose of preserving the public health of animals and the ecosystem in general.”