Results of the operations carried out by Policía Nacional del Ecuador to seize drugs in zone 1 in the year 2022

DOI: 10.46932/sfjdv4n6-009

Received on: August 14th, 2023
Accepted on: September 16th, 2023

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ABSTRACT
Drug trafficking is one of the most serious problems facing the country and has increased significantly in recent years. Narcotics are transported daily in different parts of the national territory. The comparison of the amount of drugs seized in the airports of Quito and Guayaquil and the port of this one in 2020 and 2022 is analyzed and the percentage variation of intentional homicides in Zone 1 during the year 2022. Policía Nacional del Ecuador, through Dirección Nacional de Investigación Antinarcóticos (DNAI), conducts operations that allow the seizure of the aforementioned substances, acting within the current legal framework with the aim of dismantling organised criminal groups that intend to distribute different quantities of narcotics to different countries, a phenomenon of global importance. The results of the operations carried out in 2022 by the Policía Nacional del Ecuador through DNAI for the seizure of narcotics will be analyzed, allowing to obtain favorable results, by one of the most important public institution in the country works.

Keywords: Policía Nacional del Ecuador, antinarcotics, police, murder, crime.

1 INTRODUCTION
The aim of this article is the analysis of the results of the operational procedures carried out by Policía Nacional del Ecuador in the seizure of narcotics in zone 1, comprising the provinces of Esmeraldas, Carchi, Imbabura and Sucumbíos: Esmeraldas, Carchi, Imbabura and Sucumbios, being considered areas of special importance due to their border location with Colombia; significant quantities
of narcotic substances have been seized annually: cocaine base paste, marijuana, heroin, cocaine hydrochloride among others taking into account the representative economic value they have on the market and the harmful effects on human health.

Ecuador, due to its geo-referencing, bordering Colombia and Peru, which produce narcotics, is the territory of choice for Organised Crime Groups, selecting this country as a place to stockpile and transport these substances, using sea ports, airports and land borders to export them to the USA, Holland, Belgium, among other important countries, according to the figures seized; During the year 2022, various "terrorist" acts were carried out by GDOs located in the national territory, which described themselves as operators of the Cártel del Sinaloa (Choneros, Fatales, Águilas) as well as Cártel Jalisco Nueva Generación CJNG (Lagartos, Lobos, Tiguerones, Chone Killers), for the dispute of territories, as well as persecution and assassination of their main leaders; according to the United States Department of Justice, they are present in approximately 17 countries, among which Ecuador is selected for the distribution of narcotics even though they are not produced within the country.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE DRUG TRADE

The trafficking of illicit substances has unfortunate consequences for our country, resulting in high levels of violence, corruption, the growth of underground economies and the attraction of the population to become part of the GDOs, who appear to have a high economic lifestyle, apparently obtaining "easy money" and flaunting material goods through social networks without measuring the consequences, which unleash pain and death that even involve entire families, minors, from vulnerable sectors of the country.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ecuador is ranked as one of the countries with the largest seizures of cocaine hydrochloride, which is due to the operability and performance of Policía Nacional del Ecuador, making it clear that organised crime sees our country as an attractive transit country for narcotics due to the increase in the seized product, which is why it is important to know the figures for the year 2022.

Drug trafficking is the prelude to delinquent events where the main victims are adolescents and adults who find themselves in complex economic situations and even without access to education, triggering them to become participants in the consumption and commercialisation of substances where the main attractive reward is economic solvency. This social problem is unfortunately growing, triggering tragic events such as murders, increased production and therefore consumption, disputes over territories, political and cultural damage as public policies are not restructured and finally we end up with a disturbance of public order.
1.2 THE DRUG GANGS IN ECUADOR

The "Tiguerones" gang has penetrated the Consejo de la Judicatura, Fiscalía, Alcaldías and Prefecturas; This organisation has a greater presence in Guayas, Esmeraldas and Manabí, together with "Los Lobos" and "Chonekillers", who are the adversaries of "Los Choneros" in 10 other provinces. The latter is the oldest organisation, it emerged in Manta in 1998 headed by Jorge Veliz alias Chonero, with the murder of its leader, Jorge Luis Zambrano alias Rasquiña, who was also murdered in 2020, took control; Currently "Los Choneros" are present in Pichincha, Cotopaxi, Los Ríos, Manabí, Santa Elena, Guayas, El Oro, Azuay and Loja; their armed wings are "Los Gangsters" in Esmeraldas and "Los R7" in Santo Domingo; these two fronts fight over drug trafficking routes and according to the Dirección Nacional Antinarcóticos are responsible for violent crimes.

Recently, after being captured in July 2023 in Colombia, alias "Gordo Luis" was transferred to the province of Cotopaxi to be held in the Cárcel Regional del Latacunga. He is one of the leaders of "Los Lobos" and, according to the Policía Nacional, this group exercises control over this organisation in the aforementioned prison.

2 METHODS

A phenomenological, documentary, quantitative study was carried out using the figures registered in the Sistema de Gestión Policial (SGP) of Policía Nacional del Ecuador and the actions taken by police personnel.

3 RESULTS
3.1 MISSION OF THE NATIONAL ANTI-DRUG DIRECTORATE

According to General Order No. 144 - Policía Nacional del Ecuador (2010), the mission of the Dirección Nacional Antidrogas - Policía Nacional is plan, direct, coordinate and supervise police operations for the prevention, investigation and repression of drug-related crimes, guaranteeing the rights of citizens, in support of citizen security; To this end, it uses anti-narcotics control through work teams (guides and dogs) and technical teams in all areas involved in external and internal trade, carrying out inspection activities in the areas of cargo, passengers, couriers, commercial flights, private flights, military, etc., as well as checked-in baggage. As well as the checked and accompanied baggage of the different flights at national and international level, procedures that are covered by the following legal regulations in force.
3.2 DRUG TRAFFICKING IN ECUADOR

In order to achieve a better understanding of the phenomenon of international trafficking and local micro-trafficking of controlled substances, as drugs are called in Sección segunda of the Código Orgánico Integral Penal COIP, it is necessary to address some social aspects and criminological factors related to this crime.

Ecuador is a country that has historically been considered an island of peace, a name it has adopted because it has been isolated for decades from problems related to criminal violence, terrorism and drug production and consumption in neighbouring countries. However, many of the decisions taken have led to our coasts, ports and clandestine airstrips becoming the main exit points for cocaine and marijuana from the region to the main consumer countries in the Americas and the world. Among the external triggering factors we can note the increase in crops in Colombia, the absence of state control in liberated zones in southern Colombia, and among the internal factors we could mention mainly the approval of the Law of Mobility, which allowed greater freedom in the mobility of foreigners without the technology to register and monitor them, and the closure of the Manta Base, which was not compensated in a timely manner with technology that would allow for the control of boats and submersibles.

Organised crime relentlessly takes advantage of any opportunity to achieve its objective, the most significant of which is the regional presence of the large Mexican cartels, The Cártel de Sinaloa maintained its hegemony through its links with the organised crime group known as the Choneros, who, after the death of their maximum leader, alias "J1" or "Rasquiña", were unable to consolidate an orderly succession of their leaders, causing a division into various criminal groups that split up and clashed with other opposing groups that were strengthened through international support. This led to a division into various criminal groups that split up and clashed with other opposing groups that were strengthened through international support from other organised crime groups related to the Colombian “Grupos Armados Organizados” GAOR and the Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación CJNG, importing a way of operating through terror and extreme violence in their quest to dominate territories and drug routes, This has led to a worrying increase in the number of violent deaths in the country, mainly related to criminal violence caused by micro-trafficking and consumption.

The countries in the region traditionally dedicated to international drug production and trafficking have found themselves faced with an increasing number of domestic consumers, with Ecuador being one of those that have suffered a worrying increase, generating an urban war between gangs to control the territories where these substances are marketed and consumed.
3.3 INCREASE IN SEIZURES OF LARGE-SCALE DRUG SHIPMENTS

The year 2020 marks a historic milestone in the fight against drugs in Ecuador, with a significant increase in the levels of drug seizures, which has been recognised by international organisations. This increase and the capture of more than 110 tons must be explained from different angles in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding. The first explanation is the undeniable relationship between the increase in drug production and trafficking and the levels of arrests, which could be a logical explanation, although not entirely accurate. The changes in the strategies of the Dirección Nacional de Investigación Antidrogas have been a determining factor in the increase and maintenance of the levels of arrests, In addition, the design of indicators and goals imposed greater demands on the investigative units at the national level. This, added to the intervention in the maritime ports, especially the port of CONTECOM in the Province of Guayas, made it possible to achieve a record level of captures in the last two years, placing Ecuador as the third country in the world with the largest drug seizures, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report, which mentions that, of the almost 1,500 tons of drugs seized in the last two years, Ecuador is the third country in the world with the largest drug seizures, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 500 tons of drugs seized in 2020, 6.5% were seized in Ecuadorian territory after Colombia and the United States, and that the port of Guayaquil is the second most used departure point for drug trafficking in the region. (UNODC, 2022).

3.4 ILLICIT ECONOMIES

The latest report of Grupo de Acción Financiera de Latinoamérica GAFILAT, in December 2022, mentions in Ecuador, when a criminal proceeding cannot conclude with a conviction for money laundering, it is possible to initiate an action for forfeiture of ownership. The purpose of the Organic Law of Extinction of Ownership is to declare in favour of the State assets acquired by actions or omissions of illicit or unjustified origin, or of illicit destination, located in Ecuador and abroad, this law applies to assets and not to persons, it is governed by an autonomous and independent procedure of any other lawsuit. However, there are still articles in this law that need to be reformed, mainly those that prevent the extinction of ownership from being applied to all crimes, currently it can only be applied to seven crimes, and the requirement of a final judgement for previous crimes is an obligatory condition to be able to apply the extinction of ownership without which this crime will remain unpunished; In Colombia and other countries, the only requirement to extinguish ownership is the impossibility of the defendant to adequately justify how the property was lawfully acquired; the law also requires the defendant to be notified within ten days before initiating a process of extinguishment of ownership, which complicates the procedure; in addition, property that has been acquired only within a maximum period of 15 years can be extinguished, when it should be imprescriptible. All these inconsistencies in the law hinder the state's ability to attack
illegal economies. It is important to note that this is the only and most efficient way to neutralise the activities of organised crime and is the only effective resource to limit their power by limiting their power in the purchase of arms, the payment of hired assassins and payments for corruption or other actions that seek to impose fear as a way to exercise their illicit activities with greater freedom.

3.5 VIOLENCE BY CRIMINALS

The data handled by the Policía Nacional establishes that in zone 1 in the year 2022 there was an increase of 189% of violent deaths compared to the previous year, that is 409 events of which 405 events have been classified as motivation threats and in second place with 47 events drug trafficking, however this is the initial information that is available because once the investigation is completed, a good part of these deaths are oriented to drug trafficking as the main motivation, In short, drug traffickers are behind most of the crimes in Ecuador, since the people who supply them are violent and have armed themselves in the last two years with high-powered long arms, mainly with 5.56 mm rifles and in some cases up to 7.62 mm, which are military weapons. One of the relevant arms trafficking cases carried out by the Policía Nacional through the Unidad Nacional de Investigación de Delitos Transnacionales was the dismantling of a gang dedicated to trafficking rifles from the United States, which were transported through couriers for parts or machinery imports, resulting in arrests in the United States and Ecuador.

The violence caused by violent deaths is in addition to other crimes that have been prioritised over the last year due to their worrying increase with the incorporation of new criminal modalities such as Sicilian vaccine-type extortion and kidnapping, with which these criminal organisations obtain large amounts of money that is used for their criminal expansion and which is incorporated into the economy through money laundering activities.

3.6 DRUG SEIZURES IN ESMERALDAS PROVINCE Z1 2022

In the province of Esmeraldas in 2022, the total amount of drugs seized was 6,447.21kg through the various operations carried out by the Dirección Nacional Antinarcóticos.

During the year 2022 different interventions were carried out in which several police operations against drug trafficking were executed; One of these was in the "Las Piedras" sector, in which the Grupo Especial Móvil Antinarcóticos (GEMA) stopped a pick-up truck driven by a female person transporting cane to the province of Los Ríos, in the city of Quevedo, In which the personnel searched inside the vehicle a so-called "caleta" which is a modality that alters the original structure of the vehicles, finding 60 "packages" sealed with brown packing tape containing inside a greenish vegetable substance that after the respective homologated test was positive for marijuana with a weight of approximately 54.000g.
Another operation was carried out in the "El Edén" sector, with the participation of personnel from the Unidad Nacional Canina (CRAC) in which the intervention of the narcotics detection dog "Dominic" was carried out during the search of an inter-cantonal bus in which a positive alert was given for three suitcases that were searched containing 57 rectangular packages of various sizes again with a greenish vegetable substance presumably marijuana weighing approximately 47,400g.

Likewise, on the Esmeraldas road network, a lorry carrying 352 packets of cocaine was stopped. Police stopped the van and in the back part of the van they found the drug shipment that was being transported from Imbabura to Tonsupa, where two people were arrested in order to determine responsibility for the shipment and the origin of the substances in question.

Operation "Resurrection" was carried out on the road to the Esmeraldas oil refinery, in which anti-narcotics agents stopped a light taxi-type vehicle which, when searched, was found to contain several rectangular packages containing a greenish substance of vegetable origin which, after the respective field test, was found to be positive for marijuana, weighing approximately 20,000g.

One of the raids in the province of Esmeraldas was carried out in nine houses in the towns of Esmeraldas urban area and Atacames in which 11 people from a family dedicated to the sale of narcotics were arrested; the operation was carried out in 9 houses in which narcotics were found, the investigations and monitoring of the evidence were carried out four months ago in the Monte de Piedad sector of one of the capital's neighbourhoods. In order to evade police tracking, the members of the family moved to Tonsupa where they carried out the illegal sale of substances, including recruiting other people to continue the sale. After the raids, the seized narcotics entered the weighing process. In addition, 3 firearms were found, which were attached to the relevant process in the Public Prosecutor's Office for the in flagrante delicto hearing.

In March, 12 members of a criminal organisation were arrested in raids in San Lorenzo, Mataje, Esmeraldas and Quito: San Lorenzo, Mataje, Esmeraldas and Quito, in Mataje a laboratory for processing and refining drugs was located.

In an operation coordinated with the Policía Nacional, the Ecuadorian and Colombian Navy, a boat was intercepted 20mn off the coast of Esmeraldas in which the suspects were transporting approximately half a tonne of drugs, 378 double-bottomed brick-block type packages, and 3 citizens were apprehended.

In a jungle area near San Lorenzo in Esmeraldas, beds, mattresses and all the necessary equipment for cooking and shelter from the rain were found. On the table was a newspaper with information about the mobile column of Urias Rondon, an illegal organisation that is part of six armed groups that move between the border between Ecuador and Colombia. The mafias are increasingly establishing new resting places or hideouts to set up processing laboratories and traffic drugs into the neighbouring country.
Defence forces demolished two operational centres near Mataje and Corriente Larga, two locations on the Esmeraldas border. There they found fuel, dyes and other substances for drug processing. The navy, through its special forces, managed to capture two boats, each carrying 3,000 gallons of gasoline, a quantity that caught the attention of the uniformed officers, who confirmed that the cargo was destined for drug processing laboratories on the Colombian side of the border. Intelligence reports found that the drug cartels currently operating in Nariño and Cauca used fuel obtained from Ecuador in the processing of drugs. In the past, fishermen and farmers in the neighbouring country were also involved in transporting fuel. There is information that illegal fuel is being transported from four other localities in Río Verde and the San Lorenzo area. In boats, drug traffickers spend a maximum of four hours on Colombian soil. Reports indicate that in addition to Urias Rondón, a mobile column of FARC dissidents, Oliver Sinisterra, Guerrillas Unidas del Pacifico, Grupo Contador, ELN and Comuneros del Sur are also moving along the border. All these organisations would have allies in Esmeraldas.

Disputes over ports, estuaries, mangroves and land have caused criminal violence in Esmeraldas to continue to increase. Between January and June 2022 alone, 238 people were murdered in this province. During the same period in 2021, there were only 61 homicides. The government introduced a state of emergency this year on 24 July for "grave internal commotion" in Duran-Guayas, Manabi and Los Ríos, as well as a state of emergency in all prisons in Ecuador, both for a duration of 60 days, following clashes between gangs inside prisons, the detention of approximately 100 prison guards and the murder of the Mayor of Manta.

3.7 DRUG SEIZURES IN CARCHI PROVINCE Z1 2022

In the province of Carchi in 2022, the total amount of drugs seized was 6,572.12kg through the different operations carried out by the Dirección Nacional Antinarcóticos.

In 2022 several operations were carried out to seize controlled substances for both international trafficking and micro-trafficking, among the most relevant we can mention some that were developed in Control Sur Carchi, during the inspection of a moving bus with the help of the anti-narcotics canine called Dodo, during the inspection of a moving bus with the help of the Dodo anti-narcotics canine, a common bus with destination and route Tulcán - Guayaquil was stopped by means of detection and profiling methods. Jute bags containing 38 rectangular brick-type packages containing green plant compound were found in the cabin of the bus, which tested positive for marijuana.

Grupo Especial Móvil Antinarcóticos (GEMA) and the Unidad Nacional Canina (UNAC) went to the Customs Control Group checkpoint located at the Rumichaca-Tulcán International Bridge in the province of Carchi, where after receiving an alarm from the 911 ECU, a vehicle was stopped and was travelling in an unusual manner, the driver expressed nervousness, so they searched the vehicle and found
in the boot compartment two packages wrapped in transparent covers containing paper money (dollars) of different denominations. Therefore, with the assistance of specialised forensic personnel, a total of $42,000 (forty-two thousand US dollars) was obtained. The driver of the vehicle was arrested on suspicion of money laundering and together with the evidence found, received an arrest warrant from the competent authorities.

Personnel from the Unidad Nacional Canina carried out several anti-drug control operations in Tucán, achieving the seizure of controlled substances. During an inspection of a car-type vehicle, the specialised Dodo dog transmitted positive signals in the front part, under the seats, containing some whitish substances, which when subjected to chromatographic tests were positive for cocaine, which was going to be sent to Quito and then to Madrid.

Three citizens were arrested for possession of 747.00 grams of cocaine and the evidence was handed over for the corresponding proceedings ordered by the competent authority. With this operation, 387,470 doses of drugs were prevented from being placed on the market.

Agents of Grupo Especial Móvil Antinarcóticos GEMA and the Unidad Nacional Canina coordinated the "Patagonia" operation in the southern pass of the city of Tucán, Carchi province, which led to the seizure of 28 small capsules hidden in a packet of wet wipes corresponding to 52.8 grams of methamphetamines (528 pills), the specialised canine "Arko" detected the possible existence of narcotics in this seizure, inside the suitcase of a citizen who was travelling on an interprovincial bus: Tucán-Quito, the same one who was detained for the investigation, is a Colombian citizen, it should be noted that each dose is worth around $15-$20 on the black market, so it would be worth around: $10,560 (ten thousand five hundred US dollars).

In Guayaquil and Tucán, the police arrested four people in possession of 19.6 kilograms of heroin. Agents from the Police carried out the "Casería" operation in Zone 8 and Sub-zone Carchi as part of the fight against drug trafficking organisations.

During this police operation, which involved the Prosecutor's Office and special forces tactical teams, four citizens were captured and were being transported from the city of Tucán in the province of Carchi to Guayaquil to deliver products to consumer markets in the north and northeast of the city. The head of the UCTCI (Unidad Contra el Tráfico para Consumo Interno) confirmed that the drug originated in Colombia, that it followed the Tucán-Guayaquil route and that the organisation was investigated through a previous investigation. He added that a total of 19 kilos, 630 grams were seized as evidence, thus preventing more than 650 doses from being sold on the consumer market.
3.8 DRUG SEIZURES IN IMBABURA PROVINCE Z1 2022

In the province of Imbabura in 2022, the total amount of drugs seized was 4,840.14kg through the different operations carried out by the Dirección Nacional Antinarcóticos.

Operation Eclipse 2 was carried out in the Imbabura sub-zone. In the region of Gualchán, the police stopped a blazer-type vehicle whose driver mentioned that he was from the province of Carchi. After searching the interior of the vehicle, 61 packages containing 56 kilograms of marijuana (equivalent to 112,000 doses) were found. The Colombian driver was arrested and the vehicle confiscated.

Operations were carried out in the city of Ibarra, which resulted in the seizure of 8,845 doses of marijuana, especially in the Tababuela sector. Police from the Unidad Nacional Canina monitor and search vehicles in the area to prevent drug trafficking offences.

3.9 DRUG SEIZURES IN SUCUMBÍOS PROVINCE Z1 2022

In the province of Imbabura in 2022, the total amount of drugs seized was 4,042.39kg through the various operations carried out by the Dirección Nacional Antinarcóticos.

At Lago Agrio canton, there was a case of criminal violence related to micro-trafficking activities, so through preventive patrols they searched for a person with an unusual attitude who was carrying a pistol type firearm with six 9 mm calibre cartridges, The citizen was apprehended but was immediately linked to a violent death as the ECU-911 radio station of the Integral Security Service issued an alert about possible gunshots on Progreso and Velasco Ibarra streets in the Lago Agrio canton. The police immediately went to the aforementioned place, where they found a female person on the road, who minutes before had been the victim of a firearm falling on a motorbike, causing a wound to her head and left leg at the level of the thigh, a bag containing 01 phone and cash was stolen, and the suspect was identified as carrying controlled substances.

In the province of Sucumbíos, personnel from the Unidad Nacional Canina – CRAC y Control de Frontera were carrying out an anti-drug detection operation using surveillance and profiling techniques. They found a grey car and a blue van, which the police officers asked to stop, but the driver ignored the request.

When the respective investigation was carried out, the specialised antinarcotics canine "Willien" alerted his guide positive for narcotic substances, finding double bottom compartments in the seats and doors of the vehicle, finding 293 rectangular shaped packages wrapped in dark coloured plastic bags with a white substance inside, apparently cocaine hydrochloride, with a total of 289,777.00g.

The "Paraiso 1 and 2" operations were carried out in Lago Agrio, capital of the province of Sucumbíos, and agents from the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Unidad Nacional Antinarcóticos (UIAN) dismantled two drug trafficking organisations after eight months of investigation. The criminal
structure was said to be dedicated to the transport, stockpiling, distribution and illegal trade of controlled substances originating in Colombia, for which they adapted taxis into vehicles where they hid the drugs, which were then transported to sea ports to be shipped to the United States and Europe.

Operations Paraíso 1 and 2 were carried out simultaneously in a raid on several properties in Lago Agrio, during which 40 citizens were arrested, nine of whom have criminal records, said the head of the Dirección Antinarcóticos. In two operations with more than 40 arrests, 3,584 kilograms of cocaine hydrochloride, five firearms, four vehicles and seven mobile devices were seized and stored at the Antinarcotics Headquartes in Zone 8 and Sucumbíos Sub-zone.

An anti-narcotics control was carried out at the Lago Agrio land terminal, where packages sent by public transport were checked. Agents from the CRAC’s Unidad Nacional Canina detected three cylindrical ferrous metal objects (industrial air cleaners for heavy objects) with the help of the anti-narcotics specialist dog "Willie", who inspected parcels on their way to the city of Macará.

During the visual and manual technical review of the cylinders with electrical equipment (drill and grinder), it was found that they contained 208 rectangular packages of different sizes, which stored the controlled substances with a green appearance of vegetable origin that when exposed to the Duquenois-Levine-PDT chemical reagent gave a positive result for marijuana with a weight of 88,720.00g.

3.10 SEIZURE ANALYSIS

At Zone 1, Carchi Province register 325 cases, 365 arrested, 6572,12kg; Esmeraldas Province 503 cases, 601 arrested, 6447,21kg; Imbabura Province 299 cases, 382 arrested, 4840,14kg; Sucumbíos Province 158 cases, 163 arrested, 4042,39kg. Total 1285 cases, 1511 arrested, 21901,86kg.

- Carchi Province register: 4,189,58kg Hydrochloride; 11,10kg Base Paste; 135,48kg Heroin, 2,235,95kg Marijuana.
- Esmeraldas Province register: 4,253,33kg Hydrochloride; 66,69kg Base Paste; 0,00kg Heroin, 2,127,19kg Marijuana.
- Imbabura Province register: 3,161,38kg Hydrochloride; 82,60kg Base Paste; 6,76kg Heroin, 1,589,40kg Marijuana.
- Sucumbíos Province register: 3,871,81kg Hydrochloride; 35,11kg Base Paste; 0,01kg Heroin, 135,46kg Marijuana.
- Total Zone 1 register: 15,476,10kg Hydrochloride; 195,50kg Base Paste; 142,25kg Heroin, 6,088,01kg Marijuana.

- Source: DGIA
- Prepared by: Authors
In 2022, the province of Carchi had the highest amount of drugs seized in kg with 6,572.12kg in Zone 1, and the province with the lowest amount seized was Sucumbios with 4,042.39kg. The most seized substance is cocaine hydrochloride with 15,476.10kg, followed by marijuana 6,088.01kg, cocaine paste 195.50kg and heroin 142.25kg.

Ecuador, a country where drug violence is on the rise, has begun to receive more support from the United States and other countries to strengthen its anti-drug capabilities. The help of intelligence teams from the United States, Israel, Britain and Spain tripled the amount of drugs seized in the first year of President Lasso's term to 350 tons, according to statements to The Associated Press. "The fight against international criminal structures can only happen from an international perspective," the number of drugs seized is the "best indicator of the effectiveness of intelligence cooperation systems".

Colombian, Peruvian and Mexican cartels view Ecuador as a country for stockpiling, trafficking and exporting drugs, especially cocaine, to the US and Europe, which has led to serious urban violence, especially in the port city of Guayaquil.

### 3.10.1 Airport productivity

- **2020 Year, Quito City register:** 258,213,55gr
- **2022 Year, Quito City register:** 1,177,338,40gr
- **2020 Year, Guayaquil City register:** 149,838,60gr
- **2022 Year, Guayaquil City register:** 71,405,50gr
- **Source:** DGIA
- **Prepared by:** Authors

By 2020 and 2022, Quito's seizures will exceed Guayaquil's by 1,214,307 grams.

In the city of Guayaquil, the seizures are highest in 2020, while in Quito they are predominant in 2022.

### 3.10.2 Productivity in the Port of Guayaquil

- **2020 Year:** 23,151.100gr
- **2022 Year:** 77,417.752gr
- **Source:** DGIA
- **Prepared by:** Authors

At the Guayaquil port terminal, 2022 dominates the seizures, 54,266,652 grams higher than 2020.
Another effect of the presence of drug gangs is the bloody confrontations between rival gangs in prisons. One of the most important of these took place in the Cárcel del Litoral in Guayaquil, where 125 people died in a fight between prisoners, another riot took place in the Cárcel del Latacunga, where 16 died and 43 inmates were wounded. According to the SNAI Servicio de Atención a Personas Privadas de la Libertad, 316 prisoners killed their fellow inmates in 2021, and this number has increased to 106 more cases in 2022.

3.10.3 Incidence intentional homicide zone 1

3.10.3.1 SZ carchi
- **Year 2021 Carchi Province**: 6
- **Year 2022 Carchi Province**: 12
- **Carchi Province Absolute Variation**: 6
- **Carchi Province Percentage change**: 100%

3.10.3.2 SZ esmeraldas
- **Year 2021 Esmeraldas Province**: 149
- **Year 2022 Esmeraldas Province**: 516
- **Esmeraldas Province Absolute Variation**: 367
- **Esmeraldas Province Percentage change**: 246%

3.10.3.3 SZ imbabura
- **Year 2021 Imbabura Province**: 21
- **Year 2022 Imbabura Province**: 16
- **Imbabura Province Absolute Variation**: -5
- **Imbabura Province Percentage change**: -24%

3.10.3.4 SZ sucumbíos
- **Year 2021 Sucumbíos Province**: 40
- **Year 2022 Sucumbíos Province**: 81
- **Sucumbíos Province Absolute Variation**: 41
- **Sucumbíos Province Percentage change**: -103%
3.10.3.5 Zone 1

- **Year 2021 Zone 1**: 216
- **Year 2022 Zone 1**: 625
- **Zone 1 Absolute Variation**: 409
- **Zone 1 Percentage change**: 189%
- **Source**: DINASED
- **Prepared by**: Authors

At 2022 exist the percentage variation of 189% and absolute variation of 409 events in relation to 2021. By type of violence, the most relevant would be classified as follows CRIMINAL VIOLENCE, concentrating the problem in type of motivation THREATS (405 events), INTERNAL DRUG TRAFFICKING (47 events), THEFT FROM PERSONS (27 events), THEFT FROM HOME (11 events), CRIMINAL VIOLENCE concentrating the problem in type of motivation RRIMES (39 events), ACTS OF HATE (29 events), SENTIMENTAL (17 events).

3.10.4 Characterisation of violence intentional homicides zone 1

3.10.4.1 Factual area

- **Urban**: 489
- **Rural**: 145
- **Source**: DINASED
- **Prepared by**: Authors

Intentional homicides are registered in greater numbers in the urban area with 480 homicides.

3.10.4.2 Type of space

- **Private**: 181
- **Public**: 444
- **Source**: DINASED
- **Prepared by**: Authors

Intentional homicides are registered in greater numbers in public spaces with 444 cases.

3.10.4.3 Daytime segment

- **Early morning**: 118
- **Morning**: 89
- **Afternoon**: 154
Intentional homicides are registered in greater numbers in the night-time segment with 264 cases, followed by the evening with 154 cases, early morning with 118 cases and finally the morning with 89 events.

3.10.4.4 Type of weapon

- **Fire**: 542
- **Blanca**: 61
- **Constriction**: 4
- **Other**: 18

Intentional homicides are registered in greater numbers with firearms with 542 cases and blanca 61 events.

Our country emphasises the support of the United States and other countries in the fight against organised crime; cartels in other countries consider Ecuador a transit and export country for drugs, especially cocaine, to the United States and Europe.

One of the actions aimed at combating drug trafficking was the alert issued by Unidad Nacional de Investigación Antidrogas in relation to a light aircraft of unknown origin flying over Ecuador, for which the Policía Nacional, Fuerzas Armadas and DEA of the United States carried out joint actions that resulted in the arrest in Mexico State of Durango of an aircraft with 309kg of cocaine inside, the agents apprehended the pilot of Mexican nationality as well as three cars that were allegedly used to transport drugs.

These narcotics seized in Ecuador are worth approximately $31 million dollars in trade, but in the United States and Europe the cost is closer to $120 million dollars.

4 DISCUSSION

According to the Dirección Nacional Antinarcóticos, at 2022; 1285 anti-drug operations were carried out in Zone 1, depriving 1511 citizens of their liberty and seizing 21 tons 901 kilograms 86 grams, the substance with the highest incidence being cocaine hydrochloride.
Referring to Art. 344e. COFJ, cases involving indigenous persons or collectivities, with the aim of preventing the violation of their rights, are not subject to ordinary law but rather “…al derecho, usos y costumbres de los pueblos, nacionalidades y comunidades indígenas…”, in which unfortunately there have been cases of impunity due to the immediate release or the application of alternative measures, facilitating the commission of the same crime for which they were arrested, with highly worrying levels of recidivism. However, the prison population does not exceed 31500, which is why a profound analysis of the crisis in the justice system is necessary in order to change the trend and put a stop to the impunity that is the main trigger for violence, contract killings, extortion, kidnapping, drug trafficking and the commission of many other crimes that should be efficiently prosecuted by the administration of justice.

4.1 DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT: THE NEW APPROACH

While it is true that joint operations in urban areas between the Policía Nacional and Fuerzas Armadas could generate some good results, it is necessary to rethink other strategies based on the current results, since of the 180 tons seized during 2023, only 11 have been seized in the border area; these figures show the urgent need to focus efforts on border control and land routes as well as maritime and air routes both to the north and south of the country, for which the Fuerzas Armadas should play a leading role in accordance with their mobilisation capabilities in these areas, since drugs are currently captured mainly in and around seaports, with the resulting criminal violence in the areas of influence. Therefore, shifting the efforts to control and capture drugs to border areas is seen as a state strategy that will generate better security conditions, as it will force criminal organisations to seek other routes that have less impact on our country, considering that the total eradication of this social cancer is highly complex.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The highly efficient work of the Policía Nacional in the fight against drugs has been recognised by international organisations, but there is an urgent need for a comprehensive reform of the justice and social rehabilitation system to reduce the high levels of impunity, which has created the right environment for an unprecedented escalation of criminal violence. Attacking illegal economies also requires legal reforms to provide an adequate instrument to weaken criminal organisations and their permanent attempt to permeate the structures of the state and all institutions. It should be noted that social prevention in the reduction of drug consumption is indispensable, and that this is a pending debt of the governments in power in order to improve security conditions in the medium and long term. The levels of capture of these substances should be increased in the border area with the support of Fuerzas Armadas controls to reduce maritime and land air traffic, which will make it possible to displace and control criminal violence around maritime ports.
In reference to the topic developed, Zone 1 is identified as a strategic place for the transport of psychotropic substances due to its geographical location and its border with the neighbouring country of Colombia. This location has been the prelude to it being selected as a beneficial place for the transport and sale, which has led to a multitude of violent events caused by various drug trafficking groups; The social situation, such as lack of employment, education and increasing poverty in the marginalised areas of the provinces of Imbabura, Carchi, Sucumbíos and Esmeraldas, have led this population to have a false vision of economic prosperity, which with the passing of time leads to a number of violent events that in many cases lead to the commission of other crimes that worsen the quality of life they envisage and end up being included in a cycle of violence that they can hardly get out of, degenerating their quality of life.

Another factor contributing to the increase in drug trafficking in Zone 1 is the lack of a stronger and more punitive legislative reform to weaken the organisations and to investigate the people who are recruited by the different organised crime groups to commit this type of crime, with the aim of socialising the consequences of erroneous decisions, which end in a sentence of several years in a detention centre, in the best of cases, and in others, regrettably and irreparably, death.
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