# British businessman Colin Armstrong and partner reveal details of Ecuador kidnapping ordeal



In a dramatic case that captured international attention, British businessman and former honorary consul Colin Armstrong, 79, and his Colombian partner Katherine Paola Santos, 30, have spoken for the first time about their harrowing kidnapping ordeal in Ecuador. The couple was abducted in December 2023 by a gang of 15 armed men from Armstrong's weekend home outside Guayaquil.

Mr Armstrong, who previously headed the British Consulate in Guayaquil and owns the Forbidden Corner visitor attraction in the Yorkshire Dales, detailed the terrifying moments when gunmen stormed his 4,000-acre cattle ranch. "I could see several figures in the dark. They grabbed us, so I tried to hit one of them, but what strength do I have?" he recounted. Bound with plastic ties, he was wrapped in a sheet, bundled into his own car, and driven for hours through the countryside alongside Ms Santos. The kidnappers switched vehicles to avoid pursuit before holding them at a remote farmhouse.

During captivity, Mr Armstrong described their accommodation as a modest room with mattresses on the floor and furniture barricading the windows. His captors reportedly searched for tracking devices implanted in their bodies, reflecting growing concerns over kidnappings in the region.

One of the most distressing aspects of the ordeal involved Ms Santos being forced to wear what she believed to be an explosives vest. The kidnappers claimed the vest was rigged to detonate if she disobeyed instructions, and she was ordered to deliver a phone to Armstrong's son, Nick. Video footage circulating on social media showed a bomb disposal expert removing the vest, which was later discovered to be fake. Ms Santos recalled to The Times that explosive experts handed her scissors and asked her to cut a wire herself, before swiftly withdrawing.

Mr Armstrong revealed that at the time of the kidnapping he had been warned to take security precautions such as varying his travel routes, using an armoured vehicle, and employing an escort. "I always laughed off the threat of kidnap. Then it happened," he said.

The kidnappers initially demanded a $5 million ransom and contacted Armstrong's son to communicate their demands. Nick promised to meet their price but simultaneously alerted the embassy in Quito. The British government urged Ecuadorian authorities to assist in resolving the situation. Following arrests of some gang members in Guayaquil, negotiations reduced the ransom to $500,000, to be paid weekly over a month.

Mr Armstrong was finally released near a roadside close to a brothel and promptly taken to hospital for assessment. Police described his condition as "pretty good" given the circumstances. Upon release, he was reunited with his wife and daughters at their family home, just five days before Christmas.

The couple has remained together since the incident. Mr Armstrong acknowledged that choosing to stay with Ms Santos caused tensions within his family, opting to prioritise his partner over returning immediately to his family home.

Colin Armstrong expressed deep sadness over the public and media reaction during their ordeal, particularly criticism aimed at Ms Santos, who was released earlier than him under unclear circumstances. Police investigated whether she was involved in the kidnapping scheme but found no evidence to support this, and she has denied any complicity. "People were cruel. I felt very sad that they could make jokes and lie about us at such a terrible time," Ms Santos told The Times.

The operation to rescue Mr Armstrong involved Ecuadorian police raiding the farmhouse where the couple was held. The authorities confiscated a sizeable arsenal including five grenades, six firearms, 1,500 cartridges, 30 detonating fuses, and several kilograms of controlled substances.

Police Chief Cesar Zapata stated the motive was "economic," though he did not specify if or how much ransom was paid.

This case highlights ongoing security challenges in Ecuador and underscores the complexities authorities face in handling high-profile kidnappings. The experiences shared by Mr Armstrong and Ms Santos provide a rare and detailed insight into the tactics used by kidnappers and the resilience of victims during such traumatic events.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america> - This URL can provide context on security challenges in Ecuador, which is relevant to the kidnapping case involving Colin Armstrong and Katherine Paola Santos. It may offer insights into the broader issues of crime and safety in the region.
* <https://ecuadortimes.net/> - This URL links to a news source that could report on kidnapping cases and security concerns in Ecuador, potentially including details about Armstrong's abduction and its aftermath.
* <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/> - The Times is mentioned in the article as a source where Ms Santos recounted her experiences, suggesting that this URL could provide additional details or quotes from the couple.
* <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/ecuador> - This URL provides travel advisories and safety information for Ecuador, which could corroborate the described security risks and precautions advised for travelers.
* <https://www.axios.com/> - Axios might cover emerging stories and could include details about Colin Armstrong's kidnapping, offering insights into the international reactions and media coverage.
* <https://www.aljazeera.com/> - Al Jazeera often reports on international news, including Latin American stories. This URL could provide coverage of the kidnapping case, its impact, and the broader context of security issues in Ecuador.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14654643/Colombian-mistress-30-Brit-consul-79-denies-cruel-claims-involved-kidnapping-Ecuador-pair-horrifying-ordeal-time-family-rift-caused-affair.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data