

Opinion: Panama needs stronger provincial airports and helipads

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Summary

A La Prensa opinion piece argues that the recent earthquake showed air infrastructure is vital when roads collapse, and that Panama should modernise provincial airports and helipads and keep Albrook airport where it is.

Details (summary of the article)

Writing in La Prensa, a legislative adviser and public policy specialist argues the recent earthquake reopened the debate on Panama's disaster preparedness. When mountain and coastal roads crack or collapse, airstrips and helipads become the only reliable way to deliver aid quickly. She defends keeping the Marcos A. Gelabert airport at Albrook, saying its central location in the capital makes it the natural hub for dispatching medical teams and supplies, and that relocating it would cost the country a rapid-deployment point. For western Panama she highlights Enrique Malek international airport in David as the main gateway and collection centre, plus local strips such as Volcán and Puerto Armuelles, which matter for farm emergencies and rescues in the highlands. She also lists airports in Bocas del Toro, the central provinces, Darién and Guna Yala as links in the aid chain. Helipads, she says, are irreplaceable where runways are unusable, allowing direct landings at disaster sites and regional hospitals. Her three priorities are technical investment in runways, night lighting and communications; building helipads at provincial hospitals; and contingency plans coordinating civil aviation with SINAPROC, security forces and health authorities through drills.

Original (es)

Pistas para la próxima emergencia

El sismo demostró que, cuando colapsan las carreteras, aeropuertos y helipuertos son vitales; Panamá debe fortalecer su red aérea provincial y mantener Albrook.