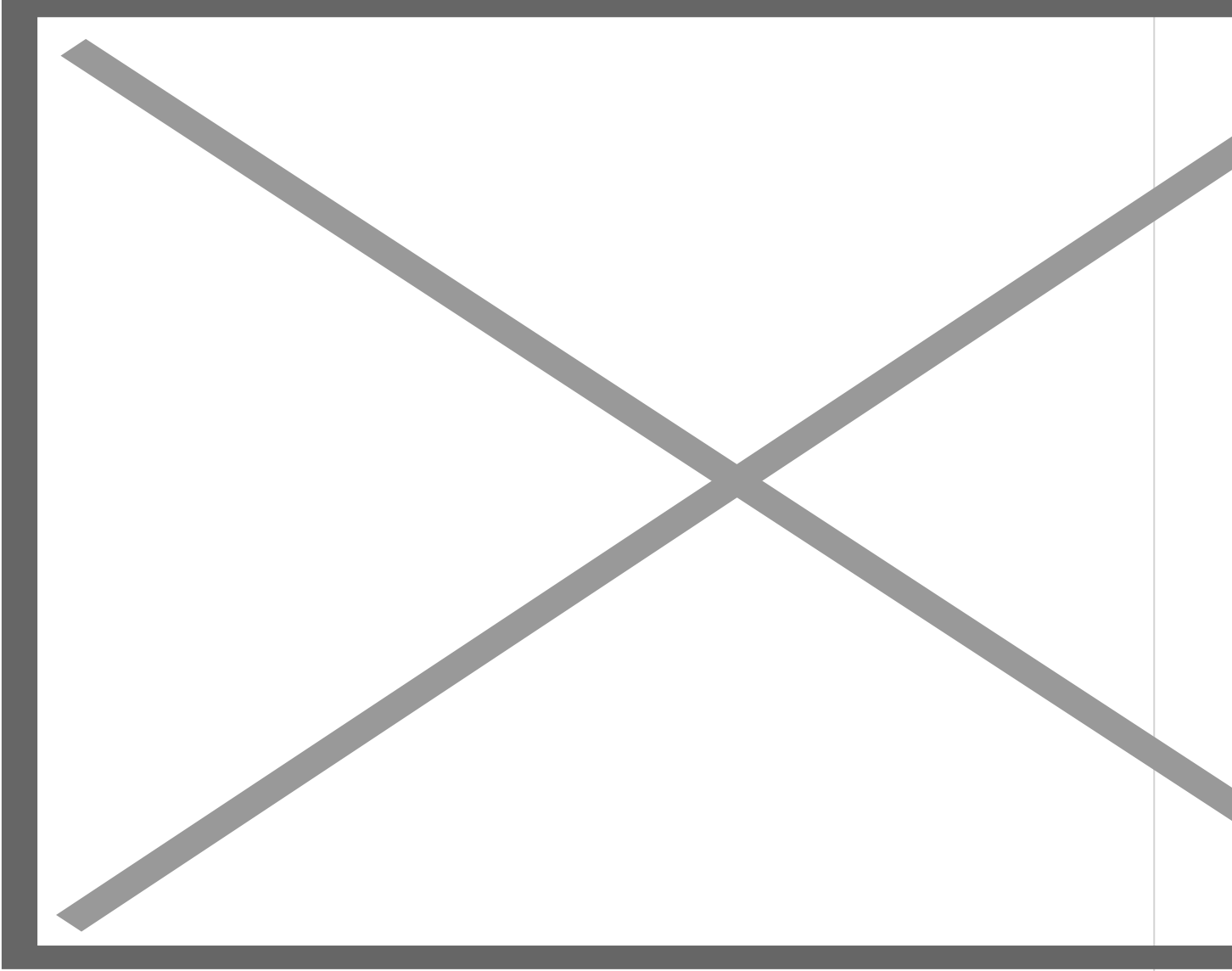


Former Bolivian de facto minister convicted and sentenced in the U.S.

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The case against the former minister was unleashed by the multi-million-dollar purchase of tear gas, which took place in 2019. | Photo: ABI

Miami, January 5 (RHC)-- The former minister of the Bolivian de facto government headed by Jeanine Áñez, Arturo Murillo, has been sentenced to nearly 6 years in prison in the United States for the crimes of international bribery and money laundering.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Murillo "was sentenced to 70 months in prison for conspiracy to launder bribes he received in exchange for corruptly helping a U.S. company win a lucrative contract with the Bolivian government."

Bolivia's Minister of Government, Carlos Eduardo del Castillo, also confirmed the information through his Twitter account.

State Attorney General Wilfredo Chávez explained that Judge Paul C. Huck of the Florida County Court, Miami, Southern District of Florida, issued the sentence against Murillo, who will serve time in federal prison in that state.

"This sentence has an unappealable character, consequently there is no way to redeem or reverse this decision of the U.S., and consequently enables us to advance the extradition process that has been initiated in Bolivia by the State Prosecutor's Office," he said.

In this sense, Chávez expressed the conformity of the Bolivian State with the sentence and emphasized that the civil trial started by the Attorney General's Office will not be stopped, in order to recover the amount of money that Murillo took.

The case against the former minister was carried out by investigating the purchase of tear gas with alteration in the price occurred in 2019, in the context of the coup d'état and the imposition of the mandate of Áñez.

The former official was arrested in 2021 in Florida, after fleeing Bolivia and remained in the Federal Administrative Security Prison of Miami Dade County. In this case, in addition to Murillo, Philip Lichtenfeld, Bryan and Luis Berkman and Sergio Rodrigo Méndez Mendizábal, all accomplices of the same crimes, were indicted and convicted.

The former Minister of Government announced in 2019 a hunt against many of the defenders of the then Government headed by Evo Morales, and mentioned names such as Juan Ramón Quintana and others.

The tear gases were acquired by the then minister for the National Police through the Condor Company, using the U.S. company Bravo Tactical Solutions LLC (BTS) as intermediary, for a figure of more than five and a half million dollars, with a proven overpricing of more than two million.

A few months after the election and the arrival to power of the current president, Luis Arce, Murillo decided to go on the run. The Bolivian Government started a lawsuit against Murillo and his henchmen in the U.S. in order to recover the overpricing of the tear gas purchase, as well as damages.

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