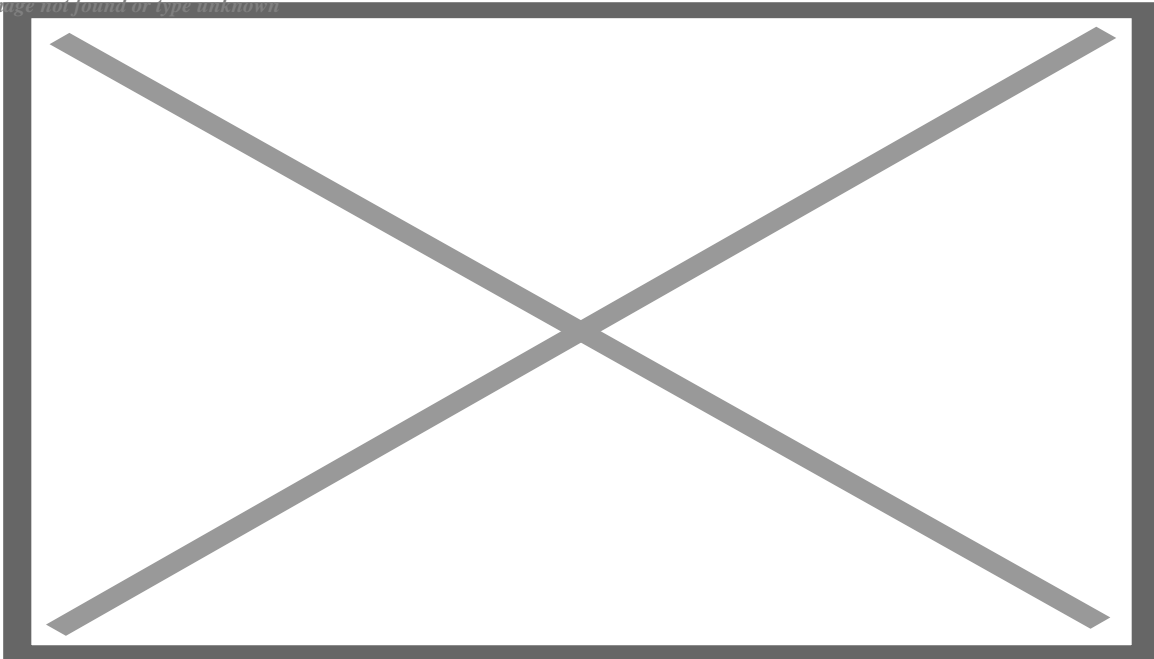


Former Venezuelan oil minister Tareck El Aissami arrested in corruption case

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Venezuelan Attorney General Tarek William Saab. (Photo: EFE).

Caracas, April 10 (RHC)-- Attorney General of Venezuela Tarek William Saab announced this Tuesday the arrest of former Oil Minister Tareck El Aissami for his participation in a corruption plot in the oil sector, whose whereabouts had been unknown for a year, when he resigned from his position to collaborate with investigations.

In an address to the press, William Saab presented the second phase of investigations into the PDVSA-Cripto case, which included the revelation of evidence and people involved (including agents from Washington and Miami) in this corruption network that had the objective of harming the Venezuelan economy.

The Venezuelan attorney general emphasized the enormous damage intended by this plot against the Venezuelan economy, which would have had serious consequences considering the hundreds of

unilateral coercive measures that the United States maintains against the South American country.

In addition to El Aissami, the former Minister of Economy and Finance and former president of the National Development Fund (Fonden) Simón Alejandro Zerpa was also arrested, after "recent denunciations of at least five witnesses" interviewed by Public Ministry officials.

Also arrested was businessman Samark López Bello, who acted through a digital bank, as the financial operator of this group, to provide digital money and cash for the operation of the mafia.

Pictures of the former Minister of Petroleum and former president of PDVSA, handcuffed and guarded by security officials, were shown by the Attorney General of the Republic in a case that makes it clear that no one is above the law.

William Saab pointed out that the crimes that will be charged in the next few hours are: treason, appropriation or distraction of public assets, boasting or taking advantage of relationships or influences, legitimization of capital and illegal association.

The attorney general said that after the investigations, he has no doubt that the former high-ranking officials were linked to Washington, with the aim of destroying the country's economy and causing serious damage.

"It was possible to detect and dismantle a network of officials who used their positions to carry out illegal oil operations," pointing out that they sought to generate the rise of the parallel dollar tax exchange.

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