

Peruvian Presidential Candidate Keiko Fujimori's Party Chief Investigated by DEA Resigns



Lima, May 19 (RHC-teleSUR) -- Peruvian presidential candidate Keiko Fujimori announced on Wednesday that Joaquin Ramirez had resigned from her Fuerza Popular Party in a bid to calm an uproar following media reports that linked the two to money laundering.

Fujimori said Ramirez, the party's secretary general, offered to step down, even though both have denied any wrongdoing.

In a joint Sunday broadcast, Univision's investigative unit and Peruvian television show Cuarto Poder reported that Ramirez was the subject of a money laundering investigation by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

The report featured a man identified as a pilot and DEA informant who said he recorded Ramirez stating that he laundered \$15 million for Fujimori's previous political campaign.

In the recording, Ramirez can be heard bragging "you know the Chinese [Keiko] gave me \$15 million during the last campaign to launder, for the 2011 elections, and I laundered the money through a chain of

gas stations.”

The DEA said Monday that Fujimori had never been under investigation, a statement she and her supporters touted as vindication. But the agency made no reference to Ramirez, and critics say Fujimori, the eldest daughter of imprisoned ex-president Alberto Fujimori, was too quick to defend Ramirez and dismiss questions over the source of his wealth.

Ramirez owns several real estate and construction businesses and has been part of a preliminary money-laundering investigation by Peruvian prosecutors since 2014. The scandal comes three weeks before a tight election between Fujimori and Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, a 77-year-old former World Bank economist and prime minister.

Most polls show the two candidates neck-and-neck ahead of the June 5 run-off. Although Fujimori came in first by a wide margin in the first election round in April, she faces stiff opposition from Peruvians who loathe her father.

Alberto Fujimori is serving a 25-year sentence for corruption and human rights abuses during his authoritarian rule.

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