

Brazilian Senate Votes to Proceed with Impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff



Brasilia, August 5 (RHC)-- With the Brazilian Senate voting Thursday to proceed with impeachment charges against suspended President Dilma Rousseff, her defense attorney has questioned the committee's failure to consider key wiretap evidence that strongly suggests corruption allegations are a ruse intended to obscure a politically-calculated coup attempt.

By a margin of 14-to-5, Brazil's Senate voted to accept a subcommittee's recommendations that there is sufficient evidence to try Rousseff on corruption charges. But the deposed president's lawyer, Jose Eduardo Cardozo, has argued in her defense that damning leaked recordings provide a "clear" indication of a "strong coordinated component" in high-ranking opposition figures' plan to impeach the president. The series of revealing recordings dropped a political bombshell in late May, just weeks after Rousseff's suspension.

But the report by the Senate sub-committee, headed by conservative lawmaker Antonio Anastasia, a fierce rival of Rousseff, failed to reference the wiretap evidence that has been critical in reshaping the political narrative of the impeachment.

“(The report) did not comment of the recordings of the Senators saying ‘there was bleeding,’” Cardozo said according to Brasil de Fato, referring to the wiretapped conversations where opposition figures likened the anti-corruption investigations their allies were facing to a bloodletting. “It did not comment on the other statements by Senators that mentioned that evidence did not need to be produced.”

The first explosive leak revealed that Senator Romero Juca -- the interim Planning Minister in unelected President Michel Temer’s government and head of his conservative political party -- had conspired with the Supreme Court and military commanders to oust Rousseff in a bid to stop the criminal investigation known as Operation Car Wash which targeted dozens of politicians for bribery and fraud in connection with the state oil company Petrobras. Juca was forced to resign over the scandal.

A second shocking leak caught Senate chief Renan Calheiros planning talks with the Supreme Court to change key laws governing investigations into corruption, saying politicians were “afraid” of Operation Car Wash.

The third and fourth major leaks implicated a former president from the final days of Brazil's dictatorship-era from 1985 to 1990, Jose Sarney, and Temer's interim Transparency Minister Fabiano Silveira, in similar conversations. Silveira also resigned over the scandal.

The wiretaps, leaked by former state oil executive Sergio Machado as part of a deal seeking leniency from prosecutors, offered by far the clearest evidence to date that protecting corruption — not rooting it out as Rousseff’s rivals have long claimed — is a central motivation behind the impeachment bid. But Rousseff’s attempts to use the damning recording in her defense were rejected.

The Senate committee report suggests once again that her opponents are bent on ousting her from office regardless of the highly questionable legality of the impeachment.

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