

Bolsonaro's cabinet meets for first time, agenda remains secret



Brasilia, December 20 (RHC)-- Brazil's President-elect Jair Bolsonaro held his first cabinet meeting Wednesday. Twenty-two newly-appointed ministers met with Bolsonaro at his farm in Brasilia. The agenda for the right-wing head of state and his executive team was not disclosed to the public.

Bolsonaro will be inaugurated on January 1st in the midst of "unprecedented" security measures, promised his named Security Minister General Sergio Etchegoyen. "We have never had a presidential candidate suffer an assassination attempt, which justifies the security scheme" on January 1st.

On the campaign trail, someone attacked Bolsonaro with a knife which sent him to the hospital for weeks last September in Minas Gerais. He chose to boycott televised presidential debates in light of the injuries.

Etchegoyen said the president-elect is "still receiving threats." According to a Chilean newspaper, La Tercera, Brazilian police arrested two people in Rio de Janeiro and Recife under suspicion of sending death threats to Bolsonaro and Vice President-elect, General Hamilton Mourão.

The general, one of five in the Bolsonaro cabinet, says the Esplanade of Ministries, the avenue in Brasilia where the Parliament and presidential palace are housed, will be reinforced with security agents for 80 hours surrounding the swearing-in -- from December 30 until January 2nd -- according to O Globo newspaper.

Elite shooters are also expected to line the buildings along the Esplanade, a large contingent of plain-clothed security agents will remain within the area along with some 12,000 military members and national and local police forces. Because of the added security measures, this inauguration will cost around one million reais (\$258,000 USD), Brazil's highest in history, says O Globo.

The public won't be able to enter the area with bottles, bags, animals, masks, umbrellas, among other prohibited objects. There will be no street vendors during the inauguration. The government will also be blocking certain radio frequencies in the area.

Despite the agenda of the cabinet meeting not having been disclosed to the public, his selected members have been vocal about their policy preferences. Bolsonaro, a former army captain himself, picked retired General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz as his minister of Congressional relations. His Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo has come out strongly against climate change science, calling it a "cultural Marxist" plot to asphyxiate Western economies and promote China's growth.

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