

Corruption scheme over peace funds in Colombia investigated

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Reporters just revealed systemic, high level corruption of official peace funds that were supposed to fight poverty in conflict zones - including official national accountability institutions. | Photo: Twitter @jonathanfox707

Bogota, July 10 (RHC)-- The former advisor to the Presidency of Colombia, Emilio Archila, has appeared in court to testify before the Prosecutor's Office, which is conducting a preliminary investigation over alleged irregularities in the management of resources destined to development projects in areas affected by the armed conflict.

According to local media, around 500 billion Colombian pesos (about US\$ 120 million) destined for peace projects went to mayors, senators and public officials as bribes.

These funds were intended for the Collegiate Body for Administration and Decision Making (OCAD-PAZ) to pay for development initiatives in 170 municipalities hit by war and poverty, as part of the the Peace Agreement signed in 2016 by the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP).

Archila has insisted that he denounced these irregularities since the beginning of 2021 so that they could be investigated. In this regard, the Attorney General's Office announced on Thursday that it is pursuing 24 disciplinary actions on such irregularities.

The entity specified that it will carry out tests to "verify the occurrence of allegedly irregular conduct of officials that would have affected the correct use of the resources of the General Royalties System (SGR)".

The projects belonged to the Development Programs with Territorial Focus (PDET) in municipalities prioritized for the post-conflict period, mainly located in the departments of Amazonas, Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Cesar, Córdoba, La Guajira, Nariño, Quindío, Risaralda, Sucre, Tolima and Valle del Cauca.

In particular, the Public Prosecutor's Office will analyze 27 investment projects approved by the OCAD-PAZ. According to the agency, it "observed risks and alleged irregularities in the execution of these initiatives that led to the opening of ten preliminary inquiries and two disciplinary investigations."

Recently, a journalistic investigation brought to light that officials of the National Planning Department (DNP), the Comptroller's Office and a group of Colombian congressmen created a scheme to allegedly appropriate more than ten percent of the resources of this fund for peace projects.

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