

Brazil's military chiefs discussed coup plot after Bolsonaro's electoral defeat

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The former commanders of the three branches of the Brazilian Armed Forces and the fascistic ex-president Jair Bolsonaro discussed a draft decree at the beginning of last November that would have resulted in a military intervention and the calling of new elections. The meeting occurred shortly after Bolsonaro's loss of the October 31 election victory to Workers Party (PT) candidate and current president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The meeting was first reported last Thursday following a plea bargain by Lt. Col. Mauro Cid, Jair Bolsonaro's former personal assistant, with the Federal Police. Cid was arrested in May for falsifying Bolsonaro's COVID-19 vaccination card.

According to Cid, the draft decree was handed to Bolsonaro by his then-international advisor, Filipe Martins, a fascistic figure linked to white supremacist movements in the United States. A copy of the document, that became known in the press as the "coup draft," was found in possession of Bolsonaro's former justice minister, Anderson Torres, arrested in connection with the January 8 coup attempt in Brasilia. At the time, Torres was secretary of public security for the Federal District.

The "coup draft" found with Torres included the order to implement a "State of Defense at the headquarters of the Superior Electoral Court (STF)," with the possible arrest of STF Minister Moraes, who at the time was president of the TSE, Brazil's electoral high court, and the investigation of alleged irregularities in the electoral process through an "Electoral Regularity Commission."

Of the 17 representatives of that commission, eight would be appointed by the Ministry of Defense, which, at the end of last year, actively participated in the challenge to the electronic voting system initiated by Bolsonaro.

Of the three military commanders present at the meeting, Cid said that only the then-commander of the Navy, Adm. Almir Garnier, favored the coup plan and promised that "his troops would be ready to adhere to a

call from the then president." According to *Valor Econômico*, Cid has declared that, in contrast, the then-Army commander, Gen. Marco Antônio Freire Gomes, threatened Bolsonaro by saying: "If you go ahead with this, I'll have to arrest you."

The scene of General Freire Gomes standing up and crying to the President, "Stop in the name of the law!," seems borrowed from a Hollywood movie. It plays directly into the hands of the narrative promoted by the top brass of the military and by Lula's government itself, with both claiming that, while "bad apples" should be punished, the Armed Forces were the responsible for preventing a coup in Brazil.

The occurrence of such a meeting between Bolsonaro and the generals to discuss a coup d'état, as well as the Navy commander's willingness to go ahead at any cost, has been confirmed by different sources, including US officials, as the *Financial Times* reported. The murky narrative about the Army saving Brazilian democracy, on the other hand, is contradicted by every piece of evidence, most damningly by the public actions of the former military commanders themselves in the aftermath of last year's election.

While Bolsonaro refused to concede his defeat to Lula, and his fascistic supporters blocked roads and gathered in front of Army barracks across the country to incite a military coup, the Armed Forces command gave them repeated signs of support.

Eleven days after the meeting with Bolsonaro, on November 11, the three military commanders issued a joint statement entitled "To the institutions and the Brazilian people." The statement defended the fascistic movement to overthrow the elections as "popular demonstrations," and asserted that the Armed Forces, "always present and acting as moderators in the most critical moments of our history," had an "unrestrained and unwavering commitment" to the "people."

Two days before this note was published, on November 9, the Ministry of Defense, headed by Army Gen. Paulo Sérgio de Oliveira, published its report on the “fairness” of the elections. Its main conclusion was that the “military technicians” identified electoral procedures that posed a “relevant risk to the security of the process,” adding that “it is not possible to affirm that the electronic voting system is free from the influence of a possible malicious code that could alter its operation.”

On the very eve of Lula’s inauguration, General Freire Gomes resisted an order to remove the encampment of Bolsonaro’s supporters from the gates of the Army Headquarters in Brasilia, where the mob that invaded the government’s headquarters on January 8 was mobilized.

Faced with the latest revelations by Cid, Lula’s Defense Minister José Múcio was forced to acknowledge that, “The way things are going when you talk about the Armed Forces, it seems that everyone is a suspect.” But, in the same statement, he redoubled the government’s efforts to promote the military as saviors of democracy. Múcio claimed: “There is only one thing I’m crystal clear about: the coup was never in the interest of the Armed Forces; these are isolated attitudes of components of the forces.” He concluded: “We owe it to the Army, Navy and Air Force to maintain our democracy.”

The involvement of active and reserve military personnel in the coup plot that led to January 8 can also be revealed in the numerous investigations by the Attorney General’s Office.

On September 15, the Superior Federal Court convicted the first three defendants for the January 8 fascist attack on Brasilia’s Three Branches of Government. They were sentenced to between 12 and 17 years for having committed the crimes of criminal association, coup d’état, abolition of the democratic rule of law, qualified damage to federal property and deterioration of listed property. These crimes were considered “multitudinous,” in which it is not necessary to individualize the defendant’s conduct.

In his vote, the minister reporting on the case, Alexandre de Moraes, stated, “The idea was that, from this destruction [of the headquarters of the Three Branches], there would be a need for a GLO (Guarantee of Law and Order) and, with that ... obtain a military intervention, achieve the coup d’état and overthrow the democratically elected government.”

In addition to these convicted defendants, there are almost 1,400 other people already indicted by the Federal Attorney’s Office as the executors of the coup who will

be tried in the coming months by the STF. The investigation by the Federal Attorney’s Office also includes, in addition to the “executors,” the financiers of the coup plot, the participants by instigation, the intellectual authors and executors, and the state authorities responsible for failing to prevent it. Bolsonaro is being investigated as one of the intellectual authors.

That Bolsonaro spent his presidential term plotting and building his fascist movement that led to the January 8 coup is undeniable. It is hard to predict if and when Bolsonaro will be arrested. That would risk exposing the entire rotten Brazilian capitalist system that gave rise to Bolsonaro and his coup threat, as well as the Lula government that is now covering up the role of the Armed Forces on January 8.

What can be said with certainty is that the eventual arrest of the ex-president will not end the threat of a new military-backed coup attempt in Brazil. The origin of this threat lies in the enormous crisis that is engulfing the world capitalist system, with explosive consequences in Brazil, one of the most unequal countries in the world.

Furthermore, all the power that a section of the Brazilian ruling elite invests in a reactionary figure like Minister Alexandre de Moraes in pursuit of Bolsonaro will only turn Brazilian bourgeois rule even further to the right. The legal precedents being set, such as the anti-democratic sentencing in July of Bolsonaro to eight years of ineligibility as a candidate, will be used with full force against the social protests and struggles of workers and youth that are to come.

The working class cannot rely on the methods of the bourgeoisie even against a fascist figure like Bolsonaro, who will pose as a victim of political persecution in order to strengthen himself and his reactionary supporters. Its response must be based on the development of an independent and international struggle against the source of the threat of dictatorship in Brazil and internationally, the capitalist system.



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