

Bolsonaro supporter bombs Brazil's Supreme Court as probe of January 8 coup attempt draws to a close

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Last Wednesday night, November 13, bombs were thrown at Brazil's Supreme Federal Court (STF) building, in the capital Brasilia, and a car full of explosives was detonated nearby. The circumstances of the death of the perpetrator of the attack, Francisco Wanderley Luiz, are still being investigated, but all indications are that he committed suicide shortly afterward.

Although the attack caused no damage to the STF building, the event was symptomatic of the enormous crisis of bourgeois democracy in Brazil as the investigation of the role played by fascistic ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, his political entourage, and high-ranking military officials in the January 8, 2023 coup attempt draws to a close.

Luiz initially tried to enter the STF with the bombs but was barred by security. His target was STF minister Alexandre de Moraes, a central focus of Bolsonaro's systematic campaign to discredit the electronic voting system that paved the way for the coup attempt. Moraes was the president of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) during the 2022 presidential election. He is also the rapporteur of numerous investigations of Bolsonaro, including in relation to the January 8 coup attempt and two other matters that have already led to the former president's indictment.

Luiz was a staunch Bolsonaro supporter. In 2020, he was a city council candidate for Bolsonaro's Liberal Party (PL) in a small town in the southern state of Santa Catarina. On social media, Luiz "reproduced anti-communist conspiracy theories such as QAnon, popular with the American far right," reported the daily *O Estado de S. Paulo*.

The attack on the STF building occurred at a critical moment in Brazilian and international politic life. While the October municipal elections yielded gains for Bolsonaro's PL and the collapse of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's Workers Party (PT), Donald Trump's victory in the US over Kamala Harris continues to send shockwaves around the world.

Bolsonaro enthusiastically celebrated Trump's victory,

writing on X/Twitter: "May Trump's victory inspire Brazil to follow the same path." The PT, meanwhile, is mimicking the Democrats in minimizing the effects of Trump's election, with Lula wishing him "luck and success" after supporting Harris' election and saying that Trump represented "fascism and Nazism working again with a new face."

Momentarily, it appears that the attack on the Supreme Court caused a setback to Bolsonaro's attempt to advance a bill in the Brazilian Congress that would guarantee amnesty to those convicted and facing convictions for their roles in the January 8 coup attempt, possibly including himself. Last year, the Superior Electoral Court declared Bolsonaro ineligible to run for office until 2030 for his baseless attempts to discredit Brazil's electronic voting system.

On X/Twitter, Bolsonaro characterized the bomb attempt on the Supreme Court as an "isolated fact ... caused by disturbances in a person's mental health." Cynically, he called for a supposed "national pacification," writing: "It's time for Brazil to once again cultivate a suitable environment for different ideas being confronted peacefully."

In the same vein, the leader of the PL in the Senate, Rogério Marinho, said, "More than ever, it's time to pacify the country," and affirmed that "the political solution lies within the National Congress, with the amnesty."

Bolsonaro and Marinho's statements were a response to the STF ministers who directly associated Wednesday's attack with the January 8 coup attempt. Moraes declared: "What happened ... is a demonstration that it is only possible to pacify the country by holding criminals accountable. There is no possibility of pacification with amnesty for criminals. We know that an amnestied criminal is an unpunished criminal. Impunity will generate more aggression, as it did yesterday [November 13]."

Moraes and other STF ministers once again advocated regulation of social media, declaring that recent acts of

violence have taken place in the context of “hate speech against institutions,” according to Moraes. In the fraudulent political narrative shared by himself and the PT and the Brazilian pseudo-left, “hate speech” and “fake news” are the driving forces for the attacks on democratic institutions and the rise of fascism in Brazil and around the world. Their reactionary political prescription is the wholesale censorship of the internet, as was done in Moraes’ decision to block X/Twitter in August.

At the same time that the bombs were being thrown at the STF, Lula, three STF ministers, including Moraes, and the director general of the Federal Police (PF) were in the Alvorada Palace reportedly discussing the January 8 coup attempt.

In recent weeks, the Brazilian media has revealed new findings concerning the coup conspiracy, based upon a report being drawn up by the PF that is supposed to be presented soon.

The Federal Police have recovered a series of files deleted from the cell phone and computer of Army Lt. Col. Mauro Cid, Bolsonaro’s former aide-de-camp who entered a plea bargain with the PF last year. According to press reports, the uncovered documents showed that Moraes and Lula were being closely monitored by the coup plotters. This includes the names of and weapons used by their security guards, indicating intentions to kidnap and possibly assassinate Lula and Moraes. Neither was in Brasilia on January 8, 2023.

The reports on the new information uncovered by the PF indicate that this task would have been carried out by officers from the Army’s Special Forces, nicknamed “kids pretos.” Important figures in Bolsonaro’s government, including Cid, had previously served in this wing of the military. As part of the results of the documents recovered from Cid’s devices, on November 6 the PF questioned Gen. Nilton Diniz Rodrigues, who also began his career in the “kids pretos,” and who was an advisor to the Army commander under Bolsonaro, Gen. Marco Antônio Freire Gomes.

In February of this year, the Federal Police revealed that the “kids pretos” were prepared to be summoned into action by Gen. Estevam Theophilo Gaspar de Oliveira, who until the end of 2022 headed the Army’s Land Operations Command. In his testimony to the PF at the time, he said that he met with Bolsonaro and General Freire Gomes on December 9, 2022, when Bolsonaro presented them with the so-called “coup draft.”

The same document was also submitted to the other commanders of the Armed Forces and to the Bolsonaro government’s Minister of Defense, Gen. Paulo Sérgio Nogueira, according to testimony given by the generals to the PF in March of this year.

Almost two years after the January 8 coup attempt, the fact that Bolsonaro and his Liberal Party made important gains in the October municipal elections and are openly campaigning for a political amnesty attests to a broad shift to the right of the entire Brazilian political establishment. Just as happened in the US with Trump, the Brazilian ruling class has normalized and strengthened a political figure like Bolsonaro, paving the way for a return to power by himself or a similar candidate for fascistic dictator.

This could not be happening without the complicity of Lula and the PT, who have been trying to disassociate the generals investigated for their roles in the coup attempt from the Brazilian Armed Forces as a whole, as well as to suppress the memory of the 21-year-long bloody military dictatorship supported by the US (1964-1985). Since coming to power, Lula has announced greater investment in the Armed Forces than in health and education under his Growth Acceleration Program and has promoted Brazil’s defense industry as part of his economic nationalist program amid a growing threat of world war.

At the same time, throughout this year the Lula government has suppressed strikes for better pay and working conditions in virtually every sector of the federal government — university teachers and staff, environmental and social security workers, and federal hospital employees. As a consequence of its policy of fiscal austerity, particularly the “new fiscal framework” that the Lula government managed to approve last year, it is about to announce major cuts in various social services.



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