

Architect of Parliamentary Coup against Dilma Rousseff in Brazil Sentenced to 15 Years for Corruption



Brasilia, March 31 (RHC)-- A Brazilian judge sentenced Eduardo Cunha, the former speaker of the lower house and mastermind behind the parliamentary coup against former President Dilma Rousseff, to 15 years and four months in jail Thursday for corruption charges.

The sentence is the result of a criminal suit investigating Cunha for fraud related to millions of dollars in kickbacks he received for the 2011 purchase of an oil field in the West African country of Benin by the state-run oil company, Petrobras, which has been at the center of a major anti-corruption probe in the South American country known as Operation Car Wash.

Federal Judge Sergio Moro handed down the sentence over charges of corruption, money laundering and tax evasion. The former head of the lower house has been held in pre-trial detention since last October.

"The responsibility of a federal parliamentarian is enormous, and therefore so is his guilt when he commits crimes," said Moro.

According to Moro, Cunha received US\$1.5 million in bribes for the Benin oil field contract, which, according to an internal Petrobras investigation reported by local media, resulted in US\$77.5 million in losses for the state-run oil company after no oil was found at the site.

The federal public prosecutor's office had called for Cunha to be forced to pay full damages to Petrobras, but Moro has signaled that a fine equivalent to the US\$1.5 million bribe he received will be ordered.

While Cunha's defense team has said that they will appeal the decision, Moro confirmed that the politician will remain behind bars while the appeals process moves forward.

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