

Odebrecht paid \$61 million in bribes to Peruvian politicians



Lima, September 15 (RHC)-- Peru's public prosecutor's office has released figures showing over \$61 million worth of bribes were given by Odebrecht to Peruvian politicians in exchange for 19 public infrastructure projects. The figures are significantly higher than initially predicted.

On Thursday, Peruvian prosecutors revealed that they have uncovered over \$61 million worth of bribes paid by disgraced Brazilian construction company Odebrecht. They found that most of the bribes had been paid to electoral campaigns of those in positions to award public contracts. It was this issue that ex-president Alan Garcia stood accused of when he committed suicide to avoid facing trial.

The bribes handed out by Odebrecht span across politicians of all the major neoliberal parties, causing a huge political scandal in Peru. Currently, all of Peru's living ex-presidents are in jail on corruption charges. The most recent arrest came after the extradition of Alejandro Toledo, who Odebrecht confessed to having given \$32 million in personal bribes.

The bribes to Toledo were to secure the contract to build the "Interoceanic Highway," in 2004, a huge road that connects Peru to Brazil. The project was worth around \$1.3 billion and was controversial at the time for environmental reasons as it cut through much of the country's Amazon region, causing significant deforestation.

It's also thought that huge bribes were handed to Susana Villarán and Luis Castañeda, both former mayors of Lima, who assigned to Odebrecht the construction of the city's large metro system.

Odebrecht lawyers have responded to the allegations saying that it's true they paid amounts that were not present in official company accounts, but that they were not 'bribes.' In 2017, the company admitted to paying bribes in exchange for four different infrastructure contracts, through the courts now believe that the number of illicitly awarded contracts stands at 19.

The scandal has led to a breakdown in trust between Peruvian voters and the neoliberal political parties that dominate congress. A poll in April showed that the country's legislature has an approval rating of just 10%.

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