

Panama Rejects Colombian Ex-Intelligence Chief Asylum Request



Panama City, January 13 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The National Office of Refugees of Panama refused to grant asylum to the Colombian former chief of intelligence, which will now enable authorities to deport her immediately from Panama if captured.

Last year, Maria del Pilar Hurtado, leader of the Administrative Department of Security (DAS) in Colombia, lost the asylum status she was granted in the Central American country. She is a fugitive from Colombian justice for having ordered illegal wiretappings of journalists, magistrates, members of congress, and human rights activists, under the government of Alvaro Uribe.

Panamanian authorities are not sure of Hurtado's current whereabouts, since she may have fled to Costa Rica, and Interpol has put out an international arrest warrant on her.

In 2010, former Panamanian president Ricardo Martinelly granted Hurtado refugee status, but four years later the Supreme Court of Justice declared the decision unconstitutional. Then Martinelly's successor Juan Carlos Varela informed Colombia that his government had rejected Hurtado's second request for asylum, in accordance with national and international conventions.

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