

Former President of Guatemala Accused of More Corruption



Guatemala City, June 6 (RHC)-- Guatemalan authorities have accused former president Otto Pérez and his vice president Roxana Baldetti of further corruption for their involvement in bribes and public contracts amid an investigation into widespread corruption.

According to the investigation, officials and businessmen started using a "mechanism" during the 2011 elections to hide bribes, pulling in at least 130 million USD. The scheme continued until the resignation of Pérez and Baldetti, who are both in jail pending trial for customs fraud. Pérez has denied any involvement in the fraud.

The attorney general's office and the Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, a U.N.-backed body that was key in Pérez's fall, said the former president and his vice president took at least 60 percent of the funds for themselves in order to live a life of luxury.

The newest charges against Pérez and Baldetti include illicit campaign financing, illegal association, passive bribery, and money-laundering.

The investigation is looking at 450 cases of illicit contracts, involving bankers, officials, and businessmen such as the legal representative of Sigma, Guatemala's most important construction firm, as well as people who acted as front men to hide the source of funds.

Authorities arrested 23 people during the day and sent seven international orders for capture, including for Alba Lorenzana, the wife of Mexican media magnate Angel Gonzalez and a partner in his companies.

This is the third pending case for Perez and the fourth for Baldetti, who are also accused of arranging bribes with a Spanish firm in exchange for a port concession.

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