

Former Right-wing Brazilian Congressman Eduardo Cunha Arrested



Brasilia, October 20 (RHC)-- Brazilian federal police arrested Eduardo Cunha, the controversial former head of the lower house of Congress and chief architect behind the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, at his apartment in Brasilia Wednesday.

According to Brazil's O Globo news, federal police transferred Cunha Wednesday afternoon to Curitiba, the capital of the state of Paraná, where a federal court has taken up the case. Preventative pre-trial detentions like Cunha's are common in cases when the accused is considered a flight risk, as he is due to his wealth and dual Brazilian-Italian citizenship, according to federal Judge Sergio Moro, who authorized the arrest.

Moro also issued a warrant for Cunha's home in Rio de Janeiro to be searched, Brazil's Folha de Sao Paulo reported. The arrest comes just days after Moro issued a subpoena for Cunha to face charges over accusations that he hid laundered money in secret Swiss bank accounts while in office. The alleged crimes are under investigation as part of the country's major anti-fraud probe, focused on uncovering rampant bribery in the state-run oil company, Petrobras.

Cunha, a member of unelected President Michel Temer's PMDB party, is accused of corruption, money laundering and tax evasion linked to raking in at least \$5 million USD in illicit kickbacks between 2006 and 2012 and hiding the wealth in Swiss bank accounts.

Cunha was removed from his position as speaker of the lower house on September 12 after being suspended in May -- just weeks after the lower house pushed through the impeachment bid against Rousseff -- to face an impeachment process over accusations that he intimidated lawmakers and hampered investigations. The Congress voted overwhelmingly by 450 to 10 to remove the unpopular politician.

The decision also stripped Cunha of the parliamentary immunity he long enjoyed, opening him up to corruption charges. Despite the power he has wielded over Brazilian politics, recent polling has repeatedly unmasked Cunha as one of the most unpopular politicians in the country, including among his own party.

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