

CIA memo reveals Brazil's dictator Ernesto Geisel authorized extrajudicial executions



Washington, May 15 (RHC)-- A declassified memo from the U.S. Department of State has revealed that Brazilian dictator Ernesto Geisel -- who ruled from 1974 to 1979 -- personally approved summary executions of "dangerous subversives," continuing with the extrajudicial methods of his predecessors.

The document was made public back in 2015, but it wasn't until a few days ago that Matias Spektor, an international relations professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV) and a columnist at Brazilian newspaper Folha, found it as part of his research work and posted it on social media, along with a picture of Geisel and Joao Baptista Figueiredo, who later became his successor.

The document narrates a meeting between President Geisel, General Milton Tavares de Souza and General Confucio Danton de Paula Avelino, respectively outgoing and incoming chiefs of the Army Intelligence Center (CIE), along with Figueiredo, who at that time was Chief of the National Intelligence Service (SNI).

“This is the most disturbing document I've read in 20 years of research: Just after being sworn in, Geisel authorized the continuation of the regime's killing policies, but it requires the Army Intelligence Center previous authorization from the Planalto Palace.”

General Milton briefed Geisel about the role of the Army Intelligence Center (CIE) against “the internal subversive target” during the presidency of Emilio Garrastazu Medici, and said that “extrajudicial methods should continue to be employed against dangerous subversives.” He also informed Geisel that about 104 people falling under this category had been executed by the CIE in the previous year. Figueiredo supported this policy and urged Geisel to continue with it. According to the memo, Geisel “commented on the seriousness and potentially prejudicial aspects of this policy,” and said he wanted to think about it over the weekend. He decided to go along with it, but to limit the executions to “only dangerous subversives,” and required the CIE to consult Figueiredo for approval before any execution.

The entire CIE would then be under Figueiredo's control, blurring the line between the CIE and the SNI. “I didn't know Geisel had given the Planalto Palace the responsibility over summary execution decision. The government's leadership was not only aware of the executions but also ordered them. That's impressive, unheard of,” said Spektor.

The memo was sent by William Colby, who was then Director of Central Intelligence Agency, to then U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who also played a key role in promoting military coups against democratically elected governments in Latin America, under the subject “Decision by Brazilian President Ernesto Geisel To Continue the Summary Execution of Dangerous Subversives Under Certain Conditions” and dated April 11, 1974.

First and second paragraphs of the document (7 and 12 and a half lines) are still classified. After the documents were picked up by Spektor, the Brazilian army stated that any classified documents that could prove Colby's allegations of the events had been destroyed as it was stipulated by the laws of that period.

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