

Costa Rica Waits for U.S. to Explain 'Cuban Twitter'

US SECRETLY BUILT 'CUBAN TWITTER' TO STIR UNREST

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. government masterminded the creation of a "Cuban Twitter" — a communications network designed to undermine the communist government in Cuba, built with secret shell companies and financed through foreign banks, The Associated Press has learned.

The Obama administration project, which lasted more than two years and drew tens of thousands of subscribers, sought to evade Cuba's stranglehold on the Internet with a primitive social media platform. First, the network would build a Cuban audience, mostly young people; then, the plan was to push them toward dissent.

Yet its users were neither aware it was created by a U.S. agency with ties to the State Department, nor that American contractors were gathering personal data about them, in the hope that the information might be used someday for political purposes.



San José, May 16 (RHC) -- Costa Rica's new president said Thursday that the United States government still has not explained why it operated the secret "Cuban Twitter" network from inside his Central American nation.

The Associated Press reports that President Luis Solís said his administration will lodge another request with the U.S. government to clarify the circumstances surrounding the subversive social media program.

We will "reiterate the request for information to know exactly what were the circumstances surrounding that program," said Solís, who began his four-year administration last week.

The AP detailed in an investigation last month how U.S. officials developed the ZunZuneo program in Costa Rica as a way to undermine Cuba's government. The network was created under the U.S. Agency for International Development, but its users in Cuba were unaware it was backed by the U.S. government.

Costa Rican authorities say they were never informed of the project, and the administration that preceded Solís previously asked the U.S. to explain.

Solís said he wants to know exactly what happened and what the U.S. is doing "to prevent this from happening again without authorization from the Costa Rican government."

"I find it regrettable that Costa Rica was used as a platform for such acts without proper notification to its government," he said.

Documents obtained by the AP show that contractors working on ZunZuneo went to extensive lengths to hide its ties to the U.S., using foreign companies and computer servers paid for via a bank account in the Cayman Islands. They did so after acquiring more than 400,000 Cuban cellphone numbers from the island country's state-run telecommunications provider.

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