

# *Drug trafficking and political struggles in Paraguay*

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**El Nuevo Diario**

By Roberto Morejón

The mantle of drug trafficking gained new space in Paraguay with the dismissal of the Minister of the Interior, Arnaldo Giuzzio, after the revelation of connections to an alleged criminal detained in Brazil.

The minister was dismissed by President Mario Abdo Benítez after the press exposed Giuzzio's use of a vehicle belonging to Marcus Vinicius Espíndola Marques de Padua, a suspected drug smuggler.

Suspiciously, Marques de Padua pretended to be a supplier of military equipment to the Ministry of the Interior and the police of Paraguay.

The scandal surrounding Paraguay's Interior Minister comes as the police claim to be deploying an operation against organized crime and money laundering.

President Abdo Benítez admitted that these scourges and other modalities permeate Paraguayan institutions and sectors of society.

This was not the first sign of shady machinations in a country also known for the unfair distribution of land and the existence of paramilitary groups paid by landowners.

There is much talk of the unrest in the notorious Triple Frontier, on Paraguay's borders with Argentina and Brazil, where smuggling and criminality are rife.

Although Asuncion, the capital, is far from the mentioned regions, the most rancorous political clans, including elements linked to the ruling Colorado Party to which former dictator Alfredo Stroessner belonged, seem to know about the labyrinthine maneuvers.

The aforementioned, handled by the international press, is splashed on the power blocs, among them, according to speculations, the one headed by former President Horacio Cartes.

The sector headed by the aforementioned, who has denied being related to the illegal sale of cigarettes abroad, would use the dividends to finance a powerful branch of the Colorado party.

In Paraguay, the largest producer of marijuana in South America, the starting signal has already been given, since simultaneous party internal elections will be held on December 18, 2022 and the general elections on April 30, 2023.

The tendencies of the conservative Colorado Party, which has ruled Paraguay for decades, are tenaciously seeking to impose their candidates by any means.

All this despite the fact that upon taking office in 2018, Mario Abdo Benítez promised that he would put an end to corruption.

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