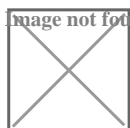


Peruvian Party Expels Son of Former Leader over Drug Links



Lima, April 16 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Peru's APRA party expelled Gerald Oropeza Lopez on Wednesday for alleged links to drug trafficking.

Gerald's family are active members of the important APRA political party. Americo Oropeza, his father and a former leader of APRA, was murdered at gunpoint in 2011. His sister ran for congress, but failed to show how her campaign was financed, arousing suspicions.

Gerald Oropeza – whose nickname was Scarface – was nearly murdered last week, when his Porsche SUV was shot at and blown up with a grenade, presumably in a drug-trafficking dispute. According to APRA Congressman Javier Velazquez, there are no links between his party and drug-trafficking organizations: "we don't have anything to do with that anymore. Always in a community or in an organization there will be shady elements under investigation but that does not jeopardize the institution. We are very clear that we want nothing to do with terrorism or drug trafficking."

However, the links between APRA and drug trafficking do not end with these latest events. One of Gerald's business associates was also a party member, who is currently serving time in jail for his participation in illegal cash exchanges, which saw amnesties given to jailed drug traffickers. The pardons were signed by former president and current head of APRA, Alan García. Julio Arbitzu, analyst and former anti-corruption prosecutor, argues the issue of illicit drug interference in politics is not unique to the APRA party: "there is a worrying advance of organized crime permeating the party system - or what is left of it. Or more accurately taking advantage of the precarious situation of the system of parties to become important forces, important actors in national politics."

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