

Evidence on “parallel” intelligence network cultivated by Bolsonaro exposes rot of Brazil’s democracy

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On January 25 and 30, Brazil’s Federal Police (PF) raided homes and offices connected to the criminal operation dubbed “parallel Abin.” The scheme is described as an unofficial, undercover structure inside the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (Abin) operating from at least 2020, the second year into the government of fascistic former president Jair Bolsonaro. For the first time, PF agents raided Bolsonaro’s own beach house in Angra dos Reis, in southern Rio de Janeiro state, in search of documents and devices of his son Carlos, a city counselor in Rio seen by investigators as the head of the “parallel Abin.”

The scheme amounted to the illegal surveillance of at least 1,500 individuals, including Supreme Court (STF) justices, leading Congress members and state governors, both those opposed to, and in a few cases allied with, former president Bolsonaro. While the primary source of surveillance was the illegal use of Israeli-made First Mile software to remotely track the location of the targeted individuals, spies were also deployed to follow and monitor an unknown number of targets.

Since October 20, 2023, when the scheme surfaced, raids had mainly targeted Abin agents involved in the use of First Mile, a software capable of following someone’s movements by hacking into the country’s telephone and internet networks. The software is not capable of intercepting communications, and the Abin itself is ostensibly banned from doing so by law. But movement tracking would still require a formal judicial authorization, and the 1,500 targeted individuals were spied upon without any formal procedure within the agency, let alone formal communication to other state bodies tasked with overseeing the Abin, including the courts.

At the time, no formal connection to Bolsonaro-appointed officials had been made by the PF. However, the abuse of power by Bolsonaro to both target opponents and fend off criminal charges through the Abin had been taken for granted since at least April 22, 2020, when the former

president boasted of having “his own intelligence” in a recorded cabinet meeting.

The January raids have definitely confirmed those suspicions. The first main target, on January 25, was the House member for Rio de Janeiro Alexandre Ramagem, of Bolsonaro’s Liberal Party (PL). Ramagem is himself a career PF agent, appointed by Bolsonaro to head the Abin in 2020. He won his House seat in the 2022 general elections after a campaign based on political loyalty to the former president. The PF has found him in possession of Abin devices officially registered as being under the intelligence agency’s custody.

The second raid, on the 30th, targeted several addresses tied to Carlos Bolsonaro, including his offices in the Rio City Council building and the Angra dos Reis home where the entire Bolsonaro family, including the former president, were vacationing. The Bolsonaros left the property on three jet-skis shortly before the raid, and the PF suspects they had been tipped off. A number of cell phones and laptops were seized.

The PF investigation has found that among the goals of the “parallel Abin” was the production of evidence to support Bolsonaro’s bogus election fraud charges tied to Brazil’s electronic ballot boxes. These claims were at the center of his attempt to stay in power after his October 31, 2022 presidential election defeat, which led to the fascist assault on the national capital Brasilia by his fascist supporters on January 8, 2023. The illegal spying also gathered “counterintelligence” against state officials leading corruption investigations against the Bolsonaro family, possibly to be used in blackmailing them.

In one of the most prominent cases, it spied on prosecutors of the still-unresolved case of the murder of Rio City Counselor Marielle Franco, of the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), in 2017. The murder was carried out by members of Rio’s retired and off-duty police gangs, the “militias,” but no mastermind has so far been charged.

Bolsonaro has extensive ties to Rio's crime underworld and the far-right officers who lead the militias, which originated in political death squads organized under the 1964-1985 US-backed military dictatorship.

The PF's investigation line is that Ramagem and Carlos Bolsonaro were heads of different "task forces" ("núcleos") in the illegal spying scheme. One of these "task forces" was in charge of monitoring STF justices to attempt to tie them to Brazil's most prominent drug cartel, the PCC, by recording their meetings with human rights lawyers charged by the far-right with being PCC figureheads.

Among those followed by on-spot spies was current Education Minister Camilo Santana, a close ally of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT). While he was governor of Ceará state, Santana had Abin personnel camped outside of his private home in the capital Fortaleza as he hosted a series of meetings before the launch of Lula's 2022 presidential bid. Senators leading the Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPMI) into Bolsonaro's "herd immunity" policy during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 were also spied upon.

Among Bolsonaro's allies, his former Justice Minister Anderson Torres was one of the targets. Torres was later named as head of the security forces of Brasília, a post he occupied during the January 8, 2023 fascist assault on the Brazilian capital. He was arrested shortly afterwards for complicity in the stand-down of police that allowed the fascist mob to overrun the main government buildings.

Bolsonaro himself has yet to be named in the investigations, but on February 2 the UOL news website revealed that the PF has evidence that Bolsonaro received information gathered by the "parallel Abin."

Despite all efforts by the political establishment, and above all the PT government, to pin full blame for the revelations on Bolsonaro, the PF investigations are only scratching the surface of what is a vast and deep conspiracy of the Brazilian bourgeois state against democratic rights.

The October 20 raids brought to the fore wide rifts within that state apparatus, with Abin officials complaining off the record that the PF exceeded its authority in carrying out an operation inside the agency's headquarters. Now, the PF is stating that an emergency meeting of the Abin board of directors on the very day of the raids against Ramagem could amount to obstruction of justice, implicating the entire agency and not only the members of the undercover spy scheme. At the same time, the association representing the Abin spies has publicly called on authorities to stop the leaking of information from the investigation, stating that public knowledge of who was targeted by the agency could affect its standing among international spy organizations with which it cooperates. The crisis could be deepened if, as

suspected, foreign diplomatic figures are also named among the targets of illegal spying.

As the various sections of the Brazilian state, from the Army to the police and the Abin, try to blame each other for the illegal spying, what is being exposed is the rot pervading the entire bourgeois-democratic setup produced by the so-called "Citizen's Constitution" of 1988.

The Abin crisis is also revealing the critical collaboration of capitalist corporations in the buildup of the state repressive apparatus, whose fundamental target is the Brazilian working class. On January 31, *Folha de S. Paulo* revealed that the three largest network providers in the country, Tim, Vivo and Claro, had been aware that their data was hacked by the First Mile software, but deliberately refrained from reporting it to the communications regulating body Anatel.

Bolsonaro's effort to spy upon and blackmail opponents, as well as to shield his family's numerous ties with organized crime, could only thrive in the environment of deep hostility to democratic rights that prevails among the Brazilian capitalist elite and within its state apparatus.

As the international capitalist crisis deepens, and the Brazilian ruling class gears up for decisive clashes with the working class, the democratic mask of a state built for the protection of the interests of a tiny capitalist oligarchy is falling. In this context, the PT and its aligned factions of the political establishment and justice system are above all dedicated to preventing internal disputes within the state from being exposed, compromising bourgeois rule in the country.

The attempt to solve the crisis by means of secretive machinations within the state is epitomized by the all-embracing classified inquiry into far-right activities led by STF justice Alexandre de Moraes, who authorized the PF raids. Meanwhile, the very fascistic breeding grounds in which Bolsonaro emerged and thrived, the Army and the Military Police forces, are promoted by the PT government as the chief guardians of democracy.

Brazilian workers must reject this perspective entirely. The latest revelations show ever more clearly that the struggle for democratic rights and social equality is a struggle against the capitalist state itself.



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