

Trial of ex-president Bolsonaro for fascist coup bid advances in Brazil

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The last few weeks have been marked by important developments in the case against former President Jair Bolsonaro and those accused of leading the coup attempt that culminated in the invasion of government buildings in Brasília on January 8, 2023.

The Supreme Federal Court (STF) concluded on Tuesday the questioning of witness for the prosecution and defense, including former ministers as well as military, police and intelligence officials. Next week, it will begin questioning the defendants in the “core group” of the case, which includes the former president and seven allies, almost all high-ranking military officers.

The recent testimony of former Army commander Gen. Marco Antônio Freire Gomes and Air Force commander Lt. Brig. Carlos de Almeida Baptista Júnior had deep repercussions for the crisis of the entire Brazilian political system.

Before the court, General Freire Gomes attempted to downplay the significance of the preparatory meetings for a coup d'état in which he participated alongside other military commanders. The meetings were called by then-Defense Minister Gen. Paulo Sérgio Nogueira de Oliveira after Bolsonaro's electoral defeat in 2022. The focus of the discussion was the document that became known as the “coup draft,” a decree to prevent the president-elect from taking office and establish a dictatorship.

Justifying the presentation of such a document by General Oliveira – his immediate predecessor in command of the Army – General Freire Gomes claimed: “Perhaps he presented it to us out of consideration... He was letting us know that he was going to begin these studies.” He added that all of the “considerations” raised were “based on legal aspects, on the Constitution, which is why it did not catch our attention.”

General Freire Gomes dodged allegations that he had threatened to arrest Bolsonaro if the former president continued his coup attempt: “I warned him that if he strayed from legal grounds, not only would he not have our support, but he could also face legal consequences. He agreed, and

that was the end of the matter.”

In addition to shielding Bolsonaro, the former Army commander exonerated former Navy chief Adm. Almir Garnier, accused of having resolutely supported the coup, placing his troops on standby. “He merely demonstrated, let's say, respect for the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces,” said Gomes.

The former Army commander's statements provoked a strong reaction from Minister Alexandre de Moraes. “Commander, either you misrepresented the truth to the police or you are misrepresenting the truth here,” said the judge, referring to Gomes' previous testimony to the Federal Police. He refused to change his latest version.

The former Air Force commander, who testified before the Supreme Court subsequently, stated assertively that “the three heads of the Armed Forces and then-President Jair Bolsonaro met and discussed coup scenarios, not just possibilities for using the Armed Forces to ensure social peace until the transition.”

Brigadier Baptista Júnior also stated that the meetings between the former president and the military commanders discussed the arrest of Moraes, then president of the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), and that “the head of the Navy placed troops at the disposal of the plot.” Contrary to the testimony of General Freire Gomes, he attested that his colleague, “very calmly,” had threatened to arrest Bolsonaro.

Regardless of the former Air Force commander's correction attempts, General Freire Gomes' testimony threw a bucket of cold water on the establishment's official narrative regarding the coup attempt, which claims that the military “saved democracy” in Brazil.

This narrative is promoted in the Federal Police report and the complaint filed by the Attorney General's Office (PGR), which forms the basis for the Supreme Court's trial, as well as in the media and the government statements. Led by the alleged heroic action of General Freire Gomes, the Armed Forces supposedly dared to say “no” to the coup.

What the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates, and

what was made clear by Freire Gomes' testimony, is that the Armed Forces went along with the coup conspiracy and their support remained an open question.

The fraudulent narrative about the military as “saviors of democracy” is the highest expression of the hopes of Brazil's ruling class to solve the greatest crisis in its history through bureaucratic maneuvers and by purely judicial means. These bankrupt pretensions are exploding in the face of the contradictions that led to the coup attempt in the first place.

There are signs of growing dissatisfaction within the military with the development of the case in the Supreme Court and the general political situation in the country. Describing the reaction of high-ranking Army figures to the former commander's testimony, *Veja* magazine quoted an anonymous general saying: “It is not natural to see an Army commander, such a respected figure, being reprimanded by a Supreme Court minister.”

At the same time that the STF was concluding the hearing phase of the case, Brazil's Federal Police (PF) launched an operation that revealed the existence of a paramilitary organization specializing in contract killings which called itself the “Commando to Hunt Communists, Corrupt Officials, and Criminals,” or *Comando C4*.

The group was made up of active and reserve military personnel and operated under the legal guise of a “private security company.” According to the PF, the group had a fixed price list for the execution of authorities, including congressmen, senators, and Supreme Court ministers. Former Senate President Rodrigo Pacheco was one of the figures monitored by the organization.

One of the leaders of *Comando C4* arrested by the PF, retired Col. Etevaldo Caçadini de Vargas, was also a head of the YouTube channel “Frente Ampla Patriótica” (Broad Patriotic Front), which promoted the January 8 attempt and attacked military leaders who backed down from the coup. The colonel had already been prosecuted in military court in 2024 on the grounds that his videos “spread coup ideas that offended and defamed the Armed Forces.”

Comando C4 is a direct reference to the Communist Hunting Command (CCC), a fascist armed organization formed shortly before Brazil's 1964 military coup. Operating along the lines of a classic fascist shock squad, the CCC carried out terrorist actions against left-wing activists and political events, especially in the early years of the military regime. With the consolidation of the dictatorship, its members—who had informal ties to the military from the beginning—were incorporated into the state apparatus of repression and torture.

The emergence of a fascist paramilitary organization such as *Comando C4*, directly linked to the forces that served as

Bolsonaro's constituency and remain alive in the state apparatus, exposes the grave dangers contained in the current political situation.

The intensification of the international crisis, marked by the specter of world war, is a determining factor in the explosive unfolding of the Brazilian political situation, particularly under the impact of the violent eruption of US imperialism.

In recent weeks, the US government has significantly escalated its offensive against Brazilian state institutions.

At the end of May, the Brazilian government received an official letter from the US State Department challenging the STF's orders directed against US-based social media networks such as Rumble. Following this, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio publicly stated that there is a “high possibility” that the Trump administration will impose sanctions against Moraes, the judge leading the trial against Bolsonaro.

The US government's actions have been directly coordinated with the Brazilian former president's son, Eduardo Bolsonaro, who resigned from his position as a federal deputy in Brazil to operate directly from the United States.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva described Washington's actions as “unacceptable” interference in “the decision of another country's Supreme Court” during a press conference on Tuesday.

At the same time, the STF reacted by opening an investigation against Eduardo Bolsonaro for obstruction and coercion of the proceedings against the former president and for “attempted violent abolition of the democratic rule of law.” The investigation stemmed from an accusation by PT Deputy Lindbergh Farias, who, in addition to these crimes, characterized the activities of the former president's son as “an attack on national sovereignty” and “high treason against the homeland.”

The actions promoted by the PT and the institutions of the Brazilian bourgeoisie are fundamentally incapable of combating the rise of fascism and imperialist aggression. On the contrary, their appeals to reactionary nationalist ideals and their attempt to resolve all political conflicts in the legal sphere are only deepening the rightward turn of the entire bourgeois system.



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