

Morenoites campaign for Brazilian Army medal for metalworkers union amid escalating global war

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In late March, a petition was launched on Change.org to award the Order of Military Merit, the highest decoration of the Brazilian Army, to the Metalworkers Union of São José dos Campos and Region (SindmetalsJC). The petition, which had surpassed 21,000 signatures by April 26, holds that the union's work in the "defense of our strategic assets and the promotion of national sovereignty"—particularly in preserving Avibras—qualifies it to receive the honor from the hands of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Workers Party-PT).

Although the petition was formally created by geopolitics podcasters, it was politically orchestrated by the union's leadership, tied to the Unified Socialist Workers Party (PSTU), the principal section of the International Workers League (LIT-FI) founded by the Argentine revisionist Nahuel Moreno. The president of SindmetalsJC and PSTU leader, Weller Gonçalves, hosted the military affairs consultant Robinson Farinazzo on his YouTube interview program to promote the petition.

Farinazzo, who has assumed the role of a kind of "ambassador" for the campaign, is a naval reserve officer and an explicit defender of the Brazilian military dictatorship of 1964-85, with political ties to far-right sectors, including the Russian fascist ideologue Alexander Dugin. In his appearance on Weller's program, Farinazzo argued that Brazil needs to develop nuclear bombs to repel threats by American imperialism—a position the Morenoite union leader endorsed by sharing the segment on his Instagram profile.

Under a presidential decree from 2000, the Order of Military Merit can be awarded not only to military personnel, but also to "civil institutions, national or foreign, that become deserving of special tribute from the Army." Historically, the medal has been given out to Brazilian military dictators and torturers as well as their US "advisors." There is no precedent, however, for bestowing the decoration on a trade union.

The campaign is a defining political act, signaling a sharp lurch to the right by the PSTU Morenoites in a conjuncture marked by two converging processes: the escalation of imperialist world war and, internally, the resurgence of dictatorial threats directly tied to the military. The deepening crisis of the capitalist order is exposing the fundamental political divisions between an internationalist revolutionary position—the genuine Trotskyism represented by the International Committee of the Fourth International—and the reactionary nationalist perspectives of the pseudo-left.

That this political act takes place at the present moment is particularly revealing. The case against the coup conspiracy led by

Bolsonaro and the military commanders in 2022-23 is still unfolding. In April, the Supreme Federal Court (STF) ordered the enforcement of the sentences of the members of "core 2," which includes a general and a colonel of the Army. The military apparatus, however, remains intact, and fascist sectors are preparing a new offensive in the October elections. The very commission responsible for the Order of Military Merit is composed of generals trained during the military regime of 1964-85 and under its virulent anti-communist ideology.

The traditions of the Brazilian Army are violently hostile to the working class, with a record of multiple coup attempts, culminating in the seizure of power in 1964 and the two subsequent decades of political terror. One of the first acts of the military in power was the persecution of trade union leaders and combative workers and the imposition of state intervention over the unions, which deepened the dictatorial policies of Getúlio Vargas's 1937 Estado Novo.

The immense political and historical implications of the militarist campaign promoted by SindmetalsJC have been noted by circles tied to the military. The site Sociedade Militar observed:

The case gains weight when one considers the entity's history. The Metalworkers Union of São José dos Campos has built, over the decades, a record of confrontation with governments, companies, and the very logic of national security formulated during the military regime.

Its Truth Commission produced reports pointing to the complicity of companies with repressive structures, the exchange of information with intelligence agencies, and the persecution of union leaders, in line with the doctrine of the "internal enemy."

In other words, the union was, for a long time, seen precisely as part of this "enemy to be neutralized" by the state security apparatus.

The proposal to honor the union, therefore, would express a "symbolic inflection." The site states: "If in the past the presence of organized metalworkers was seen as a potential threat to order, now their action in defense of a strategic missile and rocket company can be a contribution to the country's sovereignty and deterrence capacity."

The military's recognition of SindmetalsJC is a public confirmation that the Morenoite trade union bureaucracy has fallen into line with the role required by the bourgeois state in an era of war: the integral

subordination of the workers to the “patriotic interests” and sacrifices demanded by war.

SindmetalSJC’s trajectory at Avibras

The defense of the military decoration of SindmetalSJC crowns a political process conducted by the Morenoites over the last three and a half years. As the WWS exposed in a series of articles, SindmetalSJC has developed a systematic political orientation toward the military and in defense of the construction of a war industry by the Brazilian state.

This is not a uniquely Brazilian phenomenon, but rather a characteristic shared by the trade union apparatuses in many countries, including the United States. There the United Auto Workers bureaucracy headed by Shawn Fain has offered its services in transitioning to a war economy, extolled the union’s history in creating the World War II-era “arsenal for democracy” and supported “strategic tariffs,” including against Brazil itself.

In September 2022, the workers of Avibras, one of the largest weapons manufacturers in Brazil, launched a strike in response to the company’s entry into judicial recovery, with debts of around 600 million reais (US\$120 million), and the non-payment of wages. The strike continued until last March 11, when SindmetalSJC signed an agreement for the resumption of production. The agreement, celebrated by the Morenoite bureaucracy as a victory, entailed the elimination of half of the factory’s jobs. Hundreds of the 1,400 workers originally employed by Avibras were forced to migrate or resort to informal work.

Throughout this three-and-a-half-year period, CSP-Conlutas, the trade union federation led by the PSTU, has shown itself to be aligned with the interests of the capitalist investors and the bourgeois state.

While keeping the Avibras workers isolated, the Morenoite bureaucracy advocated a “solution” to the company’s crisis based on redirecting massive state investments toward the construction of a war industrial complex. This orientation was formalized as early as January 2023, when SindmetalSJC presented to the Ministry of Defense the “Avibras Dossier,” a document extolling the company as the country’s “principal manufacturer of heavy war materiel” and proposing “the strategic planning of national defense” through “the nationalization of the companies of the sector, integrating them with scientific institutes and federal universities, to enable the manufacture of fighter jets, heavy armaments, military cargo planes, warships, combat helicopters, rockets, missiles, submarines.”

In April 2024, the trade unionists of CSP-Conlutas sent a letter to President Lula reiterating these demands, without receiving a response. This effort culminated in a seminar held by SindmetalSJC, in March 2025, with the participation of active-duty officers, figures tied to the arms industry, and Farinazzo himself. The event served to consolidate an “alliance between left and right” in defense of a militarist and national-chauvinist perspective.

The agreement for the resumption of operations at Avibras was directly linked to massive private investments in the company. On April 8, an investment of 300 million reais (US\$60 million) by J&F, the capitalist group that controls the food sector giant JBS, was announced.

The group led by the Batista family was one of the main

beneficiaries of the state credit policies implemented under the first PT governments. Following Lula’s return to the presidency in 2023, Joesley and Wesley Batista took part in the official delegation on the government’s first trip to China. In March 2025, JBS announced an agreement with the BNDES to list its shares on the New York Stock Exchange.

Far from securing the “national interests”—as concerns the interests of the Brazilian working masses—the policy celebrated by CSP-Conlutas is the product of the rotten marriage between the profit interests of private capitalist groups, the needs of the Brazilian bourgeois state, and the parasitic interests of the trade union bureaucracy.

For an internationalist working class response to the capitalist crisis and to war

The Morenoites at the head of SindmetalSJC try to sell their program of building up the Brazilian war industry as a radical policy of “defense of national sovereignty” and even of combating imperialism. This is a thoroughgoing political fraud.

Far from constituting an obstacle to imperialist domination, this nationalist program is bound to deepen Brazil’s integration, as a semi-colonial country, into the war interests of the imperialist powers. This political truth has been clearly demonstrated by the Morenoites’ efforts to tie the prospects of Avibras’s financial recovery to Brazil’s participation in the US-NATO imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine.

The LIT-FI declared in 2023 that it was “necessary to intensify the campaign of ‘Arms for Ukraine, for the military defeat of Putin’ which must be taken up by all unions and workers’ organizations.” The leadership of SindmetalSJC translated this orientation into the argument that the US-NATO war against Russia opened up a unique market opportunity for the rockets and armaments produced at Avibras.

The Avibras workers must reject the militarist nationalism and the binding of their jobs and wages to the expansion of global imperialist war defended by the PSTU/Conlutas.

The danger to the company’s workers has not abated, as the union itself admitted. The payment of back wages and the very existence of the factory continue to depend upon the interests of the investors and the bourgeois state. It is only by turning to their class brothers and sisters, in Brazil and internationally, in a direct struggle against capitalism and its state, that the interests of the Avibras workers can be effectively defended.



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