

“MAGA’s Man in LatAm” jailed in Bolivia over political assassination plot

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Fernando Cerimedo, the Argentine political operative described by *The Economist* as “MAGA’s man in LatAm,” is being held in preventive detention in Bolivia, accused of ordering the attempted murder of his former partner, the lawyer and activist Nadia Beller.

Cerimedo was among the most prominent propagandists at the intersection of the Trump administration, the US intelligence apparatus and the installation of far-right governments from Buenos Aires to Tegucigalpa.

Beller, 33 and four months pregnant, was shot three times outside a hotel in Santa Cruz de la Sierra on the night of August 17 by two assailants dressed as delivery drivers who arrived on a stolen motorcycle. She survived the attempt.

Cerimedo was detained the following morning at Viru Viru airport attempting to board a flight to Buenos Aires. A judge imposed the maximum term of preventive detention, 180 days. A search of his residence reportedly turned up evidence of a bot farm and large quantities of cash. He is being held in a section of the prison reserved for state officials and members of the security forces.

Cerimedo denies involvement. His lawyer has advanced the theory that Beller staged the shooting herself in order to “destabilize” the Bolivian government—a claim amplified by Argentine President Javier Milei, who reposted messages questioning whether her wounds were real.

The evidence and the state apparatus

The prosecution’s case rests on material extracted from Cerimedo’s telephone. According to Beller’s attorney, Jerjes Justiniano, one message reads: “Don’t tell anyone. But Enrique’s friend sold us out, remember? Nadia. Either we eliminate her now or we’re screwed. Do you know anyone who can do the job?”

Other messages recovered from the device were sent by an individual identified as E.C.G. on the day of the shooting. “Brother, they just shot her,” one reads. Afterward: “We have the phone just in case,” and “Apparently no organs were compromised.” Investigators reportedly found 11 deleted calls between the two men that day.

E.C.G. has been identified as Erik Correa González, intelligence chief under Bolivian President Rodrigo Paz. Former President Evo Morales has stated that the operation was designed to pin the killing on him: Beller was lured to the hotel by an anonymous message offering information about a complaint against Morales, and Cerimedo—according to Beller’s own account—encouraged her to go despite her expressed fears for her safety.

Beller has called the attack a “state crime,” charging involvement by the government and the police. From her hospital bed she stated that she decided to speak publicly because “until I speak directly to the Bolivian people, they are going to finish what they attempted to do.”

Inside the Palacio Quemado

The intimate relationship between Cerimedo and the Bolivian presidency has been described in detail by Vice President Edman Lara, himself a former police officer now in open conflict with Paz.

According to Lara, Cerimedo first appeared during the election’s second round last year as Paz’s personal adviser, initially introduced to him as “my daughter’s teacher.” He held an office inside the Palacio de Gobierno (Palacio Quemado) close to the president’s own, attended cabinet meetings, wrote Paz’s speeches and instructed ministers on what they were to do and say. “Ministers had to speak with Cerimedo before speaking with the president. Cerimedo was the bridge.”

Lara added a detail of considerable significance: at a meeting with Santa Cruz business figures, Cerimedo appeared accompanied by an American who identified himself as a representative of Starlink, the satellite internet service developed by Elon Musk’s Space X, and the three men—Cerimedo, the American and Paz—withdrew to meet privately.

Lara also asked the question, “How was he sustained? Who paid his expenses?” Beller answers this question with the charge that Cerimedo and Paz were partners in fuel smuggling operations, claiming that she has evidence of irregular business dealings involving the president and his family. She has stated that Cerimedo boasted of taking in \$800,000 a month through his relationship with the Bolivian presidency, and that he had ties to the CIA.

Her allegations reach into Argentina as well. Beller states that Cerimedo and his wife Natalia Basil leaked the recordings of Diego Spagnuolo, former director of the National Disability Agency, in which Spagnuolo described a bribery scheme run by Karina Milei, the Argentine president’s sister and General Secretary of the Presidency. Basil was in charge of that same agency.

The timing is politically significant. Beller was shot days after these disclosures began circulating, and one week after the Paz government eliminated the diesel subsidy for large consumers, driving the price up by nearly 84 percent.

The general strike and Decree 5503

Beller has stated that she believes she was targeted for her opposition to the package of measures being prepared under Decree 5503—the elimination of fuel subsidies and a battery of economic reforms dismantling social spending—and for what she witnessed of high-level corruption. Significantly, Beller was also a congressional candidate for Morales’s Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party ahead of the US-backed coup against Morales in 2019.

The Paz government came to office this year committed to placing the full weight of Bolivia's prolonged economic crisis on the backs of the working class. The response was a massive 50-day general strike. That movement was betrayed by the union leadership of the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), which channeled the immense militancy of miners, teachers and other workers back into negotiations with a government that had answered the movement with a state of exception and the deployment of troops in the streets.

The assassination attempt, with the participation of a state intelligence officer, against a politician who claims she opposed the government, is not a private matter, but a political action.

The plot is the logical culmination of Cerimedo's political trajectory as a key operative serving Washington's interests across the region.

His back story is murky at best. He has claimed to have been offered a full scholarship to attend Harvard University, to have trained with the US Navy Seals and to have served in the Obama White House. There is no credible evidence to support any of this.

Until 2019, he was working for the nominally "left" faction of Peronism, organizing digital operations for the Peronist Youth in La Matanza and running social media campaigns that re-elected Peronist mayors in the province of Buenos Aires. He crossed over, he says, for love: "My wife is a fan of Javier Milei." More likely than not, he followed more lucrative opportunities.

During the pandemic, his outlet *La Derecha Diario* attacked public health measures and published disinformation about vaccines, including the fabricated claim that Argentina's regulatory agency had confirmed doses contained graphene.

His first operation of continental significance came in Brazil in 2022. Days after Jair Bolsonaro's defeat, Cerimedo hosted a livestream titled "Brazil Was Stolen," alleging that voting machines had been manipulated. He repeated the claims before the Brazilian Senate. Days later, Bolsonaro's supporters stormed Congress and the presidential palace in Brasília in a failed coup attempt organized from the highest levels of the state.

He then joined Milei's 2023 campaign, claiming credit for the chainsaw brandished at rallies. In Chile he commissioned polling used to influence the constitutional referendum that would have replaced the constitution inherited from Pinochet. In Bolivia, his Numen Academy trained Catalina Paz, the president's daughter, now an adviser to his government. And in Honduras he says he coordinated Trump's Truth Social post endorsing Nasry Asfura—the same Asfura exposed in the "Hondurasgate" recordings discussing the financing of "information cells" to destabilize Mexico and Colombia, and the imprisonment or assassination of opponents.

Cerimedo's business partner is Brad Parscale, Trump's former campaign manager, who supplies the voter-targeting technology through their Buenos Aires consultancy Numen. "Brad set up all the infrastructure that I work with," Cerimedo has said.

The road to Miami

The decisive connection, however, runs through Washington and Miami.

In May 2023, Cerimedo registered NUMEN Advisors LLC in North Miami. Three months later, a memorandum filed with the US Justice Department under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) records a contract between Numen and Damián Merlo's Latin America Advisory Group to work on Milei's campaign—including approaches to Members of Congress with emphasis on south Florida, and to the Heritage Foundation, CSIS, the Council on Foreign Relations and the Atlantic Council.

Merlo's own record is documented in the same FARA filings. He worked for the US Interests Section in Havana in 1996-97 under State Department contract, screening Cuban applicants for emigration. From 2002 to 2007 he was a program officer at the International Republican Institute responsible for its Cuba, Mexico and Brazil programs, including a grant to the Cuban Democratic Revolutionary Directorate in Miami.

As explained by a *La Jornada* investigation, FARA disclosures record Merlo's meetings with Viviana Bovo, longtime adviser to Marco Rubio; with Ricardo Pita, former Ted Cruz aide and now senior adviser for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the State Department; with Florida Republican Representatives Mario Díaz-Balart and María Elvira Salazar; and, on January 13 of this year—10 days after the seizure of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro—with Joseph Humire, who heads Americas security affairs at the Department of Defense, the office supervising regional security cooperation and military sales.

Parscale, meanwhile, attended a meeting at Mar-a-Lago also attended by Rubio and Salazar.

When Cerimedo engaged Merlo in 2023, he was securing much more than a publicity deal. He was being integrated into the institutional circuit—Miami, the Cuban fascistic organizations, south Florida legislators, the hemispheric security bureaucracy—through which US policy toward Latin America is made.

Condor 2.0

The reaction of the regimes implicated has been immediate. Milei declared Cerimedo "someone who is not part of our space and has no connection with us of any kind," despite official records showing 13 visits to the Casa Rosada after Milei took office. He then attributed the affair to a conspiracy involving Evo Morales, Lula and "castrochavismo." In Chile, the chief adviser to President José Antonio Kast's election campaign has been formally questioned in Congress over his ties to Cerimedo. Bolivia's Paz has not appeared in public since the arrest.

In fact, what has been exposed is a US-backed transnational apparatus of disinformation, subversion and violence, operating with the participation of intelligence services and reaching into the highest levels of the Trump administration. Fifty years after Chilean intelligence chief Manuel Contreras convened his counterparts in Santiago to establish Operation Condor's joint information bank and multinational task forces, the same methods are being reconstructed.

The nominally left governments of the region offer no alternative. Despite their current denunciations of this fascistic conspiracy, their consistent accommodation to Trump demonstrates that bourgeois nationalism provides no means of opposing imperialism or fascism.

What the Cerimedo case exposes is not the criminality of one operative but the criminal character of an entire hemispheric operation. The defense of democratic rights falls to the international working class, and requires the building of sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International throughout the Americas.



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