

## Brazil Has Blocked Overseas US\$ 300 Million Stolen from the Public Coffers

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The Brazilian government hopes to recover around US\$ 300 million that were transferred abroad illegally. The money was blocked by the Department of Assets Recovery and International Legal Cooperation (DRCI), which is linked to the National Secretariat of Justice of the Ministry of Justice.

According to the Secretary, Cláudia Chagas, these funds are the fruit of various crimes, but most of it stems from corruption. "Brazil's biggest problem in terms of money-laundering is corruption," she points out.

The DRCI was created in February, 2004, to organize the war on money-laundering, and, in little more than a year of activity, it has succeeded in tracking and blocking around US\$ 300 million.

For the Secretary, this amount is significant, since the total of funds blocked abroad through 2003 was around US\$ 58 million.

According to Chagas, the blocking of these funds abroad already represents an advance. "The fact of being blocked already constitutes a guarantee to Brazil that the money is not lost, that it has already been discovered and blocked, and that it will be returned to the public coffers," she says.

But, according to the Secretary, to recover the money, Brazil must negotiate a long path that involves processes of international legal cooperation. One of the conditions for the amount to be returned to the country is a definitive criminal conviction.

"Only at the end of it all, after all appeals have been exhausted, can Brazil approach the other country, present the penal condemnation sentence, upheld at all higher levels, and request the return of this money," she explains.

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