

## Brazil Suspects Bishop Caught with Millions in Suitcases Is Money Launderer

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Brazil's Federal Police began Tuesday, July 12, an official investigation of Deputy João Batista Ramos da Silva from the PFL party of São Paulo and president and bishop of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God.

Silva was arrested on Monday, July 11, in a private hangar in Brasília, the Brazilian capital, with seven suitcases containing US\$ 4.2 million (10.2 million reais) in cash.

The continuation of the investigation now depends upon an authorization from the Federal Supreme Court (STF), since members of the National Congress have immunity from prosecution in ordinary courts.

The Deputy was charged together with six other people: the pilot and copilot of the airplane and two pastors and their wives.

The commissioner in charge of the investigation, David Campos, wants to examine the origin of the money, which was placed in the custody of the Central Bank in Brasília. He thinks it is necessary to discover whether there is evidence of tax evasion and money-laundering.

In his declaration to the Federal Police, the Deputy informed that the money was collected in tithes from members of the church.

Yesterday the PFL decided to expel the São Paulo Deputy from its ranks.

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