

## Jailed Brazilian Cambist Denies Working with Political Parties

Contributed by Marcela Rebelo  
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Brazilian money changer, Antônio Oliveira Claramunt, aka Toninho da Barcelona (Little Tony from Barcelona, a reference to the name of a neighborhood in the São Paulo suburb of São Caetano do Sul), affirmed that he never did business with Brazil's ruling PT (Workers Party) or any other political party.

"There were no politicians or government funds among my clients or business transactions," he declared. He said he had judges and members of the federal police among his clients, but he pointed out that most of his clients were foreigners who retired to Brazil and receive checks worth between US\$ 300 and US\$ 400.

He also emphasized that he does not believe that the president of the Central Bank, Henrique Meirelles, committed any type of fraud by transferring money abroad.

"The operation in which he sent US\$ 59,000 must have been a matter that required a speedy resolution, as a favor or to liquidate a debt. Who am I to judge? But I don't believe it was with the intention of committing fraud," he stated.

The money changer also asserted that he did not transfer dollars abroad for Minister Márcio Thomaz Bastos.

"Barcelona" testified before a joint session of three parliamentary investigatory commissions (on the Post Office, Vote Buying, and Bingo Parlors) to clarify the relationship between gambling establishments, organized crime, and money-laundering.

"Barcelona" has been in jail since August, 2004, in Avaré, in the interior of the state of São Paulo, for transferring money abroad illegally. It is estimated that, in just one of his accounts, he handled over US\$ 190 million. The money changer was escorted to Brasília by the Federal Police.

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