

Brazil's Supreme Clears Way for Probing Accounts of Fallen House Speaker

Contributed by Newsroom
Tuesday, 27 September 2005

Brazil's Federal Supreme Court (STF) authorized the disclosure of bank and telephone accounts belonging to ex-federal deputy and former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Severino Cavalcanti, and restaurant proprietor, Sebastião Augusto Buani, for the period from January 1, 2002, to December 31, 2003.

The petition was filed by the Federal Public Defense Ministry as part of its investigation into accusations that Cavalcanti received payoffs to extend the concession contract permitting Buani to operate a restaurant in the Chamber of Deputies.

The reporter of the decision, Minister Gilmar Mendes, also determined that the petition be recast in the form of a judicial inquiry.

He informed that Cavalcanti's resignation of his parliamentary mandate does not prevent the continuation of investigations in the Supreme Court, since the case documents include references to sitting federal deputy, Gonzaga Patriota from the PSB party of the northeastern state of Pernambuco.

Mendes also granted 90 days for the Federal Police to take witnesses' statements.

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