

## Brazilian Congress Calls for Defense Minister's Head Following Airports' Chaos

Contributed by José Wilson Miranda  
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Brazilians senators have transformed the Senate floor, this Wednesday, December 6, in a stage for criticism against the government. Most of the flak was directed towards the airports mismanagement, which caused yesterday, what's being called the worst day in Brazil's aviation history.

Defense Minister, Waldir Pires, was the favorite target of the attackers.

Senator Tasso Jereissati, president of the opposition party PSDB, bayed for the Minister's head on a silver platter. He made a direct appeal to Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva:

"Mr. President, do respect the 58 million who voted for you. Go to work, stop the speeches and take responsibility. Fire whoever has to be fired and put in his place someone who knows about the matter." And he went on:

"Today we don't have a president, a man to take care of this problem. The president acts as a stranger, a completely absent person. There is no minister to take responsibility for the sector. The Defense Minister's interviews have been pathetic. He doesn't know a thing about the subject. Brazil is living through a true mess, without a man, without pulse."

The Defense Minister's position seems more and more untenable. While the opposition is calling for his ousting the government's allies are not defending him.

Senator Delcídio Amaral from the ruling Workers Party urged the president to act and to act fast:

"This is a serious matter and it's becoming so critical that I think the president needs to take a position and alert the population so that they will be ready. Nobody deserves this!

"Therefore, we have to face this matter with the seriousness that it deserves, showing clearly what are the plans we have. Or we should push for brief interviews to try to show that we are concerned.

"The situation demands a declaration by the Minister of Defense, by someone with authority, in a national radio and TV linkup, to say what is going to be done and what is going to happen."

The leader of the PSDB (the party with the most seats in Congress) in the Senate, Arthur Virgílio, didn't beat about the bush:

- I can't see Waldir Pires as minister any longer. He is not a minister anymore.

In response to the outcry, the government leader in the Senate, Romero Jucá, said very little but was very eloquent in what he didn't say:

"The president is taking all necessary steps. If he needs to change someone he will do this."

Rodrigo Maia, leader of the PFL in the House, also called from the floor for Pires's dismissal. For him the airports crisis showed that Waldir Pires can't continue heading the Defense Ministry: "With all due respect to the minister's history, unfortunately, he wasn't able to take charge of the situation when the time came," said Maia.

For the speaker of the House, Aldo Rebelo "the facts show that there is a crisis, there is an impasse, and the crisis affects the life of people, companies and institutions and therefore, fast and strong measures should be taken and the National Congress should cooperate in the search for these solutions."