

## Brazil's Defense Minister Bumpy Ride Ends Here

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Jurist Néelson Azevedo Jobim, 61, a former Supreme Court chief, accepted Brazilian President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's invitation to become Brazil's new Defense Minister, who is also the civil aviation chief. Since the July 17 air tragedy, the worst in Brazilian history, with at least 199 deaths, Lula had decided that Waldir Pires, 80, the current defense minister, had to go.

Initially, the president's press office informed that Pires had offered his resignation. Pires, however, protested and a new version was given, this time stating that the minister had been fired by Lula this morning. The new defense minister should be sworn in today at 4 pm.

Pires stayed in his post for a little more than a year, since April 2006. His reign was quite troubled, however. Brazil's air transportation has been in a state of chaos since September 29, when a Boeing 737 collided with a smaller jet killing all 154 aboard and causing what at the time was Brazil's worst air accident ever.

Since then, air controllers, who for the most part are military men, have staged work-to-rule campaigns and rebelled demanding better salaries and work conditions.

Jobim, who is from the Rio Grande do Sul PMDB (Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement) started his political career in the 1980s when he was elected to the House of Representatives. After being elected in 1986 he won reelection for a second mandate in 1990.

In the House he was his party's leader in 1988, the president of the Constitution and Justice committee and also the reporter for the constitutional review in 1993 and 1994. In January 1995, no more a representative, he accepted president Fernando Henrique Cardoso's invitation to be Justice Minister, a post he kept until April 1997 when he was appointed by Cardoso to the Supreme Court.

Jobim left the court March of last year. During his time at the highest court he became the Supreme Electoral Court's president in 2001 and the Supreme Justice in 2004.

He was born on April 12, 1946, in Santa Maria, in the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul. He graduated in 1968 in Juridical and Social Sciences from Rio Grande do Sul Federal University's Law School.