

## Brazilians Involved in Military Era's Operation Condor Won't Be Extradited

Contributed by Newsroom  
Thursday, 27 December 2007

Authorities in Brazil have said they are awaiting notification from Italy on arrest warrants for suspects in the coordinated repression campaign during South America's dictatorship era, which in Brazil lasted from 1964 to 1985, but also anticipated that Brazilian citizens could not be extradited for trial abroad.

An Italian judge on Monday, December 24, issued arrest warrants for 146 Latin Americans suspected of involvement in Operation Condor - a coordinated campaign by South American military rulers in the 1970s and early eighties to persecute leftists and dissidents.

The warrants name Argentines, Bolivians, Brazilians, Chileans, Paraguayans, Uruguayans and Peruvians sought for complicity in the deaths of 25 Italian citizens. The list included 13 Brazilians.

"We have received no information, be it from the Italian or Brazilian governments," a Federal Police spokeswoman in Brazilian capital Brasília said.

"There is no such thing as extradition of Brazilian citizens for trial abroad. There can be a request from them to be arrested here, but that will depend on the analysis by the Brazilian justice system."

Justice Minister Tarso Genro confirmed an extradition was unlikely. "We have a cooperation treaty on criminal justice with (Italy) but, in principle, Brazilian law doesn't permit extradition," Genro told reporters in Brasília.

The constitution permits extradition only in the case of common crimes and only of naturalized Brazilians, the minister said. Crimes committed by Brazilians abroad are subject to domestic law. The Supreme Court has the final word, Genro said.

Brazil was under military rule from 1964 to 1985 but unlike the post-dictatorship governments of Chile and Argentina, has made little attempt to bring military men behind human rights abuses to justice.

Families of torture victims and those who disappeared have expressed disappointment in the lack of action by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, a former union leader who was himself briefly imprisoned under military rule.

Operation Condor was a secret operation among several South American military regimes to coordinate operations to abduct or kill their political opponents, including allowing death squads to cross borders to hunt them down.

A joint information center was set up at the headquarters of Chile's notorious secret police in Santiago. Rights groups say the U.S. government knew of and supported the operation.

Rio daily newspaper O Globo said this week that Brazil was not officially part of the secret operation but it allowed "freelance" military and police units to cooperate in certain missions with their counterparts from other countries.

However it was not clear if the Italian judge's action against those on the list who are living in Latin American or elsewhere outside Italy was symbolic or whether the judge would try to have them extradited to Italy.

The list includes such notorious characters as Argentine dictator General Jorge Videla, former head of the Argentine Navy Admiral Emilio Massera and former Uruguayan president Juan María Bordaberry.

Of the long list some have died such as Chile's notorious Augusto Pinochet and one of them Captain Jorge Fernandez Troccoli from the Uruguayan Navy intelligence services was arrested in Salerno, where he was retired, reported the Italian press.

Troccoli is accused of the disappearance of four people and will be transferred to Rome to face questioning on December 27.

Under Operation Condor, six governments (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) worked together from the 1970s to hunt down and kill left-wing opponents. Italian authorities have been looking into the plot since the late 1990s.

The investigation followed complaints by relatives of South American citizens of Italian origin who had disappeared. Judge Luisann Figliola issued the arrest warrants on Monday, following a request from state prosecutor Giancarlo Capaldo.

Those named face charges ranging from lesser crimes to kidnappings and multiple murders. Under Operation Condor the military governments agreed to co-operate in sending teams into other countries to track, monitor and kill their political opponents.

As a result, many left-wing opponents of military regimes in the region who had fled to neighboring countries found

themselves hunted down in exile. The Italian Justice is expected to begin in the coming days procedures for the extradition of those people in the list, according to the Italian press.

The list of suspects allegedly includes 61 from Argentina; 32 from Uruguay; 22 from Chile; 13 from Brazil; 7 from Bolivia; 7 from Paraguay and 5 from Peru.

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