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Fascist terror and military hostility set tone for Lula's inauguration in Brazil

The inauguration of Brazil's president-elect Luís Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT), set for January 1, is being prepared under the shadow of fascist conspiracies in the country.

The growing threats of far-right violence have been made explicit in the last week with the exposure of a terrorist plot by supporters of current fascist President Jair Bolsonaro, who has yet to admit losing the election to Lula. The stated goal of the planned actions was to prevent the transfer of power to the elected government and pave the way for an authoritarian coup.



Military parade on the commemoration of Brazil's independence, September 7, 2022. [Photo: Alan Santos/PR]

On Christmas Eve, the 54-year-old fascist George Washington de Oliveira Sousa was arrested in Brasilia after a failed bomb attack at the Brazilian capital's airport.

Sousa confessed to having armed the explosive, which he said was planted by another man, Alan Diego Rodrigues, in a tanker truck that was heading to Brasilia International Airport (BSB) loaded with jet fuel. The bomb was removed in the vicinity of the airport by the truck driver, who identified the strange object and called the police. The survey by the Civil Police of the Federal District (PCDF) concluded that the bomb was set off but failed due to "a micro technical detail in the detonator."

In his statement to the authorities, Sousa revealed having planned this and other actions, such as blowing up a power substation in the capital, together with other fascist supporters of Bolsonaro. He stated that their goal was to "start the chaos" that would "lead to the intervention of the armed forces and the decree of a state of siege to prevent the establishment of communism in Brazil."

The pro-Bolsonaro activist identified himself as a gas station manager and former paratrooper (supposedly in the Brazilian army). He was arrested in a rented property in Brasilia, more than 700 miles away from his residence in the state of Pará.

Sousa, inspired by "the words of President Bolsonaro," traveled to the capital on November 12 carrying "two 12-gauge shotguns, two .357 caliber revolvers ... a .308 caliber Springfield rifle, more than a thousand rounds of ammunition of various calibers, and five sticks of dynamite," said the police report. He claims to have invested 160,000 reais (US\$32,000) in his arsenal, equivalent to about three years of his declared income.

Sousa declared that the purpose of his trip to Brasilia was "to participate in the protests that were taking place in front of the Army's headquarters and wait for the sign for the Armed Forces to take up arms and overthrow communism." He said he planned to distribute part of his weapons and ammunition to other participants in this fascist mob.

This ultra-right armed movement, although it seeks to present itself as an individual and spontaneous initiative, has directly traceable connections to Bolsonaro and his entourage and to the higher echelons of the military and the police.

Over the past two months, the fascist encampment in Brasilia in which Sousa took part has been the focus of a series of actions coordinated by Bolsonaro's allies to challenge the outcome of the Brazilian election. The idea that individuals like Sousa are independent political actors is immediately refuted by the records of these actions.

On November 30, Sousa and Alan Diego Rodrigues, his currently fugitive accomplice, attended a Senate hearing organized by politicians linked to the fascist president as a

platform to promote their conspiratorial narrative of electoral fraud and openly advocate a military coup.



George Washington Sousa (marked in red, on the left) and Alan Diego Rodrigues (marked red, on the right) attend Brazilian Senate's audition on November 30, 2022. [Photo: Tv Senado]

On social media, Rodrigues displays personal photos alongside the politicians who organized this action in the Senate, such as congressmen Zé Trovão, from Bolsonaro's Liberal Party (PL), and Daniel Silveira from the ultra-right Brazilian Labor Party (PTB), who was given amnesty by the fascistic president after being convicted of agitating for a coup d'état.

On the eve of the Senate hearing, on November 24, Congresswoman Carla Zambelli (PL), one of Bolsonaro's main allies, visited the fascist camp at the gates of the Army's headquarters along with her husband, Col. Aginaldo de Oliveira, the head of the National Public Security Force until March of this year.

Speaking to the crowd, Zambelli, who is also charged with political violence during the October election, claimed she was organizing "an action in the Senate that will shake the structures of the Senate." She added: "Count on us. While you are here, know that you have people working sometimes behind the scenes ... and I won't rest for a second until we achieve our freedom."

On December 12, two weeks before the action that led to Sousa's arrest, the members of this fascist encampment staged violent protests in Brasilia against the event officially confirming Lula's victory. Facing virtually no police intervention, the small group of far-right protesters attacked buildings and set fire to more than a dozen cars and buses across

the capital. Videos show Rodrigues present at different moments of the day, sometimes walking among police officers, sometimes on barricades or next to burning vehicles.

The violent actions enacted by these fascist foot soldiers, both on December 12 and December 24, can be directly linked to the political orientation provided by Bolsonaro in previous days.

In his first extensive political speech since his electoral defeat on October 30, Bolsonaro addressed his supporters in Brasilia (likely Rodrigues and Sousa among them) just three days before the official confirmation of Lula's victory. His speech instigated and gave legitimacy to the fascist violence carried out in the days afterward. Bolsonaro said:

"I am sure that, among my functions guaranteed by the Constitution, is being the supreme chief of the Armed Forces. ... I have always said, throughout these four years, that the Armed Forces are the last obstacle to socialism. The Armed Forces, be sure, stand united."

He added: "Today we are living a crucial moment, at a crossroads, a destiny that the people have to take. It is you who decide my future and where I go. You are the ones who decide where the Armed Forces go. Who decides where the Congress, the Senate go, are you too."

Bolsonaro's silence after the violent acts committed by his supporters, as on previous occasions, is an indisputable sign of approval.

The Armed Forces, to which both the president and his fascist supporters appeal, have also remained silent on these events. That silence is even more ominous in face of an extraordinary statement given by the Armed Forces Command about the fascist demonstrations demanding a military coup. On November 11, the commanders issued an official note characterizing this movement as "popular demonstrations" and affirming the military's "unshakable commitment to the Brazilian people" and its historical role as a "moderating power."

The exacerbation of political tensions in recent days led Lula's team to make unprecedented preparations and agreements for Sunday's ceremony.

The team has demanded the closure of the Esplanade of Ministries starting Friday for bomb screening, the employment of the National Public Security Force and the mobilization of 8,000 security agents for Inauguration Day. It is still under discussion whether Lula will ride to the ceremony in a convertible car, as is customary in Brazil, or in a bullet-proof vehicle.

The changes in protocol were motivated not only by fears of individual actions of terrorism, but of the direct participation of state agencies and the military in a possible coup in Brasilia.

Lula's team decided to take his personal security out of the hands of the Cabinet of Institutional Security (GSI) and to drastically reduce the GSI's traditional participation in the inauguration ceremony. The GSI is currently commanded by Gen. Augusto Heleno, who recently lamented in public the fact that the president-elect, Lula, "is not sick ... unfortunately."

In another extraordinary decision, the defense minister pointed by Lula, José Múcio Monteiro, negotiated the moving up of the change of command of the Navy and Army, traditionally held after the presidential inauguration. The action was a preemptive maneuver aimed against the growing threats of insubordination by the military chiefs toward the new government.

The possibility of accelerating the change of command initially emerged as a threat to the elected government by the military chiefs themselves. Lula's choice of the generals' favorite, Múcio, for the Defense ministry, praised in the press as a gesture of subordination of the PT government to the military, had supposedly made the proposal recede.

However, the decision, taken hastily on Monday amid rumors that the Navy's commander Almir Garnier was inclined to resign his post, made it clear that the PT government's crisis with the military is far from resolved.

The attitude Bolsonaro will take on Inauguration Day remains unknown. The media has announced that, according to his allies, the president will not attend the ceremony, breaking the basic protocols of Brazilian democracy and manifesting his persistent challenge to the election result.

Instead of attending the event, there are reports that the fascistic Brazilian president intends to travel later this week to Florida, where he would spend the next few days at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago complex. The links between Bolsonaro's coup plots in Brazil and Trump's allies, who promoted the attempted coup at Washington's Capitol on January 6, 2021, have long been established.

Bolsonaro has only stated in an interview with CNN that the reports that he would hold a farewell meeting of his government in Brasilia and then embark to Florida were "fake news."

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