



Ecuadorian Special Forces Storm Mexican Embassy and Arrest Former Vice President Jorge Glas Convicted of Corruption

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At 10:00 PM local time on April 5 (5:00 AM in Italy), a contingent consisting of Army Commando Paratroopers and the Ecuadorian police's Grupo Operaciones Especiales (GOE) surrounded and subsequently stormed the Mexican embassy in Quito, Ecuador, arresting former Vice President Jorge Glas, definitively convicted for misuse of public funds and with strong ties to drug trafficking.

This is one of the rare cases in recent history where the diplomatic immunity of an embassy has been openly breached, violating one of the fundamental principles of diplomatic sovereignty as enshrined in the Vienna Convention of 1961.

Glas, who served as vice president under Rafael Correa's presidency, was definitively found guilty in a series of corruption cases. On December 15, 2017, he was sentenced to 6 years in

prison for the illegal withdrawal of 13.5 million dollars from the Brazilian conglomerate Odebrecht, a sentence confirmed by the National Supreme Court in October 2019. In 2020, he received an additional 8-year sentence for aggravated corruption and the loss of political rights for 25 years. In January 2021, the total sentence increased to 22 years following a conviction for misuse of public funds.

He is also under investigation for corruption charges related to the reconstruction of the city of Manabí, devastated by the 2016 earthquake. Further charges link him to drug trafficking figures, further aggravating his legal position. According to the Ecuadorian judiciary, the bail for his conditional release in 2022, for health reasons, set at 250,000 US dollars, was allegedly paid by drug trafficker Leandro Norero.

Free on bail, after 40 days Glas found refuge in the Mexican embassy in Quito. The decision yesterday afternoon by the Mexican president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, to grant political asylum to Glas had already sparked diplomatic tensions between the two countries.

This night's military operation clearly indicated that the Ecuadorian government, led by the young president Daniele Noboa, does not intend to leave any escape route for individuals linked to corruption or drug trafficking crimes, even if protected by diplomatic immunity. This dramatic development comes at a time when Ecuador is intensifying its fight against crime. The arrest of Glas represents a significant blow to the state of impunity that some criminals have exploited in the country's diplomatic premises in the past.

In recent years, a series of Ecuadorian politicians, all linked to the left-wing political current known as "correísmo", led by former president Rafael Correa, have sought refuge abroad to avoid judicial proceedings in Ecuador:

Rafael Correa, president of Ecuador from 2007 to 2017, moved to Belgium in July 2017, after completing his term. Correa has been involved in numerous judicial proceedings, including charges of embezzlement, organized crime, human rights violations, and planning the kidnapping of politician Fernando Balda. In 2020, he was sentenced to eight years in prison in the Sobornos case for corruption.

Pedro Delgado, president of the Central Bank of Ecuador, fled to the United States in 2012. Delgado was sentenced to eight years in prison for bank embezzlement and five years for illicit enrichment.

Carlos Ochoa, former Superintendent of Communication, fled to Mexico in 2018, after receiving a pre-trial detention order. Ochoa is accused of falsifying the Communication Law to sanction local media.

Sofía Espín, former assembly member, left Ecuador for Bolivia, then to Mexico in 2018, while under investigation for influence peddling. Her case was dismissed in December 2019, allowing her to return to Ecuador.

Ricardo Patiño, minister in several Correa governments, left the Andean country for Mexico after being accused of incitement. He is known in Ecuador for his call to "take over public institutions".

Fernando Alvarado, former Secretary of Communication and Minister of Tourism, fled to Venezuela in 2018, evading several controls and after removing his electronic bracelet.

Vinicio Alvarado, former Minister of Tourism and former Secretary of Administration, is currently in Venezuela after a sentence of eight years in prison for corruption.

Carlos Pólit, former Comptroller General of the State, and his son John took refuge in Miami in 2017, before being convicted of corruption in the Odebrecht case. Pólit enjoys American citizenship, complicating his extradition.

Ramiro González, former president of the IESS Board of Directors and Minister of Industries, has been living in Lima, Peru, since he fled in 2017. Accused of tax fraud and influence peddling, his extradition has been denied by the Peruvian justice system.

Carlos Viteri, former assembly member, received political asylum in Mexico after seeking refuge in the Mexican embassy in Quito following the 2019 unrest.

Soledad Buendía, former assembly member, and **Gabriela Rivadeneira**, former president of the Assembly and legislator, took refuge in Mexico after the 2019 national strike, citing political persecution.

Luis Molina, former alternate assembly member, fled to Mexico without a specific charge against him, following in the footsteps of other colleagues.

María de los Ángeles Duarte, former Minister of Transport, took refuge in the Argentine embassy in Quito in 2020, after being sentenced to eight years in prison for corruption.

Walter Solís, former Minister of Transport, is one of the most wanted and is presumed to have fled to the United States. He is subject to two Interpol red alerts.

Yesterday's event thus marks the total breakdown in diplomatic relations between Ecuador and Mexico, already at a low point.

The implications of this move are vast, raising questions about diplomatic sovereignty, international law, and Ecuador's determination to pursue justice. While the Andean country celebrates the action as a success in the fight against corruption, the international community will remain tuned to the ramifications of this unprecedented act, which could redefine the boundaries of diplomatic immunity in situations of serious crimes.