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**Brazil's Moro questions authenticity of leaked messages**

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Brazil's justice minister on Saturday questioned the authenticity of leaked personal messages published by a news website that appear to show him when he was still a judge improperly advising prosecutors in a case against former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The Intercept posted purported chats between then-judge Sergio Moro and ex-prosecutor Carlos Dos Santos Lima in which Moro offers strategy advice to the prosecutor in the corruption case against da Silva. According to the website, the conversation suggests Moro acted "as an informal coordinator" of the prosecution in the judicial process that led to da Silva's conviction for receiving a beachfront apartment as a bribe.

The website said Moro at one point suggested the prosecutors release a statement highlighting contradictions in da Silva's declaration.

The conviction ended da Silva's 2018 presidential run and Moro went on to become justice minister in President Jair Bolsonaro's government.

A statement from the Justice Ministry, led by Moro, said it did not recognize the authenticity of the messages. It said the messages were leaked because of a "criminal invasion by hackers."

It reiterated that "the supposed material must be presented to an independent authority for certification."

Moro and prosecutors deny any wrongdoing, but the Brazilian Bar Association has called for the

suspension of the minister and others pending an inquiry.

On Thursday, Bolsonaro offered words of support for his justice minister, saying Moro's accomplishments in the sprawling Car Wash investigation have "no price."

Launched in 2014, Car Wash has looked into billions of dollars in contracts with oil-giant Petrobras and ended the careers of some of the most prominent business and political figures in the South American nation.

In an interview recorded earlier this week in Curitiba, where da Silva has been held in a federal prison since April 7, 2018, Brazil's former president said the leaked communications between the members of the Car Wash task force and then-judge Moro demonstrate what he has been saying all along.

"I take advantage now to tell you that I'm happy because the country is finally going to know the truth. I always said that Moro is a liar," da Silva said.

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