
Guatemalan Congress Withdraws Presidential Immunity for Otto Perez Molina

02/09/2015



GUATEMALA CITY – Guatemala's congress unanimously decided on Tuesday to withdraw the immunity from prosecution heretofore enjoyed by President Otto Perez Molina, who stands accused of heading a customs corruption network known as "La Linea."

From this point forward, Perez Molina may be investigated and even arrested for his links to La Linea, a case that has already cost former Vice President Roxana Baldetti her job and led to her arrest and expected trial.

The legislative ruling must now be transferred "immediately" to Guatemala's supreme court, or CSJ.

Perez Molina, a 64-year-old retired general who became president in January 2012, is the first Guatemalan leader to be deprived of the immunity privilege.

In a plenary session on Tuesday, 132 lawmakers, voted unanimously in favor of removing the president's immunity from prosecution.

"Having a majority, it is approved," said the head of Congress, Luis Rabbe.

There are 158 seats in the Guatemalan Congress but a number of legislators did not attend Tuesday's session, including 24 with the Lider party, the main opposition group, according to Mario Taracena, who is with the UNE party, also in the opposition.

A pretrial investigation of Perez Molina was called for on Aug. 21 by the Public Ministry and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, or CICIG, which argued that sufficient proof exists linking the president to the corruption network.

It took just 90 minutes on Tuesday for lawmakers to decide to remove Perez Molina's immunity.

Outside the legislature, members of the public celebrated the decision with fireworks, honking horns and endless applause.
