

DOJ requests time in Alex Saab case

MIAMI, USA, August 26, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In 'The United States v. Alex Nain Saab Moran,' the United States Department of Justice (DOJ) has filed for a 30 day extension to submit its brief on the merits in the matter of Alex Saab's appeal which is in front of the Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit. Saab is challenging Miami indictment and the jurisdiction of the US on the basis of immunity arising from his status as a lawfully appointed diplomat.

In reality, the DOJ is aware that it has no valid arguments to put forward in opposition to Saab's claim of diplomatic status and resulting inviolability. Accordingly, it seeks to delay the Eleventh Circuit proceedings hoping to secure extradition from Cabo Verde to avoid dealing with the merits of his claim to diplomatic immunity.

In parallel, all signs point towards the fact that the DOJ is putting tremendous pressure on the Constitutional Court in Cabo Verde to waive its own rules, risk regional relations, and damage its reputation as being free and fair. The motives for using Cabo Verde, as a staging ground for detaining Venezuelan Ambassador Alex Saab and then trying to extradite him to the United States have become more apparent with each delay.

Background

Alex Saab was acting as an official envoy for the Venezuelan government as he attempted to negotiate the purchase of medicines from Iran to Venezuela at the height of the Covid pandemic. His aircraft needed to refuel and stopped in Cabo Verde, an archipelago of islands off the coast of West Africa. He was removed and taken to jail by local authorities, as U.S. government agents observed from the background, standing by every moment.

His arrest had been a well-planned takedown of a man alleged to have helped for the Maduro government manoeuvre around U.S. sanctions.

Even after offering to show the Cabo Verde arresting officials documents confirming his status as a diplomat, even before he was locked up, it was brushed off and ignored by Cabo Verde. What message does this send to other diplomats traveling through the area? It will tell them that if a significant agenda-setting power wants us to grab you, for a price we will.

The arrest was carried out without a warrant and before any alleged Interpol notice was published. Justice in this world is important, but if countries start playing by their own rules, we become lawless and paranoid.

Since Alex Saab has been locked up on the island of Sal, under heavily armed guards 24 hours a day, many truths have surfaced about the relationship between the United States and Cabo Verde, along with some reasonable assumptions for the premeditated motivations.

The United States Influence over Cabo Verde

The U.S. has a vested interest in making sure its sanctions mean something. It knew that arresting Saab would have a more significant collateral effect – blocking a special mission being undertaken for the people of Venezuela. Many countries wouldn't have agreed to participate in such a politically motivated takedown, but Cape Verde did.

Cabo Verde was vulnerable, its national debt was crippling, and tourism, the sole industry besides minimal salt mining, was non-existent. It needed money, and it found a way to raise it using Saab.

U.S. sanctions on Venezuela are criminal under the UN Charter. U.N. Special Rapporteur Alena Douhan calls sanctions “the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights.”

This week, the Biden administration has announced it will review the United States' broader sanctions policy from the international pressure he's receiving. President Biden essentially admitted to the Wall Street Journal that sanctions are used to tell the world who is in trouble or on the U.S.-'bad list' and then to push people or countries to change.

And where sanctions don't work, programs get expanded, favors are handed out, and support is leveraged. The U.S. has rewarded Cape Verde with a \$400 million new embassy complex project, announced on July 4. This week, a former Cabo Verde Ambassador to the U.S. announced his candidacy for president of the island nation.

When you look at the events, only since the detainment of Venezuelan diplomat, you have to ask yourself, where was the U.S. all this time? Where were the investments and political support before Alex Saab's arrest and why was Cabo Verde largely ignored until now?

The U.S. took advantage of this small debt-ridden island which will pay the price for many years to come, having reshaped its reputation across the Continent. The failure to comply with the ECOWAS Court of Justice by Cape Verde ruling was a prime example.

The Economic Community of West African States is a regional political and economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa, including the Republic of Cabo Verde. In its judgment delivered in March 2021, the ECOWAS Court of Justice declared illegal the arrest and detention of Venezuelan diplomat Alex Saab ordered his release from further custody, quashed the extradition proceedings against him to the United States, and awarded him \$200,000 reparation for the violations of his human rights by Cape Verde. Cape Verde has failed to comply to date.

How will ignoring West Africa partner countries' legal ruling to ensure the U.S. can accomplish its mission shape Cabo Verde's future relationship in the region? These are just a few examples of how Saab is the human casualty of politics and how a small island nation was influenced by money and power.

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