

Bolsonaro trial: Defendants seek to create cracks in accusations



The Supreme Court is presiding over one of the most consequential trials for Brazilian democracy. Photo: Antonio Augusto/STF

The [face-to-face confrontation](#) between defendants in Brazil's high-profile criminal investigation into an [alleged coup attempt following the 2022 presidential election](#) has brought **new scrutiny to the prosecution's evidence — potentially revealing cracks in the case.** At the same time, the accusations that hold up under pressure may become central to the prosecution's closing arguments, set to follow in the next stage of the trial.

👉 **Why it matters.** While prosecutors have compiled extensive evidence beyond the defendants' testimonies, any weaknesses in the case are likely to be seized upon by former President Jair Bolsonaro and his allies —

whose political clout will remain [pivotal in the 2026 election](#). Bolsonaro has worked to frame the court proceedings as a political hit job, aiming to undermine the credibility of the charges against him and sway public opinion in his favor.

A key contradiction emerged between two prominent military figures: Army Lieutenant Colonel Mauro Cid, Bolsonaro's former aide-de-camp, and retired General Walter Braga Netto, a former cabinet member and Bolsonaro's running mate in 2022 (who is currently under arrest).

Cid, who agreed to cooperate with federal prosecutors, alleges that Braga Netto hosted military officers at his home to discuss a plan to challenge the results of the 2022 election. According to [Federal Police reports](#), that meeting was in fact a planning session for an **alleged plot to assassinate then-President-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva** and [other public officials](#).

Cid further testified that Braga Netto gave him a **bag filled with cash to fund the scheme**, though he claims he did not know its purpose at the time. Investigators say they have uncovered evidence that a group of military officers had begun to act on the alleged assassination plot. Braga Netto, however, denies any wrongdoing, insisting the meeting was mischaracterized and that he never gave money to Cid.

“Mauro Cid contradicted himself even more [during the confrontation],” Braga Netto's lawyer said after the hearing. “Now he's saying the money may have been delivered in a third location ... He has no evidence for any of this,” the lawyer continued, adding that he intends to request the termination of Cid's plea agreement.

The deal itself may already be in jeopardy. Other defendants allege that **Cid violated a court-ordered communication ban** by operating a [fake Instagram account](#) under his wife's name — an accusation he denies. If proven, such a breach could threaten his cooperation agreement.

Raquel Scalcon, a criminal law professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, noted that Brazil has few legal precedents for breaches considered serious enough to terminate a plea deal. “It will be important for the Supreme Court to

establish that — not only for this case, but also as guidance for future cases,” she told **The Brazilian Report**.

A termination of the plea deal, however, [is unlikely to affect](#) the legal situation of the other defendants. **Brazilian law already prohibits convictions based solely on plea bargain statements**, without supporting evidence.

Moreover, many experts argue that if the agreement is terminated [due to the cooperating defendant's own actions](#), that **does not invalidate the evidence legally obtained** through a deal that was, up to that point, fully regular. “This is a consolidated position in the courts,” said Vinicius Vasconcellos, a professor at the University of São Paulo specializing in the theme.



The charges against Bolsonaro and his associates extend far beyond the alleged assassination plot. Prosecutors say the broader coup attempt included the dissemination of false claims that the election had been rigged, aimed at provoking civil unrest — a campaign that ultimately culminated in the violent storming of government buildings on Jan. 8, 2023.

Bolsonaro's role in that narrative is well documented. While still in office, he hosted multiple livestreams to cast doubt on Brazil's voting systems — and even convened a meeting with foreign diplomats to ask other governments not to recognize the results (for which electoral courts barred him from office until 2030).

More recently, during questioning before the Supreme Court, **Bolsonaro acknowledged that he had spread those claims without proof** and [issued an apology](#) to Justice Alexandre de Moraes for baselessly accusing the justice of receiving tens of millions of dollars to defraud the 2022 election.

He also [admitted to meeting with military leaders](#) to **explore invoking emergency powers to prevent Lula from taking office** — an action legal scholars say would amount to launching a coup. Any attempt to overthrow the constitutional order is a criminal offense in Brazil.