

US spied on Brazil government officials: WikiLeaks

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Sao Paulo: Whistle-blower Web site WikiLeaks has published the names of more than 29 members of Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff's administration who were spied on by the US National Security Agency at the start of her first term in office, which began in January 2011.

The release of the list of phone numbers on Saturday linked to high-level Brazilian officials comes just days after Rousseff, who was reelected to a second term late last year, and US counterpart Barack Obama met in Washington to end bilateral tensions stemming from previous revelations about NSA eavesdropping on Brasilia.

That June 30 meeting initially been scheduled for October 2013, but Brazil canceled it after former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden released documents showing that the NSA intercepted Rousseff's personal communications.

NSA also targeted Brazilian government ministries and the country's state-owned oil company, Petrobras, those previously released documents showed.

The list disclosed on Saturday by WikiLeaks said that in addition to Rousseff the NSA also spied on the communications of 29 other members of her administration, including her former chief of staff, Antonio Palocci, and erstwhile foreign minister, Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado.

The document also said that members of Rousseff's economic team and Brazil's ambassadors to Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium and the US were targets of the wiretapping.

"Our publication today shows the US has a long way to go to prove its dragnet surveillance on 'friendly' governments is over," WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange said in a statement.

"The US has not just (been) targeting President Rousseff but the key figures she talks to every day."

"If President Rousseff wants to see more US investment in Brazil on the back of her recent trip as she claims, how can she assure Brazilian companies that their US counterparts will not have an advantage provided by this surveillance?" Assange asked rhetorically.

Assange has been holed up at the Ecuadorean Embassy in London to avoid extradition to Sweden for questioning on allegations of sexual misconduct.

Assange, who denies the sexual-misconduct accusations, fears that once he is in Swedish custody, US prosecutors would indict him for the release of secret documents and Washington would pressure Stockholm into handing him over.

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