

PERU - Fujimori Family Secret Bank Accounts Uncovered (Ángel Páez, IPS)

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Anti-corruption authorities in Peru have discovered numerous secret bank accounts holding up to 4.5 million dollars in the names of former Peruvian ambassador to Japan Víctor Aritomi and his wife Rosa Fujimori, former president Alberto Fujimori's sister.

LIMA, Dec 2 ([IPS](#)) - "These are definite leads towards tracking down the ill-gotten money believed to be in the possession of Fujimori and his family," said Walter Hoflich, the financial intelligence expert heading up the investigation of the former president for the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Corruption Offences.

"This is incredible information," the prosecutor remarked to IPS.

Bank documents recording the movements of the money in question emerged during the liquidation of Norbank, a bank used between 1990 and 2000 by Fujimori and his closest relatives for large-scale financial transactions in Lima.

Among the papers turned up by Norbank's liquidators were requests for withdrawals of up to a million dollars made by Mutsue Inomoto de Fujimori, the mother of the man who ruled Peru from 1990 to 2000 and is currently in prison in Chile, while Peru is preparing a request for his extradition.

"Mrs. Mutsue withdrew the money between 1995 and 1998, when she was between 83 and 86 years old, which indicates that they used her as a front to cover up the illegal origins of these funds," a source connected to the Norbank liquidation told IPS.

When the first indications of Mutsue de Fujimori's sizeable accounts at Norbank came to light in 2003, her son Alberto maintained that this money represented "the savings of a lifetime devoted to selling flowers and Christmas trees, honest work."

The anti-corruption authorities questioned how the octogenarian had managed to amass a fortune through such a modest business, but despite the importance of the discovery, they did not pursue the investigation when the information first emerged in 2003.

It was not until Fujimori was arrested in Santiago, Chile last month that the authorities decided to ask the Norbank liquidators for more information on the former first family's banking operations. The results were shocking.

The lead prosecutor in the investigation of the Fujimori family's operations at Norbank, Cecilia Hinojosa, has received copious documentation shedding light on the origins of the 20 million dollars moved around in the accounts that were uncovered.

On Jul. 5, 1990 during a trip to Japan shortly before taking office, Fujimori (the son of Japanese immigrants) instructed the Peruvian ambassador there to open an account at the Bank of Tokyo, to be used exclusively for Japanese donations to aid poor children in Peru.

In 1991, Fujimori appointed his brother-in-law Víctor Aritomi - his sister Rosa's husband - as the new Peruvian ambassador to Japan, and placed him in charge of the Bank of Tokyo account. At the same time, he named Rosa as the representative to the non-governmental organisation Apenkai, founded for the

purpose of raising funds in Japan to build schools in impoverished areas of Peru.

>From 1990 to 2000, Japanese citizens and institutions made donations of over 20 million dollars. Of this total, 4.5 million were diverted and withdrawn by Rosa Fujimori through accounts at Norbank, an affiliate of the Bank of Tokyo in Peru.

"Instead of using all of the donated money to build schools for poor children, they appropriated a large part of it for their own benefit," said Hoflich. "What the new documents reveal is the precise financial outline of how they got hold of this money."

The case of the embezzled donations prompted the Peruvian courts to order the arrest of Víctor Aritomi and Rosa Fujimori, but as the former president himself had done in 2000, the couple fled to Japan, which refuses to extradite them.

In 2003, Norbank documents revealed that Rosa Fujimori had written a cheque for 150,000 dollars to her brother Alberto on Sept. 26, 1996. At the time, the former president stated that the cheque involved the "repayment of a family loan" to a friend. He never explained where his sister had acquired the money.

The bank records turned over this week provide an answer: the 150,000 dollar cheque was part of the money diverted from the Japanese donations, which also proves that Fujimori profited from the money skimmed off by his sister.

To cover the trail of the true origins of the money in their accounts, Rosa Fujimori and Víctor Aritomi used not only the former president's elderly mother, but also the names of their own children, Yayoi and Gledy.

Others who purportedly served as figureheads for the bank scam include the former leader's younger brother Pedro Fujimori and Augusto Miyagusuku, known as the "family cashier", a trusted ally who handled the Apenkai accounts with Rosa.

The bank documents show that in order to get the money out of the country, Rosa Fujimori made numerous transfers to accounts at Citibank and Swiss Bank in New York and the offices of the Banco do Brasil in Tokyo.

The anti-corruption authorities also believe that Rosa Fujimori could have taken money with her to Japan in her husband's diplomatic valise, an allegation previously made by Vladimiro Montesinos, Alberto Fujimori's former security chief who is currently in jail in Peru facing numerous corruption and human rights charges.

"The Norbank documents which prove that Fujimori's relatives moved over four million dollars of the Japanese donations are evidence of the crimes of misappropriation and illicit association," said corruption expert Carlos Rivera of the Legal Defence Institute.

"The financial scheme that they used is clearly demonstrated by the bank records: they received the donations, diverted part of them to the accounts of family members, and a part ended up in Fujimori's hands," he commented.

"This information has come at a key moment to demonstrate the responsibility of Fujimori and his family," he added.

Rivera criticised the anti-corruption prosecutors for taking two years to ask for more information in the case.

Hinojosa has instructed the Norbank liquidators to immediately report any further records of account movements.

"These documents are the most promising lead to finding the money illegally acquired by former president Fujimori and his family," said a source from Hinojosa's office.

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