

**Recent Dominican Media Coverage of *Operation Calamar*:¹
Judge Doubts ‘Reckless Litigation Tactics’ Seeking to Delay Corruption Trial
of Ex-Ministers Accused of Embezzling \$324 Million
to Aid Failed 2020 Presidential Campaign**

Background: The Dominican Public Prosecutor (*Ministerio Público*) has [accused](#) former finance minister (2016-20) **Donald Guerrero**; former public works minister (2012-19) **Gonzalo Castillo**; and former administrative minister of the presidency (2012-20) **José Ramón Peralta**, *et al*, of “engaging in criminal association, embezzlement, collusion among officials, forgery of public and private documents, bribery, illegal campaign financing on an unprecedented scale, and money laundering, among other charges.” *Prosecutors allege that Guerrero and his fellow members of the cabinet of ex-president Danilo Medina (2012-20) conspired to embezzle at least 19 billion Dominican pesos (US\$324 million) to benefit Castillo’s failed 2020 presidential campaign.*

On April 25, counsel for Castillo sought to recuse the presiding judge for a second time, and co-defendants’ counsel joined the motion; the hearing was postponed until May 2 to provide time for the Appeals Court to consider the recusal motion. *The presiding judge [asserted](#) that the recusal motion might be considered a “reckless litigation” tactic devised to further delay the trial.* (Recent media coverage follows.)

[Delaying Tactics Denounced in Calamar Corruption Case, *El Nacional*, April 26, 2025](#)

SANTO DOMINGO. – The Public Prosecutor’s Office has denounced that the *Calamar* corruption case is not progressing in court due to strategic delays by the defense teams of the accused, who have been repeatedly postponing hearings in an effort to stall the process. Authorities warned that these actions could turn the trial into a case of frivolous litigation.

Mirna Ortiz, head of the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Administrative Corruption (PEPCA), stated that the motion to recuse Investigating Judge Altagracia Ramírez—filed by the legal teams representing the three defendants—was clearly aimed at delaying the proceedings.

“Friday’s hearing was postponed after Judge Altagracia Ramírez was recused by the defense... this could become a case of frivolous litigation, as the code provides, where parties use this as a delaying strategy,” emphasized a PEPCA press release.

The release explained that the motion was initially filed by Gonzalo Castillo’s defense team—allegedly their second time using this tactic—and was later joined by the legal teams for Donald Guerrero and José Ramón Peralta.

As a result of the incident, the *Calamar* case has been suspended until May 2.

This material was compiled and distributed by Vision Americas LLC on behalf of the Dominican government. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Gonzalo Castillo, Guerrero, and Peralta Appeal to Judge Handling Alleged Corruption Case, *De Ultimo Minuto*, April 25, 2025

SANTO DOMINGO. – Former ministers Gonzalo Castillo, Donald Guerrero, and José Ramón Peralta appealed this Friday to Judge Altagracia Ramírez of the Fourth Investigating Court of the National District, who is overseeing the trial against them and others accused in the alleged corruption case known as *Operation Calamar*.

Mirna Ortiz, head of the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Administrative Corruption (PEPCA), stated in a press note that this move prompted the hearing to be postponed until May 2. Ortiz explained that the judge warned, “*this could become a reckless litigation tactic,*” and noted the possibility—outlined in the Code—that the parties were using this as a delaying strategy.

The motion to recuse the judge was led by Gonzalo Castillo's defense, who is using this delaying tactic for the second time, as noted by the judge during the hearing. Ortiz said that the defense teams for Donald Guerrero and José Ramón Peralta then joined the motion.

“In today's preliminary hearing for Operation Calamar, the legal defense teams for defendants Gonzalo Castillo, Donald Guerrero, and Ramón Peralta challenged the investigating judge's decision to allow the Public Prosecutor's Office to present its charges in a summarized form,” Ortiz said.

In the *Operation Calamar* case file, the prosecution accuses twenty individuals of embezzling over 19 billion pesos (US\$324 million) from the state through irregular payments for land expropriations deemed of public utility and bribes tied to the 2020 political campaign.

In addition to Castillo, Peralta, and Guerrero, those linked to the fraud include former Comptroller General of the Republic Daniel Omar Caamaño; former Director of the State Sugar Council (CEA) Luis Miguel Piccirilo; former Director of the National Cadastre Claudio Silver Peña; and former Directors of Casinos and Gambling, Óscar Chalas Guerrero and Julián Omar Fernández.

The Public Prosecutor's Office accuses the group of engaging in criminal association, embezzlement, collusion among officials, forgery of public and private documents, bribery, illegal campaign financing on an unprecedented scale, and money laundering, among other charges.

Judge Warns Calamar Case Defense Over ‘Frivolous Litigation and Delaying Tactics’, *El Día*, April 25, 2025

SANTO DOMINGO. – Judge Altagracia Ramírez of the Fourth Investigating Court of the National District issued a warning to the defense teams of the defendants in the Calamar Case regarding the use of delaying tactics that could amount to frivolous litigation.

The warning came after the defense attorneys for Gonzalo Castillo, Donald Guerrero, and José Ramón Peralta filed a motion to recuse the judge, following her decision to allow the Public Prosecutor's Office to present its charges in a summarized format, as permitted by the Code of

Criminal Procedure. Judge Ramírez referred the recusal motion to the Court of Appeals of the National District and postponed the hearing to May 2.

Mirna Ortiz, a lead prosecutor with the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for the Prosecution of Administrative Corruption (PEPCA), noted that this was the second time Castillo's defense has sought to recuse the judge, apparently with the intent of delaying the proceedings.

The Public Prosecutor accuses 20 individuals of embezzling more than 19 billion pesos from the state through fraudulent land expropriations and bribes linked to the 2020 election campaign, in what has been described as an unprecedented corruption scheme.

Gonzalo, Donald, and Peralta Challenge the Court in Calamar Corruption Case, *CDN (Canal de Noticias)*, April 25, 2025

Judge Altagracia Ramírez refers the recusal motion filed by the defendants' legal teams to the Court of Appeals

Former officials Gonzalo Castillo, Donald Guerrero, and José Ramón Peralta—defendants in the Calamar corruption case—have filed a motion to recuse Judge Altagracia Ramírez, who is presiding over the preliminary hearing.

According to the Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, the recusal occurred after the Fourth Investigating Court of the National District allowed the Public Prosecutor's Office to present its charges in a summarized format against the accused. Anti-corruption prosecutor Mirna Ortiz said the judge warned that the parties may be using this legal recourse as a delaying tactic.

“In today's preliminary hearing of Operation Calamar, the defense teams for Gonzalo Castillo, Donald Guerrero, and Ramón Peralta challenged the investigating judge's decision to permit the Public Prosecutor to present its accusations in summarized form,” Ortiz stated after leaving the courtroom.

This move led Judge Ramírez to refer the recusal request to the Court of Appeals of the National District and to suspend the hearing until May 2. *“The defense teams objected, but the judge reaffirmed her decision, backed by the provisions set forth in the Criminal Procedure Code—specifically articles 300 and 318—as well as the principle of promptness and reasonableness that governs criminal proceedings,”* Ortiz noted.

It will now be up to the Court of Appeals to decide whether Judge Ramírez should be removed from the case.

About the Calamar Case

In the Operation Calamar case file, the prosecution accuses twenty individuals of embezzling over 19 billion pesos from the state through irregular payments for land expropriations declared of public utility, and through bribes linked to the 2020 political campaign.

In addition to Castillo, Peralta, and Guerrero, others allegedly involved include former Comptroller General of the Republic Daniel Omar Caamaño; former Director of the State Sugar Council (CEA) Luis Miguel Piccirilo; former Director of the National Cadastre Claudio Silver Peña; and former Directors of Casinos and Gambling, Oscar Chalas Guerrero and Julián Omar Fernández.

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