

Remains of late President Joao Goulart are exhumed

November 13 2013, by Stan Lehman



In this Sept. 8, 1961 file photo, Brazil's President-elect Joao Goulart signs papers to assume office at Congress in Brasilia, Brazil. Brazil's government is exhuming Goulart's remains on Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2013 in a southern Brazilian cemetery to be analyzed because of suspicions he was murdered on orders of the military regime that once ruled this country. In 1964, Goulart was toppled by a coup that installed the military regime that ruled Latin America's biggest country for two decades. (AP Photo, File)

The remains of former Brazilian President Joao Goulart were being exhumed Wednesday due to suspicions that he may have been murdered on orders of the military regime that once ruled the country.

The exhumation at the cemetery of Sao Borja, Goulart's hometown in the southern state of Rio Grande do Sul, was partly organized by Brazil's Truth Commission, which is investigating [human rights](#) abuses committed during the nation's military dictatorship.

Goulart was toppled by a 1964 coup that installed the military regime that ruled Latin America's biggest country for 21 years.

He went into exile in Argentina, where he died in the city of Mercedes in December 1976. His body was quickly flown back to Sao Borja, where he was buried beside family members.

His death was ruled a heart attack, but an autopsy was never performed either in Argentina or in Brazil.

Brazil's Human Rights Ministry says on its website there are suspicions he was poisoned.

Those suspicions stem from statements made in 2008 by a former Uruguayan intelligence officer imprisoned in Brazil for drug smuggling. He told the Folha de S. Paulo newspaper that Goulart had been poisoned by agents of Operation Condor, under which the military dictatorships that ruled much of South America in the 1970s and 1980s secretly cooperated in the torture and disappearances of each others' citizens.

The Uruguayan agent told the newspaper that Goulart's heart medication had been swapped with poisoned pills that caused a [heart attack](#).



A team of forensic experts, federal police and members of Brazil's Human Rights Ministry stand around the tomb of Brazil's late President Joao Goulart in Sao Borja, Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil, Wednesday, Nov. 13, 2013. Brazil's government is exhuming Goulart's remains on Wednesday to be analyzed because of suspicions he was murdered on orders of the military regime that once ruled this country. In 1964, Goulart was toppled by a coup that installed the military regime that ruled Latin America's biggest country for two decades. (AP Photo/Diego Vara, Agencia RBS)

"We are taking the first big step to tell the truth that for many years has been omitted," the Truth Commission's website quoted Goulart's son, Joao Vicente, as saying.

Justice Minister Jose Eduardo Cardozo said, "Families have the right to know how their loved ones died and a country's citizens have the right to know how their leaders died."

Goulart served as vice president during the governments of Juscelino Kubitschek and Janio Quadros.

In 1961, Quadros resigned and Goulart assumed the presidency. His term was marked by greater investments in education, agrarian reform and higher taxes on the wealthy.

Goulart's exhumation was authorized in 2012 by a federal court.

The Human Rights Ministry said Goulart's remains will be taken to Brasilia to be examined by Brazilian Argentine and Uruguayan forensic experts. There he will be given full state honors, which he did not receive when he was buried. His body will be returned to Sao Borja on Dec.6

The toxicology tests needed to determine if Goulart's was poisoned will be conducted outside Brazil the Human Rights Ministry said without revealing where.

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Citation: Remains of late President Joao Goulart are exhumed (2013, November 13) retrieved 23 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-11-late-joao-goulart-exhumed.html>

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