

## Former Colombian politician stays free in South Florida — for now

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Andrés Felipe Arias Leiva, Colombia's former agriculture minister, can remain free for now.

But he will have to persuade a U.S. citizen to sign his bond and prove it's backed by real estate equity worth at least \$1 million, according to a new order signed by the magistrate judge overseeing the extradition case.

He was arrested last August in Weston after fleeing Colombia where he faces corruption charges.

Magistrate Judge John O'Sullivan's order, issued last Wednesday, comes as Arias Leiva, his lawyers and allies fight on multiple fronts to derail the extradition trial — a fight made all the more urgent after the federal prosecutor assigned to the case, Robert Emery, filed a motion calling for the revocation of the Colombian's bond or strengthening of its conditions.

On the legal front, Arias Leiva's lawyers — David Oscar Markus, Ricardo Javier Bascuas and Marc David Seitles - have filed petitions in the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta seeking that judges there prohibit or suspend the extradition trial.

And on the public relations front, Arias Leiva's allies are lobbying to keep the Colombian politician in the United States, arguing that sending him back to his homeland would be handing a political victory to the government in Bogotá of President Juan Manuel Santos.

Arias Leiva's attorneys expressed satisfaction over O'Sullivan's order.

"Dr. Arias rightfully remains on bond and we remain committed to fighting his unjust prosecution and extradition," Markus said in an email message.

"We are happy that Dr. Arias is able to remain with his wife and children while we continue to explain the reasons why his extradition would be unlawful," Bascuas said.

The case against Arias Leiva began in Florida on Aug. 11 when Emery filed the extradition request sought by the Colombian government.

Arias Leiva was arrested by federal agents at his Weston home on Aug. 23 and released on bond on Nov. 17.



Andrés Felipe Arias Leiva, former Colombian Minister of Agriculture, explains his side of the federal court case in which his government is seeking extradition so he could be jailed over corruption charges, on Tuesday December 20, 2016