

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024033112576 image copyrightAFP The son of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has denied allegations that he laundered public funds, including via a chocolate shop he co-owns in Rio. Flávio Bolsonaro's shop was one of 24 properties raided by anti-corruption investigators earlier this week. Other properties owned by him, his former advisors and members of President Bolsonaro's ex-wife's family were also raided. Flávio Bolsonaro, now a senator, was a Rio state deputy from 2003 to 2018. The investigation relates to the alleged practice of "rachadinha" - diverting the salaries of non-existent employees, which is alleged to have taken place during this period. On Thursday, President Bolsonaro - who was elected after vowing to end corruption - declined to comment, saying: "I can only answer for myself." Is the honeymoon period over for Brazil's Bolsonaro? Brazil president offers US ambassador job to son Last month the president launched a new political party, the Alliance for Brazil, which he said would be dedicated to fighting corruption and advancing Christian values. Flávio Bolsonaro would be the party's vice-president, he said. What happened in the raids? Brazilian media have been reporting details of the investigation that were contained in a document allegedly leaked from the Rio de Janeiro prosecutor's office. In a YouTube video, Flávio Bolsonaro criticised the supposed leak, denied all the allegations and said he was being persecuted. "Now they are attacking my chocolate shop, which was bought with my wife's and my own resources," he said. "If I wanted to launder money, would I open a franchise which is subject to external checks by the franchiser and auditors?" he added. He also rejected accusations that he had laundered money through the purchase of two apartments in Rio's Copacabana area. "I bought them from a group of American investors that was leaving Brazil and obviously I was able to negotiate a better price because it was two properties from the same seller. Can't I buy it cheaper? Do I have to pay more to avoid suspicion?" he said. His lawyer Frederick Wassef has asked Brazil's Federal Supreme Court to suspend the investigation, Brazilian media reported. Mr Wassef said the senator had reacted to news of the searches "with surprise, but with complete peace". One of Flávio Bolsonaro's former aides, Fabrício Queiroz, is being investigated on suspicion of helping skim ghost workers' salaries, the Rio state prosecutor's office said in a statement. In a statement, Mr Queiroz said he was left surprised but unworried by the raids.