

Paraguay's Taiwan ties safe as ruling party retains presidency

Santiago Peña of the Colorado party is elected, defeating Efraín Alegre who wanted to switch diplomatic recognition to China

Paraguay's ruling party candidate, Santiago Peña, 44, has scored a big win in the presidential election, tightening the conservative Colorado party's political grip and defusing fears that diplomatic ties with Taiwan might have been cut.

Peña, who has pledged to maintain Paraguay's longstanding Taiwan relations, had 42.7% of the vote with more than 99% of ballots counted - a more than 15-point lead over centre-left rival Efraín Alegre, who has argued for switching allegiance to China.

"Thank you for this Colorado victory, thank you for this Paraguayan victory," Peña said in a speech. The outgoing president, Mario Abdo, congratulated Peña as "president-elect", as did the leaders of Brazil and Argentina.

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