



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Congressman Henry Cuellar and His Wife Charged with Bribery, Unlawful Foreign Influence, and Money Laundering Schemes

Friday, May 3, 2024

For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Congressman Allegedly Accepted \$600,000 in Bribes from Two Foreign Entities in Exchange for Official Acts as a Member of Congress

An indictment was unsealed today in the Southern District of Texas charging U.S. Congressman Enrique Roberto “Henry” Cuellar, 68, and his wife, Imelda Cuellar, 67, both of Laredo, Texas, with participating in two schemes involving bribery, unlawful foreign influence, and money laundering. Congressman Cuellar and Imelda Cuellar made their initial court appearance today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Dena Palermo in Houston.

According to court documents, beginning in at least December 2014 and continuing through at least November 2021, Congressman Cuellar and Imelda Cuellar allegedly accepted approximately \$600,000 in bribes from two foreign entities: an oil and gas company wholly owned and controlled by the Government of Azerbaijan, and a bank headquartered in Mexico City. The bribe payments were allegedly laundered, pursuant to sham consulting contracts, through a series of front companies and middlemen into shell companies owned by Imelda Cuellar, who performed little to no legitimate work under the contracts. In exchange for the

bribes paid by the Azerbaijani oil and gas company, Congressman Cuellar allegedly agreed to use his office to influence U.S. foreign policy in favor of Azerbaijan. In exchange for the bribes paid by the Mexican bank, Congressman Cuellar allegedly agreed to influence legislative activity and to advise and pressure high-ranking U.S. Executive Branch officials regarding measures beneficial to the bank.

Congressman Cuellar and Imelda Cuellar are each charged with the following offenses and if convicted, face maximum penalties as indicated: two counts of conspiracy to commit bribery of a federal official and to have a public official act as an agent of a foreign principal, five years in prison on each count; two counts of bribery of a federal official, 15 years in prison on each count; two counts of conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, 20 years in prison on each count; two counts of violating the ban on public officials acting as agents of a foreign principal, two years in prison on each count; one count of conspiracy to commit concealment money laundering, 20 years in prison; and five counts of money laundering, 20 years in prison on each count.

Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri, head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department's National Security Division; Assistant Director Michael D. Nordwall of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division; and Deputy Assistant Inspector General Jason Loeffler and Special Agent in Charge Chris Hileman of the Department of State Office of Inspector General (DOS-OIG) made the announcement.

The FBI and DOS-OIG investigated the case.

Acting Deputy Chief Marco A. Palmieri, Acting Deputy Chief Rosaleen O'Gara, and Trial Attorney Celia Choy of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and Trial Attorney Garrett Coyle of the National Security Division's Counterintelligence and Export Control Section are prosecuting the case.

An indictment is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Updated May 3, 2024

Topic

PUBLIC CORRUPTION

Components

[Criminal Division](#) | [Criminal-Public Integrity Section](#) | [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#) | [Criminal Investigative Division \(FBI\)](#) | [National Security Division \(NSD\)](#)

Press Release Number: 24-571

Related Content

PRESS RELEASE

Two Former Missouri Health Care Charity Executives Sentenced for Roles in Multimillion-Dollar Bribery and Embezzlement Scheme

Two former executives of a Springfield, Missouri-based charity were sentenced for their roles in a multimillion-dollar public corruption scheme that involved embezzlement and bribes paid to multiple elected public officials...

April 29, 2024

BLOG POST

Criminal Division's Voluntary Self-Disclosures Pilot Program for Individuals

Combating corporate crime is one of the Criminal Division's top priorities. We are focused on identifying the most serious misconduct and holding wrongdoers accountable.

April 22, 2024

PRESS RELEASE

City of Atlanta's Former Chief Financial Officer Pleads Guilty to Federal Program Theft and Tax Obstruction

The City of Atlanta's former chief financial officer (CFO) pleaded guilty today to federal program theft and to obstructing an IRS audit.

April 8, 2024



Office of Public Affairs

U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20530



Office of Public Affairs Direct Line
202-514-2007

Department of Justice Main Switchboard
202-514-2000