



Office of Public Affairs  
U.S. Department of Justice



**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*

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## Topic

**PUBLIC CORRUPTION**

## Components

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### Office of Public Affairs

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