

Indictment of Democratic Senator Menendez exposes corruption in the US political establishment

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New Jersey Democratic Senator Robert Menendez was indicted on Friday by federal prosecutors in New York, along with four others, including his wife Nadine Menendez, on multiple charges of bribery.

The US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York brought the charges against Menendez, a senior senator and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, for using "his official position" to provide favors to three businessmen and the Egyptian government "in exchange for hundreds of thousands of dollars" for himself and his wife which included "gold bars, cash and a luxury convertible."

In a Department of Justice press release Friday, US Attorney Damian Williams said a grand jury charged the Menendezes for engaging in "a corrupt relationship" with New Jersey businessmen Wael Hana, Jose Uribe, and Fred Daibes and unnamed Egyptian government officials between 2018 and 2022.

Williams' statement went on to say the businessmen "collectively paid hundreds of thousands of dollars of bribes, including cash, gold, a Mercedes Benz, and other things of value—in exchange for Senator Menendez agreeing to use his power and influence to protect and enrich those businessmen and to benefit the Government of Egypt."

Responding eight hours after the indictment, leading Democratic Party leaders in the Garden State, including New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy, called on Menendez to resign. Murphy said the allegations are "deeply disturbing" and "implicate national security and the integrity of our criminal justice system." The governor continued, saying the "facts are so serious they compromise the ability of Senator Menendez to effectively represent the people of our state."

Clearly, the stench of corruption surrounding the

longtime federal legislator from New Jersey—Menendez held a seat in the House of Representatives from 1993 to 2006 and has been in the Senate since 2006—was so strong that the Department of Justice was forced to shut him down.

Senator Menendez was implicated in ethics violations in 2006 for renting property he owned to a non-profit agency that received federal funding. In 2015, he was indicted on bribery and fraud charges involving requests that the State Department pressure the Dominican Republic to enforce a government contract that benefited a Florida businessman, who gave the senator money and paid for his expensive vacation trips on a private jet.

In the corruption trial in 2017, Menendez escaped conviction when a US District Court judge in New Jersey declared a mistrial due to a hung jury. In January 2018, the Department of Justice announced that it was dropping all charges against him.

Menendez has responded defiantly to the new charges. He issued a statement saying he would "fight for the people of New Jersey with the same success I've had for the past five decades," although he did not elaborate on whom he was fighting for or what his supposed success was. Menendez then injected a bogus claim of ethnic discrimination, saying, "It is not lost on me how quickly some are rushing to judge a Latino and push him out of his seat," and adding, "I am not going anywhere."

Reprising legal arguments he advanced during his trial in 2017, Menendez also said of the prosecution, "They have misrepresented the normal work of a congressional office. On top of that, not content with making false claims against me, they have attacked my wife for the longstanding friendships she had before she and I even met." In one sense Menendez is right. The type of horse-trading and favors for friends in business that he is

charged with is in fact “the normal work of a congressional office,” although perhaps his fellow senators are less indiscreet in their displays of the proceeds.

The new indictment includes photographs of the stacks of money, close-ups of the gold bars and a photo of the convertible found in the garage of the Menendez home. It said investigators found \$480,000 in cash “stuffed into envelopes and hidden in clothing, closets, and a safe,” a brand new Mercedes Benz C-300 worth \$60,000 and two one-kilogram gold bars worth over \$100,000. The bribes also included payments on a home mortgage, home furnishings, exercise equipment and “compensation for a low-or-no-show job” for the senator’s wife.

The indictment says the bribery payments were made in exchange for multiple official actions taken by Menendez. The first was “improperly pressuring an official at the US Department of Agriculture (‘USDA’) to seek to protect a business monopoly granted to HANA by Egypt.” The second charge is that Menendez sought “to disrupt a criminal investigation undertaken by the Office of the New Jersey Attorney General (‘NJAG’) related to URIBE and his associates.”

The third charge is that Menendez “recommended that the President nominate a US Attorney who MENENDEZ believed he could influence with respect to DAIBES and sought to disrupt a federal criminal prosecution undertaken by the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey (‘USAO-DNJ’) of DAIBES.”

At the heart of the dealings between Menendez and the New Jersey businessman was pending US military aid to the Egyptian government that was being held up by the State Department due to human rights violations committed by the Cairo regime. The indictment says Menendez met with Egyptian officials in July 2018, with his wife also present, and promised to advocate for “Egyptian foreign policy goals and positions and setting forth Egypt’s requests for the approval of foreign military financing and foreign military sales to Egypt.”

As part of the evidence presented, the indictment says one day after the meeting, the senator texted his wife the following message:

Tell Will [HANA] I am going to sign off this sale to Egypt today. Egypt: 46,000 120MM Target Practice Rounds and 10,000 Rounds Tank Ammunition: \$99 million

NOTE: These tank rounds are for tanks they

have had for many years. They are using these in the Sinai for the counter-terrorism campaign.

In return, Nadine Menendez forwarded this text to Hana and two unnamed Egyptian officials with a “thumbs up” emoji.

Senator Robert Menendez, 69, and Nadine Menendez, 56, were both charged with one count of conspiracy to commit bribery, one count of conspiracy to commit honest services fraud and one count of conspiracy to commit extortion. Hana, Uribe and Diabes were each charged with one count of conspiracy to commit bribery and one count of conspiracy to commit honest services fraud.

“Honest services fraud” refers to schemes involving public officials where “intangible rights” like government services are defrauded as opposed to schemes involving money or property involved in mail or wire fraud.

Buried in the corporate media coverage of the corruption charges is the relationship between the Egyptian and US governments. Egypt receives about \$1.3 billion per year in foreign military financing. Officially, the aid is segmented and conditioned upon Egypt’s progress on human rights concerns, as determined by the State Department.

Typically, the State Department will honor requests to delay grants and weapons sales from the chair or the ranking member of the Senate committee. Menendez, who has served as the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee since 2018, has publicly criticized the regime of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi over human rights violations.

The details behind the bribery charges brought by federal prosecutors expose the fact that Menendez could care less about the Egyptian people and that his fake sympathies for their democratic rights could be bought off cheaply with cash and gifts in exchange for billions in US military aid.



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