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OSCEOLA SHERIFF, DEPUTIES FACE CIVIL RIGHTS LAWSUIT IN KILLING OF JAYDEN BAEZ

By Cristóbal Reyes | Orlando Sentinel September 21, 2023

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NEXT EDITION



SOURCE

Lawyers for the family of Jayden Baez filed a civil rights lawsuit against Osceola County Sheriff Marcos López and two deputies accused of excessive force in killing the 20 year old and injuring two others in a Target parking lot last year while trying to apprehend them for suspected shoplifting.

The federal lawsuit claimed the deputies, who were practicing "dynamic vehicle takedowns" as part of training exercises near the store before the April 2022 shooting, opted to demonstrate those tactics on Baez's car as deputies monitored the alleged theft of about \$46 in pizza and Pokémon cards.

According to the legal complaint, two deputies followed Baez's companions, Michael Gómez and Joseph Lowe, into the store

and back to Baez's car without stopping them as they allegedly stole the merchandise. When they got back to the car, unmarked vehicles quickly boxed them in without immediately activating their lights. Deputies Scott Koffinas and Ramy Yacoub,

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U.S SENATOR MENENDEZ & WIFE CHARGED ACCUSED, TRYING TO COVER UP BRIBES

By Jonathan Dienst and Tom Winter • Published March 5, 2024

The FBI alleged the pair lied about money they received for a new Mercedes convertible and home mortgage payments. The senator & his wife lied, claiming the money was given as loans they planned to repay – when all along the cash payments were alleged bribes.

A federal grand jury in New York hit the Democrat and his wife with two new counts tied to obstruction of justice, & conspiracy too bstruct justice, bringing the total amount of charges faced by New Jersey's senior senator to 18, a copy of the superseding indictment shows.

A businessman admitted he conspired to pay bribes to Sen. Bob



SOURCE

Menendez, including getting the Democrat's wife a luxury convertible. According to the plea deal, the key co-defendant will now cooperate with prosecutors in their case against New Jersey's senior senator. NBC New York's Jonathan Dienst reports.

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who were named in the lawsuit along with López, fired at the car as Baez tried to flee.

The complaint identifies Yacoub for the first time as having fired the fatal shots that struck Baez multiple times in the chest. Gómez and Lowe were both injured in the shooting, with Lowe losing a finger after being shot in both hands as they were raised. A fourth passenger, who was a minor at the time, was unscathed.

"The Osceola County deputies entirely created the situation by the exercise of their illegal, unconstitutional, reckless, and irresponsible actions," said Mark NeJame, whose law firm is representing Baez's family and the surviving victims.

López, whose agency is also facing a public corruption probe related to the shooting, fostered "an agency-wide culture of escalating minor criminal offenses into violent and deadly scenes," according to the lawsuit, which points to the takedowns being against agency policy, which allows them only when a suspect is accused of a "forcible felony."

It further referenced comments López made to WOFL-Fox 35 that his deputies were "justified in all their actions." "Shortly after the incident, it was announced the individuals who damaged several police cars, caused injury to one deputy, and placed several other deputies in fear for their lives would be suing the Osceola County Sheriff's Office. This announcement is not unexpected. We look forward to the facts being told in a court of law," an Osceola County Sheriff's Office spokesperson told WESH-Channel 2.

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U.S CONGRESSMAN HENRY CUELLAR CHARGED WITH BRIBERY & ACTING AS A FOREIGN AGENT

SOURCE

By Justice.gov Friday, May 3, 2024 | Press Release Number: 24-571

Congressman Allegedly Accepted Approximately \$600,000 from Azerbaijan's State-Owned Oil Company and a Mexican Bank in Exchange for Official Acts as a Member of Congress.

An indictment was unsealed today in the Southern District of Texas charging United States 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 & Imelda Cuellar allegedly accepted approximately \$600,000



U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-Texas, during a campaign event. May 4, 2022. (AP Photo/Eric Gay, File)

PHOTO SOURCE

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NeJame, in a follow-up statement, replied, "The fact is, the damage caused to police vehicles, which preoccupies Sheriff Lopez, was caused by Deputies ramming their vehicles into the one driven by Jayden Baez just before they fired blindly into it. The Deputies created the deadly confrontation with their reckless actions."

"The disconnect from reality is troubling," he added, "but shows, once again, that Sheriff Lopez endorses the actions of the Deputies that night who acted according to his policies and procedures."

Use-of-force experts have also questioned the tactics used by deputies, with one calling it "really aggressive policing" to perform a vehicle takedown in response to a petit theft, a misdemeanor. The only video of the scene was taken by a Target surveillance camera, as deputies were not wearing body cameras at the time.

"Defendant Lopez not only condoned, but encouraged the use of dynamic vehicle takedowns as a response to alleged petit theft occurring within a retail store as part of his 'by any means necessary' law enforcement model," the complaint said.

The long-anticipated lawsuit, filed Wednesday but announced Thursday morning by NeJame, is separate from one filed against the Target Corporation in May, which accuses store employees of being complicit in the lead-up to the shooting. It also comes about a week after State Attorney Andrew Bain announced a grand jury will decide whether charges will be filed against Koffinas and Yacoub as part of a new policy aimed at shortening the time it takes to review uses of force by law enforcement.

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U.S CONGRESSMAN HENRY CUELLAR CHARGED WITH BRIBERY & ACTING AS A FOREIGN AGENT

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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 & 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 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 required to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), five years

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He called the 17-month investigation into the Target shooting, which was led by Monique Worrell before she was suspended as state attorney, "an unacceptable timeline."

"We have to get these families some closure, and we have to get the officers whether they're going to be prosecuted or if they're going to be back on the streets," Bain said at a press conference last Thursday. Bain said the grand jury will not be hearing evidence regarding an investigation into alleged corruption in the Sheriff's Office related to the shooting, the existence of which was first announced to reporters by NeJame and later confirmed by Worrell, who said it was in its final stages prior to her suspension.

At issue are allegations of a cover-up in the handling of the Target shooting, with reports being filed on the same day at the same time more than a week after it happened, which prompted NeJame to send letters to state and federal officials calling for an investigation.

Worrell in an interview with The Daily Beast suggested the probe spans several cases investigated by the Sheriff's Office. She said **she feared the investigation would be abandoned by Bain, who was appointed by Gov. Ron DeSantis following her suspension over claims she was not aggressively prosecuting certain crimes.**

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U.S CONGRESSMAN HENRY CUELLAR CHARGED WITH BRIBERY & ACTING AS A FOREIGN AGENT

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imprisonment on each count; two counts of conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, **20 years imprisonment on each count; two counts of violating the ban on public officials acting as agents of a foreign principal required to register under FARA,** two years imprisonment on each count; one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering, 20 years imprisonment; & five counts of money laundering, 20 years imprisonment on each count. IPrincipal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri, head 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 Counter intelligence 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.

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FDLE INVESTIGATION LEADS TO ARREST OF ORLANDO CITY COMMISSIONER REGINA HILL

FDLE Office of Public Information For Immediate Release

LOCAL NEWS



SOURCE

ORLANDO, Fla. — Following a Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) investigation, FDLE **arrested Orlando District 5 Commissioner Regina Hill, 58, on charges including exploitation of the elderly, fraudulent use of personal identification, and mortgage fraud.**

The investigation began when the Office of the Attorney General forwarded a complaint to FDLE, alleging that **Hill was taking advantage of a 96-year-old elderly citizen.** Hill first came in contact with the victim, through her position as a city commissioner, after it was discovered that the victim was living in deplorable conditions. At first glance, Hill's actions appeared well-intentioned as she coordinated

the clean-up of the victim's residence and other community resources. **However, the investigation revealed that in just over a month's time, Hill was able obtain power of attorney over the victim and financially exploit her for a period of approximately three years.**

During the initial investigation, agents **discovered that Hill fraudulently obtained a second power of attorney to purchase a home with the victim as the co-signor without the victim's knowledge or consent, for a cost exceeding \$400,000.** Agents also learned that the victim owned a second residence that Hill took residence in. Hill used approximately \$15,400 of the victim's money to renovate the residence she moved into, without the victim's knowledge.

Further investigative work revealed Hill also **gained access to the elderly victim's personal checking, savings, and credit card accounts, spending over \$100,000 of the victim's money for her own personal benefit.**

GEORGE SANTOS ENDS LONG SHOT COMEBACK BID FOR CONGRESS AFTER BEING EXPELLED

SOURCE

By Brittany Shepherd April 23, 2024, 5:36 PM ABC NEWS

"IT'S ONLY GOODBYE FOR NOW," THE DISGRACED FORMER REPRESENTATIVE SAID. Disgraced former Rep. George Santos has suspended a long shot comeback bid to represent New York's 1st Congressional District, he said on Tuesday, insisting that his challenge to incumbent Republican Rep. Nick LaLota would "all but guarantee" a Democrat takes the seat in November. "I don't want my run to be portrayed as reprisal against Nick LaLota... Although Nick and I don't have the same voting record and I remain critical of his abysmal record, I don't want to split the ticket and be responsible for handing the house to Dems," Santos, who has said he was switching his party affiliation from Republican to independent, said in a statement on X.

LaLota has been dismissive of Santos but not of Santos' challenge itself, previously calling his former colleague an "embarrassment" and "one of the most bizarre people I have ever met" but saying he would take the race "seriously."

Santos was removed from the House in a historic vote in early December -- after an internal campaign led in part by LaLota -- and he has pleaded not guilty to pending charges that include wire fraud and aggravated identity theft.

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