

Rewritten indictment against Sen. Bob Menendez now includes allegations of obstructing justice

BY LARRY NEUMEISTER
Associated Press

NEW YORK — New obstruction of justice crimes were added Tuesday to charges against Sen. Bob Menendez and his wife that allege they accepted gold bars, cash and a luxury car in return for favors the senator carried out to assist three businessmen. The new charges were in a rewritten indictment returned against the Democrat in federal court in Manhattan.

New charges of conspiracy to obstruct justice and obstruction of justice were added against Menendez and his wife, Nadine. Attorneys for Bob and Nadine Menendez and the other defendants in the case did not immediately respond to emails requesting comment.

An indictment already alleges that the couple conspired with three businessmen to accept the bribes in return for the senator's help in projects pursued by the businessmen.

Both have pleaded not guilty, along with two of the businessmen.

A May trial has been scheduled.

One businessman pleaded guilty to charges last week and agreed to testify against the others at trial.

After his arrest last fall, Menendez, 70, was forced to relinquish his chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee but said he would not be resigning from Congress.

According to an in-

dictment, Menendez and his wife accepted gold bars and cash from a real estate developer in return for the senator's using his clout to get that businessman a multimillion-dollar deal with a Qatari investment fund.

Menendez also was charged with helping another business associate obtain a lucrative deal from the government of Egypt.

Among the new allegations, prosecutors say that Menendez caused his then-attorney to meet with prosecutors last June and September to say that the senator had been unaware until 2022 of a \$23,000 payment that one of the businessmen had made to the company holding the mortgage on the Menendez's New Jersey home or of the money that another defendant had paid toward a Mercedes-Benz convertible.

Prosecutors allege that Menendez also caused his lawyer to say in the September meeting that Menendez in 2022 had learned that the payments were loans.

The prosecutors wrote that Menendez knew and "had learned of both the mortgage company payment and the car payments prior to 2022, and they were not loans, but bribe payments."

Prosecutors also said in the rewritten indictment that Nadine Menendez caused her lawyer to tell prosecutors last August that the mortgage payment and payments for the convertible were loans when she knew they were bribe payments.



Courtesy of Javier Garcia-Bengochea

This six-apartment building in Havana was built by Javier Garcia-Bengochea's family in 1939 and was confiscated without compensation by the Cuban government in 1960.

Airbnb is sued in Florida for listing property in Cuba confiscated by Castro decades ago

BY NORA GÁMEZ TORRES
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A Florida physician is suing Airbnb, claiming the vacation rental company unlawfully profited from listing on its website a property that Fidel Castro's government confiscated without paying compensation to his family decades ago, in what appears to be the first lawsuit alleging "trafficking" involving the business use of a residential property on the island.

The lawsuit, filed on Monday in the Orlando-based U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida, argues that Airbnb profited from advertising a rental in a six-apartment building in a leafy area in

the Havana neighborhood of Marianao that was originally owned by members of the Parreño family, including Alberto Parreño. In 1970, the Department of Justice's Foreign Claims Settlement Commission certified Parreño's claim to one-third of the land and building, valued at \$547,365.24 at the time

Parreño, an American citizen, died in 1972. Javier Garcia-Bengochea, a cousin and the estate's administrator, filed the lawsuit.

The suit says Airbnb continued listing the property between August 2019 and May 2022 after it was notified that it was subject to a claim and that the company "knowingly,

voluntarily, intentionally, and continuously trafficked in the Property." In a January 2022 story, the Miami Herald reported that Airbnb had listed one apartment with high guest ratings in that building at least since 2017, according to the reviews. The company told the Herald at the time that it would investigate the allegations and take action, including removing the listing if it was found to violate the company's policies. That listing is no longer appearing on the company's website.

Airbnb did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Garcia-Bengochea, a Jacksonville Cuban-Amer-

ican neurosurgeon, actively lobbied Congress and several presidential administrations to enforce a provision in the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, also known as the Libertad Act, that would allow the suing of companies with business in Cuba for "trafficking in confiscated property." The right to sue had been suspended by every president since the law's enactment but was reinstated by President Donald Trump.

There followed a flurry of lawsuits against American, foreign and Cuban government entities doing business involving confiscated properties, mostly hotels, mines, ports, airports and land. Most cases are still in litigation, including in appeals. Some lawsuits, including a previous one filed by Garcia-Bengochea against cruise companies that used port facilities in Santiago de Cuba seized from his family, have been dismissed or were lost on appeal over technicalities and questions about ownership. But in another case still in litigation and involving facilities at the port of Havana, several cruise companies were ordered to pay more than \$400 million in compensation.

According to Airbnb's website, the company advertises more than 1,000 places in Havana. The company started working in Cuba in 2015 during a period of improved U.S.-Cuba relations. The U.S. Treasury Department imposed a fine on Airbnb in January 2022 for apparent violations of the U.S. embargo. At the time, Treasury warned companies about "entering new commercial markets, particularly one that has elevated sanctions risks such as Cuba, without fully anticipating the complexities of legally operating in a U.S.-sanctioned jurisdiction."

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Ukraine claims it has sunk another Russian warship in the Black Sea using high-tech sea drones

KYIV, UKRAINE

Ukraine claimed Tuesday that it has sunk another Russian warship in the Black Sea using high-tech sea drones as Kyiv's forces take aim at targets well behind the war's front line. Russian authorities did not confirm the claim.

Ukrainian military intelligence said a special operations unit destroyed the large patrol ship Sergey Kotov overnight. The ship, which Ukraine said was commissioned in 2021 and was hit near the Kerch Strait, reportedly can carry cruise missiles.

Officials in Kyiv say some 20% of Russian missile attacks on Ukraine are launched from the Black Sea, and Ukrainian attacks have dented that aspect of Moscow's capability.

Patrol ships like the Sergey Kotov are part of Russia's measures against drone attacks, said an article published last month by the U.S. think tank Foreign Policy Research Institute. The vessels employ radar and helicopters to find and destroy drones by using grenade launchers and heavy machine guns, it said.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

Obituaries

Iris M. Semeya March 21, 1934 - March 3, 2024



Aventura, Florida - It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved Iris M. Semeya, who left us on March 3, 2024. She peacefully bid farewell, surrounded by her family, after a life filled with love, dancing, and devotion to family.

Born on March 21, 1934 in New Brunswick, New Jersey, Iris was the cherished daughter of David and Betty, and grew up in Brooklyn, New York with her sister Sylvia. Growing up in a single-mother household after her father's tragic passing, from a young age, she displayed an extraordinary strength of character, resilience and an indomitable spirit that would guide her throughout her life. In her youth, Iris excelled in school. In her 20s, she worked at an advertising agency, where she was known for her fast typing skills, amazing penmanship, and her outgoing personality.

In 1957, meeting on a blind date, Iris embarked on a journey of love and companionship when she married her beloved Ike the next year. Their bond was a source of inspiration to all who knew them, and their love endured through the trials and triumphs of 64 years together.

Iris moved to south Florida in 1962, and together with

her family, made the North Miami Beach area her home. She went back to college to get a certificate in Early Childhood Education and taught at both Temple Sinai of North Dade and Beth Torah Adath Yeshurun Early Childhood Schools for 30 years. She was loved by her students and their parents.

As a mother, wife, and grandmother, Iris was the heart and soul of her family. Her children and grandchildren were the light of her life, and she delighted in their every achievement and milestone.

Iris is survived by Ike, her devoted husband, her children David and Masako of Tokyo, Ellen and Ronald Krasnow of Palo Alto, grandchildren Benjamin and Jack Krasnow, and Isaac, Rachel and Hannah Semeya, her sister-in-law Evelyn Semeya, and her many loving nieces and nephews in South Florida and New York, who will cherish her memory forever. Iris is predeceased by her sister Sylvia Monuse, her brother-in-law Harold Monuse, and her brother-in-law Sam Semeya. The family would like to thank Paula Bruce-Stanley, her loving care giver, for helping to take care of Iris in her final years.

A funeral service will be held on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 at 11:00 am at Lakeside Memorial Park, followed by interment. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Beth Torah Benny Rok Campus (<https://btbrc.org/giving/>) or The Florida Breast Cancer Foundation (<https://www.floridabreastcancer.org/>), in honor of Iris's memory. May her soul find eternal peace and may her memory be a blessing. Arrangements by Levitt-Weinstein Blasberg-Rubin-Zilbert Memorial Chapel (305) 932-2700.



CITY OF DORAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

All residents, property owners and other interested parties are hereby notified of a **COUNCIL ZONING MEETING** on **March 20, 2024 beginning at 6:00 PM** to consider a text amendment to Section 74-170 "Tobacco/vape dealers" of Chapter 74, "Miscellaneous and Supplementary Regulations," of the City's Land Development Code. The City Council will consider this item for **SECOND READING**. The meeting will be held at the **City of Doral, Government Center, Council Chambers located at 8401 NW 53rd Terrace, Doral, Florida, 33166**.

The City of Doral proposes to adopt the following Ordinance:

ORDINANCE No. 2024-07

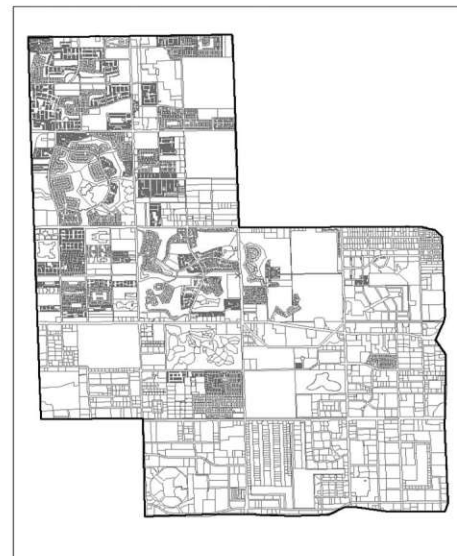
AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DORAL, FLORIDA, AMENDING SECTION 74-170, "TOBACCO/VAPE DEALERS," OF CHAPTER 74, "MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS" OF THE CITY OF DORAL LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE, TO INCLUDE HEMP AND CBD DEALERS FOR PURPOSES OF LOCATION/DISTANCE RESTRICTIONS, AND TO ALSO INCLUDE MOVEABLE PLACES OF BUSINESSES; PROVIDING FOR INCORPORATION INTO THE CODE; PROVIDING FOR A REPEALER; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

HEARING NO.: 24-03-DOR-04

APPLICANT: City of Doral

REQUEST: The Planning and Zoning Department respectfully recommends that the Mayor and City Councilmembers approve an amendment to Section 74-170 "Tobacco/vape dealers" to include hemp and CBD dealers for purposes of location/distance restrictions, and to also include moveable places of businesses.

Location Map



Inquiries regarding the item may be directed to the Planning and Zoning Department at 305-59-DORAL.

Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes, if a person decides to appeal any decisions made by the City Council with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings and, for such purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. This notice does not constitute consent by the City for introduction or admission of otherwise inadmissible or irrelevant evidence, nor does it authorize challenges or appeals not otherwise allowed by law. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, any person who are disabled and who need special accommodations to participate in this meeting because of that disability should contact the Planning and Zoning Department at 305-59-DORAL no later than three (3) business days prior to the proceeding.

Connie Diaz, MMC
City Clerk
City of Doral

Obituaries

OBITUARY INDEX

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Contact our obituary staff at 305-376-8901 or obit@miamiherald.com

NAME, AGE	CITY	DEATH	ARRANGEMENTS
Semeya, Iris M., 89	Aventura	Mar 03	Levitt Weinstein

Bold listings indicate expanded obituaries