

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

Business Executive Arrested on Foreign Bribery Charges in Connection With Venezuela Bribery Scheme

A dual U.S.-Venezuelan citizen who controlled multiple companies was arrested yesterday on foreign bribery charges for conspiring to make, and making, corrupt payments to an official of Venezuela's state-owned and state-controlled energy company, Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. (PDVSA), in exchange for favorable business treatment with PDVSA.

Assistant Attorney General Brian A. Benczkowski of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Patrick of the Southern District of Texas and Special Agent in Charge Mark Dawson of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Houston Field Office made the announcement.

Jose Manuel Gonzalez Testino (Gonzalez), 48, was arrested at Miami International Airport, on an arrest warrant based on a criminal complaint filed in the Southern District of Texas that was unsealed yesterday. He made his initial appearance today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Lauren F. Louis of the Southern District of Florida. Gonzalez is charged with conspiring to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and paying bribes to a foreign official in violation of the FCPA.

According to the criminal complaint, Gonzalez and a co-conspirator paid at least \$629,000 in bribes to a former PDVSA official in exchange for the official taking steps to (1) direct PDVSA contracts to Gonzalez's companies, (2) give Gonzalez's companies priority over other vendors to receive payments, and (3) award Gonzalez's companies PDVSA contracts in U.S. dollars instead of Venezuelan bolivars.

The charges contained in the complaint are merely allegations and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

With the arrest of Gonzalez, the Justice Department has announced charges against 17 individuals, 12 of whom have pleaded guilty, as part of a larger, ongoing investigation by the U.S. government into bribery at PDVSA. HSI in Houston is conducting the ongoing investigation with assistance from HSI in Boston and Miami. Trial Attorneys Sarah E. Edwards and Jeremy R. Sanders of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys John P. Pearson and Robert S. Johnson of the Southern District of Texas are prosecuting the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Kristine Rollison of the Southern District of Texas is handling the forfeiture aspects of the case. The Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs also provided assistance.

The Fraud Section is responsible for investigating and prosecuting all FCPA matters. Additional information about the department's FCPA enforcement efforts can be found at www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa.

Attachment(s):

[Download Testino Criminal Complaint and Affidavit](#)

Topic(s):

Foreign Corruption

Component(s):

[Criminal Division](#)

Criminal - Criminal Fraud Section
USAO - Texas, Southern

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