

United States Department of Justice

For Immediate Release

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Central District of California

Immigration Agency Attorney Convicted of Federal Corruption Charges for Taking Thousands of Dollars in Bribes from Immigrants Seeking Status in U.S.

LOS ANGELES—A senior attorney with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was found guilty today of three dozen corruption-related charges for taking a series of bribes from immigrants who were seeking documentation to remain in the United States.

ICE Assistant Chief Counsel Constantine Peter Kallas, 39, of Alta Loma, was convicted by a federal jury following a three-week trial. The jury found Kallas guilty of conspiracy, six counts of bribery, two counts of obstruction of justice, seven counts of fraud and misuse of entry documents, three counts of aggravated identity theft, nine counts of making false statements to the Department of Labor, four counts of making false statements to obtain federal employee compensation, and four counts of tax evasion.

“Mr. Kallas was a corrupt government official who abused his position of trust to line his own pockets,” said United States Attorney André Birotte Jr. “This case should serve as a warning to any public official who might consider trading a quick buck for illegal acts that making this trade could send them to prison.”

Kallas has been in a federal jail since August 2008, about two months after he was arrested by special agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the San Manuel Indian Bingo and Casino in Highland, where he and his wife accepted a bribe from an immigrant. The June 2008 bribe was the last in a series of incidents in which Kallas and his wife, Maria, told illegal aliens that Kallas was an immigration official—either an immigration judge or some other type of high-level immigration official—and that Kallas could obtain immigration benefits for the aliens in exchange for bribes which ran as high as \$20,000.

Kallas took a \$7,000 bribe from his housekeeper in return for using his official position at ICE to dismiss removal proceedings against the housekeeper’s daughter. The Kallases took bribes from four other illegal aliens in return for using two companies they had set up—Botno Inc. and Mississippi Valley Consulting Inc—to file Permanent Employment Certification applications with the Department of Labor that falsely claimed the companies had offered employment to the aliens.

According to court documents, the couple’s bank records show that, beyond Constantine Kallas’ salary, approximately \$950,000 had been deposited in the couple’s bank accounts since 2000. When investigators searched the Kallas residence in June 2008, they discovered a hidden floor safe that contained more than \$177,000 in cash and two dozen official immigration files.

As a result of today's convictions, Kallas faces a statutory maximum sentence of 256 years in prison when he is sentenced by United States District Judge Terry J. Hatter Jr. on August 9.

"This verdict serves as a sobering warning about the consequences of violating the public's trust," said Paul Layman, assistant special agent in charge for the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility in Los Angeles. "ICE played a pivotal role in the investigation that led to these criminal charges and we will continue to hold our employees to the highest standards of professional conduct. Guarding against illegal or unethical behavior is not an option; it is an obligation we have to the people we serve."

Maria Kallas, 41, also of Alta Loma, pleaded guilty to conspiracy, bribery, and conspiracy to commit money laundering on November 16, 2009. Judge Hatter is scheduled to sentence her in June.

Kallas joined ICE's predecessor agency in June 1998, but he has been on unpaid leave since January 2007.

The case against the Kallases was investigated by ICE's Office of Professional Responsibility, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, IRS-Criminal Investigation, and the United States Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General.