Argentines arrested in real estate scandal spanning NYC to Miami

A $65 million real estate empire across Miami and New York has been traced back to a major corruption scandal involving the former president of Argentina.

In October, four Argentine nationals were arrested by the country's federal police after prosecutors accused them of investing illicit money on behalf of an aide of former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, the Miami Herald reports. Kirchner, who served as president of Argentina between 2007 and 2015, is currently facing charges of accepting bribes in exchange for giving contracts for major government projects to specific construction companies.

Earlier this year, one of her chauffeurs released notebooks cataloguing bags of money that would regularly get delivered to Fernandez's residence.

Sergio Todisco, Carolina Pochetti, Carlos Cortez and Elizabeth Ortiz Municoy, who runs an international realty business that once had a branch in Florida's Surfside, are four of the latest people arrested in connection to this scandal. The details of their arrests are complicated — according to Argentine prosecutors, all four spent tens of millions of dollars to buy properties in the United States on behalf of Kirchner aide Hector Daniel Munoz by using illicit transactions and shell companies.

The properties purchased include expensive condos, banks, pharmacies and even a CVS convenience store in Miami's Little Havana neighborhood. One of the condos alone was worth $10.7 million.

Because Municoy is not a licensed real estate professional in the US, she also reportedly paid a local real estate broker $300 a month in order to use his third-party license to buy and sell the properties — a practice that is legal in Florida.

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The charges further allege that these properties were bought by Florida companies registered to Todisco and Municoy while instead going to Muñoz, who passed away in 2016. The scandal first broke out when the leaked Panama Papers showed that Muñoz and his wife owned a company that had actually been registered to Todisco.

Now, Argentine authorities are trying to figure out why four random citizens had more than $30 million of valuable Miami real estate. Prosecutors, meanwhile, will argue that the four participated in a scheme to enrich themselves while also acting as proxies for Kirchner's aide.

Since the case began to unravel, the properties have been sold — Municoy has sold her $800,000 condo in Hollywood and vacated the office of her Surfside business, Municoy International Properties. While Municoy once told the Miami Herald she had no idea where the money to buy the properties had come from, she is now reportedly providing the police with information about how Muñoz acquired the real estate.

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