

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***Acting United States Attorney
Cindy M. Cipriani***

For Further Information, Contact: Assistant U. S. Attorney Timothy C. Perry (619) 546-7966

For Immediate Release

MEXICAN BUSINESSMAN INDICTED IN BROADENING CAMPAIGN FINANCE INVESTIGATION

Defendant Identified as “Foreign National” responsible for \$120,000 illegal donation

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – February 20, 2014

San Diego – Mexican businessman Jose Susumo Azano Matsura was charged in an indictment unsealed today with making an illegal campaign contribution to a San Diego mayoral candidate.

Azano, 48, was arrested by FBI agents at his Coronado home Wednesday morning. He was arraigned in federal court this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mitchell D. Dembin.

Today’s indictment makes it clear that Azano was the foreign national responsible for the \$120,000 illegal campaign contribution to a San Diego mayoral candidate referred to in prior court records. According to federal law, it is illegal for a foreign national to donate to political campaigns in the U.S.

Also charged in related cases are San Diego lobbyist Marco Polo Cortes, former San Diego Police detective Ernesto Encinas and Ravneet Singh, owner of the campaign services company known as ElectionMall Inc., which is also charged as a corporate entity.

According to court documents, Cortes, Singh and Encinas conspired to funnel more than \$500,000 of illegal foreign money into San Diego municipal and federal campaigns, primarily in 2012 and 2013. The source of the illegal foreign money, the court records said, was a person referred to as “the Foreign National.”

The \$120,000 sum in the Azano indictment is the same transaction described in a January 21, 2014 complaint that charges Cortes with conspiracy to finance political campaigns using money from an illegal foreign source. That complaint says: “Using money that the Foreign National had given him, the straw donor wrote a \$120,000 check from one of his corporation’s bank accounts to an independent expenditure committee that favored Candidate 3.”

The “straw donor” is still identified in court records only as a La Jolla businessman who acted as a conduit for large campaign donations from the Foreign National.

According to a February 18 grand jury indictment charging Cortes, Singh and his company, ElectionMall Inc., “After directing the Straw Donor to write checks in favor of certain campaigns, the Foreign National would reimburse him.”

That indictment also describes a “war room” created by Singh, Cortes and another coconspirator within the campaign offices of an unidentified mayoral candidate, “for the purpose of making unreported in-kind contributions financed by the Foreign National.”

The straw donor and candidates are not identified because they have not been charged as members of the conspiracy.

DEFENDANT **Case Number: 14cr388MMA**

Jose Susumo Azano Matsura Age: 48 Coronado, CA

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Count 1: Campaign Contribution by a Foreign National – Title 2, U.S.C., Sections 437g (d) (1) (A) (i) and 441e (A) (1).

Maximum Penalties: Up to five years in prison and \$250,000 fine

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Internal Revenue Service
San Diego Police Department

**Indictments and complaints are not evidence that the defendant committed the crime charged. All defendants are presumed innocent until the United States meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.*

