

One Hundred Tenth Congress  
Congress of the United States  
**Committee on Foreign Affairs**

**TOM LANTOS, D-CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN**  
**ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, R-FLORIDA, RANKING MEMBER**

U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-5021

<http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/>

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**Contact: Lynne Weil (Lantos) 202-225-5032**  
**Sam Stratman (Ros-Lehtinen) 202-226-7875**

## **Lantos, Ros-Lehtinen Urge Cyprus to Extradite Former UN Official Charged with Bribery for Trial in the United States**

**(Washington, DC)** – In a letter sent today to the Cypriot Ambassador to the United States, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos (D-CA) and U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Ranking Republican, urged Cyprus to extradite former UN official Benon Sevan to stand trial in the U.S. on criminal charges stemming from his role in the ill-fated Oil-for-Food program.

A resident of Cyprus, Sevan was indicted in January for his role in managing the UN Office of Iraq Programs from 1996-2006. The letter was sent to Ambassador Andreas Kakouris.

Sevan's indictment on charges of bribery, wire fraud and conspiracy was jointly announced last month by the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, the Manhattan District Attorney and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The indictment follows similar allegations leveled last year against Mr. Sevan by the United Nations Independent Inquiry Committee, chaired by Paul Volcker, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank. The indictment alleges that Mr. Sevan accepted \$160,000 in bribes through an intermediary acting on behalf of the Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein.

"We trust that your government will undertake robust efforts to investigate, locate, and extradite Mr. Sevan, so that he may be fairly tried for his alleged violations of United States law," the letter states.

The program was created by the UN Security Council in the mid-1990s as a way for the international community to track the proceeds from the sale of oil by Saddam Hussein and ensure proceeds were used to purchase food, medicine and other items to benefit the Iraqi people. Sevan is alleged to have accepted bribes from Saddam Hussein. In 2005, the Volcker Commission, which was tasked with investigating the oil-for food scandal, concluded that Sevan had accepted bribes.

A text of the letter:

Dear Ambassador Kakouris:

We are writing to request your cooperation in connection with the federal indictment of Mr. Benon Sevan, former executive director of the United Nations Office of Iraq Programs, on charges of bribery, wire fraud, and conspiracy.

The indictment, jointly announced last month by the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, the Manhattan District Attorney and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) follows similar allegations leveled last year against Mr. Sevan by the United Nations Independent Inquiry Committee, chaired by Paul Volcker. It alleges that Mr. Sevan, who resides in your country, accepted \$160,000 in bribes through an intermediary acting on behalf of the Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein.

In a March 10, 2006 response to a letter asking the Government of Cyprus to open its own criminal investigation of the actions of Mr. Sevan, then-Ambassador Euripides L. Evriviades assured this Committee that your government is “extremely concerned” about the Sevan case and pledged that “we stand ready to offer any further assistance” in locating Mr. Sevan. The subsequent request – through Interpol – of the U.S. Department of Justice for the extradition of Mr. Sevan indicates precisely the type of assistance that is now needed to pursue justice in this case.

The accession of Cyprus to the European Union was welcomed by many as heralding a new era of international cooperation by your country. In this context, we trust that your government will undertake robust efforts to investigate, locate, and extradite Mr. Sevan, so that he may be fairly tried for his alleged violations of United States law and international confidence.

We look forward to a timely update on your government’s efforts to that end.

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN  
Ranking Member

TOM LANTOS  
Chairman

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