

Rex Tillerson summoned to testify at Trump ally's trial



Thomas Barrack, a former Trump ally, stands trial for acting illegally as a foreign agent for the UAE.

Prosecutors say Thomas Barrack boasted to contacts in the Emirates that he could help them gain influence with the administration of former US President Donald Trump [File: Brendan McDermid/Reuters]

New York, October 4 (RHC)-- U.S. Federal prosecutors plan to call former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson as a witness in the trial of Thomas Barrack, a one-time fundraiser for former President Donald

Trump, on charges of unlawfully acting as a foreign agent for the United Arab Emirates, a court filing showed.

In a letter to the judge presiding over the trial, Barrack's attorneys said Tillerson is being asked to take the stand. Having Tillerson testify would ensure the defense has enough time to cross-examine him, Barrack's lawyers said, adding that the U.S. State Department, and Trump himself, knew of his contacts with Middle East officials, showing that Barrack did not intend to be a foreign agent.

Prosecutors say Barrack, 75, never told the U.S. attorney general he was acting as a go-between with UAE officials, as required under federal law. Tillerson would be the first cabinet official from the Trump administration to testify in the New York City trial, which is entering its third week.

Barrack, a billionaire who was an adviser to the Trump campaign and administration, as well as chair of Trump's inaugural committee, is charged with acting as an unregistered foreign agent for the UAE, obstruction of justice and making false statements to the FBI about his dealings.

The case centers on allegations that Barrack used his friendship with and access to Trump to benefit the UAE government. Prosecutors say from 2016 to 2018, Barrack sought to advance a UAE "wish list" of foreign policy positions.

The trial began with jury selection on September 19th. During the first week, prosecutors presented emails and text messages from Barrack and an associate that showed UAE officials provided input on what then-candidate Trump should say in a 2016 energy policy speech.

Charged in July 2021, Barrack has pleaded not guilty. His lawyers say his interactions with Emirati officials were part of his role running private equity firm Colony Capital, now known as Digital Bridge Group, and there is no evidence he agreed to act at the UAE's direction.

U.S. law makes it illegal to lobby on behalf of a foreign government or entity without declaring such activities under the Justice Department's Foreign Agents Registration Act database.

Tillerson, a former chief executive of ExxonMobil, served as Trump's secretary of state for slightly more than a year from 2017 to 2018. Trump fired him by tweet. "Mike Pompeo, Director of the CIA, will become our new Secretary of State," Trump tweeted in March 2018. "He will do a fantastic job! Thank you to Rex Tillerson for his service!"

Barrack's trial, which is expected to last a few weeks, comes at a time when Trump is facing a slew of legal issues, including a civil lawsuit by New York prosecutors over allegedly fraudulent business practices, and a Justice Department investigation into his possible mishandling of classified documents.

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