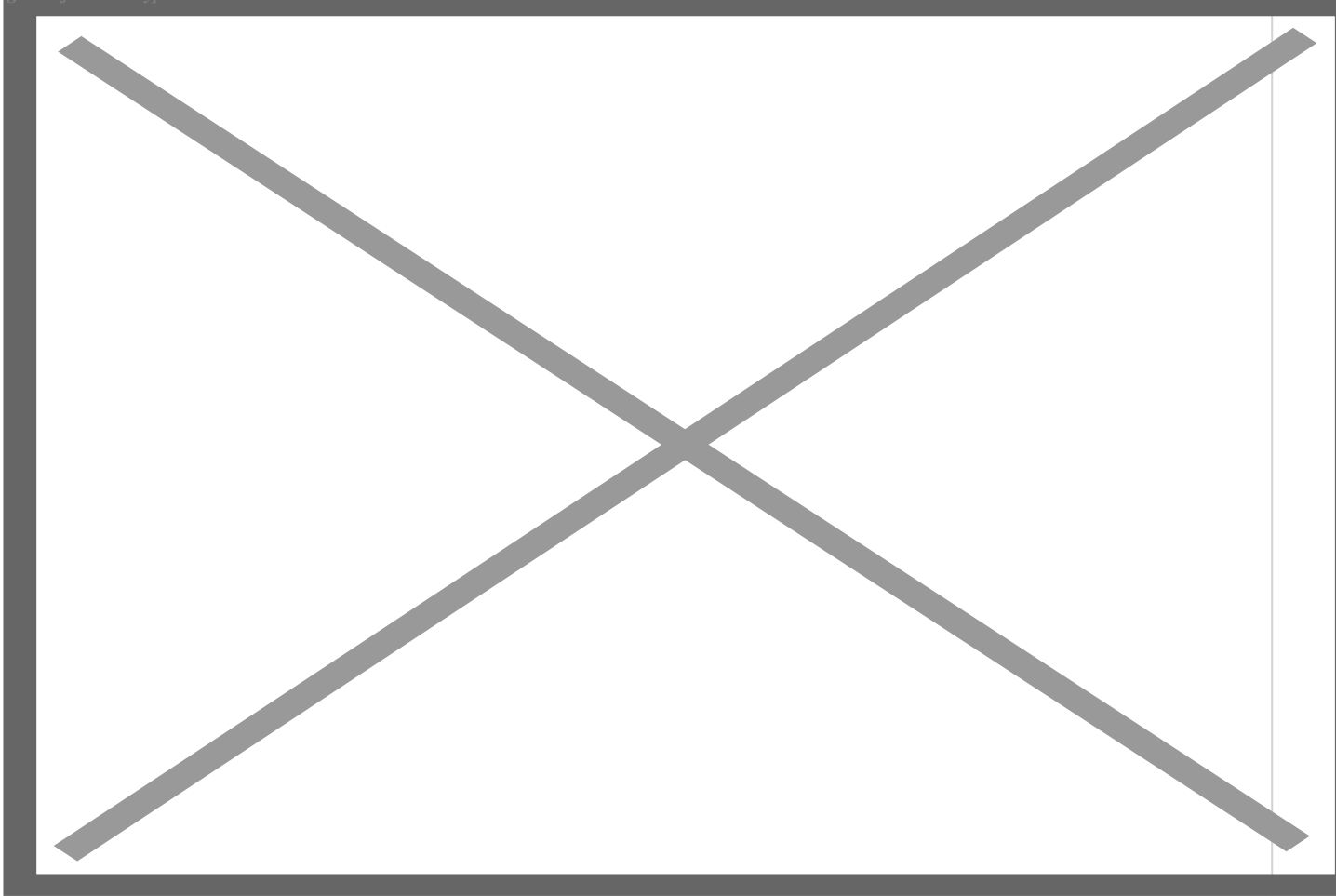


U.S. judge approves extradition of ex-Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo

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Former Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo has denied all the charges against him [File: Enrique Castro-Mendivil/Reuters]

San Francisco, September 29 (RHC)-- A U.S. judge has approved the extradition of former Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo, who was arrested in the United States in 2019 after facing corruption charges in his home country.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Thomas S Hixson ruled on Tuesday that the charges against Toledo meet the standards laid out in the extradition treaty between the United States and Peru. “The Court has heard and considered the evidence of criminality and deems it sufficient to sustain the charges of collusion and money laundering under the provisions of the Extradition Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of Peru,” Hixson wrote.

Peru requested the extradition of Toledo – who served as the country’s president from 2001 to 2006 – in 2018 on charges he took millions of dollars in bribes from Odebrecht, a Brazilian construction company involved in a massive corruption case in South America.

The State Department will have the final say on whether to extradite Toledo, who was detained by U.S. authorities in 2019 but later released to house arrest. Hixson acknowledged in his decision that the case against the former president “is not airtight” -- but said there is “probable cause to believe that Toledo committed collusion and money laundering.”

Toledo has denied the charges against him. The former Peruvian president lives in California, near the Stanford University campus, according to the Reuters news agency. A Stanford graduate, Toledo served as a visiting scholar at the university in 2016.

The testimonies of Jorge Barata, the former Odebrecht head in Peru, and that of Josef Maiman, an acquaintance of Toledo who has said he helped the former president receive bribe money, played a key role in Hixson’s decision.

“Barata and Maiman’s testimony, combined with Toledo’s admissions in this extradition proceeding that he ultimately received approximately \$500,000 in Odebrecht bribe money ... establish probable cause to believe that Toledo committed collusion and money laundering,” the judge wrote in his ruling.

The Odebrecht scandal has rocked South America, with the company admitting in 2016 to paying \$800 million to officials across the region to secure public works contracts. In 2019, former Peruvian President Alan Garcia shot himself as authorities were trying to arrest him in connection to the scandal. A year earlier, then-President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski was impeached – and he remains under investigation – over allegations of involvement in the scandal.

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