# U.S. jury finds Macau billionaire guilty in U.N. bribery case

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A U.S. jury on Thursday found Macau billionaire Ng Lap Seng guilty on charges he bribed two United Nations ambassadors to help him build a multibillion-dollar conference center.

Ng, 69, was convicted on all six counts he faced, including bribery, money laundering and corruption, in the U.S. District Court in Manhattan. Jurors needed less than a day to reach a verdict, following a four-week trial.

"In his unbridled pursuit of even greater personal fortune, billionaire Ng Lap Seng corrupted the highest levels of the United Nations," Acting U.S. Attorney Joon Kim said after the verdict. "Through bribes and no-show jobs, Ng turned leaders of the league of nations into his private band of profiteers."

Tai Park, a lawyer for Ng, said in court that his client had "substantial" legal issues to raise on appeal. Park later declined to comment to reporters. The United Nations also had no comment.

Prosecutors accused Ng of paying more than $1 million of bribes to bypass the normal hassles of dealing with the U.N., with a goal of winning "fame and more fortune" by developing in Macau what he thought of as the "Geneva of Asia."

Ng hoped that building the conference center, meant to serve developing countries, would pave the way for the construction of luxury housing, hotels, a shopping mall, marinas and a heliport, prosecutors said.

Defense lawyers countered that Ng's goals were consistent with the types of public-private partnerships that the U.N. favors, and that other diplomats abused Ng's trust.

The conference center was never built.

Ng has been free on $50 million bail, living under 24-hour guard in a luxury Manhattan apartment.

After Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel Richenthal warned that Ng could now be a flight risk, U.S. District Judge Vernon Broderick modified bail by subjecting Ng to house arrest.

"He is not to leave the apartment: no ifs, ands or buts about it," the judge said.

Broderick scheduled an Aug. 7 hearing to decide whether to revoke bail.

Prosecutors said the recipients of Ng's bribes were Francis Lorenzo, a former deputy ambassador of the Dominican Republic, and John Ashe, a former U.N. General Assembly president and ambassador from Antigua and Barbuda.

Lorenzo pleaded guilty to bribery and money laundering, and testified against Ng for more than a week after agreeing to cooperate with prosecutors.

Ashe was also criminally charged, but died accidentally at home in June 2016 after dropping a barbell on his neck.