

Former DOJ Lawyer Admits to Meeting with Chinese Officials for Illegal Lobbying Campaign



A former US Department of Justice attorney, George Higginbotham, testified in court on Thursday that he worked simultaneously for hip-hop artist Pras Michel and engaged in an illegal foreign influence campaign. The campaign aimed to persuade the Trump administration to extradite dissident Guo Wengui to China. Higginbotham admitted to making money on the side while working at the Department of Justice, providing legal advice to Michel, who he described as a long-time friend. Higginbotham's duties included facilitating some of Michel's dealings with Jho Low, a businessman who prosecutors allege embezzled billions of dollars from Malaysia's sovereign wealth fund, 1MDB.

Michel is currently facing charges of accepting millions of dollars to carry out three illegal lobbying campaigns on Low's behalf. Higginbotham is the latest witness to testify for the government in Michel's criminal trial. Other witnesses have included actor Leonardo DiCaprio and former Republican National Committee official Elliott Broidy.

During his testimony, Higginbotham revealed that he felt uncomfortable when Michel asked him to pass along a message to the Chinese embassy in 2017. The message related to the Trump administration's alleged work on the request to extradite Guo Wengui to China. Higginbotham admitted that he let his friendship with Michel cloud his judgment, and despite feeling uneasy, he passed along the message anyway. He told the jury that he knew his actions were "definitely outside of official lines" and that "this could get me in a lot of trouble."

Higginbotham's conduct eventually came to the attention of Justice Department investigators, who questioned him about his involvement. In 2018, he pleaded guilty to his role in the foreign influence campaign. Justice Department investigators discovered that Higginbotham had flown to Hong Kong for a follow-up meeting with Low a few months after his initial meeting with Michel. Higginbotham claimed that Michel had assured him that he would never have to worry about the DOJ again. However, Higginbotham's involvement in the illegal lobbying campaign resulted in his conduct being highlighted in the Department of Defense's Encyclopedia of Ethical Failure.

Knowledge is power, and knowing your earning potential is no exception. Check out LawCrossing's salary surveys to gain valuable insights.

The trial continues to shed light on the alleged corruption within the Trump administration. Higginbotham's testimony offers a glimpse into the illegal activities that some individuals engaged in to influence government decisions. Michel faces serious charges related to his involvement in the illegal lobbying campaign, and the trial will ultimately determine his guilt or innocence. The case serves as a reminder of the importance of ethical behavior and the dangers of engaging in illegal activities, particularly when influencing government decisions. The trial also highlights the need for greater transparency and accountability in government decision-making processes, particularly in cases where individuals with significant financial interests are involved.