

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024035816700 Prosecutors in the United States have charged a former Guatemalan minister with laundering millions of dollars in drug money. Acisclo Valladares Urruela, 44, was economy minister in the government of President Jimmy Morales, who governed from 2016 to 2020. His lawyer has not yet commented. Mr Valladares' father, who is the Guatemalan ambassador to London, said the accusations were baseless and part of a smear campaign by drug dealers. Acisclo Valladares Molina said a drug trafficker was setting up his son in revenge for the role the now-ambassador played when he was prosecutor-general of Guatemala in the 1990s in paving the way for the extradition of drug smugglers to the US. "All the extraditions of drug traffickers are based on the legal opinion I issued as Prosecutor-General of the Nation (1994-1998). Sufficient reason for revenge," Mr Valladares Molina tweeted in Spanish. The whereabouts of Mr Valladares junior are not known. South Florida federal prosecutors have charged Mr Valladares Urruela with "helping to launder close to \$10 million of illegal drug proceeds and other ill-gotten money". The prosecutors allege that "during a four-year conspiracy, Valladares Urruela enabled the illegal drug trade by creating a demand for untraceable cash, cash that Valladares Urruela used to bribe corrupt Guatemalan politicians". According to the prosecutors, Mr Valladares Urruela had three co-conspirators: "a major drug trafficker, a corrupt Guatemalan politician and a crooked Guatemalan bank employee". None of the three has been named in the statement released by the US Attorney's Office of the Southern District of Florida. The prosecutors allege that the unnamed politician and the drug trafficker provided Mr Valladares Urruela with cash through the bank employee, who got a cut of the various financial transactions. The statement says "the drug trafficker and corrupt politician were able to exchange their dirty cash for what appeared to be legitimate earnings, complete with papers trails". "Valladares Urruela regularly received backpacks, duffel bags, and brief cases full of dirty, untraceable cash that he knew came from drug trafficking and corruption and used it to bribe Guatemalan politicians," the statement reads.