

## N.J. Democrat Sen. Menendez Wants Federal Probe Of Cuban Role In Allegations Of Impropriety

By Administrator

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WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Robert Menendez said Tuesday that he has asked the Justice Department to investigate whether the Cuban government had a role in allegations against him that have made him a target of a federal probe.

Among the charges are so far unsubstantiated allegations that Menendez, D-N.J., flew on a plane provided by a friend and campaign supporter for rendezvous with prostitutes.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Menendez said his attorney has asked the Justice Department to investigate what he says were long-running rumors about a Cuban role in the allegations.

The lawmaker said he doesn't know if Cuba was involved. But Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, cited his decades-long role as a persistent critic of the Cuban government as potential motivation for Havana to act against him.

“To the extent they'd like to see the United States engage them more on their terms, which is not to observe democracy and human rights, they probably feel that I'm the single most significant impediment to their goals,” Menendez said.

He added, “It would not be surprising at all for the regime to hold the view that we have to do whatever we can” against him.

Menendez cited a Tuesday report in The Washington Post that the CIA obtained evidence linking Cuban agents to the claims about Menendez and prostitutes and to trying to persuade American news organizations to pursue those claims.

While declining to provide details about his attorney's letter, Menendez said, “It is clearly to ask them to investigate the charges, some of which appeared in Post.”

Menendez said the Post story makes clear that the federal government has information about the Cuban connection. Initial reports of Menendez's problems surfaced before his 2012

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re-election.

&quot;They should pursue their information,&quot; he said about the federal government, &quot;because I think it is incredibly troublesome that a foreign government would try to interfere either with a federal election or the seating of a senator on a specific committee in order to pursue its foreign policy goals. And that should be troublesome far beyond my circumstances.&quot;