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Brazil's Odebrecht 'to give Panama \$59m' it paid in bribes

AFP - January 12, 2017



Odebrecht is filing for bankruptcy protection over debts of more than \$20 billion (AFP Photo/Yasuyoshi Chiba)

Panama City (AFP) - The Brazilian construction company Odebrecht will pay the Panamanian government more than \$59 million it handed out in alleged bribes to secure public contracts, Panama's attorney general said Thursday.

"I've received a formal commitment, delivered verbally, to soon hand over the first \$59 million paid as bribes to Panamanian individuals and entities," Kenia Porcell told reporters.

Odebrecht, she said, "has shown a desire to cooperate effectively" with Panama's probe into the bribe payments, documented by the US Justice Department last month.

According to the US department, the Brazilian company paid more than \$59 million in bribes to Panama

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Panama's current government is accusing the previous administration of former president Ricardo Martinelli of involvement in Odebrecht's alleged bribery.

Two of Martinelli's sons have denied Brazilian newspaper reports that they had received \$6 million intended as a bribe from Odebrecht for their father.

Prosecutors have ordered an investigation of Martinelli, and of an official, Carlos Ho Gonzalez, appointed by the preceding president, Martin Torrijos.

Martinelli, who denies the charges, lives in voluntary exile in Miami. The Panamanian government has requested his extradition on allegations of espionage and corruption.

Panama has barred Odebrecht from bidding for future public tenders, and was seeking to remove the company from projects it was already involved in.

They include a new line of Panama City's metro system, a fourth bridge over the Panama Canal and plan for a hydroelectric dam that would now be scrapped.

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