



# Rep. Cunningham resigns; took \$2.4 million in bribes

**Sentencing:** Set for Feb. 27; he could get 10 years in prison

**Reaction:** Most in district express shock and dismay

**What's next:** Special election will be sometime next year



By **Onell R. Soto**  
STAFF WRITER

Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham resigned in disgrace yesterday after admitting he took more than \$2.4 million in bribes to help defense contractors land lucrative government contracts.

"This was a crime of unprecedented magnitude and extraordinary audacity," U.S. Attorney Carol Lam said after the haggard-looking Vietnam War fighter ace pleaded guilty to conspiracy and tax evasion charges in San Diego federal court.

While prosecutors had confirmed for several months they were investigating Cunningham's dealings with contractors, the scope of the corruption revealed yesterday was staggering.

Lam described a five-year conspiracy that included bribes in the form of cash, mortgage payments, antiques, yachts, a Rolls-Royce, a college graduation party for Cunningham's daughter and two antique French commodes worth \$7,200.

The money was frequently funneled through Cunningham's bank accounts and his commercial Web site, Top Gun Enterprises. Some of the other goods were delivered to his homes in Arlington, Va., and Rancho Santa Fe.

"It is abundantly clear that Congressman Cunningham let greed take priority over his duty to serve the best interests of his constituents and his country," Lam said.

Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham resigned from Congress yesterday after tearfully confessing to accepting bribes. After entering his guilty plea in a federal court in San Diego, he proclaimed: "In my life, I have known great joy and great sorrow. And now I know great shame." *Nadia Borowski Scott / Union-Tribune*

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- Cunningham was both respected and reviled in the halls of Congress. **A8**
- Resignation accelerates timetable for replacing Cunningham and guarantees race will be the object of national attention. **A9**
- Lawmaker's guilty plea rocks his district to the core. **A9**
- Republicans in Washington distance themselves from the fallen Vietnam fighter ace. **A10**



U.S. Attorney Carol Lam described the case yesterday.

"It is abundantly clear that Congressman Cunningham let greed take priority over his duty to serve the best interests of his constituents and his country."

CAROL LAM, U.S. attorney

## Case becomes argument over sentencing

By **Greg Moran**  
STAFF WRITER

In the end, Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham, a former Navy fighter pilot whose Top Gun swagger carried him to military glory and then to Congress, was left with little room to maneuver.

That was the consensus among local lawyers and legal experts yesterday who analyzed Cunningham's guilty pleas to conspiracy and tax evasion charges that toppled him from Congress and likely will send him to prison.

The strength of the government's

case also means Cunningham may not have much leverage as he faces a maximum prison sentence that could be up to 10 years.

"He's admitted in open court he defrauded the United States and the people of the United States and he purposely evaded — with a criminal intent — paying taxes," criminal defense lawyer Marc X. Carlos said.

"It will be difficult for any judge to give leniency given these facts," he said.

In a 33-page plea agreement, prosecutors spelled out the case against Cunningham, who admitted to accepting \$2.4 million in bribes in

exchange for steering government contracts to friendly defense contractors.

That Cunningham pleaded guilty before being indicted and did not challenge any of the government's evidence against him are telling signs that prosecutors had assembled an overwhelming case, lawyers said.

"He fell on his sword," criminal defense lawyer Michael Crowley said.

A grand jury had been investigating Cunningham's financial dealings

SEE **Attorneys, A8**

## Bush vows more border security, pushes visa plan

House likely to take up legislation next month

BLOOMBERG NEWS SERVICE  
and KNIGHT RIDDER NEWS SERVICE

TUCSON — Seeking to regain the initiative on immigration, President Bush yesterday pledged more resources for border security and stricter enforcement of workplace immigration laws as he pushed for a new visa program for temporary migrant workers.

The Republican president's guest-worker proposal is central to his plan for overhauling U.S. immigration laws,

but it faces stiff opposition from some lawmakers within his own party, which controls Congress.

The House will likely take up border-security legislation next month with the Senate considering a more comprehensive package early next year.

"The American people should not have to choose between a welcoming society and a lawful society," Bush said from the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base about an hour from the Mexican border. "We can have both at the same time."



President Bush greeted federal agents yesterday in Arizona. *Getty Images*

SEE **Border, A14**

## Does stress cause cancer? Not likely, scientists say

By **Gina Kolata**  
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

The question of whether there is a link between stress and cancer has puzzled and intrigued researchers, as well as patients, some of whom believe stress caused their cancer.

Study after study has asked whether people who developed cancer had more stress in the years before the diagnosis, and conversely, whether people who experienced extreme

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stress were more likely to develop cancer.

Investigators also have explored possible mechanisms, asking, for example, whether stress might suppress the immune system cells that might be needed to squelch rogue cancer cells. And they have

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**Tirade**

Saddam Hussein lashes out at "occupiers and invaders" and lectures the chief judge as his trial resumes. **News, A2**



**Pension drama**

Defense, prosecution square off in court during first day of the preliminary hearing in the San Diego pension case. **Local, B1**

**Slow going**

The holiday retail season loses steam after a torrid start as many shoppers hold their wallets close to the vest. **Business, C1**



**Unbeatable**

Peyton Manning leads Indianapolis to 11th straight victory, 26-7, over Pittsburgh. **Sports, D1**

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