



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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**TWO MORE FORMER REEVES COUNTY DETENTION CENTER EMPLOYEES
PLEAD GUILTY TO ACCEPTING BRIBES**

John E. Murphy, Acting United States Attorney, announced that in Midland, two more former employees of the Reeves County Detention Center in Pecos face federal prison terms after pleading guilty to charges they accepted bribes in exchange for smuggling contraband items to prisoners.

Velma Jean Payan, 41, and Jerri Diaz Ornelas, 40, each of Pecos, face up to 15 years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine when they are sentenced in September.

Appearing before United States Magistrate Judge Timothy J. Bommer this morning, Payan, a former Life Skills Instructor at the prison, admitted that she received more than \$2,000 in payments from October 2008 through January 2009 from associates of RCDC inmates in exchange for smuggling what she recalled as "green leafy" substances into the facility. She acknowledged in her plea that although she was told that the substance she smuggled was tobacco, some or all of it may have been marijuana.

Yesterday, in her respective guilty plea before Judge Bommer, Ornelas, a former corrections officer, admitted receiving approximately \$450 in payments from an inmate in October 2008 in exchange for her agreement to smuggle tobacco into the facility.

The cases were investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Justice—Office of Inspector General, and internal security investigators of the Reeves County Detention Center. Assistant United States Attorney John S. Klassen is prosecuting the cases for the government.

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