



Department of Justice

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Western District of Texas

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FEDERAL AUTHORITIES ARREST WEST TEXAS MAYOR FOR ALLEGEDLY STEALING MONEY FROM THE CITY OF TOYAH

This morning, federal agents arrested 41-year-old Bartolo Sanchez, mayor of Toyah, Texas, on fraud and identity theft charges in connection with a scheme involving approximately \$300,000 in fraudulent mileage reimbursement claims and personal expenditures using city funds announced **United States Attorney Robert Pitman and Federal Bureau of Investigation Special Agent in Charge Mark Morgan**.

A six-count federal grand jury indictment, returned this week and unsealed today, charges Sanchez with one count of bank fraud, one count of wire fraud and four counts of aggravated identity theft.

Since May 22, 2006, Sanchez has been the elected mayor of the Toyah, a city located approximately 22 miles west of Pecos, Texas, comprising approximately 1.6 square miles and having a population of about 100 residents. According to the indictment, on May 14, 2009 and unbeknownst to the Toyah City Council, Sanchez signed a \$228,132.54 settlement agreement with Chesapeake Operating, Inc. for repairs of surface damage on Toyah streets caused by Chesapeake vehicles. Sanchez deposited that money into a new Toyah bank account that he created.

The indictment further alleges that Sanchez, who had signatory authority on all city bank accounts, wrote checks to himself from various city bank accounts, including the one he created from the Chesapeake settlement, based predominantly upon fraudulent mileage reimbursement claims but also for various expenses, most of which were personal in nature and had little or nothing to do with official City business. So as to not raise the suspicions of City Council members as to his scheme, Sanchez forged a required second signature on all of the checks he issued to himself.

Upon conviction, Sanchez faces up to 30 years imprisonment on the bank fraud charge; up to 20 years imprisonment on the wire fraud charge; and a mandatory two-year term of imprisonment for each aggravated identity theft charge.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Austin Berry is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government. **An indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.**

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