

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

SELF PROCLAIMED CAMP PENDLETON “GODFATHER” CHARGED WITH BRIBERY

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – April 12, 2013

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that Natividad Lara Cervantes, aka Nate Cervantes, a U.S. Department of Defense employee – and the supervisor for Construction and Service Contracts at Camp Pendleton – was arraigned today on bribery charges before Magistrate Judge Barbara L. Major in relation to assisting a contractor obtain a \$4 million construction contract.

According to court records, Cervantes used his position at Camp Pendleton to extort bribes from businesses seeking to do business on the base, and referred to himself as the “Godfather at Camp Pendleton.” At least as early as September 2008, Cervantes allegedly used his position supervising construction and service contracts to extort bribes from businesses seeking to do business at Camp Pendleton. In return for these contracts, Cervantes received cash payments and remodeling work on a condominium.

As reflected in the complaint supporting his arrest, on Tuesday, March 26, 2013, a cooperating witness met with Cervantes and agreed to pay him a \$40,000 bribe in exchange for assistance in obtaining a new \$4 million contract at Camp Pendleton. The bribe was to be structured over a number of payments. The first payment was scheduled for Thursday, March 28, 2013, with the balance of the bribe to be paid after the contract was awarded.

On Thursday, March 28, 2013, the cooperating witness met with Cervantes at a local business on Miramar Road in San Diego, California, to make the first payment that was discussed earlier in the week. During this meeting, Cervantes discussed, among other things, the payment schedule and the source of funds for the bribe payments. At the end of the meeting, the witness handed Cervantes an envelope containing \$10,000 cash. After Cervantes had received the cash, FBI agents approached and ordered Cervantes and the witness to put their hands in the air.

United States Attorney Duffy commented that today's prosecution was one more example of her "zero tolerance" policy when it came to government corruption. "Given the large military presence in San Diego, it is imperative that this Office ensure that the government contracting process is free from bribery and undue influence. There must be a level playing field free from corruption for all government contractors."

Cervantes is scheduled to next appear in court on May 10, 2013 before Judge Anthony J. Battaglia. The charges in this case are not themselves evidence that the defendant committed the crimes charged. The defendant is presumed innocent until the government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

This investigation was conducted under the FBI's public corruption investigative program. The public is encouraged to report possible public corruption criminal activity to the FBI by calling **the FBI's public corruption/border corruption hotline at (877) NO-BRIBE or (877) 662-7423.**

DEFENDANT**Case Number: 13cr1345AJB**

Natividad Lara Cervantes

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Section 201(b)(2) – Bribery of public official
Maximum penalties: 15 years' imprisonment, \$250,000 fine

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Naval Criminal Investigative Service
Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation
Department of Defense Criminal Investigative Service
General Services Administration, Office of Inspector General
Small Business Administration, Office of Inspector General