

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

*United States Attorney
Laura E. Duffy*

Assistant U. S. Attorney Robert S. Huie (619) 546-7053

For Immediate Release

TWO FORMER MARINES CHARGED IN MIRAMAR AIR STATION BRIBERY AND FRAUD SCHEME

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – February 19, 2013

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced today that former U. S. Marine Sergeants Luis Gilbert Menchaca and Manuel Ramos Padilla have been indicted on bribery and fraud charges involving the filing of false travel and lodging claims at the Marine Corp Air Station (MCAS) Miramar.

The indictment alleges that from 2002 to 2011, Menchaca served in the U. S. Marine Corps reserves, and periodically received orders calling him onto active duty at MCAS Miramar. Ramos, a fellow Marine, worked in an administrative office at Miramar that processed lodging claims for reservists like Menchaca. The indictment alleges that Ramos and Menchaca conspired to defraud the Defense Department by submitting false monthly claims for lodging reimbursements for Menchaca, and by creating fake rental bills to substantiate those false claims. The address in San Diego that Menchaca claimed to be renting was, in fact, a nonexistent street number in Mission Valley.

According to the indictment, Ramos knowingly signed and approved dozens of false lodging claims for Menchaca and another reservist, a Staff Sergeant (identified only by initials in the indictment) who has been charged elsewhere. Each of the two reservists received tens of thousands of dollars in lodging payments as a result of the scheme. In exchange for facilitating the fraud, Ramos in turn demanded and received thousands of dollars of bribe payments from the reservists. Many of these bribes were paid by personal checks made payable to Ramos; other bribes were paid in cash.

The ten-count indictment charges both defendants with conspiracy to commit bribery and false claims in count one. Counts two through four charge Ramos with substantive counts of bribery. The remaining six counts charge the defendants with making false claims to the United States.

United States Attorney Duffy stated, "Investigating and prosecuting bribery is one of our top priorities. With our nation's military budget being strained to the breaking point, public corruption that drains needed U. S. Marine Corps resources will not be tolerated."

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service notes that fraud in the armed services is not a victimless crime; it squanders hard-earned tax dollars and erodes the confidence that citizens place in their military. Charles Warmuth, NCIS Special Agent in Charge for Marine Corps West Field Office, stated "The Department of the Navy is facing massive budget cuts in the near future so it is as important as ever that offenders are found and held accountable."

Menchaca was arraigned today before U. S. Magistrate Judge Karen S. Crawford and Ramos was arraigned on January 24 before U.S. Magistrate Judge Barbara L. Major. Both defendants pled not guilty. The case has been assigned to U. S. District Judge Dana M. Sabraw. The next scheduled court appearance is March 1, 2013 for a motion hearing.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 12cr5099-DMS

Manuel Ramos-Padilla
Luis Gilbert Menchaca

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Count 1: Conspiracy to commit bribery and false claims, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 (**all defendants**) - Maximum penalties: 5 years in prison, \$250,000 fine, term of supervised release of three years, restitution, forfeiture, and \$100 special assessment.

Counts 2 to 4: Bribery, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 201 (**defendant Ramos**) - Maximum penalties (per count): Fifteen years in prison, \$250,000 fine, term of supervised release of three years, restitution, and \$100 special assessment.

Counts 5 to 7: False claims, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 287 (**defendants Ramos and Menchaca**) - Maximum penalties (per count): Five years in prison, \$250,000 fine, term of supervised release of three years, restitution, and \$100 special assessment.

Counts 8 to 10: False claims, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 287 (**defendant Ramos**) - Maximum penalties (per count): Five years in prison, \$250,000 fine, term of supervised release of three years, restitution, and \$100 special assessment.

INVESTIGATING AGENCY

Naval Criminal Investigative Service

An indictment is not evidence that the defendants committed the crimes charged. The defendants are presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.