

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

MARINE POLICE COMMANDER FOUND GUILTY IN MIRAMAR BRIBERY SCHEME

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – July 16, 2013

A federal jury convicted former U. S. Marine Sergeant Luis Gilbert Menchaca of conspiracy and false claims in connection with a fraud and bribery scheme at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar in San Diego, California. As part of the scheme, Menchaca – while serving as a watch commander for the military police at Miramar – paid thousands of dollars of bribes to another Marine in order to obtain tens of thousands of dollars in fraudulent lodging reimbursements.

Last year, Menchaca was charged in an indictment with one count of conspiracy and three counts of false claims. The case was tried before a jury beginning on Monday, July 15, 2013. This afternoon, after less than 30 minutes of deliberations, the jury returned a verdict of guilty on all counts.

The evidence presented at trial showed that Menchaca first joined the Marine Corps in 1998, and

after an initial four-year term, was discharged and entered the Marine Corps Reserve. From time to time thereafter, Menchaca, who had attained the rank of Sergeant, received orders placing him on active duty. In connection with his mobilization orders, Menchaca became eligible to receive certain travel payments, including lodging reimbursement and a per diem allowance, for the entire duration of his active duty service. These travel payments were in addition to the compensation and basic housing allowance (“BAH”) that he, like other Marines, received.

The evidence at trial showed that in May 2007, after being placed on active duty at Miramar, Menchaca entered into a conspiracy with another Miramar Marine, Manuel Ramos-Padilla. Ramos worked in an administrative office at Miramar that processed travel claims for reservists like Menchaca. In connection with the scheme, Menchaca and Ramos agreed to submit falsely completed travel vouchers that claimed reimbursement for thousands of dollars in lodging expenses that Menchaca had not incurred or paid. In addition to submitting these false travel vouchers, the conspirators submitted a fake rental receipt, for an address on Mission Village Drive in San Diego. In fact, the address listed on the fake receipt did not exist.

Menchaca and Ramos repeated the scheme month after month, for a period of ten months. In total, Menchaca submitted approximately \$38,000 in false lodging claims. The proceeds of the scheme were deposited directly into Menchaca’s bank account every month.

In exchange for Ramos’s part in the conspiracy, Menchaca made cash payments to Ramos of up to \$1,000 per month. On occasion, Menchaca also paid bribes to Ramos of up to \$1,500 in the form of personal checks.

While on active duty with the Marine Corps, Menchaca spent over four years in the military police. During the time period of the fraud, Menchaca served as a watch commander within the military police. In that role, he supervised patrol supervisors, who in turn supervised lower-ranking military police officers. Menchaca had responsibilities for overseeing the enforcement of federal laws, including the Uniform Code of Military Justice; as well as for enforcing the California Vehicle Code and Miramar

regulations.

United States Attorney Duffy stated, “Investigating and prosecuting bribery is one of our top priorities. With our nation’s military budget strained to the breaking point, we cannot afford to allow public corruption to drain much-needed U. S. Marine Corps resources.”

Menchaca’s case is set for sentencing on October 4, 2013, before U. S. District Judge Dana M. Sabraw.

Menchaca’s co-conspirator, Manuel Ramos-Padilla, pled guilty on April 9, 2013 to conspiring to commit bribery and make false claims. Ramos’s case is set for sentencing on August 9, 2013, also before Judge Sabraw.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 12cr5099-DMS

Manuel Ramos-Padilla
Luis Gilbert Menchaca

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

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

Three counts of false claims, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 287 (**Menchaca**) - 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