



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

John E. Murphy, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORMER CBP TECHNICIAN SENTENCED IN DRUG/OFFICIAL CORRUPTION CASE

United States Attorney John E. Murphy announced that in El Paso, 43-year-old former U.S. Customs and Border Protection technician Martha Alicia Garnica was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison on drug, alien smuggling and official corruption charges.

In addition, Senior United States District Judge David Briones ordered that Garnica pay a \$5,000 fine and be placed under supervised release for a period of four years after completing her prison term.

On May 14, 2010, Garnica pleaded guilty to all of the charges returned by a federal grand jury on February 3, 2010, namely, conspiring to import over 100 kilograms of marijuana into the United States, conspiracy to smuggle undocumented aliens, three counts of bribery of a public official and one count of importation of a controlled substance.

According to the indictment:

- Since April 2009, Garnica conspired with others to import into the United States from Mexico more than 100 kilograms of marijuana.
- From October 1, 2009 until October 11, 2009, Garnica conspired to smuggle in undocumented aliens into the United States from Mexico.
- On October 11, 2009, Garnica offered a \$500 bribe to a United States Customs and Border Protection officer to allow an undocumented alien to be smuggled into the United States.
- On November 7, 2009, Garnica paid a \$3,500 bribe to a United States Customs and Border Protection officer to allow a controlled substance to be imported into the United States.
- On November 17, 2009, Garnica offered a \$1,500 bribe to a United States Customs and Border Protection officer to allow a controlled substance to be imported into the United States.
- On November 8, 2009, Garnica knowingly imported marijuana into the United States from Mexico.

“Garnica broke the very laws she swore to uphold,” stated United States Attorney John E. Murphy. “While it is unfortunate that situations like this occur, it is important to remember that no one is above the law. Twenty years in federal prison demonstrates that there is a hefty price to be paid for tarnishing the badge and violating the public’s trust.”

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Following today's hearing, James E. Smith, Special Agent in Charge for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General stated, "It is an honor and a privilege, and an awesome responsibility to serve as a federal law enforcement officer. The vast majority of those who take the oath of office, including those who wear the uniform of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, do so with honor, pride and integrity. However, there are sadly a few who take advantage of the trust and confidence our nation bestows for the purpose of facilitating criminal acts. As this sentencing demonstrates, corruption will never be tolerated within those agencies that comprise the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Public Corruption crimes are a top priority of the DHS, Office of Inspector General. We will continue to work tirelessly with our law enforcement partners and the U.S. Attorney's Office to fully investigate and to vigorously prosecute those who would violate our nations trust for money."

Garnica's co-defendants are serving federal prison terms for their roles in the scheme. On July 7, 2010, Carlos Francisco Ramirez-Rosalez, a Mexican National living illegally El Paso, was sentenced to 63 months imprisonment followed by four years of supervised release after pleading guilty to conspiring to import over 100 kilograms of marijuana into the United States and to paying a \$3,500 bribe to an undercover officer. On June 4, 2010, Edgar Ely Meraz of El Paso was sentenced to 24 months imprisonment and ordered to perform 100 hours of community service after pleading guilty to importing approximately 162 pounds of marijuana into the United States. On July 20, 2010, Arturo Leal Rosalez of Juarez, Mexico, was sentenced to 24 months imprisonment after pleading guilty to the same offense. Prior to arrest, the final co-defendant—Hugo Alberto Flores-Colmenero—was murdered in Juarez on February 24, 2010.

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of Investigations, Office of the Inspector General and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Internal Affairs. Assistant United States Attorney Juanita Fielden prosecuted this case on behalf of the government.

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