



Department of Justice

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**FORMER HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS SPECIAL AGENT
SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR ACCEPTING BRIBES TO DISMISS INDICTMENT
AGAINST COLOMBIAN NARCOTICS KINGPIN**

WASHINGTON – A former U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement-Homeland Security Investigations (ICE-HSI) Special Agent was sentenced today to 36 months in prison for accepting bribes in exchange for orchestrating, through multiple misrepresentations to numerous government agencies, the dismissal of a drug trafficking indictment filed against a fugitive narcotics kingpin, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General John P. Cronan of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division.

According to admissions in his plea agreement, Christopher V. Ciccione II, 52, of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, accepted cash and other things of value and used his official position to cause a drug trafficking indictment against Colombian national Jose Bayron Piedrahita Ceballos to be dismissed. Piedrahita and Colombian national Juan Carlos Velasco Cano met with Ciccione in Bogota, Colombia in December 2010, where they provided him with approximately \$20,000 in cash, dinner, drinks and prostitutes. In exchange, Ciccione disclosed the identities of confidential sources cooperating against Velasco three times, made numerous misrepresentations to the U.S. Attorney’s Office and HSI management, and altered law enforcement records to represent to decision makers that Piedrahita was a “former” suspect of a closed investigation, rather than a “current” subject; that Piedrahita was “never positively identified” during that investigation; and that his case should be dismissed because no one could obtain probable cause to “supersede another indictment.” Ciccione also falsified the concurrence of several other federal agents and attempted to parole Piedrahita into the United States.

“Christopher Ciccione abused his law enforcement authority for personal profit,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Cronan. “His actions not only comprised an ongoing investigation and nearly allowed a dangerous drug kingpin to escape justice, but they also betrayed the public trust placed in him to carry out his sworn duties with integrity. Today’s sentence demonstrates the hard work of our federal law enforcement partners to bring criminals to justice—no matter who they are.”

Ciccione was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Robert N. Scola Jr. of the Southern District of Florida. Velasco was sentenced to 27 months in prison on Jan. 17. Piedrahita is currently incarcerated in the Republic of Colombia.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control designated Piedrahita as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act on May 3, 2016.

ICE's Office of Professional Responsibility, Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General and the FBI investigated the case. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs and Office of the Judicial Attaché in Colombia and the Drug Enforcement Administration provided valuable assistance to the investigation. The Colombian Attorney General's Office also provided invaluable support. Trial Attorneys Luke Cass and Jennifer A. Clarke of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section are prosecuting the case.

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