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Southern District of Texas

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Former officer sent to prison for accepting bribe

McALLEN, Texas – A 48-year-old Mission resident has been ordered to federal prison after allowing drugs into the country, announced U.S. Attorney Jennifer B. Lowery.

Oziel Cantu is a former Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer. He pleaded guilty April 1, 2021, to one count of bribery of a public official.

Today, U.S. District Judge Micaela Alvarez handed Cantu a 120-month sentence to be immediately followed by three years of supervised release. In handing down the sentence, Judge Alvarez noted this type of case bothers her every single time and it is very difficult to understand the situation in which Cantu put himself. She informed him that everyone in the court room has been in a difficult financial situation before and yet none of them resorted to crime. Judge Alvarez stated that she would not let law enforcement corruption slide.

The investigation began after authorities suspected Cantu had contacted members of a Mexican drug trafficking organization to offer his assistance in smuggling narcotics through the Pharr Port of Entry where he was stationed for payment.

During an undercover operation, Cantu had agreed to assist with importing 40 kilograms of cocaine in exchange for a cash payment of \$15,000. Cantu provided instructions on how to drive a vehicle containing the narcotics through a specific inspection lane during the early morning hours on Aug. 19, 2020. Once there, Cantu would let the vehicle pass into the United States.

Cantu was permitted to remain on bond and voluntarily surrender to a U.S. Bureau of Prisons facility to be determined in the near future.

The Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General and CBP – Office of Professional responsibility conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney M. Alexis Garcia prosecuted the case.

Topic(s):

Public Corruption

Component(s):

