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**Three Sentenced for Roles in Bribery Scheme at Big Spring Correctional Center**

**LUBBOCK**, Texas — A former employee at Big Spring Correctional Center (BSCC), who admitted smuggling contraband into the facility for an inmate, the inmate, and another individual involved in the scheme, were sentenced this morning by U.S. District Judge Sam R. Cummings, announced John Parker, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas.

Eva Bermea, 42, of Big Spring, Texas, was sentenced to 36 months' probation, with eight of those months to be served in home confinement. Bermea pleaded guilty on December 30, 2014, to one count of bribery of public officials and aiding and abetting. She worked as a Recreational Specialist at BSCC.

Jonas Cruz, 34, an inmate at BSCC, was sentenced to 24 months in federal prison, to be served consecutively to the 211-month federal sentence he is currently serving following a guilty plea in January 2004 to one count of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and one count of possession of a firearm in connection with a drug crime. Cruz also pleaded guilty on December 30, 2014, to one count of bribery of public officials and aiding and abetting.

Bermea's friend, Kami Nicole Bennett, 32, of Big Spring, was sentenced to one year of probation. She pleaded guilty to a superseding information charging one count of misprision of a felony on December 30, 2014.

According to documents filed in the case, the investigation began in January 2014 when the Department of Justice Office of Inspector General (OIG) received information that Bermea was suspected of smuggling contraband into the prison for inmate Cruz.

The investigation revealed that Cruz had developed a close friendly relationship with Bermea, and in September 2013, they began to discuss smuggling contraband into the prison for Cruz to sell to other inmates. From September 13, 2013, to December 21, 2013, Bermea smuggled tobacco products and creatine into BSCC on three occasions for Cruz, who paid her \$1,500. Cruz admitted he recruited his brother to receive the payments made to him by other inmates for the contraband. This brother would then send the money to Bennett, whom Bermea had recruited to assist in packaging the contraband to be smuggled, and to facilitate receiving and retrieving the money for smuggled contraband.

The Department of Justice OIG conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Paulina Jacobo prosecuted the case.