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Former Correctional Officer and Spouse Sentenced for Bribery and Conspiracy

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Joel Gonzalez, a former U.S. Bureau of Prisons correctional officer, and his wife Lisa Gonzalez have been ordered to prison for accepting bribes from the family of an inmate in exchange for introducing contraband into the Federal Correctional Institution (FCI) in Three Rivers, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson. Both pleaded guilty to the charges on Aug. 14, 2014.

Today, U.S. District Judge Nelva Gonzales Ramos, who accepted the guilty plea, handed Mr. Gonzalez a 24-month sentence, while his wife was ordered to serve a total of 10 months in federal prison. At the hearing, additional evidence was presented including the lack of criminal history of both defendants and the military record of Mr. Gonzalez. While the government contended Joel Gonzalez had violated a position of trust, in handing down the sentence, Judge Ramos noted that the defendants had led exemplary lives prior to committing this offense. They were further ordered to serve three years of supervised release following completion of the prison term.

Joel Gonzalez admitted that from December 2012 through April 2014, he made arrangements to smuggle tobacco and other contraband into the FCI for an inmate in exchange for cash bribes. His wife assisted him in arranging times and locations for receiving the contraband and bribe payments. She also traveled with him from their residence in Beeville to Laredo in order to accept the items. Joel Gonzalez would then smuggle the items into the FCI on his body.

The investigation further revealed Lisa Gonzalez was employed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice during the orchestration of this scheme.

Previously released on bond, both were permitted to remain on bond and voluntarily surrender to a U.S. Bureau of Prisons facility to be determined in the near future.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice - Office of the Inspector General and the FBI with assistance from Customs and Border Protection, Beeville Police Department and the Texas Rangers. Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark Patterson is prosecuting.