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Southern District of Texas

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Former Law Enforcement Official Sentenced to 25 years for Drug Trafficking

McALLEN, Texas – A former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) task force officer/Mission Police Department investigator has been sentenced for his convictions of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and possession with intent to distribute cocaine, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson. A federal jury sitting in McAllen convicted Hector Mendez, 46, of San Juan, on July 14, 2016, following a six-day trial and approximately three hours of deliberation.

Today, U.S. District Judge Randy Crane, who presided over the trial, handed Mendez a 300-month sentence to be followed by five years of supervised release. In handing down the sentence, the court noted that Mendez had worked with the very best members of the law enforcement community and yet abused the special trust he held as a law enforcement officer. Judge Crane stated that Mendez's crimes were particularly reprehensible - that while working with DEA, Mendez was also profiting by stealing narcotics from the criminals he was supposed to investigate. The court hoped the serious sentence would serve as a deterrent to others.

During trial, the jury heard that Mendez conspired to steal approximately 14.9 kilograms of cocaine and stage a seizure of sham, or diluted cocaine, to cover the theft.

On July 25, 2012, Reynol Chapa-Garcia, 42, of Mission, had received a quantity of cocaine at a residence in Mission. Shortly thereafter, Mendez arrived at Chapa-Garcia's residence and collected the bundles of cocaine. Mendez and Chapa-Garcia had agreed the cocaine would be diluted or cut, then repackaged and staged for a seizure sometime later. The remaining cocaine would then be sold.

On July 28, 2012, a Ford Taurus was staged with the diluted bundles of cocaine in Mission. Mendez and other Mission Police Department officers seized the Taurus and drugs. Chapa-

Garcia made recorded calls to the person who had originally provided the drugs to conceal the fact that the cocaine had been cut and make it seem the bundles had been seized by law enforcement during the supposed transport.

Testimony of witnesses at trial established that Mendez intentionally concealed facts about the seizure in DEA reports and statements to federal prosecutors, presented false statements to multiple judges in sworn court filings and intentionally altered transcripts of recorded calls in evidence against Gonzalez.

Mendez has been and will remain in custody pending transfer to a U.S. Bureau of Prisons facility to be determined in the near future.

Chapa-Garcia pleaded guilty May 27, 2016, for his role in the conspiracy and will be sentenced at a later date.

The FBI, Department of Justice - Office of Inspector General (OIG), Department of Homeland Security – OIG and the DEA conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys James H. Sturgis and Kristen J. Rees prosecuted the case.

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