

PRESS RELEASE

Federal Corrections Officer and Wife Plead Guilty to Smuggling Contraband, Including Drugs, to Lompoc Inmate

Wednesday, August 5, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of California

LOS ANGELES – A correctional officer at a federal prison in Santa Barbara County and his wife pleaded guilty today to smuggling contraband – including a drug used to treat opioid addiction – to a prison inmate in exchange for a total of \$6,650 over several months.

Paul Betancourt, 38, and Sylvia Betancourt, 49, of Lompoc, each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to provide contraband to a federal inmate.

According to their plea agreements, Paul Betancourt was employed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) as a correctional officer at Federal Correction Complex, Lompoc. From May 2023 to September 2023, Paul Betancourt agreed to provide contraband to an FCC Lompoc inmate. Sylvia Betancourt received payment and contraband from the inmate through the inmate's intermediaries, which she then delivered to her husband.

The defendants admitted that on at least 13 occasions, they met with, or received payment from, a Lompoc inmate or one of the inmate's intermediaries for the delivery of contraband, including controlled substances such as suboxone. The payments ranged from \$100 to as much as \$1,500, according to court documents.

In total, the inmate paid the defendants \$6,650 to provide contraband to him at FCC Lompoc.

The BOP has indefinitely suspended Paul Betancourt.

United States District Judge Anne Hwang scheduled sentencing hearings for January 27, 2027, at which time the defendants will each face a statutory maximum sentence of five years in federal prison.

The United States of Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General investigated this matter.

Assistant United States Attorneys Christopher C. Kendall and Patrick Castañeda of the Transnational Organized Crime Section are prosecuting this case.

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Updated August 5, 2026