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Army Reserve Staff Sergeant Pleads Guilty to Bulk Cash Smuggling and Theft of Government Property While Serving in Afghanistan

A Fort Buchanan Army Reserve Staff Sergeant pleaded guilty today to bulk cash smuggling of \$113,050 and theft of government property worth \$6,302 while serving in Afghanistan.

Assistant Attorney General Leslie R. Caldwell of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney Rose Emilia Rodriguez-Velez of the District of Puerto Rico, Special Agent in Charge Carlos Cases of the FBI's San Juan Division Field Office, Special Agent in Charge Gary J. Hartwig of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations (ICE-HSI) Chicago Field Office, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John F. Sopko, Director Frank Robey of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command's (CID) Major Procurement Fraud Unit, Acting Special Agent in Charge Paul Sternal of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service's (DCIS) Mid-Atlantic Field Office and Brigadier General Keith M. Givens, Commander of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) made the announcement.

Luis Ramon Casellas, 42, of Canovanas, Puerto Rico, pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge Camille L. Velez-Rive of the District of Puerto Rico to three counts of bulk cash smuggling and one count of theft of government property. Sentencing before U.S. District Judge Carmen Consuelo Cerezo of the District of Puerto Rico will be scheduled at a later date.

Since 2009, Casellas has been an Army Reservist Staff Sergeant on active status based at Fort Buchanan in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. In April 2013, Casellas was deployed by the Army to Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan. As part of his duties, Casellas was responsible for helping to break down smaller bases in preparation for the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Afghanistan. These duties included retrieving U.S. government property for future use and selling unsuitable material as scrap to Afghan contractors.

Between June 17 and Aug. 9, 2013, Casellas was the leader of a three-person Army team that went to a Forward Operating Base (FOB) in Afghanistan to help break down that base. In connection with his plea, Casellas admitted that, while this team was at the FOB, he stole tools and equipment, including laptops, belonging to the U.S. Department of Defense. Casellas also admitted that, in July 2013, Casellas sent approximately eight boxes from the FOB through the U.S. Postal Service addressed to his wife in Puerto Rico, and that the boxes contained some of the stolen government property and undeclared U.S. currency totaling \$50,500.

In addition, in August 2013, Casellas sent two boxes from Kandahar through UPS, again addressed to his wife, that were marked as "gifts for family." In connection with his plea, Casellas admitted that, although he declared that the items inside the boxes were valued at \$700 and \$400, respectively, one box contained some of the stolen government property as well as \$41,750 in U.S. currency, and the other box contained \$20,800 in U.S. currency. These boxes were intercepted by U.S. Customs in Louisville, Kentucky.

This case was investigated by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, the FBI, ICE-HSI, Army CID, DCIS and AFOSI. This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Daniel P. Butler of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Julia M. Meconiates of the District of Puerto Rico.

 [Casellas Plea Agreement](#)