

# **Camp Pendleton Contracting Official Arrested on Federal Bribery Charges**

*Defendant Referred to Himself as the Godfather at Camp Pendleton*

**FBI San Diego**

April 01, 2013

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Daphne Hearn, Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the FBI San Diego Field Office, announces the arrest of Natividad Lara Cervantes, aka Nate Cervantes, age 64 of San Diego, California, on federal bribery charges.

Cervantes was arrested on Thursday, March 28, 2013, at approximately 6:40 p.m. in the vicinity of the 7000 block of Miramar Road in San Diego, California. Cervantes was arrested after accepting \$10,000 cash from an FBI cooperating witness (CW). The \$10,000 represented a partial payment of a \$40,000 bribe.

According to the complaint, filed in this matter with the United States District Court, Southern District of California, case number 13MJ1269, Cervantes is charged specifically with violating Title 18, United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 201 (b)(2), bribery. Cervantes allegedly used his position to extort bribes from businesses seeking to do business at Camp Pendleton and allegedly referred to himself as the "Godfather at Camp Pendleton." Cervantes is currently a U.S. Department of Defense employee and a supervisor for Construction and Service Contracts, Inspection Branch, at Camp Pendleton.

According to the complaint on or about March 26-28, 2013, Cervantes, while a public official, did directly and indirectly demand, seek, receive, accept, and agree to receive \$40,000 in cash in return for being influenced in the performance of an official act and being induced to do and omit to do any act in violation of his official duty, namely, assisting in obtaining for a contractor a new \$4 million flooring contract at Camp Pendleton.

The complaint alleges that Cervantes is engaged in receiving bribes and other crimes related to his management of construction contracts at Camp Pendleton. The complaint alleges that dating back to September 2008, Cervantes used his position to extort bribes from businesses seeking to do business at Camp Pendleton. Cervantes allegedly received thousands of dollars in cash payments and remodeling work on his condominium.

On Tuesday, March 26, 2013, an FBI CW met with Cervantes and agreed to pay Cervantes a \$40,000 bribe in exchange for Cervantes' assistance in obtaining a new \$4 million contract at Camp Pendleton. The first payment of \$20,000 was to be paid on Thursday, March 28, 2013, and the remaining \$20,000 to be paid upon the awarding of the contract. This meeting was monitored by federal agents.

On Thursday, March 28, 2013, the FBI CW met with Cervantes at a local business on Miramar Road in San Diego, California, to make the first payment that was discussed earlier in the week. During this meeting, the FBI CW and Cervantes discussed among other things the payment schedule and the source of funds for the bribe payments. At the conclusion of this meeting, the FBI CW handed Cervantes an envelope containing \$10,000 cash. After receiving the envelope, Cervantes was arrested by federal agents.

Following his arrest, Cervantes was booked into the Metropolitan Correctional Center (MCC), San Diego, California. Cervantes will remain at MCC pending his initial appearance before a U.S. Magistrate Judge on Monday, April 01, 2013.

Investigating agencies in this matter are as follows: Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Department of Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS), General Services Administration (GSA)-Office of Inspector General, Small Business Administration (SBA)-Office of Inspector General, and the FBI.

The U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of California, San Diego, California, is leading the prosecution in this matter.

This investigation was conducted under the FBI's public corruption investigative program. Public corruption is one of the FBI's top investigative priorities—behind only terrorism, espionage, and cyber crimes—and is the top priority of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division. The public is encouraged to report possible public corruption criminal activity to the FBI by calling the FBI's public corruption/border corruption hotline at (877) NO-BRIBE or (877) 662-7423.

An arrest itself is not evidence that the defendant committed the crimes charged. The defendant is presumed innocent until the government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.