



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FORMER U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENT SENTENCED TO 70 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR
BRIBERY AND ALLOWING COCAINE THROUGH CHECKPOINTS WITHOUT INSPECTION**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that in El Paso this morning, former U.S. Border Patrol agent Arturo Arzate, Jr., was sentenced to 70 years in federal prison on bribery and drug conspiracy charges.

“When Agent Arzate crossed the line and joined forces with the drug dealers, he betrayed us all. What he did is beyond reprehensible and today he pays the price for his treachery,” stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

In addition to the prison term, United States District Judge Frank Montalvo ordered that Arzate pay a \$30,000 fine and be placed under supervised release for 15 years after completing his prison term. Upon sentencing the defendant, Judge Montalvo stated, “I agree with the Government. By any other name, this is treason.”

On March 25, 2008, Arzate pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to possess cocaine and two counts of bribery of a public official. By pleading guilty, Arzate admitted that from September 14, 2005, until August 15, 2006, he conspired with others to possess with intent to distribute more than 500 grams of cocaine. In two undercover operations, on May 5, 2006, and again on June 1, 2006, Arzate received \$10,000 and \$6,000, respectively, in return for allowing narcotic laden vehicles to pass through the U.S. Border Patrol 62/180 checkpoint without inspection. In addition, Arzate admitted that on at least two occasions, he personally transported cocaine—90 pounds and 50 pounds, respectively—through the checkpoint and delivered it to an unnamed co-conspirator in Van Horn, Texas. Arzate also admitted that he had been paid to assist drug traffickers by allowing narcotic laden vehicles to pass through various Border Patrol checkpoints in the El Paso, Texas, sector since 1990.

Arzate was scheduled to plead guilty in January 2007, but fled to Mexico prior to entering his plea. In January 2008, he was extradited from Mexico with the assistance of the United States Marshal's Service and the Mexican authorities.

David Cuthbertson, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, El Paso Division stated, “Given the egregious nature of Arzate's actions and his violation of the public's trust as a sworn officer, the FBI believes the sentence served by the court was just. The FBI will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to ensure that the public can maintain the highest level of trust and confidence in those that carry a badge.”

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Arzate sentencing release

June 17, 2008

Page 2

Special Agent in Charge James E. Smith of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General stated, "Today's sentencing of former Border Patrol agent Arturo Arzate sends a cold clear message that those who choose to tarnish their badge with money will pay a heavy price. The Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General is committed to work hand in hand with our partners in the law enforcement community and with the U.S. Attorney's Office to strengthen the security of our nation by eradicating corruption from our midst and to insure the integrity of those agencies that comprise the Department of Homeland Security is never in question."

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security-Office of Inspector General, U.S. Border Patrol - Internal Affairs and the El Paso County Sheriff's Department. It was prosecuted for the government by Assistant United States Attorney Juanita Fielden.

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