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Former Laredo Police Department Officer Sentenced to Lengthy Prison Term for Drug Trafficking and Firearms Convictions

U.S. Attorney's Office
April 11, 2011

Southern District of Texas
(713) 567-9000

LAREDO, TX—Former Laredo Police Department (LPD) officer Orlando Jesus Hale, 28, has been sentenced to almost 25 years in federal prison without parole for drug trafficking and using a firearm during and in relation to the drug trafficking offense, United States Attorney José Angel Moreno announced today.

U.S. District Judge Micaela Alvarez sentenced Hale this morning to 235 months for his conviction of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine between Oct. 15, 2008, and Nov. 30, 2008. He also received a consecutive 60-month prison term for using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime and possessing the firearm in furtherance of the drug trafficking crime in November 2008, for a total of 295 months, or 24.5 years' imprisonment. Immediately following today's sentencing hearing, Judge Alvarez ordered Hale into the custody of the United States Marshals Service to begin serving his sentence pending transfer to a Bureau of Prisons facility to be designated in the near future. Hale had been free on bond until today's sentencing hearing.

Hale was convicted following a jury trial in September 2010, of conspiring with another former Laredo Police Officer, Pedro Martinez III, to escort cocaine-loaded vehicles through Laredo, Texas using their police-issued radios to monitor Laredo Police Department dispatch traffic during the escort. The firearms conviction is a result of Hale carrying a firearm during a meeting at a hotel in Laredo at which the co-conspirators discussed the details of the planned escorts with each other, and with an FBI undercover agent whom they believed was a drug trafficker.

During the trial, evidence was presented proving that Hale and then-fellow LPD officer, Pedro Martinez III, met with an FBI undercover agent posing as a drug dealer in a hotel room in Laredo on Nov. 7, 2008. During the recorded meet, Hale and Martinez discussed how the two officers could escort loads of 20 kilograms each of cocaine from south to north Laredo using their personal vehicles and police-issued radios to monitor dispatch traffic.

On Nov. 13, 2008, first Martinez, then Hale, each escorted a load vehicle during afternoon rush-hour traffic. Each vehicle contained 20 kilograms of sham cocaine. On Nov. 25, Hale and Martinez arranged to meet the payoff person in San Antonio, Texas, to receive payment for the protective escort services they had provided. Hale and Martinez each received \$1,000 from another undercover agent posing as the organization's moneyman. Martinez, who pleaded guilty prior to trial, testified against Hale at trial.

In addition to the terms of imprisonment, Hale was ordered to pay a \$2,000 fine and to serve a five-year term of supervised release upon release from prison.

The investigation leading to the charges was conducted by the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Immigration Customs Enforcement - Homeland Security Investigations, and Customs Border Protection, with the assistance and cooperation of the LPD. Assistant United States Attorney Roberto F. Ramirez prosecuted the case.

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