

Former U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer Pleads Guilty to Making False Statements

A former officer and program manager for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) pleaded guilty today to making false statements regarding his improper use of CBP and other law enforcement databases, announced Acting Assistant Attorney General Kenneth A. Blanco of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Dana J. Boente of the Eastern District of Virginia.

Jesus R. Muchacho, 39, of Temple Hills, Maryland, and a naturalized U.S. citizen from Venezuela, pleaded guilty to one count of making false statements before U.S. District Judge Leonie M. Brinkema of the Eastern District of Virginia. Sentencing is scheduled for July 7, 2017. According to admissions made in connection with his plea, in December 2013, Muchacho was reassigned to CBP's National Targeting Center Cargo (NTCC) in Herndon, Virginia, as a CBP officer and a program manager.

The NTCC targets and coordinates the examination of high-risk cargo entering the United States and persons associated with such shipments. According to his plea, Muchacho held a Top Secret security clearance, which gave him access to classified national security information, sensitive information and protected law enforcement database systems. Muchacho exceeded CBP's use restrictions by, among other things, making unauthorized searches and disclosing information to foreign nationals.

According to his plea, on Dec. 1, 2016, Muchacho falsely stated to federal law enforcement officers that: he did not send CBP or U.S. government information outside of CBP systems; he was not asked to provide, and he did not disclose, CBP or U.S. government information to third parties who did not have an authorized need to know; and he did not search law enforcement databases for non-official purposes. Muchacho further admitted that he made false statements during a background reinvestigation in 2014, when he applied for access to a classified information system in 2016, and when he was interviewed during a secondary inspection at Dulles International Airport. According to the plea, the false statements were related to his citizenship status, his contacts with foreign governments and an undisclosed foreign passport.

The CBP's Office of Professional Responsibility and the FBI's Washington Field Office are investigating the case. Trial Attorney Edward P. Sullivan of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and Assistant United States Attorney Grace L. Hill of the Eastern District of Virginia are prosecuting the case.