

# Former federal officer admits to smuggling aliens and receiving bribes to allow cocaine across the border

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**For Immediate Release**

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District of Texas

LAREDO, Texas – A former Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer has been convicted in two separate federal cases and now faces decades in prison, announced U.S. Attorney Alamdar S. Hamdani.

Emanuel Isac Celedon, 36, Laredo, pleaded guilty to four counts of bringing an undocumented alien to the United States through the Lincoln Juarez Port of Entry (POE) in Laredo. In a separate case, he also admitted to bribery and attempted importation of cocaine for taking money to allow what he thought was cocaine to cross into the United States from Mexico.

As part of the smuggling conspiracy, Celedon provided his daily lane assignment to conspirators to allow entry without inspection or documentation of passengers. This occurred on at least nine occasions between September and November 2023. Authorities also discovered that during at least two of these smuggling events, Celedon falsely input information into a CBP database in order to avoid sending the driver to mandatory secondary inspection.

The investigation revealed he asked others to relay information about his role to Mexican smugglers in attempts to reassure them he was doing his part to facilitate the organization's human smuggling efforts.

Law enforcement seized \$1,980 in cash from Celedon at the time of his arrest, which he admitted were proceeds from human smuggling.

In a separate case, Celedon agreed to smuggle what he believed were kilograms of cocaine from Mexico through his duty lane at the Laredo POE on two occasions in October 2023.

Celedon sought contacts within the cartels who would pay him to smuggle cocaine through the POE. The undercover investigation revealed Celedon expressed his interest in smuggling cocaine for payment, provided his duty schedule and instructed others to direct vehicles to his lane so he could allow them to safely cross into the United States.

Celedon was paid a total of \$6,000 after the vehicles with sham cocaine safely crossed the POE.

U.S. District Judges Diana Saldana and Marina Garcia Marmolejo will impose sentencing at later dates on the smuggling and bribery cases, respectively. At those times, Celedon faces up to 10 years on two counts and 15 years on the other two counts in the smuggling case as well as another 15 years for the bribery and 40 years for the drug charges. He also faces hundreds of thousands in possible fines.

Celedon will remain in custody pending those hearings.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) - Office of Inspector General, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Homeland Security Investigations and CBP- Office of Professional Responsibility conducted the investigation with assistance from the Texas Department of Public Safety, Border Patrol, Webb County Constable Precinct 2 and CBP Laredo Joint Forensic Center. Assistant U.S. Attorneys (AUSA) Jennifer Day and Richard Bennett are prosecuting both cases. AUSA Brian Bajew handled the plea today.

This investigation is related to an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) case. OCDETF identifies, disrupts and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found on the Department of Justice's OCDETF webpage.

This case is also supported by Joint Task Force Alpha (JTFA). Attorney General Merrick B. Garland created JTFA in June 2021 in partnership with the DHS to strengthen the Justice Department's overall efforts to combat the rise in prolific and dangerous smuggling emanating from Central America and impacting our border communities. JTFA is comprised of detailees from southwest border U.S. Attorneys' Offices, including the Southern and Western Districts of Texas, District of New Mexico, District of Arizona and Southern District of California. Numerous components of the Criminal Division are part of JTFA and provide dedicated support for the program which the Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section leads. The Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training; Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section; Money Laundering and Asset Recovery Section; Office of Enforcement Operations; Office of International Affairs and Violent Crime and Racketeering Section also provide support. JTFA also relies on substantial law enforcement investment from DHS, FBI, DEA and other partners. To date, JTFA's work has resulted in over 271 domestic and international arrests of leaders, organizers and significant facilitators of human smuggling; more than 211 U.S. convictions; significant jail sentences imposed; and substantial asset forfeiture.