



THE UNITED STATES  
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United States Attorney's Office  
Southern District of Texas  
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**USDA loan specialist and contractors sent to prison for roles in  
loan bribery scheme**

McALLEN, Texas – Three Starr County residents have been sentenced for their roles in a bribery scheme involving the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), announced U.S. Attorney Alamdar S. Hamdani.

Rio Grande City residents Roberto Rodriguez, 52, Daniel Diaz, 68, and Jose Sandoval, 71, each pleaded guilty May 17.

Chief U.S. District Judge Randy Crane has now imposed a 16-month term of imprisonment for Rodriguez, while Diaz and Sandoval received 8 and 6 months in federal prison, respectively. Each must also serve three years of supervised release following their sentences. At the hearing, the court heard additional evidence of the dollar amount of the contracts awarded to each contractor including \$1,107,228 to Diaz and \$709,854 to Sandoval. In handing down the prison terms, Judge Crane noted that he hoped it served as an example to the community not to get involved in corrupt practices.

“The people of the United States have the right to expect the utmost integrity from those electing to do business with the United States,” said Hamdani. “Diaz and Sandoval failed in that duty when they chose to bribe a federal official in order to obtain federal contracts. Rodriguez betrayed his oath of office when he chose to accept payments from those contractors in order to influence who would be awarded these contracts.”

At the time of his plea, Rodriguez admitted to accepting U.S. currency for referring applicants for the USDA Rural Development 504 Single Family

Housing Repair Grant and Loan program to contractors Diaz and Sandoval in order for each of them to receive money under the program.

Rodriguez also admitted he was a loan specialist responsible for approving the loans. Diaz and Sandoval both admitted they gave money to Rodriguez to receive work under the program.

Each were permitted to remain on bond and voluntarily surrender to a U.S. Bureau of Prisons facility to be determined in the near future.

The Department of Justice Office of Inspector General, USDA, FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Homeland Security Investigations and IRS Criminal Investigation conducted the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigations with the assistance of local task force officers. OCDETF identifies, disrupts and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found on the [Department of Justice's OCDETF webpage](#). Assistant U.S. Attorneys Patricia Cook Profit and Alexa Parcell prosecuted the cases.

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