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JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, December 23, 2010

Former Bell, California, Police Officer Sentenced to Nine Years on Federal Civil Rights Charge for Sexual Assault

WASHINGTON – A judge sentenced Feliciano Sanchez, a former officer with the Bell, Calif., Police Department, to nine years in federal prison and three years of supervised release for sexually assaulting a female motorist and violating her civil rights, the Justice Department announced.

Sanchez, 35, of Pico Rivera, Calif., pleaded guilty last year to violating the female victim's civil rights when he forced her to perform oral sex after stopping her for a traffic violation. Sanchez admitted in court that on May 16, 2007, he took the victim in his patrol car to an isolated parking lot away from the traffic stop. During the assault, Sanchez placed his hand on his duty weapon and forced the victim to perform the sex act.

According to evidence presented in court and in documents filed by prosecutors, Sanchez forced the victim to commit the sex act while armed and in his full police uniform. After the incident, Sanchez twice went to the victim's workplace to tell her that he would be watching her, which caused her to quit her job.

"These actions not only brutalized the victim, but undermined the public's trust in its law enforcement officers," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Department will aggressively prosecute law enforcement officers who violate the rights of the people they have sworn to protect and disregard the laws they have pledged to uphold."

"This former police officer violated his oath to serve and protect the community by committing a crime that was particularly offensive, dehumanizing and harmful," said U.S. Attorney André Birtote Jr. "In this case, Mr. Sanchez committed an egregious assault, caused incalculable pain and suffering to the victim, and damaged the honor of the thousands of men and women in law enforcement who serve us every day."

This case was investigated by agents from the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office. The case was prosecuted by former Assistant U.S. Attorney Tammy Spertus of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California, and Trial Attorney Karen Ruckert Lopez and former Trial Attorney Christine Dunn of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

10-1478

Civil Rights Division

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