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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

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Judge Sends Two to Federal Prison for Stealing and Selling more than \$2.4 Million Worth of Sensitive U.S. Military Equipment from Camp Mabry

Calling it "the ultimate breach of trust," U.S. District Judge Lee Yeakel sentenced 36-year-old former U.S. Property and Fiscal Office Program Analyst Joseph Mora and 27-year-old former Texas Army National Guardsman Cristal Avila to three years and two years in federal prison, respectively, for selling on the internet over \$2.4 million in sensitive military equipment stolen from Camp Mabry in Austin, announced U.S. Attorney Gregg N. Sofer; Department of Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) Special Agent in Charge Michael Mentavlos, Southwest Field Office; Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Special Agent in Charge Shane Folden, San Antonio; U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command (Army CID) Special Agent in Charge Ray Rayos, Southwestern Fraud Field Office; and, U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) Inspector in Charge Adrian Gonzalez, Houston Division.

In addition to the prison terms handed down during sentencing today in Austin, Judge Yeakel ordered that both defendants pay, jointly and severally, \$2,420,065 in restitution and be placed on supervised release for a period of three years after completing their respective prison terms. Judge Yeakel also ordered that the defendants forfeit to the government a 2016 Cadillac Escalade and a total of \$53,310.32 seized from two bank accounts owned by Mora.

According to court records, from 2016 to 2019, Mora and Avila stole large quantities of government property, including scopes, infrared laser aiming devices and thermal night vision goggles, with an estimated value in excess of \$2.4 million. Mora and Avila later sold the stolen goods on eBay and elsewhere.

"Stealing military equipment and offering it to the highest bidder endangers our communities and the brave men and women who protect us here at home and abroad. Thanks to the hard work of DCIS Southwest Field Office, HSI, Army CID, and USPIS, the individuals who purloined more than \$2.4 million worth of sensitive military gear have been held accountable and we can rest easier knowing that these items are not being offered up to criminals or those who would use them for nefarious purposes," stated U.S. Attorney Sofer.

On August 4, 2020, Mora pleaded guilty to one count of theft of government property. Avila did the same two days later. Both remain on bond pending formal notification from the U.S. Bureau of Prisons as to where and when to report to begin serving their prison terms.

"Today's sentencings are a result of a highly successful joint investigative effort by the DCIS Southwest Field Office, HSI, Army CID and USPIS," said DCIS Southwest Field Office Special Agent in Charge Michael Mentavlos. "DCIS and our law enforcement partners are committed to safeguarding sensitive military property and Department of Defense supply chains in order to protect the integrity of the Department of Defense, the investment of our taxpayers, and most importantly, the warfighter."

"The sentencing of Mora and Avila sends a clear message to those who break their military oath of protecting this nation by stealing and selling military technology for profit," said HSI San Antonio Special Agent in Charge Folden. "Scopes, infrared laser aiming equipment, and thermal night vision goggles are highly advanced technologies, giving our military a much deserved edge on today's battlefield. These schemes could potentially provide an opportunity for foreign adversaries to obtain sensitive U.S. equipment."

"Today's sentencing is another example of the great teamwork among law enforcement agencies," said Army CID Southwestern Fraud Field Office Special Agent in Charge Rayos. "These two defendants devised a criminal enterprise that deprived Soldiers of the equipment they needed for training. It is inexcusable and hopefully this sentence will send a strong message to those who think they can steal from the U.S. government."

"The U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) is committed to defending the nation's mail system from illegal use, no matter who the user is," said Inspector in Charge Gonzalez. "In this case, it includes ensuring that greedy individuals like Joseph Mora and Cristal Avila, who used positions of trust within the U.S. Military to steal sensitive equipment, do not use the U.S. Mails as the means to sell their ill-gotten goods. Postal Inspectors will continue to work tirelessly with our local, state and federal law enforcement partners to investigate these crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice."

The DCIS Southwest Field Office, HSI, Army CID, and USPIS conducted this investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael C. Galdo and Karthik Srinivasan prosecuted this case on behalf of the government.





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Topic(s):

Cyber Crime

Component(s):

USAO - Texas, Western

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