

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Marine and FBI Analyst Sentenced to 10 Years
for Transferring Classified Information to Assist in
Overthrow of Philippine Government

(More)

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NEWARK, N.J. – A former Marine who worked at times under two administrations in the Office of the Vice President of the United States was sentenced today to 10 years in prison for espionage and other charges for taking and transferring classified information to senior political and government officials of the Philippines in an attempt to destabilize and overthrow that country's government, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge William H. Walls sentenced Leandro Aragoncillo, 48, for his guilty pleas to espionage charges on May 4, 2006. There is no parole in the federal system, and Aragoncillo can be expected to serve nearly the entire sentence except for potential good-inmate credits. Judge Walls also fined Aragoncillo \$40,000.

“Those charged with protecting the nation have a special responsibility to maintain their oath of loyalty to the United States,” said Kenneth L. Wainstein, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. “As a former U.S. Marine and FBI analyst, Aragoncillo betrayed that oath, violated our espionage laws, and now must suffer the consequences of his actions.”

“Aragoncillo is guilty of grave betrayals,” said Christie. “He betrayed his Marine uniform, his adopted country and the trust bestowed on him as an FBI analyst.”

“The sentencing of Leandro Aragoncillo brings to a close a harmful and disgraceful story of how a formerly trustworthy FBI employee and U.S. Marine can turn into an enemy of the American people and the American way of life,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun. “Aragoncillo and his cohort, Michael Ray Aquino, have come full circle in the justice system, and for them the circle ends at a federal penitentiary”

At his plea hearing last year, Aragoncillo admitted that he regularly transferred to his Philippine contacts national security documents classified as Secret, and that the information could be used to the injury of the United States or to the advantage of a foreign nation. He also admitted traveling to the Philippines in January 2001 to meet his co-conspirators, including during a visit to the Malacanang Palace, the official residence of the president of the Philippines.

Aragoncillo admitted that some of the classified information he removed from of the Office of the Vice President between approximately October 2000 and February 2002 included information marked Top Secret that related to terrorist threats to United States government interests in the Philippines.

Aragoncillo, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in the Philippines and most recently of Woodbury, N.J., was an FBI intelligence analyst at Fort Monmouth, N.J. at the time of his arrest in 2005. He admitted that his espionage activity continued during his time as an FBI analyst.

Aragoncillo and Michael Ray Aquino, a former Philippines National Police official, were

arrested on Sept. 10, 2005. Aquino was among those to whom Aragoncillo passed classified information.

Judge Walls sentenced Aquino yesterday to 76 months in federal prison for his guilty plea to unlawfully possessing and retaining documents and information relating to the national defense.

Aragoncillo pleaded guilty to four counts of an Indictment: Conspiracy to Transmit National Defense Information; Transmission of National Defense Information; Unlawful Retention of National Defense Information; and Unlawful Use of a Government Computer.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI Newark Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, for their investigation of the espionage case.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Karl H. Buch and Michael Buchanan, of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division, and Clifford I. Rones, Senior Trial Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice in Washington.

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Defense Counsel: Chester M. Keller, Esq., First Assistant Federal Public Defender, Newark