

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
EASTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,            )  
  )  
Plaintiff,                                )  
  )  
  ) NO. 4:09CR382 CDP  
  )  
  )  
  )  
STEVEN CORTEZ-ORTEGA                )  
  )  
  )  
Defendant.

**PLEA AGREEMENT, GUIDELINES  
RECOMMENDATIONS AND STIPULATIONS**

Come now the parties pursuant to Section 6B1.4, Sentencing Guidelines and Policy Statements (October 1987), and the Administrative Order of this Court (July 19, 2006) and hereby stipulate and agree that the following are the parties' agreements, recommendations and stipulations:

**1. THE PARTIES:**

The parties to the agreements, recommendations and stipulations contained herein are the defendant STEVEN CORTEZ-ORTEGA, defense counsel JOHN D. STOBBS, II, and the Offices of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri and the Southern District of Illinois (hereinafter "the government"). This document and the agreements, recommendations and stipulations contained herein do not, and are not intended to, bind any governmental office or agency other than the Offices of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri and the Southern District of Illinois. It is understood by the parties that the Court is neither a party to nor bound by these agreements, recommendations and stipulations.

## **2. PLEA AGREEMENTS:**

### **A. The Plea:**

Pursuant to Rule 11(c)(1)(A), Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, in exchange for the defendant's voluntary plea of guilty to Count II (attempt to possess with the intent to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine) of the Indictment, the government agrees that no further federal prosecution will be brought in this District or the Southern District of Illinois relative to the defendant's participation in the conspiracy to distribute illegal narcotics from on or about 2008 until the present, of which the Offices of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri and the Southern District of Illinois are aware at this time.

Pursuant to Rule 11(c) and (d), Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the defendant fully understands that there will be no right to withdraw the plea entered under this agreement, except where the Court rejects those portions of the plea agreement which deal with charges the government agrees to dismiss or not to bring.

### **B. The Sentence:**

Pursuant to Rule 11(c)(1)(B), Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, in this document the parties have addressed the United States Sentencing Guidelines, the factors set forth in Title 18, United States Code, Section 3553(a), and other factors relevant to sentencing. The parties agree that the recommendations contained herein fairly and accurately set forth the Guidelines applicable to this case. The parties believe that the Court should use these recommendations in determining the defendant's sentence along with any other factors specified in this agreement.

The parties acknowledge that the Guidelines application recommendations set forth herein are the result of negotiations between the parties as to the Guidelines applications they address; that

these negotiated recommendations as well as the agreements the government made in paragraph 2A led to the guilty plea in this case; and that each party has a right to rely upon and hold the other party to the recommendations at the time of sentencing. The parties further agree that neither party shall request a sentence above or below the applicable guideline range pursuant to any chapter of the Guidelines, Title 18, United States Code, Section 3553(a), or any other provision or rule of law, unless that request or facts which support that request are addressed in this document or the request is made with the consent of both parties. The parties understand that the District Court is neither a party to nor bound by the Guidelines recommendations agreed to in this document.

**C. Waiver of Post-Conviction Rights:**

(1) **Appeal:** The defendant has been fully apprised by defense counsel of the defendant's rights concerning appeal and fully understands the right to appeal the sentence under Title 18, United States Code, Section 3742.

(a) **Non-Sentencing Issues:** In the event the Court accepts the plea, as part of this agreement, both the defendant and the government hereby waive all rights to appeal all non-jurisdictional issues including, but not limited to, any issues relating to pre-trial motions, hearings and discovery and any issues relating to the negotiation, taking or acceptance of the guilty plea or the factual basis for the plea.

(b) **Sentencing Issues:** In the event the Court accepts the plea and, in sentencing the defendant, 1) applies the recommendations agreed to by the parties herein, and 2) after determining a Sentencing Guideline range, sentences the defendant within that range, then, as part of this agreement, both the defendant and the government hereby waive all rights to appeal all sentencing issues, including any issues relating to the determination of the Total Offense Level, the Criminal History Category, and Career Offender status.

(2) *Habeas Corpus*: The defendant acknowledges being guilty of the crime to which a plea is being entered, and further states that neither defense counsel nor the government has made representations which are not included in this document as to the sentence to be imposed. The defendant further agrees to waive all rights to contest the conviction or sentence in any post-conviction proceeding, including one pursuant to Title 28, United States Code, Section 2255, except for claims of prosecutorial misconduct or ineffective assistance of counsel.

**D. Disclosures Required by the United States Probation Office:**

The defendant agrees to complete and sign forms as required by the United States Probation Office prior to sentencing, including a Net Worth Statement (Probation Form 48); or a Net Worth Short Form Statement (Probation Form 48 EZ); a Cash Flow Statement (Probation Form 48B); a Declaration of Defendant or Offender Net Worth and Cash Flow Statements (Probation Form 48D); a Customer Consent and Authorization for Access to Financial Records (Probation Form 48E); and an Authorization to Release Government (State or Federal) Information to Probation Officer (Probation Form 11-H). The defendant agrees to provide complete, truthful and accurate information on these forms and consents to the release of these forms and any supporting documentation by the United States Probation Office to the government. The defendant also agrees to complete and sign forms, including a Customer Consent Authorization for Access to Financial Records During Supervision (Probation Form 48I), as required by the United States Probation Office during the defendant's term of supervised release or probation. The defendant agrees to provide complete, truthful and accurate information on these forms and consents to the release of these forms and any supporting documentation by the United States Probation Office to the government and to defense counsel.

**E. Civil or Administrative Actions not Barred; Effect on Other Governmental Agencies:**

The defendant has discussed with defense counsel and understands that nothing contained in this document is meant to limit the rights and authority of the United States of America to take any civil, tax or administrative action against the defendant including, but not limited to, asset forfeiture, deportation and any listing and debarment proceedings to restrict rights and opportunities of the defendant to contract with government agencies. Further, any recommendation in this document as to the amount of loss or restitution is not binding upon the parties in any civil or administrative action by the government against the defendant.

**F. Forfeiture of Interest in Property Seized:**

The defendant agrees to forfeit all of the defendant's interest in all items seized by law-enforcement officials during the course of their investigation and will not contest the forfeiture to law enforcement of such items. The defendant specifically admits that all United States currency, weapons, property and assets seized by law enforcement officials during their investigation constitute the proceeds of the defendant's illegal activity, were commingled with illegal proceeds or were used to facilitate the illegal activity and agrees not to file a claim in any forfeiture proceeding or to contest, in any manner, the forfeiture of said currency, weapons, property or assets.

The defendant further agrees not to assist any other individual in contesting those forfeitures on the defendant's behalf and agrees that there was reasonable cause to seize the aforementioned currency, weapons, property or assets. The defendant agrees to prevent the disbursement of any and all monies, property or assets derived from unlawful activities, if said disbursements are within the defendant's direct or indirect interest or control. The defendant agrees to take all steps necessary and to execute any documents needed, to transfer title or ownership of these items to the government,

to include truthful testimony to rebut the claims of nominees and/or alleged third party owners of any of these seized items.

The defendant further agrees that any and all seized items may be disposed of by law enforcement officials in accordance with the established practices and policies of the respective law enforcement agency.

**3. GUIDELINES RECOMMENDATIONS (NOT BINDING ON THE COURT):**

**A. Manual to be Used:** The parties recommend that the 2008 version of the Guidelines Manual applies.

**B. Offense Conduct:**

(1) **Base Offense Level:** The parties recommend that the base offense level is 36 as found in Section 2D1.1(c)(2). The parties recommend that the quantity of mixture or substance containing cocaine and methamphetamine for which the defendant is accountable, including relevant conduct, when converted to its marihuana equivalent is more than 10,000 kilograms and less than 30,000 kilograms of marihuana, resulting in the recommended Base Offense Level.

(2) **Chapter 2 Adjustments:** The parties recommend that no Chapter 2 Adjustments apply.

**C. Chapter 3 Adjustments:** The parties recommend that the following adjustments, other than acceptance of responsibility, apply: A 3 level enhancement as the defendant was a manager or supervisor in a criminal activity that involved 5 or more participants as defined at Section 3B1.1(b).

**D. Acceptance of Responsibility:** The parties recommend that two levels should be deducted pursuant to Section 3E1.1(a) because the defendant has clearly demonstrated acceptance of responsibility.

The parties agree that if the defendant does not abide by all of the agreements made within this document, the defendant's failure to comply is grounds for the loss of acceptance of responsibility pursuant to Section 3E1.1. The parties further agree that the defendant's eligibility for a reduction pursuant to Section 3E1.1 is based upon the information known at the present time and that any actions of the defendant which occur or which become known to the government subsequent to this agreement and are inconsistent with the defendant's acceptance of responsibility including, but not limited to criminal conduct, are grounds for the loss of acceptance of responsibility pursuant to Section 3E1.1. In any event, the parties agree that all of the remaining provisions of this agreement remain valid and in full force and effect.

If the deduction pursuant to Section 3E1.1(a) is applied, the government moves to deduct one additional level pursuant to Section 3E1.1(b), because the defendant "timely notified authorities of the intention to enter a plea of guilty, thereby permitting the government to avoid preparing for trial and permitting the government and the Court to allocate their resources efficiently."

**E. Estimated Total Offense Level:** Based on these recommendations, the parties estimate that the Total Offense Level is 36.

**F. Criminal History:** The determination of the defendant's Criminal History Category shall be left to the Court after it reviews the Presentence Report. The Criminal History Category determination will be made only after the United States Probation Office obtains and evaluates the records it can find of the defendant's criminal history. Prior convictions can affect the sentence and usually result in a harsher sentence. Both parties retain their right to challenge, before sentencing, the finding of the Presentence Report as to the defendant's criminal history and the applicable category.

Both parties are aware that the results of a preliminary criminal record check are available for review in the Pretrial Services Report.

**G. Acknowledgment of Effect of Recommendations:**

The parties recognize that they may not have addressed or foreseen all the Guidelines provisions applicable in this case. Guidelines applications not expressly addressed by the parties' recommendations, but which are addressed by the Presentence Report or the Court, may be presented to the Court for consideration. The parties agree and understand that the Court, in its discretion, may apply any Guidelines not addressed in this document.

Furthermore, this Court is not bound by these recommendations. The refusal of this Court to follow the recommendations of the parties shall not serve as a basis to withdraw the plea.

**4. STIPULATION OF FACTS RELEVANT TO SENTENCING:**

The parties stipulate and agree that the facts in this case are as follows and that the government would prove these facts beyond a reasonable doubt:

On May 1, 2009, agents received information from the ongoing investigation along with information from a confidential source (CS) who has proven reliable multiple times in the recent past that a large drug transaction was going to take place at 3712 Texas St. Louis, Missouri between an unidentified Hispanic male, who was later identified as **Elizandro GONZALES-CORTEZ**, and **Steven CORTEZ-ORTEGA**.

Based upon that information, members of DEA Fairview Heights initiated surveillance on **Elizandro GONZALES-CORTEZ'S** residence located at 3712 Texas St. Louis, Missouri and on **Steven CORTEZ-ORTEGA'S** residence located at 724 Summit Avenue, Apartment #7, Collinsville, Illinois.



During the surveillance, agents observed **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** depart 724 Summit Avenue, Apartment #7, Collinsville, Illinois and travel to St. Louis, Missouri driving a 2003 red Jeep Wrangler. There was a passenger in **CORTEZ-ORTEGA'S** vehicle that was later identified as Eduardo **RUEDA-AQUILAR**.

Agents observed **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** travel to Broadway Avenue in St. Louis where he pulled off to the side of the road and waited for the **GONZALES-CORTEZ** to arrive.

**GONZALES-CORTEZ** was observed departing the residence of 3712 Texas driving a 2002 green Chevrolet truck and proceed to **CORTEZ-ORTEGA'S** Broadway Avenue location and meet with **CORTEZ-ORTEGA**. Both vehicles then departed the location with **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** following **GONZALES-CORTEZ** to the intersection of Texas and Chippewa in St. Louis, Missouri. **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** parked his vehicle at the intersection where he and **RUEDA-AQUILAR** were observed exiting their vehicle and getting into **GONZALES-CORTEZ'S** vehicle.

Agents observed **GONZALES-CORTEZ** drive directly to 3712 Texas with **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** and **RUEDA-AQUILAR**. Once at the residence they all went inside.

While inside the residence, agents obtained information from the CS who indicated that **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** was attempting to obtain a large amount of cocaine from **GONZALES-CORTEZ** inside the residence.

A short time later, agents observed the three subjects exit the front of the residence. Agents approached the subjects and placed all three under arrest. Incident to their arrest, **GONZALES-CORTEZ** provided agents with consent to search his residence and detached garage located at 3712 Texas. A search of the residence resulted in the seizure of approximately one kilogram of cocaine and approximately one kilogram of cocaine inside a vehicle located in the detached garage. The kilogram of cocaine inside the vehicle was concealed in a secret compartment located in the rear

bumper area of the vehicle. The substance believed to be cocaine field tested positive as such and was later confirmed by the DEA North Central Crime Laboratory to in fact be 2,000 grams of cocaine hydrochloride.

**GONZALES-CORTEZ** later agreed to be interviewed by agents after being advised his Miranda Rights and Warnings. **GONZALES-CORTEZ** admitted the cocaine inside the residence and garage was his and stated he obtained the two kilograms of cocaine from the Chicago, Illinois area the previous day and intended to distribute it. **GONZALES-CORTEZ** advised he obtained the cocaine on the "front" and asked **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** to come to the residence to look at the cocaine and purchase some. **GONZALES-CORTEZ** further advised he had knowledge **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** resided in the Collinsville, Illinois area where **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** distributes cocaine to his customers.

**CORTEZ-ORTEGA** also agreed to be interviewed by agents after being advised his Miranda Rights and Warnings. **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** admitted he went to **GONZALES-CORTEZ'S** residence located at 3712 Texas to look at some cocaine **GONZALES-CORTEZ** had available for sale. **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** advised **GONZALES-CORTEZ** showed him one kilogram of cocaine and provided him prices to purchase the cocaine. **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** further advised agents he was attempting to obtain one half kilogram of cocaine for a customer in the Collinsville, Illinois area. **CORTEZ-ORTEGA** advised he was attempting to get the cocaine "fronted" to him by **GONZALES-ORTEGA** and was leaving the residence to check with his customers concerning amount and price when he was arrested.

The defendant and the government agree that the facts set forth above are true and may be considered as "relevant conduct" pursuant to Section 1B1.3.

**5. ELEMENTS OF THE OFFENSE:**

As to **Count II**, the defendant admits to knowingly violating Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and 846, and admits there is a factual basis for the plea and further fully understands that the elements of the crime are:

(1) That on or about May 1, 2009, in St. Louis City and within the Eastern District of Missouri, the defendant attempted to possess cocaine, a controlled substance and;

(2) The defendant did so knowingly and intentionally and;

(3) That he committed a substantial step in furtherance of the attempt to possess cocaine, and;

(4) That at the time he attempted to possess the cocaine, he intended to distribute some or all of it and;

(5) That the amount of cocaine involved in the offense was 500 grams or more.

**6. PENALTIES:**

**A. Statutory Penalties:** The defendant fully understands that the maximum possible penalty provided by law for Count II of the Indictment to which the defendant is pleading guilty is imprisonment of not more than 40 years, a fine of not more than \$2,000,000, or both such imprisonment and fine. The Court shall also impose a period of supervised release of not less than four years. The defendant fully understands that the offense charged in Count II to which he is pleading guilty carries a minimum mandatory term of imprisonment of not less than five years.

**B. Sentencing Guidelines Effect on Penalties:** The defendant understands that except for Title 18, Sections 3553(b)(1) and Section 3742 (e), this offense is affected by the provisions and Guidelines of the "Sentencing Reform Act of 1984," Title 18, United States Code, Sections 3661 *et. seq.* and Title 28, United States Code, Section 994.

C. **Supervised Release:** The defendant understands that the Court may impose a term of "supervised release" to follow incarceration pursuant to Title 18, United States Code, Section 3583 (Sentencing Guidelines, Chap. 5, Part D). The defendant further understands that pursuant to the supervised release term, the Court will impose standard conditions upon the defendant and may impose special conditions upon the defendant which relate to the crime the defendant committed. These conditions will be restrictions on the defendant to which the defendant will be required to adhere. The defendant further understands that violation of the conditions of the term of supervised release resulting in revocation may require the defendant to serve a term of imprisonment equal to the length of the term of supervised release, but not greater than the term set forth in Title 18, United States Code, Section 3583(e)(3), without credit for the time served after release. The defendant understands that parole has been abolished.

D. **Mandatory Special Assessment:** The defendant further acknowledges that this offense is subject to the provisions of the Criminal Fines Improvement Act of 1987 and that the Court is required to impose a mandatory special assessment of \$100 per count for a total of \$100, which the defendant agrees to pay at the time of sentencing. The defendant further agrees that if the mandatory special assessment imposed by the Court is not paid at the time of sentencing, until the full amount of the mandatory special assessment is paid, money paid by the defendant toward any restitution or fine imposed by the Court shall be first used to pay the mandatory special assessment.

**7. FINES AND COSTS:**

The defendant understands that the Court may impose a fine, costs of incarceration and costs of supervision. The defendant agrees that any fine imposed by the Court will be due and payable immediately.

**Effect of Bankruptcy on Fines:** The defendant hereby stipulates that any fine imposed by the Court is not dischargeable in any case commenced by the defendant or the defendant's creditors pursuant to the Bankruptcy Code. The defendant agrees not to attempt to avoid paying any fine imposed by the Court through any proceeding pursuant to the United States Bankruptcy Code, and stipulates that enforcement of any fine by the United States is not barred or affected by the automatic stay provisions of the United States Bankruptcy Code (Title 11, United States Code, Section 362).

**8. ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND WAIVER OF THE DEFENDANT'S RIGHTS:**

The defendant acknowledges and fully understands the following rights: the right to plead not guilty to the charges; the right to be tried by a jury in a public and speedy trial; the right to file pre-trial motions, including motions to suppress evidence; the right at such trial to a presumption of innocence; the right to require the government to prove the entire case against the defendant beyond a reasonable doubt; the right not to testify; the right not to present any evidence; the right to be protected from compelled self-incrimination; the right at trial to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses; the right to testify and present evidence; and the right to compel the attendance of witnesses. The defendant further understands that by this guilty plea, the defendant expressly waives all the rights set forth in this paragraph.

The defendant fully understands that the defendant has the right to be represented by counsel, and if necessary, to have the Court appoint counsel at trial and at every other stage of the proceeding. The defendant's counsel has explained these rights and the consequences of the waiver of these rights to defendant. The defendant fully understands that, as a result of the guilty plea, no trial will, in fact, occur and that the only action remaining to be taken in this case is the imposition of the sentence by this Court.

The defendant is fully satisfied with the representation received from defense counsel. The defendant has reviewed the government's evidence and discussed the government's case and all possible defenses and defense witnesses with defense counsel. Defense counsel has completely and satisfactorily explored all areas which the defendant has requested relative to the government's case and any defenses.

**9. PRESENTENCE REPORT AND SENTENCING:**

Following defendant's guilty plea, a Presentence Report will be prepared by the United States Probation Office. Defendant agrees to provide truthful information to the Probation Officer so that an accurate Presentence Investigation Report may be prepared. At the time of sentencing, the defendant, his attorney and the government reserve the right to allocution regarding the appropriate sentence to be imposed. Each party also reserves the right to bring any misstatements of fact made either by the other party or on that party's behalf to the attention of the Court at the time of sentencing.

**10. STANDARD OF INTERPRETATION:**

In interpreting this document, any drafting errors or ambiguities contained herein shall not automatically be construed against any party, whether or not the party was involved in drafting this document.

**11. VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE PLEA AND THE PLEA AGREEMENT, RECOMMENDATIONS AND STIPULATIONS:**

This document constitutes the entire agreement between the defendant and the government, and no other promises or inducements have been made, directly or indirectly, by any agent of the government, including any Department of Justice attorney, concerning any plea to be entered in this

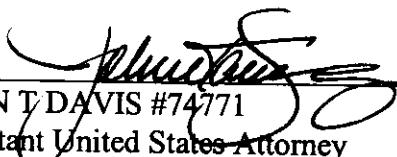
case or the agreements, recommendations or stipulations contained herein. In addition, the defendant states that no person has, directly or indirectly, threatened or coerced the defendant to do or refrain from doing anything in connection with any aspect of this case, including entering a plea of guilty. The defendant's agreements, recommendations and stipulations as set forth above are made in exchange for the United States' agreements, recommendations and stipulations set forth.

The defendant acknowledges that the defendant has voluntarily entered into both this plea and these agreements, recommendations and stipulations. The defendant further acknowledges that this guilty plea is made of the defendant's own free will because the defendant is, in fact, guilty of the conduct specified in sections four and five above.

**12. CONSEQUENCES OF FURTHER CRIMINAL CONDUCT OR WITHDRAWAL OF PLEA BY DEFENDANT:**

The defendant agrees that if, between the time of signing this document and the sentencing the defendant engages in any criminal activity, the government shall be released from any obligations or limits on its power to prosecute the defendant created by this document, and any such conduct shall be grounds for the loss of acceptance of responsibility pursuant to Section 3E1.1.

8-10-09  
Date

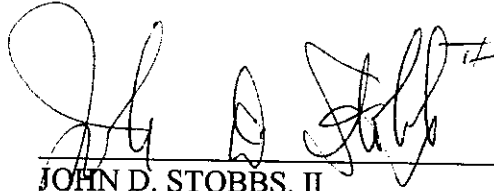
  
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~~8-09~~ 8-10-09  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
STEVEN CORTEZ-ORTEGA  
Defendant

8-10-09

Date



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