

Statement of José L. Betancourt, 11 July 2007

I accept full responsibility for attempting to assist a small information technology business in submitting a bid to the Navy shortly after retiring from active duty after a career of 33 years. I should have realized that as a Flag Officer, it was improper for me to do so for at least one year after leaving active duty. I had checked with a Navy attorney prior to beginning my post-military career and mistakenly believed my actions were acceptable. At the time, the company I consulted for issued a news release announcing that I was affiliated with it, so there was never any attempt to conceal my involvement.

The moment I learned my action was prohibited, I immediately severed my relationship with the company. I notified the Navy that I was no longer affiliated with the company and requested that my name be removed from the solicitation. It was an embarrassing situation that I deeply regret.

Fortunately, to the best of my knowledge, the company did not get the bid, did not profit from my association with it, and no tax dollars were expended as a result of my participation.

But actions have consequences. I respect the decision of the U.S. Attorney and will fully comply with the imposed sentence. This experience has reinforced one of life's important lessons: Laws, rules and regulations exist for a reason. They must be adhered to by everyone. No one is above the law.

This misdemeanor plea carries a substantial fine. In addition, I owe the U.S. Navy, the school district and the people of San Diego an apology. My entire life has been devoted to public service and I'm deeply sorry I did not set a better example in this instance.

Throughout my career with the Navy and now with our schools, I have been honored to serve. All of my adult life, it has been a privilege to help others, and I hope to continue serving the students and families of the San Diego Unified School District in the years ahead. This has been a most humbling experience that I will never repeat or forget.