

Judge: Hooper must serve probationary term

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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The former corrections officer who was charged in April 2016 with smuggling contraband into the McKinley County Adult Detention Center received an 18-month prison sentence Nov. 21. A judge ordered that part of the sentence suspended, and Terrance Hooper must serve that same amount of time on supervised probation.

That was the sentence handed down by Eleventh Judicial District Court Judge Robert Aragon regarding the Hooper case.

“You did take an oath and in a very real sense, you swore to protect us and the U.S. Constitution,” Aragon told Hooper during proceedings. “If we can’t trust the people who wear a badge, then you can’t trust anyone.”

Hooper, 24, was employed as a jail officer at the county detention center when it was discovered that he was part of a multi-person scheme to bring methamphetamine into the facility. He was subsequently arrested by undercover officers with the McKinley County Sheriff’s Office Narcotics Unit.

Kerry Comiskey, deputy district attorney representing the 11th Judicial District, told Aragon that Hooper was arrested when another inmate overheard Hooper telling his girlfriend about the scheme to bring the meth inside the jail. She was told who to call and staff at the jail. The undercover sheriff’s officers took things from there.

At the time of the initial arrest, Hooper was sent to jail at the Cibola County Detention Center for safety reasons, jail officials said at the time.

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“I hope you realize that you got a real break today,” Aragon told Hooper. “I want you to remember this and teach your children how costly this can be.”

A previous court appearance by Hooper resulted in a rescheduling because a plea agreement before Aragon placed restrictions on the length of a sentence.

Hooper told Aragon that he was raising two children and said he recognized the error of his ways. Hooper was initially jailed on a conspiracy to bring contraband into a detention facility, which is a fourth degree felony.

There have been three attempts in 2016 by jail corrections officers to bring contraband into the jail. Each time, the incident was squashed by officers with the McKinley County Sheriff's Office.

Hooper is not eligible to be hired again at the detention center, officials have said.

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