



# Department of Justice

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## **FORMER HERTFORD COUNTY, N.C., CHIEF DEPUTY PLEADS GUILTY FOR ASSAULT ON INMATE**

WASHINGTON – The Justice Department announced today that Timothy Lassiter, the former chief deputy of the Hertford County, N.C., Sheriff’s Office, pleaded guilty today in federal court in Elizabeth City, N.C., to violating the civil rights of an inmate during a court appearance.

According to information presented to the court, on June 12, 2012, the inmate created a verbal disturbance during a court appearance. After removing the inmate from the courtroom, Lassiter repeatedly and unjustifiably punched the inmate in his face and body at a time when the inmate was handcuffed and posed no threat to law enforcement. The inmate was injured as a result of the assault.

“The Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice works to ensure that no law enforcement officer abuses his power to assault a person in his custody,” said Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Roy L. Austin Jr. “This assault by a sheriff’s deputy which started in a courtroom – the very place where the constitutional rights of all Americans, including those accused of crimes, are applied and enforced on a daily basis. This plea demonstrates that the department will vigorously defend the integrity of our legal system.”

U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina Thomas G. Walker stated, “This deputy’s deliberate abuse of authority undermines the efforts of the vast majority of law enforcement officers who honor their oath to uphold the law.”

“Every citizen has the right to expect law enforcement officers to act legally and in accordance with the Constitution. Former Chief Deputy Timothy Lassiter's actions were inexcusable. The charges against him should serve as a reminder that no one is above the law,” said John Strong, the Special Agent in Charge of the Charlotte Division of the FBI.

Lassiter pleaded guilty to one count of deprivation of rights under color of law. He faces a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. A sentencing hearing has been scheduled for Sept. 9, 2013.

This case was investigated by the FBI and prosecuted by Civil Rights Division Trial Attorney Betsy Biffel and Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina Toby Lathan.

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