



U. S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Washington

PRESS RELEASE

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“OFFICER THOMPSON CHARGED FOR THE BEATING OF OTTO ZEHM”

Spokane – Today, James A. McDevitt, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, and Loretta King, Acting Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division, announced the unsealing of a two count federal grand jury indictment returned against Karl F. Thompson, Jr., age 61.

The Indictment charges Karl Thompson, a Spokane Police officer, with the deprivation of Otto Zehm’s civil rights on March 18, 2006, by repeatedly striking him with a baton and tasing him, resulting in bodily injury. The Indictment also charges Karl Thompson with making a false entry in a record in a matter investigated by a federal agency.

James A. McDevitt, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, said, “Law enforcement officers are entrusted with important power and authority. With that authority comes the responsibility not to abuse essential constitutional rights of those they serve.”

The civil rights charge carries a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, up to 3 years of court supervision after release and restitution. The falsification of records in a matter investigated by a federal agency carries a maximum penalty of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and up to 3 years of court supervision after release.

The federal civil rights statutes prohibit intentional acts by law enforcement officials who misuse their positions to unlawfully deprive individuals of constitutional rights, such as the right to be free from unwarranted assaults, illegal arrests and searches. Because almost any matter which presents a violation of federal law is also a matter involving a local or state law violation, deference is given to local prosecutions. But where there is no local action or where the results of the state or local proceedings are insufficient to vindicate federal interests, a federal prosecution may be brought.

This investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This case is being prosecuted by Timothy Durkin, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington and Victor Boutros, Trial Attorney for the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

An Indictment Contains Allegations That a Defendant Has Committed a Crime. Every Defendant Is Presumed Innocent until and Unless Proven Guilty Beyond a Reasonable Doubt.