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WINNFIELD POLICE CHIEF CONVICTED AT TRIAL

Chief Johnnie Carpenter Convicted of Obstructing U. S. Deputy Marshal

ALEXANDRIA, La.: Johnnie Carpenter, the Chief of Police of Winnfield, La., was convicted by a federal jury of obstructing a Deputy United States Marshal as he attempted to serve a federal arrest warrant, United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today.

Trial testimony showed that on August 27, 2009, officers and agents of the U. S. Marshal Service Fugitive Task Force, the FBI Violent Gang Task Force, and Winn Parish Sheriff's Office traveled to Winnfield to make the arrest of a woman wanted on a federal arrest warrant for bank fraud out of the Western District of Washington. The woman was also the subject of an investigation by the Seattle Police Department for two homicides and two shootings, and she was affiliated with a violent gang in Seattle. FBI task force agents from Seattle traveled to Winnfield to assist the USMS.

The officers converged on the subject's apartment and knocked on the door. The subject answered the door and was arrested. Thereafter, a large crowd began to gather outside. Several males shouted to "get the chief."

A male later identified as Carpenter emerged from the crowd and demanded to know “why are these folks being arrested.” He never identified himself, nor did he have any badge or markings of any type on his person. He yelled for the crowd to follow him, and the crowd pushed forward around the arrest team.

U. S. Deputy Marshal Belgard approached Carpenter and advised him that the investigation was still in progress and that he was now inciting the crowd. Belgard ordered Carpenter to get on the sidewalk away from the officers and the arrestees. Belgard repeated his command to Carpenter at least 10 times, but Carpenter refused, and he continued to yell over Belgard’s commands. The deputy then advised Carpenter that he was obstructing a federal investigation, and if he continued, he would be removed and possibly arrested.

Carpenter disregarded Belgard’s orders and continued to attempt to prevent the arrest. Later on that same day, Carpenter showed up at the police station and got into a shouting match with the deputy about the arrest and activities related to their earlier exchange.

An October 28, 2009 indictment charged Carpenter with one count of willfully obstructing, resisting and opposing a Deputy United States Marshal from serving a federal arrest warrant. The jury deliberated for 2 hours before returning a guilty verdict. Carpenter faces a maximum potential penalty of one year in prison, a \$100,000 fine, or both. Sentencing has been set for July 27, 2011, before U. S. Magistrate Judge James D. Kirk.

This case was investigated by the United States Marshal Service and is being prosecuted by Assistant U. S. Attorney James G. Cowles, Jr.

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