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United States Attorney
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**FORMER CORRECTIONS OFFICER SENTENCED
FOR CRIMINAL SEXUAL ACTIVITY**

Alexandria, La.: United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced that U.S. District Court Judge Dee Drell sentenced former corrections officer Joseph Taunton, 32, of Jonesville, La., yesterday to 10 months in prison for engaging in a sexual act with a federal detainee at the LaSalle Detention Facility in Jena, La., on Dec.16, 2010.

Taunton pleaded guilty to the felony sex act on April 7, 2011. During the plea hearing, Taunton admitted that he entered the victim's cell, while on duty, and engaged in sexual conduct with the victim.

"Corrections officers are entrusted with critical public safety duties, and it is unacceptable when they abuse that power by violating the rights of others," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Justice Department is committed to prosecuting officers that participate in criminal activity to the fullest extent of the law."

The case was investigated by the Department of Homeland Security—Office of Inspector General. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mary Mudrick of the Western District of Louisiana and by Angie Cha, a Trial Attorney in the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division.

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