



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

News Release

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Former TSA employee pleads guilty to federal hate crime

MINNEAPOLIS—George Thompson, age 64, a former employee of the Transportation Security Administration in Minneapolis, pleaded guilty earlier today in federal court in St. Paul to violating the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Specifically, Thompson admitted assaulting an 83-year-old Somali man on May 4, 2010.

According to the information presented during the plea hearing, Thompson targeted the elderly victim because the victim had a beard, which caused Thompson to believe he was a Muslim and an African immigrant. Thompson admitted he assaulted the victim solely because he believed the man to be Muslim and Somali. During the assault, Thompson yelled that the victim should go back to Africa.

“No one should be a victim of assault because of their race or religion,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “The Department of Justice will continue to vigorously enforce the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act and all the laws under our jurisdiction.”

B. Todd Jones, U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota, added, “Physical violence motivated by racial or religious hatred exacerbates fear and tear at the fabric of our society. When warranted by the facts and circumstances, we will vigorously prosecute these crimes, which are violations of federal law. Here in Minnesota, we have vibrant and diverse communities and should be celebrating that fact, not assaulting people because of it.”

For his crime, Thompson faces a potential maximum penalty of ten years in prison. U.S. District Court Judge Paul A. Magnuson will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Office of Inspector General at the Department of Homeland Security. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ann M. Anaya and Trial Attorney Nicole Lee Ndumele of the Civil Rights Division.

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