



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Northern District of New York*

445 Broadway, Room 218

TEL: (518) 431-0247

*James T. Foley U.S. Courthouse
Albany, New York 12207-2924*

FAX: (518) 431-0249

March 10, 2011

PRESS RELEASE

Keith Ronald Hancock, Jr., was convicted following a jury trial in Albany of violating the civil rights of an inmate while working as a Corrections Officer at the Rensselaer County Correctional Facility (“RCCF”), and making false statements to the FBI regarding the incident, announced Richard S. Hartunian, United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York, Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, and Clifford C. Holly, Special Agent in Charge of the Albany Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Following trial before U.S. District Judge Gary L. Sharpe, the jury found that, on or about January 18, 2009, Hancock, age 37, of Cohoes, while employed as a correctional officer at the RCCF in Troy, New York and acting under color of the laws of the State of New York, knowingly and wilfully physically struck and assaulted an inmate housed at the RCCF, resulting in bodily injury to the inmate, and thereby willfully deprived the inmate of a right preserved and protected by the Constitution and laws of the United States, namely, the right not to be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment. The jury also found Hancock guilty of knowingly and willfully making a materially false statement to the FBI during the investigation of the January 2009 incident, in that he stated in substance that he had heard through the grapevine that he punched someone, but that it did not happen, and that he was threatened by the inmate walking down the hallway and did what he had to

do to protect himself, whereas, as defendant then and there well knew, the defendant, while on duty as a correctional officer, had physically punched and struck an inmate who had not threatened the defendant and he did not have to do so to protect himself.

At trial, the jury heard evidence that Hancock struck an inmate on multiple occasions, despite the fact that the inmate was handcuffed behind the back and under the control of other correctional officers. After the incident, Hancock prepared an incident report, in which he failed to report his uses of force or provide any justification for them. Thereafter, during the course of the federal investigation, Hancock falsely denied his conduct and, at trial, he claimed in substance that he thought the inmate was going to spit and was trying to stop him from doing so, even though that was not documented in his contemporaneous incident report.

“Corrections officers who abuse their authority and punish inmates with violence, and who make false statements to their fellow law enforcement officers about their conduct, do a disservice to all officers who take an oath to uphold the United States Constitution,” said Assistant Attorney General Perez. “The Civil Rights Division will aggressively prosecute these abuses of official authority, wherever they occur.”

United States Attorney Hartunian stated: “Conduct such as the defendant’s has no place in our correctional institutions, or in our society. Prosecutions such as this send an important message that such conduct cannot and will not be tolerated.”

The defendant’s conviction for violating the inmate’s civil rights carries a maximum statutory penalty of up to ten (10) years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both, and a period of up to three years supervised release to follow any term of imprisonment. The conviction for making a false statement to the FBI carries a maximum statutory penalty of up to five (5) years imprisonment, a

\$250,000 fine, or both, and a three year period of supervised release. Sentencing was set for Tuesday, July 12, 2011, at 10:00 am, before Judge Sharpe in Albany.

The investigation in this matter was conducted by the Albany Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with the assistance of the Rensselaer County Sheriff's Office. The case was prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of New York and the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

LOCAL CONTACT: Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert P. Storch, or Deputy Criminal Chief AUSA William C. Pericak, both at (518) 431-0247