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FORMER CORRECTIONS OFFICER SENTENCED

Former Rensselaer County Corrections Officer Sentenced Following Felony Convictions

PRESS RELEASE

Keith Ronald Hancock, Jr., was sentenced today to five years probation, with conditions that he serve six months in home detention and perform two hundred hours community service, following a jury trial in March 2011 in which he was convicted 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 willfully 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 at the time of Hancock’s trial conviction. “The Civil Rights Division will aggressively prosecute these abuses of official authority, wherever they occur.”

United States Attorney Hartunian reiterated that “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 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.

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