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FORMER WESTCHESTER COUNTY JAIL GUARD
FOUND GUILTY OF VIOLATING CIVIL RIGHTS OF INMATE

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that PAUL M. COTÉ, formerly a Corrections Officer employed by the Westchester County, was convicted today in federal court in White Plains of violating the civil rights of Zoran Teodorovic, an inmate at the County jail in Valhalla, New York. COTÉ was convicted of using excessive force against Teodorovic, by kicking, and punching, and stomping his head into the cement floor at the jail. Teodorovic, who was 46 at the time of the incident in 2000, suffered brain trauma as a result of the assault, survived in a persistent vegetative state for fourteen months and then died. Teodorovic, a Yugoslavian immigrant, was a pretrial detainee who was arrested on a misdemeanor trespassing charge five days before the assault and was detained at the jail because he was unable to pay his bail of \$250.00.

According to trial testimony, Teodorovic refused an order of Corrections Officer John Mark Reimer to enter his jail cell and when Reimer attempted to physically escort him into his cell, Teodorovic punched Reimer. Reimer took Teodorovic into a bear hug and brought him down to the floor and he was fully restrained. According to trial testimony, COTÉ then entered the cell block and beat Teodorovic, while Reimer pleaded for COTÉ to stop his assault. According to trial testimony, COTÉ briefly stopped, stepped back and then launched another attack, stomping Teodorovic's head into the cement floor, shouting obscenities and warning Teodorovic never to assault a corrections officer again. Just minutes after the event, COTÉ filed an official report in which he falsely claimed that Teodorovic had sustained his head injuries by being taken to the ground by both COTÉ and Reimer, whereas according to witness testimony, COTÉ did not enter the cell block until after Reimer had Teodorovic restrained. COTÉ then told Reimer the substance of his written statement and said that they should stick together. According to trial testimony, when Reimer went to file a report about the incident, a Sergeant at the jail gave him COTÉ's written report and suggested that Reimer include additional details in his

report which would discredit the statement of the only inmate who had reported having seen the event. Reimer contacted State law enforcement authorities the following day and began cooperating.

United States District Judge CHARLES L. BRIEANT has scheduled post trial motions to be heard on December 5, 2006. The sentencing is not yet scheduled.

COTÉ, 40, lives in Mahopac, New York.

In July 2001, before Teodorovic died, a jury in New York State Supreme Court, Westchester County, convicted COTÉ of assault in the second degree, a felony, based on the same conduct that gives rise to the instant federal civil rights charge. On September 28, 2001, New York State Supreme Court Justice JOHN M. PERONE sentenced COTÉ to three (3) months incarceration and one hundred hours of community service. COTÉ served two months in jail and then was released. Subsequently, on December 21, 2001, Teodorovic died as a result of the injuries he sustained on October 10, 2000. The medical examiner concluded that Teodorovic's death was the result of a homicidal assault.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on this case.

Assistant United States Attorneys CYNTHIA K. DUNNE and ANDREW W. SCHILLING are in charge of the prosecution.

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