



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

October 22, 2012

FORMER SHIPROCK CORRECTIONS OFFICER SENTENCED
FOR SEXUALLY ASSAULTING INMATE

ALBUQUERQUE – Sylvester Bruce, 45, a former corrections officer with Navajo Nation’s Shiprock Detention Center (SDC) in Shiprock, N.M., was sentenced today in federal court on charges related to the sexual abuse of an inmate during the summer and fall of 2010. In July 2012, Bruce pleaded guilty to one count of violating the victim’s civil rights when he touched her breasts against her will. Bruce also pleaded guilty to making material false statements to the FBI when he denied taking pictures of inmates inside the cells of the SDC.

According to court documents, while the victim was incarcerated at SDC, Bruce repeatedly placed his hands under her shirt and bra, and grabbed her breasts, knowing that she did not consent to his actions. Bruce did so in areas of the jail that did not have surveillance cameras. Bruce further admitted that he lied to the FBI when he denied taking pictures of inmates in their cells, acknowledging that he had, in fact, photographed two female inmates asleep on a bed in their cell.

Bruce was sentenced to one year and one day in federal prison followed by three years of supervised release. In addition, Bruce will never serve in law enforcement again and will submit to federal and state sex offender registration requirements.

"Every person in official custody has the right to bodily integrity, and namely to be free from sexual assaults by corrections officers," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Justice Department will continue to vigorously prosecute these serious crimes."

"Every person in lock-up, regardless of the charge or crime of conviction, is entitled to be safe and certainly should never be victimized by the law enforcement officers responsible for guarding them," said U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales. "I commend the victim in this case for having the courage to step forward and assert her right to be free of sexual abuse, and for trusting the Department of Justice to protect her."

This case was investigated by the Farmington Resident Agency of the Albuquerque Division of the FBI and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark T. Baker and Fara Gold of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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