

# Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.  
Western District of New York

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## **ERIE COUNTY HOLDING CENTER DEPUTY PLEADS GUILTY TO CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATION INVOLVING AN INMATE**

BUFFALO, N.Y.— U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Thomas Thompson, 40, of Grand Island, N.Y. pleaded guilty before Magistrate Judge H. Kenneth Schroeder to deprivation of rights under color of law. The charge carries a maximum sentence of one year in prison, a \$100,000 fine or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Trini E. Ross, who is handling the case, stated that on January 18, 2010, the defendant, a Sergeant with the Erie County Sheriff's Department, recruited other deputies to assist him in the search of a cell at the Erie County Holding Center. Thompson was following up on an anonymous report of illegal narcotics in a unit that housed the victim.

After arriving at the victim's cell, the defendant asked which inmate had the illegal narcotics. Thompson and other deputies was told by the victim that an inmate across the hall had the drugs but a search of that inmate's cell did not turn up any drugs. Thompson and the other deputies then returned to the victim's cell and told the victim that because he had lied and did not assist with finding the illegal narcotics, the victim had to take a shot to the gut. Thompson then told the victim to pick a deputy to deliver the shot. The victim pointed to a deputy who then proceeded to punch the victim.

“As a guard at the jail—a Sergeant no less—Thomas Thompson was charged with keeping order inside the Erie County Holding Center,” said U.S. Attorney Hochul. “Instead, he summoned a small group of deputies working under him to participate in what amounted to an organized attack on an inmate involving excessive force. The pre-meditated behavior exhibited by this defendant is something our Office takes very seriously and will not tolerate.”

The plea is the culmination of an investigation by Special Agents of the Federal bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Christopher M. Piehota, Special Agent in Charge.

Sentencing is scheduled for September 27, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. before Magistrate Judge Schroder.

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