



## U. S. Department of Justice

*Jason R. Coody*  
*Acting United States Attorney*  
*Northern District of Florida*

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **JURY CONVICTS FORMER TALLAHASSEE FEDERAL CORRECTIONAL OFFICER OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF INMATE**

**TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA** – A federal jury in Tallahassee convicted Jimmy Lee Highsmith, 42, of Marianna, on one count of sexual abuse of a ward while on duty at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tallahassee. The guilty verdict, returned yesterday afternoon, at the conclusion of a three-day trial, was announced by Jason R. Coody, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida.

Evidence introduced at trial revealed that Highsmith abused his authority as a correctional officer to engage in sexual acts with an inmate on various occasions. The jury received testimony and exhibits showing that between March and April 2014, Highsmith ordered a female inmate at Federal Correctional Institution Tallahassee to meet him in his office and the officers' bathroom to engage in illicit sexual acts. Surveillance video footage confirmed that, on April 30, 2014, Highsmith and his victim were caught by other inmates engaging in sexual acts between 11:30 p.m. and midnight in his office. The victim disclosed the illicit sex acts the next day and was taken to Tallahassee Memorial Hospital where a sexual assault examination confirmed injuries resulting from sexual activity.

"The sexual abuse of inmates by federal correctional officers is intolerable," said Acting U.S. Attorney Coody. "Those sentenced to prison are to atone for their crimes and gain skills that will enable them to return as productive members of society. They should not be preyed upon by officers who violate their oath of office. This office will vigorously investigate and prosecute any officer who engages in such acts of abuse to the fullest extent of the law."

"Today, Highsmith was brought to justice for abusing his authority and sexually assaulting an inmate under his supervision. The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General will continue to investigate anyone who engages in this type of conduct," said James F. Boyersmith, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General Miami Field Office.

Highsmith faces a maximum term of fifteen years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and five years to life on supervised release. As a result of this conviction, Highsmith is required by law to register as a sex offender.

This conviction was the result of an investigation by the Department of Justice Office of Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorneys David L. Goldberg and Lazaro P. Fields are prosecuting the case.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](#) website. For more information about the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.

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