

Two former Tennessee corrections officers guilty of civil rights offenses

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WASHINGTON - Two former White County corrections officers were found guilty on Friday by a federal jury in Nashville, Tenn., of violating the constitutional rights of an inmate at the White County Jail in May 2004. The announcement was made by Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, and Craig Morford, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Tennessee.

"These defendants violated the public's trust and broke faith with the proud history of integrity and professionalism in law enforcement," said Assistant Attorney General Kim. "This prosecution demonstrates the Justice Department's commitment to vigorously pursuing law enforcement officials who willfully abuse those entrusted to their custody."

"When inmates are confined to correctional institutions, those charged with their security are expected to abide by the Constitution and the rule of law in carrying out their duties," said U.S. Attorney Morford. "When an officer violates those duties by illegally abusing a prisoner, it is our duty to prosecute that officer in order to punish that illegal conduct, to deter others from engaging in similar conduct, and to preserve the public trust that honest, law-abiding officers deserve. We take seriously our duty to preserve the civil rights of all people, and remain committed to our long history of vigorously prosecuting civil rights offenses."

The jury found the jail's former Chief of Corrections, Donald R. Wilson, and former supervisory corrections officer Stanley Hawkins each guilty of a separate violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 242.

The evidence at trial established that on May 6, 2004, defendant Hawkins beat a jail inmate and used a chemical agent against him in retaliation for the inmate's misconduct. Thereafter, defendant Wilson confined the same inmate for three weeks in a straightjacket in a small holding cell in unsanitary conditions.