

Former Memphis cop pleads guilty to civil rights violations

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Alexander Johnson, a former officer with the Memphis Police Department, pleaded guilty today to a one-count felony violation for conspiring to deprive individuals of their civil rights.

“The integrity of law enforcement officers, the vast majority of whom serve with great distinction, is essential to the administration of justice,” said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “Where that integrity is compromised through a willful abuse of authority, the Justice Department will vigorously prosecute the requirements of federal law.”

“The majority of law enforcement officers are good and hardworking people who risk their lives every day for our safety,” said David Kustoff, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee. “However, those officers who violate the public trust will be prosecuted.”

As part of his plea, Johnson acknowledged that he and other Memphis Police Department officers abused their authority as law enforcement officers by stealing cash and drugs, including cocaine and marijuana, from drivers they pulled over. Johnson agreed that his conduct violated federal law. He faces a term of incarceration of up to ten years.

In related matters, former Memphis reserve police officer Andrew Hunt was sentenced to 19 years in prison in December 2006 after pleading guilty to related charges. Additionally, Arthur Sease was indicted in August 2006 on 50 counts, including conspiracy to violate civil rights, conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, robbery in interstate commerce, possession of a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence, violation of civil rights under color of law, and distribution of controlled substances. The same indictment charges Antoine Owens with conspiracy to violate civil rights and conspiracy to distribute controlled substances. A fifth defendant, Laterrica Woods, a civilian who allegedly helped Sease and Hunt, was indicted in December 2006 on charges of conspiracy to violate civil rights, conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance, robbery in interstate commerce, distribution of a controlled substance, violation of civil rights under color of law, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence. Trial for Owens and Sease has not yet been scheduled.

This case is being jointly prosecuted by the Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Tennessee.

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