

Former Oklahoma Jail Officer Pleads Guilty to Civil Rights Violation

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A former detention officer with the McClain County Jail in Purcell, Oklahoma, pleaded guilty to being deliberately indifferent to a substantial risk of serious harm to a pretrial detainee's physical safety, thereby violating the pretrial detainee's constitutional civil rights.

According to court documents and admissions, on April 21, 2019, Kyle Tecumseh, 25, was involved with moving a pretrial detainee, B.B., into a jail cell with a senior United Aryan Brotherhood (UAB) gang member whom Tecumseh knew was angry at and posed a danger to B.B. Thereafter, Tecumseh allowed another detention officer to move several more UAB gang members into the cell with B.B. and the senior UAB gang member. The UAB gang members then physically attacked B.B., as Tecumseh knew was likely to occur.

"As a detention officer, this defendant had a duty to ensure that the civil rights of pretrial detainees under his care and custody were protected," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "Instead, the defendant abused his power and authority by allowing a pretrial detainee to be put in a situation where he faced a substantial risk of physical harm. The defendant is now being held accountable

for his actions, and the Justice Department will continue to ensure that corrections officials are held responsible when they violate the civil rights of detainees and inmates under their care, custody and control.”

“Criminal conduct by any detention staff member erodes public trust and unfairly compromises the reputation of all corrections officials who honorably serve,” said U.S. Attorney Robert J. Troester for the Western District of Oklahoma. “Today’s guilty plea demonstrates our continuing commitment to protect all Oklahomans, including those in custody. I commend the prosecutors and law enforcement officials for their efforts here.”

“There is never a reason for a detention officer to resort to violating an inmate’s civil rights. The FBI understands that working in a correctional institution is stressful and dangerous work, and the vast majority of the men and women working in these institutions do their jobs honorably on a daily basis,” said Special Agent in Charge Edward J. Gray of the FBI Oklahoma City Field Office. “When an officer violates the rights of detainees in their care, it erodes public trust in these important positions and damages the reputation of the hard-working officers who continue to serve.”

Tecumseh faces a maximum sentence of 12 months imprisonment and a \$100,000 fine. In addition, according to court documents, Tecumseh agreed to never again seek employment in any law enforcement capacity and to pay the victim any owed restitution. A sentencing date will be set by the court in approximately 90 days.

The Oklahoma City FBI Field Office investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Julia E. Barry for the Western District of Oklahoma and Trial Attorney Laura Gilson of the Civil Rights Division’s Criminal Section are prosecuting the case.

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