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CRIME

Fired FMPD officer indicted in federal court for mishandling Hendry County arrest

Tyler Williams, 29, was fired from Fort Myers police in February 2021 before he joined the Hendry County Sheriff's Office.



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A former Fort Myers police officer, fired after a child's 2020 death, faces federal civil rights violations after a federal grand jury indicted him, charging him with use of force in Hendry County.

U.S. Attorney Roger Handberg on Monday announced a grand jury last week returned a federal indictment against Tyler Williams, 29, of LaBelle for deprivation of civil rights under color of law.

Williams is charged with unreasonable use of force and obstruction of justice. If convicted, he faces up to 10 years in federal prison on the use of force charge, and up to 20 years' imprisonment on the obstruction charge. Williams is a former deputy sheriff from the Hendry County Sheriff's Office.

The indictment alleges that on or about July 4, Williams responded to a reported burglary and threw a suspect to the ground and injuring him, Handberg said. Prosecutors said Williams then wrote a false justification for the use of force in an incident report, obstructing justice.

Captured on his body-worn camera, Handberg said, Williams placed the suspect in handcuffs and walked the man to the rear of his patrol car to conduct a search.

Tyler Williams: Fired Fort Myers officer appealing decision linked to child's death, didn't call authorities

Williams' supervisor was also on scene and had a conversation about the events, Handberg said. The suspect attempted to talk to Williams and to interject himself into the conversation.

In response to one of those attempts, Handberg said, Williams grabbed the man by the shoulders and threw him to the ground. Handcuffed, the victim couldn't brace himself.

Williams was first placed on administrative leave and then terminated from the sheriff's office after the incident.

Handberg said the man was unconscious after his chin hit the asphalt. Williams then yelled at the victim.

Handberg expressed his gratitude for law enforcement.

"Within any profession, however, there are individuals who betray the trust that we place in them," Handberg said Monday. "Just as in any other sector, law enforcement is not immune to the presence of a small number of individuals who tarnish the reputation of their profession."

Hendry County Sheriff Stephen Whidden said the sheriff's office has used body worn cameras for at least six years.

Whidden expressed his disappointment when he reviewed the footage on Williams' agency-issued camera.

Handberg said Williams had his first court appearance Thursday.

Dark past with Fort Myers police

Prior to joining the sheriff's office, Williams was fired Feb. 23, 2021, after an internal investigation claimed he violated four policies during a January 2020 traffic stop, leading to the death of a toddler.

He served five years as a police officer with Fort Myers police.

In those five years, Williams was put on paid administrative leave once, following an officer-involved shooting in 2017 that he participated in. An investigation found Williams was justified in using deadly force.

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