



Department of Justice

**Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy
District of Massachusetts**

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CONTACT: CHRISTINA DiIORIO-STERLING

Phone (617) 748-3356

usama.media@usdoj.gov

 twitter.com/dmanews1

FORMER CORRECTIONAL OFFICER SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR VIOLATING INMATE'S CIVIL RIGHTS

Handcuffed inmate was struck with shield, causing severe head lacerations that required 12 staples and six sutures

BOSTON – A former senior Correctional Officer at U.S. Bureau of Prisons Federal Medical Center in Devens (FMC Devens) was sentenced today in federal court in Boston for using excessive force on an inmate.

Seth M. Bourget, 42, of Woodstock, Conn., was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Denise J. Casper to one year and one day in prison and two years of supervised release. In December 2022, Bourget was convicted by a federal jury of one count of deprivation of civil rights under color of law.

On or about June 18, 2019, Bourget struck a handcuffed inmate suffering from severe mental disorders with a large protective shield with excessive force, causing serious head injuries. Specifically, on the day of the incident, the inmate was acting out and not prepared for his move to a different unit. Evidence at trial established that the inmate was sprayed in the face with pepper spray and locked in a cell with his hands cuffed behind his back for approximately 45 minutes. As a result, the inmate was in an agitated state and unable to consistently engage in a coherent conversation or understand regular verbal commands. Bourget and other officers prepared to conduct a use of force on the inmate involving a train of five men entering the cell – which Bourget volunteered to lead using a protective shield. Trial evidence established that, upon entry into the cell, Bourget thrust the protective shield upward and struck the handcuffed inmate in the chin area, snapping the inmate's head back and causing the inmate to fall back onto the concrete cell floor. The resulting impact caused significant injury to the inmate's head, including lacerations that required 12 staples and a gash on his lip that required six sutures.

“Corrections officers are placed in a position of public trust and the overwhelming majority of correctional officers do their jobs with professionalism, respect and dedication to protect and serve. In this case, a jury unanimously found that Mr. Bourget abused his position of authority when he violently struck a mentally ill and defenseless inmate,” said Acting United

States Attorney Joshua S. Levy. “This office will continue to hold accountable bad actors who abuse their power and violate the public’s trust in them.”

“No inmate should experience abuse at the hands of a Federal Bureau of Prisons employee. Bourget assaulted an inmate using excessive force, and today’s sentencing shows that those who abuse their power will be held accountable for their actions,” said Ryan T. Geach, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General New York Field Office.

“Corrections officer Seth Bourget betrayed the public trust when he violently struck a severely mentally ill inmate who was handcuffed inside a locked cell. Today’s sentence holds him accountable for his blatant disregard for the laws he swore to uphold, and the civil rights he violated,” said Christopher DiMenna, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division. “As law enforcement officers, we are all bound by oath to serve all citizens equally, with compassion, professionalism, dignity, and respect which clearly did not happen in this case.”

Acting U.S. Attorney Levy; DOJ-OIG New York Field Office SAC Geach; and FBI Acting SAC DiMenna made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Neil J. Gallagher Jr. of the Public Corruption Unit and Torey B. Cummings of the Civil Rights & Human Trafficking Unit prosecuted the case.

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