

Former Federal Bureau of Prisons Corrections Officer Pleads Guilty to Sexually Abusing Inmate in His Custody

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Office of Public Affairs

A former Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) Corrections Officer, Robert D. Smith, 38, pleaded guilty today in federal court to one count of sexual abuse of a ward.

"Today, Robert Smith pleaded guilty to sexually abusing a woman in his custody, in violation of the law and his sworn duty as a Federal Bureau of Prisons officer," said Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco. "This prosecution is the latest example of the Justice Department holding to account those who exploit their positions of authority within the Federal Bureau of Prisons and working to eliminate sexual assault from our prison systems."

"When officials inside our jails and prisons carry out acts of sexual violence against vulnerable women in their custody, they will be held accountable," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "There is zero tolerance for corrections officers who misuse their authority to commit egregious sex crimes, and that rule applies equally to those who work at federal prisons. The Justice Department will continue to aggressively prosecute sexual predators in correctional settings, while standing up for the civil rights of the survivors of these heinous crimes."

"As today's guilty plea demonstrates, the Office of the Inspector General is committed to ensuring that Federal Bureau of Prisons employees who exploit their power and authority to sexually abuse inmates are brought to justice and held accountable for their heinous acts," said Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz of the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General (DOJ-OIG).

"Sexual abuse of prison inmates by federal corrections officers is intolerable," said U.S. Attorney Prim F. Escalona for the Northern District of Alabama. "My office will continue to aggressively prosecute and bring to justice those who abuse their authority and prey on vulnerable people they are sworn to protect and keep safe."

According to court documents, Smith worked as a corrections officer at the Federal Correctional Institution in Aliceville (FCI-Aliceville), Alabama. As part of his duties, Smith was to ensure the safety and security of inmates housed at FCI-Aliceville and to uphold the U.S. Constitution.

While acting in his capacity as an officer, in or around February 2019, Smith knowingly engaged in a sexual act with T.M., a female inmate in official detention, who was under Smith's custodial, supervisory, or disciplinary authority. Smith also admitted to sexually abusing another inmate on a different occasion. Also while acting in his capacity as an officer, between on or about July 6, 2018, and Nov. 15, 2018, Smith knowingly engaged in a sexual act with R.R-L., a female inmate in official detention, who was under Smith's custodial, supervisory, or disciplinary authority.

A sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 29. Smith faces a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

DOJ-OIG investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael Royster for the Northern District of Alabama and Trial Attorney Anna Gotfryd of the Civil Rights Division's Criminal Section are prosecuting the case.

FBOP is committed to rooting out misconduct within its ranks and working with law enforcement partners to prosecute violations of federal law. The numerous FBOP employees working diligently to ensure justice for the victims of misconduct are critical to the Department's reform efforts.