

Former Federal Bureau of Prisons Corrections Officer Sentenced for 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, 39, was sentenced today in federal court to 24 months in prison, followed by 15 years of supervised release, for sexually abusing an inmate while he was a corrections officer at the Federal Correctional Institution, in Aliceville, Alabama (FCI-Aliceville).

Smith previously pleaded guilty to sexually abusing a ward on Jan. 11.

"Robert Smith has been held to account for abusing his position of trust by sexually assaulting an adult in his custody," said Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco. "Today's sentence marks the latest step forward in the Justice Department's ongoing campaign to root out sexual misconduct from the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The Department will continue to hold accountable any BOP employee who violates their oath to protect those in their care through sexual assault."

"Beyond the view of the cameras and the eyes of potential witnesses, this defendant sexually abused and assaulted vulnerable women inmates and thought he would get away with his crimes," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "This case should send an unequivocal message to officials working in correctional settings that we have zero tolerance for sexual assaults of women held inside jails and prisons. We encourage the survivors of these heinous crimes to report acts of official misconduct and violence to the FBI. The Justice Department will continue to aggressively prosecute those who violate the civil and constitutional rights of people detained in correctional facilities."

"Corrections officers have the responsibility to ensure the safety and security of those incarcerated in our nation's prisons," said U.S. Attorney Prim F. Escalona for the Northern District of Alabama. "We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to investigate and prosecute corrections officers who abuse inmates and violate positions of public trust."

"Today's sentencing holds Smith accountable for the serious crimes he committed," said Justice Department Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz. "Smith sexually abused multiple inmates and he did so by taking them to areas of the prison without camera coverage. As the Office of Inspector General (OIG) has repeatedly found, the effective use of cameras by the FBOP is critical to preventing and deterring such criminal wrongdoing at its facilities."

According to court documents and evidence presented at the sentencing hearing, Smith worked as a corrections officer at FCI-Aliceville, which is a low-security federal prison. 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 a female inmate in official detention, who was under Smith's custodial, supervisory or disciplinary authority. Smith committed this criminal act when he and his victim were in his office in the facilities department, which was away from cameras and other inmates and officers.

Smith also admitted to sexually abusing another inmate on a different occasion. Specifically, 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 a female inmate in official detention, who was under Smith's custodial, supervisory or disciplinary authority. Smith committed this criminal act in the mechanical room, which Smith accessed with a key, and which was also away from cameras and other inmates and officers.

The Justice Department 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 prosecuted 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.