



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias
Northern District of Georgia

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CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

FORMER FULTON COUNTY JAIL OFFICER ARRESTED ON FEDERAL CIVIL RIGHTS AND OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE CHARGES

Former Sheriff's Department Detention Officer Charged for Offenses Relating to Jail Inmates in 2007 and 2008; Investigation is Continuing

Atlanta, GA - CURTIS JEROME BROWN, JR., 41, of Lithonia, Georgia, a former Fulton County Sheriff's Detention Officer who worked at the Fulton County Jail, was arrested today by FBI agents and charged with the felony offenses of violating civil rights, filing a false report, making false statements to federal agents, and two counts of obstruction of justice. BROWN is expected to make his initial appearance before United States Magistrate Judge Gerrilyn Brill today.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said: "All citizens – including citizens held as inmates in our jails – have a constitutional right not to be subjected to excessive force by law enforcement officers. The great majority of detention officers do their difficult and dangerous work with courage and professionalism. But officers who instead decide to physically abuse inmates will face federal investigation and prosecution. And anyone who tries to interfere with our investigations through false reports, false statements, witness tampering, and other obstruction of justice will also face prosecution, even if they were not involved in the underlying abuse.

U.S. Attorney Nahmias continued, "For those at the Fulton County Jail who believed that such serious crimes would be overlooked, or punished only by reassignment or termination, today's action should serve as a wake-up call. Those who engage in such crimes should expect to be arrested, as this former officer was today, and ultimately to face their own time as an inmate. Our investigation into the two incidents described in the criminal complaint, as well as other incidents at the Fulton County Jail, is active and ongoing. Anyone who has information about such crimes is encouraged to contact the FBI at 404-679-9000, and any officer involved in such incidents will be much better off calling the FBI now than waiting for the FBI to show up at their door."

FBI Atlanta Special Agent in Charge Greg Jones said, "Law enforcement officers who

tarnish the badge deserve the swiftest and harshest treatment the justice system will allow. Every proud and honorable member of our profession is outraged by what we've witnessed in this case, and with good cause. Our badges represent a sacred promise to protect and serve, not a shield behind which rogue officers may hide and abuse their authority. Those who have placed themselves above the law and who violate the civil rights of others should consider themselves warned: You may very well find yourself on the other side of the jailhouse door, and sooner than you think.”

Fulton County Sheriff Ted Jackson, who joined the United States Attorney in a brief news conference this afternoon, said of the case, “The violation of the civil rights of housed inmates is not tolerated by the Fulton County Sheriff’s Office. Any failure to comply with the Civil Rights Act will be pursued to the fullest extent of the law in coordination with federal authorities. The behavior described in the federal criminal complaint is not representative of the hard work and dedication of the employees of this jail.”

According to U.S. Attorney Nahmias, the charges and information presented in court: On August 11, 2007, BROWN, who was then a detention officer at the Fulton County Jail, allegedly violated the civil rights of an inmate at the jail by using excessive force against the inmate, causing bodily injury. After learning that the inmate had made derogatory remarks to another officer, BROWN allegedly took the inmate to another area of the jail with that officer and told a trustee to leave the area. BROWN then put on black leather gloves and hit the inmate – whose hands BROWN had cuffed behind the inmate’s back – in the face and head with his gloved fists until the inmate was bleeding, ignoring repeated requests by the other officer to stop the beating. The first officer and two other officers reported the incident to the Assistant Watch Commander.

BROWN then allegedly obstructed the investigation of the incident by, among other things, trying to convince the first officer and another officer to write their reports on the incident together with him, which the other officers believed was an effort to prevent them from telling the truth. BROWN then allegedly filed a false report regarding the incident, falsely claiming that the inmate had aggressively moved toward him and threatened to harm him and that he reacted by “giving an open hand smack” to the inmate’s face. The Fulton County Sheriff’s Department Office of Professional Standards (OPS) began investigating the assault on or about August 21, 2007, but the Sheriff’s Department took no action against BROWN for more than a year.

Meanwhile, according to the criminal complaint, on the night of March 18-19, 2008, another jail inmate was causing a commotion in his cell when BROWN and two other staff members allegedly entered the cell and engaged in a physical altercation with the inmate. According to eyewitness accounts, the inmate was on the floor when BROWN and the other staff members left the cell. After they left, the inmate was discovered unresponsive and not breathing on the cell floor and was transported to Grady Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. The FBI began an investigation of the inmate’s suspicious in-custody death. On

August 13, 2008, BROWN allegedly made false statements during an FBI interview, concealing that he had entered the cell prior to the discovery of the inmate unresponsive and not breathing and claiming that he took photos of the scene that were deleted from the jail's digital camera and computer, when forensic review shows that no such photos were deleted. During testimony before a federal grand jury on August 28, 2008, BROWN again allegedly concealed his role in the physical altercation in the cell. BROWN was charged with making false statements to the FBI and obstruction of justice in relation to this incident.

BROWN was terminated by the Sheriff's Department on October 22, 2008.

The federal investigation of both incidents and other incidents at the Fulton County Jail is continuing. The Fulton County Sheriff's Department is cooperating in the investigation.

Members of the public are reminded that the criminal complaint only contains only allegations. The defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney Brent Alan Gray and Angela M. Jordan are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.