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**CHICAGO POLICE OFFICER PLEADS GUILTY TO VIOLATING FEDERAL  
CIVIL RIGHTS OF A MAN BEATEN WHILE RESTRAINED IN A WHEELCHAIR**

CHICAGO – A Chicago police officer pleaded guilty to violating the federal civil rights of a man whom the officer struck repeatedly with a dangerous weapon while the man was handcuffed and shackled in a wheelchair, federal law enforcement officials announced today. The defendant, **William Cozzi**, admitted using excessive, or unreasonable, force while acting under color of law, announced Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Loretta King; and Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Cozzi, 51, of Chicago, joined the Chicago Police Department in 1992 and was assigned to the 25<sup>th</sup> District at the time of the alleged incident. He was subsequently suspended from duty.

Cozzi was indicted last April for depriving the victim of his civil rights. On Aug. 2, 2005, while performing his duties as a police officer, Cozzi admitted that he used a “sap” – a dangerous weapon, which is similar to a blackjack – to repeatedly strike the unnamed victim, identified only as “Victim A,” who was handcuffed and shackled in a wheelchair at Norwegian American Hospital, resulting in bodily injury. At the time, Victim A was awaiting treatment in the hospital emergency room after being stabbed in the shoulder.

“No law enforcement officer may use unreasonable force with impunity and every citizen, regardless of being in police custody, has a Constitutional right to be free from the use of excessive force,” Mr. Fitzgerald said.

“The defendant violated the public trust by abusing his law enforcement authority,” said Ms. King. “This prosecution demonstrates that the Civil Rights Division is committed to aggressively prosecuting law enforcement officers who willfully use excessive force.”

Cozzi pleaded guilty while reserving his right to appeal a judge’s rulings last year denying his motion to dismiss the indictment on the grounds that the prosecution was based in part on compelled statements he made to the Chicago Police Department’s Office of Professional Standards and during a police review board hearing.

According to a plea agreement, Cozzi was dispatched to the hospital to respond to the stabbing and approached Victim A who was being loud and verbally abusive while awaiting treatment for the stabbing. Shortly after approaching Victim A, Cozzi placed him in handcuffs and left the emergency room to retrieve leg shackles, which he then placed upon Victim A. With the victim restrained, Cozzi used a sap to repeatedly strike him in the face and body. At the time, Victim A posed no physical threat to Cozzi or anyone else at the hospital, according to the plea agreement.

Cozzi also admitted that he subsequently prepared a false arrest report and misdemeanor complaints stating that Victim A attempted to punch him and two hospital security guards, as well as a false tactical response report stating that he used an “open hand strike” on Victim A but omitted that he struck the victim with a sap.

U.S. District Judge Blanche Manning set sentencing at 11:30 a.m. on March 26. Cozzi faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, with the Court to determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The Government is being represented in court by Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Drury and DOJ Trial Attorney Betsy Biffel.

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