



Department of Justice

Carlton S. Shier, IV
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Kentucky

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, September 22, 2022
www.usdoj.gov/usao/kye

CONTACT: Gabrielle Dudgeon
PHONE: (859) 685-4887
E-MAIL: gabrielle.dudgeon@usdoj.gov

Boyd County Man Pleads Guilty to Violent Kidnapping

ASHLAND, Ky. – A Catlettsburg, Ky., man, Jonathan Lee Smithers, 41, pleaded guilty on Wednesday, before U.S. District Judge David Bunning, to a federal kidnapping charge.

According to Smithers' plea agreement, on May 1, 2022, Smithers physically assaulted a victim with whom he was in a romantic relationship. Then, under threat of force and using a firearm, Smithers made the victim accompany him to a store, where he brandished the weapon, assaulted her with the weapon, and confined her in the vehicle. Smithers then drove her to the Flatwoods area. After again confining her in the vehicle, Smithers stopped the vehicle and forced her to exit. Thereafter, still armed, he forced her to accompany him on foot, requiring her to climb fences, trespass on private property, and traverse random routes around the area for several hours. She was eventually able to escape and hide from Smithers and law enforcement found her collapsed at a gas station. Smithers remained in the area on foot, was spotted coming out of the woods, and law enforcement responded. Upon being approached by law enforcement, Smithers shot the responding officer in the throat. The officer survived life-threatening injuries.

Pursuant to the plea agreement, Smithers faces a sentence of life imprisonment.

Carlton S. Shier, IV, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Jodi Cohen, Special Agent in Charge, FBI, Louisville Field Office; Col. Phillip Burnett, Commissioner, Kentucky State Police; Chief Todd Kelley, Ashland Police Department; Chief David Smith, Flatwoods Police Department; and Sheriff Matt Smith, Greenup County Sheriff's Office, jointly announced the guilty plea.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI, KSP, Ashland Police Department, Flatwoods Police Department, and the Greenup County Sheriff's Office. The United States was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Erin Roth.

— END —