



Department of Justice

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Former Grant County, Kentucky Deputy Jailer Pleads Guilty in Civil Rights Case

WASHINGTON – Former Grant County Detention Center (GCDC) Deputy Jailer Jack Powell of Covington, Ky., pleaded guilty today to conspiring with another former GCDC employee to obstruct a federal investigation into a civil rights offense, announced Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. Powell pleaded guilty in federal court in Gulfport, Miss. The case had been transferred to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi on April 14, 2008.

Powell was charged with the offenses in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky. In a related case, former GCDC employees Clinton Shawn Sydnor, Wesley Lanham, and Shawn Freeman, have been charged with violations of federal civil rights statutes. On Feb. 14, 2003, Sydnor, Lanham, and Freeman, while on official duty, allegedly taunted a 18-year-old high school student, who had been arrested on a speeding charge, about his appearance and then solicited convicted felons housed in a general population cell to join in the taunting. After the detainee was lodged in a general population cell, inmates inside that cell physically assaulted him, raped him, and forced him to perform sexual acts.

Powell pleaded guilty to conspiring with Clinton Shawn Sydnor to obstruct the investigation into the Feb. 14, 2003 incident. As part of the plea agreement, Powell acknowledged signing a typewritten statement that contained both a false justification for the placement of the pre-trial detainee in a general population cell and false statements concerning the completion of cell checks by GCDC personnel.

The Civil Rights Division is committed to the vigorous enforcement of every federal criminal civil rights statute, such as those laws that prohibit acts of misconduct by law enforcement officials. In Fiscal Year 2007, the Criminal Section convicted the highest number of defendants in its history, surpassing the record previously set in Fiscal Year 2006. The Division has compiled a significant record on criminal civil rights law enforcement prosecutions. During the last seven years, the Criminal Section obtained convictions of 53 percent more defendants (391 v. 256) in color of law cases than the previous seven years.

This case was investigated by special agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case was prosecuted by Special Litigation Counsel Kristy L. Parker and Trial Attorney Forrest Christian of the Civil Rights Division.

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