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Former Bureau of Prisons Corrections Officer Sentenced for Sexually Abusing an Inmate and Witness Tampering

Eric Todd Ellis, 32, a former Bureau of Prisons (BOP) corrections officer at the FCI-Aliceville facility in Aliceville, Alabama, was sentenced today in federal court in Birmingham, Alabama, to 18 months in prison and five years of supervised release. Ellis previously pleaded guilty to one count of sexual abuse of a ward and one count of tampering with a witness.

According to court documents, on or about June 11, 2020, Ellis knowingly engaged in a sexual act with a female inmate while in the back of the laundry room of the prison. At the time, Ellis was on-duty and acting in his capacity as a corrections officer. The female inmate was in official detention and under Ellis's custodial authority. Ellis then admitted his conduct to another corrections officer. While the OIG was investigating Ellis's conduct, Ellis told that corrections officer to lie to OIG. On a recorded call, Ellis said: "Just tell [the OIG agents], yeah, we're friends, but, I mean, you hadn't really talked to me about it. And when you have it's – I've just told you that nothing happened."

"Prison employees who abuse their positions of power to sexually assault individuals in their custody, and then attempt to cover up their crimes, will be held accountable," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "The Civil Rights Division will continue to secure justice for sexual assault victims, including those held in the custody and control of law enforcement officials."

"The sexual abuse of prison inmates by federal corrections officers is intolerable," said U.S. Attorney Prim F. Escalona of the Northern District of Alabama. "My office will vigorously investigate and prosecute any such officers who violate their oath of office. As today's sentence makes plain, officers who abuse inmates face significant prison time for their offense."

"Ellis sexually abused an inmate and then tried to cover it up," said Special Agent in Charge James F. Boyersmith of the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Miami Field Office. "Today's sentencing sends a clear message that prison staff who abuse their power and assault inmates in their custody will be brought to justice."

This case was investigated by the Miami Division of the OIG. Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert Posey and Assistant U.S. Attorney Robin Mark of the Northern District of Alabama and Special Litigation Counsel Fara Gold and Trial Attorney Anna Gotfryd of the Civil Rights Division's Criminal Section prosecuted the case.