

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, September 29, 2022

FCI Dublin Correctional Officer Faces Abuse Charges Against Two Additional Incarcerated Victims

A federal grand jury in Oakland, California, returned a superseding indictment today charging a former California correctional officer with sexual abuse charges against two female inmates.

John Russell Bellhouse, 39, formerly of Pleasanton, California, was originally charged by criminal complaint on Nov. 30, 2021, one count of sexual abuse of a prison ward.

“The additional charges unsealed today demonstrate the priority the Department of Justice has placed on prosecuting cases of sexual misconduct by Bureau of Prison employees,” said Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco. “We have no tolerance for correction officers who betray the trust placed in them to safely and humanely care for those in their custody.”

“The safety, security and integrity of federal prisons are of the utmost importance, and the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General will continue to aggressively pursue allegations of abuse at FCI Dublin and across the BOP,” said Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz.

According to the superseding indictment, two charges allege Bellhouse, former correctional officer at an all-female correctional institution in Alameda County that houses federal prisoners and is operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, sexually abused Victim 1 and a third charge alleges Bellhouse engaged in abusive sexual contact with Victim 1. All three incidents occurred before October 2020, with two occurring as early as February 2020 and the third as early as December 2019. All three incidents are alleged to have occurred within FCI Dublin Prison Safety facilities.

The superseding indictment further added three additional charges that Bellhouse sexually abused two other female victims identified as “Victim 2” and “Victim 3.” Both Victims 2 and 3 are described as inmates who were serving their prison sentences at FCI Dublin at the time of the sexual abuse and were also under the custodial supervision of Bellhouse. The superseding indictment charges two counts of abusive sexual contact by Bellhouse against Victim 2. One of these contacts is alleged to have occurred between October and December 2020 and the other on Oct. 22, 2020. The superseding indictment also charges one count of sexual abusive contact by Bellhouse against Victim 3 between May and December 2020. All of the charged acts involving Victim 2 and Victim 3 are alleged to have occurred in the FCI Dublin Camp Safety Office.

“Individuals incarcerated in federal prisons should never experience sexual abuse, and particularly not at the hands of correctional officers charged with maintaining safety and order within the institution’s walls,” said U.S. Attorney Stephanie M. Hinds for the Northern District

of California. “The security of inmates is a vital priority within our prison system. This office will continue to pursue allegations of correctional officers abusing inmates and will seek accountability for those who engage in such conduct.”

“The defendant had a fundamental responsibility to care for the welfare of inmates in his custody and maintain the good order of FCI Dublin,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Robert K. Tripp of the San Francisco Field Office. “The additional charges allege the defendant did neither, but instead abused his powers and took advantage of the women for whose care he was responsible. Investigation of violations of the public trust, regardless of the status of the victims, will remain among the highest priorities of the FBI.”

Bellhouse is charged in the superseding indictment with two counts sexual abuse of a ward and four counts of sexually abusive contact. The defendant is scheduled for his initial court appearance on Oct. 13, 2022, and his jury trial is set for June 5, 2023, before U.S. Magistrate Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. If convicted for sexual abuse, he faces a maximum statutory sentence of 15 years in prison for each count. If convicted for sexual abusive contact, he faces a maximum statutory sentence of two years in prison, a minimum five term of supervised release, and a \$250,000 fine for each count. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

An investigation was conducted by the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General and the FBI. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Molly K. Priedeman and Andrew Paulson Attorney for the Northern District of California are prosecuting the case.

An indictment is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.