

Department of Justice  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Former BOP Corrections Officer Sentenced to 10 Years in Prison for Sexually Assaulting a Woman in Federal Custody in Los Angeles**

A former corrections officer with the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), was sentenced to 120 months and three years of supervised release today in federal court in the Central District of California for sexually assaulting a woman in custody.

Jose Viera, 49, was sentenced for one felony count of deprivation of rights under color of law for sexually assaulting a woman in custody in December 2020. He entered his guilty plea on May 24, 2022.

According to court documents, at the time of the assault, Viera was a BOP corrections officer assigned to work at Metropolitan Detention Center-Los Angeles (MDC-LA), a federal prison that holds male and female pre-trial detainees and persons serving custodial sentences. In his role as corrections officer, Viera was required to uphold the U.S. Constitution and ensure the safety and security of persons housed at MDC-LA. In March 2022, Viera was placed on administrative leave.

In December 2020, Viera was assigned to supervise incarcerated women who were quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure and infection. During the morning of Dec. 20, Viera entered the cell of the victim, who was in COVID-19 isolation, as he had done on previous occasions to bring her breakfast. On that morning, Viera laid down next to the victim in her bed, sandwiching her between his body and the wall. Then, he sexually assaulted the victim. Viera committed this assault despite knowing that his actions violated her constitutional rights. When the Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General (DOJ-OIG), and the FBI conducted a voluntary interview with Viera about the sexual assault allegations, Viera lied to federal agents about his misconduct.

“Law enforcement officials must be held accountable when they abuse their authority and exploit their power to sexually assault the very people they are sworn to protect,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “This defendant’s actions destroyed this woman’s sense of peace, caused incalculable pain, and shattered her trust in law enforcement. We hope this sentence stands as a reminder to would-be offenders that the Justice Department is committed to holding officials accountable when they sexually assault people held inside jails and prisons.”

“By breaching his duty of trust, Viera harmed not only the victim, but also the system of justice he was entrusted to serve,” said U.S. Attorney Martin Estrada for the Central District of California. “My office will continue in its mission to ensure that no one is above the law, regardless of their position, and that victims receive justice.”

“Viera abused his power and sexually assaulted the inmate in her cell while she was extremely vulnerable in COVID-19 isolation,” said Special Agent in Charge Zachary Shroyer for the DOJ-

OIG, Los Angeles Field Office. “Today’s sentencing shows that Correctional Officers that abuse inmates will be brought to justice.”

“Law enforcement officers are charged with upholding civil rights. The defendant in this case completely abused his position of power,” said Assistant Director Luis Quesada of the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division. “The FBI is dedicated to protecting the American people and pursuing justice on behalf of victims in cases like this.”

The DOJ-OIG Los Angeles Field Office and the FBI Los Angeles Field Office are investigating the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Rybarczyk for the Central District of California and Trial Attorney Nikhil Ramnaney and former Special Litigation Counsel Fara Gold of the Civil Rights Division’s Criminal Section are prosecuting the case.