

PRESS RELEASE

# Former Kentucky Federal Corrections Lieutenant Sentenced for Violating the Civil Rights of an Inmate and Writing False Reports

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**For Immediate Release**

Office of Public Affairs

A former Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) lieutenant, Ryan O. Elliott, 47, was sentenced today to one year and one day in prison and one year of supervised release after pleading guilty to assaulting one inmate and writing a false report about the assault of a second inmate in an unrelated incident.

Two other former corrections officers at U.S. Penitentiary Big Sandy in Kentucky – Samuel Patrick, 41, and Clinton Pauley, 42 – previously pleaded guilty to related offenses and were sentenced to 36 and 40 months in prison, respectively. Another prison official, former Lieutenant Kevin Pearce, 39, was convicted of related offenses after a six-day trial and was sentenced to 66 months in prison.

“While he was a lieutenant in a federal prison, this defendant violently assaulted an inmate and then worked with other officers to cover up the assault of a second inmate,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “Supervisors should lead by example — not abuse their authority by using excessive force against inmates entrusted to their care and by helping colleagues conceal misconduct. The Justice Department will vigorously pursue law enforcement officers at the local, state or federal level who commit, condone or enable violations of constitutional rights.”

“Not only did Pearce have a profound responsibility to protect people in his custody and care, he had an even greater one — to ensure that those under his supervision also protected them,” said U.S. Attorney Carlton S. Shier IV for the Eastern District of Kentucky. “He fell well short on both counts. Instead of honoring his obligations, he

acquiesced in the abuse by his subordinates and then tried to cover it up. He now faces the consequences of this betrayal of the public trust placed in him.”

“Rather than perform his supervisory responsibilities and ensure that FBOP staff complied with the law, former Lieutenant Elliot joined with other FBOP staff to assault an inmate and to lie about a separate FBOP staff assault of an inmate,” said Special Agent in Charge William J. Hannah of the Justice Department’s Office of the Inspector General (DOJ-OIG) Midwest Region. “Today’s sentencing sends an important message to FBOP supervisors that they will be held to account for such egregious acts.”

According to court documents and evidence introduced at the trial of Pearce, Elliott, who at that time held the rank of lieutenant, joined Pauley and other officers in assaulting one inmate and, in a separate incident, wrote false reports about the assault of another inmate. On March 26, 2021, Elliott was present when an inmate was taken to a room with no cameras following a non-violent violation of prison rules. When another officer began to assault the inmate, Elliott assisted by tackling the inmate to the ground and punching him in the body. Elliott continued to assault the inmate, and Pauley joined. On or about April 30, 2021, Elliott was asked by Pearce to help cover up an assault against another inmate who had been beaten by Pauley and Patrick. Elliott, who had not been present for that assault, agreed to help Pearce cover up the assault by writing a false report claiming that he had been there and had seen no assault.

DOJ-OIG and the FBI Louisville Field Office investigated the case.

Trial Attorneys Thomas Johnson and Tara Allison of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Zachary Dembo for the Eastern District of Kentucky prosecuted the case.

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