

PRESS RELEASE

Former USP Big Sandy Lieutenant Sentenced for Civil Rights Violations

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For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

A Harold, Kentucky, man, Michael Childers, 47, was sentenced today to 17 months in prison by U.S. District Judge Robert Wier for falsification of records.

Childers was a Lieutenant at United States Penitentiary Big Sandy, located in Inez, Kentucky. According to his plea agreement, on April 13, 2021, Childers was in the lieutenants' office, along with Lieutenant Terry Melvin, Lieutenant Kevin Pearce, Case Management Coordinator Samuel Patrick, and Captain's Secretary Clinton Pauley, when an inmate who had requested protective custody was brought into the lieutenants' office. The inmate pleaded for protective custody and then was assaulted by staff members without justification.

After the assault, Childers wrote an incident report in which he falsely claimed that the inmate had struck him with his head as well as a closed fist. Childers admitted he wrote these things knowing they were false, but did so in an attempt to impede the administration of justice regarding the investigation of the unlawful assault on the inmate.

"Today's sentence marks a significant moment of accountability. BOP personnel are entrusted with authority and responsibility — positions that demand integrity, judgment, and a commitment to the rule of law. Instead, these defendants abused that authority, not only by engaging in unlawful conduct, but by taking steps to impede justice and conceal the truth," said First Assistant U.S. Attorney Jason Parman for the Eastern District of Kentucky. "Our office remains committed to pursuing justice wherever the facts lead and such misconduct will be met with accountability."

"The subject abused his position of power to lie about the assault of an inmate in an effort to cover up illegal actions," said Special Agent in Charge Olivia Olson of the FBI Louisville Field Office. "The FBI will continue to hold accountable law enforcement officers who exploit their authority and damage the public's trust placed in them."

"Today's sentence underscores the serious nature of this misconduct and the violation of civil rights it involved," said Federal Bureau of Prisons Director William K. Marshall III. "The Federal Bureau of Prisons will not tolerate abuse of authority and is committed to holding individuals accountable while ensuring the safety of those in our custody."

Childers is the final defendant to be sentenced for the assault. Melvin pleaded guilty to conspiracy against rights and violating an individual's rights under the color of law and was sentenced in April 2026 to 48 months. [Patrick and Pauley](#) pleaded guilty for their roles in the assaults of inmates and were sentenced in November 2023 to 36 and 40 months, respectively. [Pearce](#) was convicted of writing false reports that covered up the assaults of inmates and was sentenced to 66 months. Finally, [Ryan Elliott](#), also a former USP Big Sandy lieutenant, pleaded guilty to assaulting an inmate and writing a false report about the assault of a second inmate in an unrelated incident. Elliott was sentenced in March 2024 to 12 months and one day.

Under federal law, Childers must serve 85 percent of his prison sentence. Upon his release from prison, he will be under the supervision of the U.S. Probation Office for one year.

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Jason Parman for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Acting Special Agent in Charge Matthew Loux of the Department of Justice Office of Inspector General, Chicago Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge Olivia Olson of the FBI Louisville Field Office, jointly announced the sentence.

The investigation was conducted by DOJ-OIG and the FBI.