

PRESS RELEASE

Former Deputy U.S. Marshal Sentenced for Assault on Prisoner in Louisiana Courthouse

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For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

A former Deputy U.S. Marshal was sentenced today to 45 months in prison for assaulting a federal inmate and writing a false report about the incident.

In April 2026, after a three-day trial, a federal jury in the Western District of Louisiana convicted Joshua Firmin, 49, of one count of Deprivation of Rights Under Color of Law and one count of Falsification of Records.

"The great majority of law enforcement officers do essential work honorably and lawfully under difficult and high-risk conditions," said Assistant Attorney General Harmeet K. Dhillon of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "But Joshua Firmin knowingly overstepped his authority when he assaulted a shackled prisoner and failed to uphold the trust placed in him when he lied about it in official documents. Today's sentence represents appropriate accountability, and we are grateful to the law enforcement personnel who reported the misconduct and cooperated with the investigation."

"The civil rights protections afforded to all U.S. citizens are a fundamental part of the Constitution," said U.S. Attorney David I. Courcelle for the Eastern District of Louisiana. "The unlawful civil rights violation committed by Mr. Firmin against a shackled inmate, not only tarnishes the reputation, it also engenders public distrust of the innumerable law enforcement officers who so honorably protect and serve all of us. Today's sentencing ensures that Mr. Firmin is being held accountable for his actions."

"Firmin violated his oath as a law enforcement officer by abusing his authority," said Special Agent in Charge Cloey Pierce of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (DOJ OIG) South Central Region Houston Office. "The DOJ OIG will continue working with its law enforcement partners to ensure that anyone participating in this type of behavior will be brought to justice."

According to court documents and evidence presented at trial, on February 29, 2024, Firmin, who was then assigned to operations duties at the federal courthouse in Lafayette, Louisiana, learned that a prisoner awaiting a court appearance in the courthouse cell block had made insulting remarks about Firmin to another courthouse employee. Shortly thereafter, Firmin entered the courthouse cellblock and unlocked the cell where the prisoner was being held, yanked the prisoner, who was restrained in handcuffs, waist shackles, and leg irons, out of the cell by his hair and slammed his head into the cellblock wall. As a result of the assault, the prisoner suffered a laceration to his scalp that required staples to close. Following the assault, Firmin wrote an official use of force report in which he falsely stated that the prisoner had attempted to spit on him and then inadvertently struck his head on a door while resisting efforts to escort him to another cell. However, another Deputy U.S. Marshal, who had witnessed the assault, promptly reported the misconduct to his chain of command, leading to an investigation by the DOJ OIG.

The case was investigated by the DOJ OIG South Central Region Houston Office.

The case was prosecuted by Trial Attorney Alec Ward of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division and Assistant U.S. Attorney Chandra Menon for the Eastern District of Louisiana.

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