

Two Massachusetts corrections officers arrested for allegedly beating a handcuffed inmate

Seth M. Bourget, 39, of Woodstock, Conn., a Senior Correctional Officer at U.S. Bureau Prisons Federal Medical Center in Devens (FMC Devens), was indicted on two counts of deprivation of civil rights under color of law. Joseph M. Lavorato, 51, of Wilmington, Mass., a Lieutenant at FMC Devens was indicted on obstruction of an official proceeding and destruction and falsification of records in a federal investigation. Bourget and Lavorato were arrested this morning.

“These corrections officers abused their authority and the public’s trust by allegedly injuring a vulnerable inmate and then attempting to cover it up,” said United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling. “This conduct is an affront to the law enforcement officers who serve honorably every day and fulfill their duties with fairness and integrity. Today’s charges reflect the Justice Department’s commitment to prosecuting official misconduct.”

“The alleged use of excessive force by Correctional Officer Bourget toward an inmate and the alleged follow-up actions and poor judgment of Lieutenant Lavorato in attempting to cover up the incident are extremely troubling. This kind of conduct directly contradicts the oath that federal Correctional Officers take – to serve and protect, and to uphold the law,” said Guido Modano, Special Agent in Charge of the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General New York Field Office.

“Great power and responsibility are sewn into a Bureau of Prisons uniform. But that uniform and the oath taken by those who wear it is not a license to use excessive force on a vulnerable prisoner, or to allegedly cover up a subordinate’s reprehensible behavior by attempting to destroy evidence of that abuse,” said Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division. “Civil rights are everyone’s rights, and we will continue to investigate anyone who violates their professional responsibility to keep others safe and secure.”

According to the indictment, on or about June 18, 2019, Bourget, dropped his knee on an inmate’s head while the inmate was handcuffed and restrained on the floor in the mental health housing unit, resulting in bodily injury to the inmate. It is further alleged that Bourget struck the handcuffed inmate with a protective shield with excessive force, in a locked cell, injuring the inmate.

Lieutenant Lavorato allegedly obstructed the investigation into U.S. Bureau of Prison’s review of the use of the force by purposely failing to timely and accurately report the nature and extent of inmate’s injuries and intentionally concealing the existence a video recording of the incident in an official report. It is alleged that Lavorato destroyed a video recording of the incident, and then falsely stated in a report that the security camera was not operational at the time due to a dead battery.

The charge of willful deprivation of civil rights under color of law provides for a sentence of up to 10 years in prison, two years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of obstruction of an official proceeding and the destruction and falsification of a record in a federal investigation provides for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$250,000. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other

statutory factors.

U.S. Attorney Lelling, DOJ-OIG SAC Modano, and FBI Boston SAC Bonavolonta made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney Neil J. Gallagher, Jr. of Lelling's Public Corruption Unit is prosecuting the case.