

# Two Springfield Police Officers Indicted for Unreasonable Force Against Two Juveniles

Two Springfield Police Officers – one current and one former – were arrested today and charged in federal court in Springfield, Mass., in connection with using unreasonable force against two Latino juveniles during an arrest in 2016. One of the officers is also charged with threatening two juveniles during an interrogation and falsifying subsequent reports regarding the incident.

Gregg A. Bigda, 48, of Wilbraham, was charged in an indictment unsealed today with one count of deprivation of rights under color of law – excessive force, two counts of deprivation of rights under color of law – abusive interrogation, and one count of obstructing justice by writing a false report.

Steven M. Vigneault, 48, of East Longmeadow, was charged in the same indictment with one count of deprivation of rights under color of law – excessive force. Bigda and Vigneault will appear in federal court in Springfield later today.

“Even in the face of adversity, law enforcement officers are expected to conduct themselves professionally, respectfully, and with integrity,” said U.S. Attorney Andrew E. Lelling. “They are ambassadors for the rule of law, and when they themselves break those laws, they violate not just the rights of their victims, but compromise the public’s trust in law enforcement. My office is committed to holding our public servants accountable under the law and prosecuting those who abuse their positions of power.”

“Most law enforcement officers are dedicated, honest, and

fully committed to building trust within their communities, but those who break the law stain the reputation of the law enforcement profession,” said Harold H. Shaw, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division. “Badges and guns do not come with the authority to ignore the Constitution or the rights of others, and those who violate it will be held accountable.”

It is alleged that on Feb. 27, 2016, Bigda used unreasonable force against a juvenile, spat on him, and said, “Welcome to the white man’s world,” and that Vigneault used unreasonable force against a second juvenile. According to the indictment, both officers’ use of unreasonable force involved a dangerous weapon, resulting in bodily injury.

After the arrests, Bigda allegedly interrogated two juveniles without their parents present, without reading them their Miranda rights, and by issuing various threats. For example, Bigda made the following threats against one juvenile: to “crush [the juvenile’s] skull and “fu— get away with it;” “fu— bring the dog back [and] let him go after” the juvenile; “fu— kill [the juvenile] in the parking lot;” “charge [the juvenile] with killing Kennedy and fu— make it stick;” “stick a fu— kilo of coke in [the juvenile’s] pocket and put [the juvenile] away for fu— 15 years;” and “kick [the juvenile] right in the fu— face as soon as [they] cross the Springfield line.” Bigda made the following threats against a second juvenile: to “beat the fu— out of [the juvenile].;” “tune [the juvenile] the fu—up;” and “bloody [the juvenile’s] body.”

The indictment further alleges that Bigda subsequently attempted to obstruct the investigation into the assaults of the juveniles by falsifying his reports to the Springfield Police Department Internal Investigations Unit, writing that he did not kick anyone or see any officer kick anyone during the course of the arrests of the juveniles. Bigda filed a second report in which he denied spitting on anyone or yelling “welcome to the white man’s world” during the arrest of the

juveniles.

The charges of deprivation of civil rights under color of law resulting in injury or using or threatening to use a dangerous weapon provide for a sentence of no greater than 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of deprivation of civil rights under color of law provides for a sentence of no greater than one year in prison, one year of supervised release, and a fine of up to \$100,000. The charge of falsifying a police report provides for a sentence of no greater than 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 on the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling; Acting Assistant Attorney General John M. Gore of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division; and Harold H. Shaw, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Field Division, made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Deepika Bains Shukla and Katharine Wagner of Lelling's Springfield Branch Office and Trial Attorney Christopher J. Perras of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division are prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the indictment are allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.