



BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Frederick J. Akshar II

Undersheriff Sammy L. Davis

155 Lt. Van Winkle Drive, Binghamton, NY 13905

For Immediate Release:

July 31, 2024

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BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

Corrections Officer Charged After Striking Inmate

(TOWN OF DICKINSON) Two corrections officers have been suspended without pay, with one facing criminal charges as an investigation has opened into the unnecessary use of force during an interaction with an incarcerated individual at the Broome County Correctional Facility.

“For the past 19 months, I’ve been proud to share our collective accomplishments and the good work being done by the men and women of the Broome County Sheriff’s Office, both out in the community and within the Correctional Facility,” said Sheriff Fred Akshar. “We pledged an unprecedented level of transparency, and sadly, today’s news is a black mark amidst the good work being done by men and women who proudly wear the uniform.”

On Tuesday, July 23, 2024 at approximately 9:40 AM, Broome County Sheriff’s corrections officers responded to a housing unit where an incarcerated individual was refusing to return to his cell and verbally threatening suicide. Per standard policy and procedure, the incarcerated individual was escorted to the Medical housing unit for observation.

Video of the incident shows a corrections officer forcefully escorting the individual to the lobby of the Medical unit, where another corrections officer then strikes the inmate before applying a “gooseneck” wrist restraint on the individual after he was seated in handcuffs. The physical force utilized was deemed to be unnecessary and contrary to office policy and Article 35 of the New York State Penal Law that dictates when force is authorized to be used by corrections officers.

“My expectations since Day One in this office have been that our Corrections Officers treat all incarcerated individuals in our care with dignity and respect, adhering to the highest standards of the practice put forth by the Office of the Sheriff and the letter of the law,” said Akshar. “Twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, our officers put on the uniform and put their lives on the line to protect and honorably serve their community, but on the day in question, two officers failed to do their jobs. We were shocked and disappointed by the conduct we witnessed, because the actions taken during this incident have no place in our Correctional Facility and in no way reflect the good work performed daily by our officers for the past 19 months and beyond.”

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Sheriff Akshar publicly released body camera and security footage of the incident in question, which can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/pXZg3Ky0Vcw>

As a result of the initial investigation, James A. Woodard, age 39 of Windsor, NY, was charged with Official Misconduct, a Class A Misdemeanor and Harassment in 2nd Degree, a Violation.

Both Woodard and the other corrections officer were immediately suspended without pay while both the investigation and internal disciplinary processes continue.

The case has been reported to the state's Commission of Correction and the state's Attorney General office.

Over the past several days, Sheriff Akshar and Undersheriff Davis have met with nearly every corrections officer employed at the Facility to discuss the incident and the actions of those involved. In the coming days, all Correctional Facility staff will participate in a formal training review on Use of Force, De-escalation and Duty to Intervene.

“We pledged to be open, honest and transparent with the people of this community, and for 19 months, we’ve fortunately had nothing but good news to report,” said Sheriff Akshar. “Going forward, the men and women of the Broome County Sheriff’s Office will continue to hold ourselves to the highest standard every day. As much as it pains me to report on an incident when two of our officers failed to meet that standard, when someone does something wrong, we must take every appropriate measure to do what’s right.”

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