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TARRANT COUNTY INMATE GETS 25 YEARS FOR TAKING A BITE OUT OF JAILER

Prosecutor: *"The people of Tarrant County are sending a message that it's important to protect all our law enforcement officers."*

(Fort Worth) – A Tarrant County jury sentenced 55-year-old habitual criminal Gary Cole to 25 years in prison this week for biting a Tarrant County detention officer and causing a complete lockdown of the Tarrant County Jail.

On November 21, 2018, while Gary Cole was in Tarrant County Jail lock-up awaiting trial on charges of assaulting his girlfriend, he resisted being moved into a special cell reserved for inmates at risk for suicide. Detention Officer Kalonji Foster testified Cole refused to get out of an unneeded wheelchair to be moved through the cell door. Cole proceeded to put his head under Officer Foster's coat and bit his right side multiple times as the officer attempted to move the inmate to the cell bunk.

The jail supervisor called an alert, forcing a shutdown of the jail complex while other officers secured the cell block. Officer Foster was taken to John Peter Smith Hospital, where he was treated with a tetanus shot and antibiotics.

Prosecutor Chris Dewitt told the jury, *"Cole's crime is magnified because his resistance led to a lockdown of the entire jail, including the medical section, putting other officers and inmates at risk."*

Despite Cole's lawyers arguing the inmate was suffering from numerous medical difficulties and was demanding treatment, Officer Foster and his supervisor testified Cole had not been denied treatment nor medicine, and was walking easily without any assistance just moments before requesting the wheelchair, which Foster testified "is not allowed in the suicide unit."

After finding Cole guilty, the jury heard about Cole's habitual record of prior federal and state convictions for armed robbery, auto theft and mail threats, resulting in the enhanced prison sentence.

Following the trial, Dewitt added there was good reason for such a long sentence.

"Officer Foster was assaulted by an inmate, a risk he and every man and woman working in our jails face every day. With this 25-year sentence, the people of Tarrant County are sending a message that it's important to protect all of our law enforcement officers."