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Washington County jailers used inmate as enforcer

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BY ROBERT PATRICK • rpatrick@post-dispatch.com > 314-621-5154 | Posted: Wednesday, July 14, 2010 11:41 am | [Loading...](#)

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Washington County jailers used a violent inmate to physically assault and otherwise discipline other unruly inmates, sending at least one to the hospital, federal prosecutors and a former correctional officer said Wednesday.

That officer, Valeria Wilson Jackson, pleaded guilty to obstructing justice Wednesday morning in federal court in St. Louis and admitted that she lied to the FBI to cover up the assaults.

She also claimed that her father, the former chief deputy of the sheriff's office, was one of those who enlisted that violent inmate in the assaults, rewarded him with cigarettes and subsequently altered jail documents to cover up his actions.

In court, Assistant U.S. Attorney Fara Gold, of the civil rights division in Washington, mentioned multiple inmates who were allegedly assaulted in this way. The inmates were identified only by their initials, as was "T.M.," the inmate used in the assaults.

T.M. is described in court documents as "one of the most violent inmates at the jail," who "was well-known as someone who would fight with and assault other inmates."

Jackson's father, Vernon G. Wilson, of Potosi, is not named in the federal court documents, but has pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor charge of third-degree assault last year and was sentenced to probation, court records show. The date of the assault, Aug. 14, 2005, matches the date of an incident described in Jackson's plea in which Wilson allegedly slapped an inmate for singing rap songs to irritate officers and inmates.

Wilson's lawyer did not immediately return a call seeking comment.

As part of Jackson's plea, she admitted that she and other correctional officers, including her father, placed inmates in dangerous situations, knowing that they were likely to be attacked.

In one instance in July of 2005, she warned her father that placing a "complainer" in the cell block with T.M. "was a bad idea," documents show.

Five minutes after placing the complainer's belongings in with T.M., staff watched on a surveillance camera as he staggered into view after an attack. Wilson then handed out cigarettes to T.M and other inmates in what Jackson believes was a reward, documents show.

The sheriff was not at the jail at the time and had nothing to do with the decision to move the inmate in with T.M., the plea agreement says.

Federal prosecutors and an FBI agent declined to comment when asked whether the sheriff was aware of the other incidents.

Current sheriff Andy Skiles did not immediately return a call seeking comment Wednesday.

In another incident, an inmate who called Jackson a “bitch” was placed in the cell block with a violent inmate. Jackson turned to that inmate, saying “play nice” and “have fun,” as a signal that the inmate “needed to be shut up,” documents show.

That inmate later received “the worst injuries Jackson had ever seen at the jail.”

Posted in [Crime-and-courts](#), [Metro](#) on *Wednesday, July 14, 2010 11:41 am* Updated: 4:07 pm. | Tags: [Washington County](#), [Jail Abuse](#), [Civil Rights](#), [Prisoner Abuse](#), [Valeria Jackson Wilson](#), [Federal Courts](#), [Robert Patrick](#),

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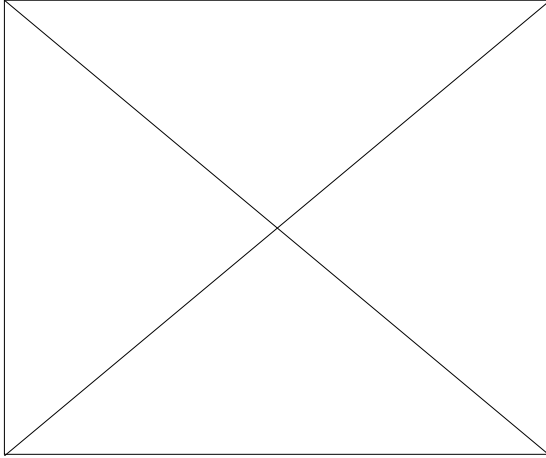
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