

Local News 

Ex-LI corrections officer indicted over inmate abuse

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Mark Barber

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Eyewitness News

MINEOLA (WABC) -- A former Nassau County corrections officer was indicted on 80 counts related to alleged sexual abuse of inmates.

Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice announced that a grand jury returned the 80-count indictment against 48-year-old Mark Barber, who was arrested last December.

He is charged with multiple counts of rape, sexual abuse and forcible touching. Seven female inmates have come forward alleging that Barber used his position at the Nassau County jail to extort sexual favors.

Barber, of Levittown, was indicted on charges of two counts of rape, criminal sexual act, three counts of receiving reward for official misconduct, 11 counts of sexual abuse, three counts of forcible touching, 18 counts of promoting prison contraband, 40 counts of official misconduct, patronizing a prostitute and stalking.

He faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted. He is due back in court September 28.

Rice said that from approximately August 2007 through March 2009, Barber, acting in his capacity as a grievance officer for the Nassau County Correctional Center's (NCCC) female inmate population, engaged in various ongoing, inappropriate relationships with female inmates. These relationships ranged from providing cigarettes and private phone calls to engaging in various levels of sexual activity with select inmates.

According to New York State Penal Law, "a person is deemed incapable of consent when he or she is committed to the care and custody of a local correctional facility...and the actor is an employee."

Rice said that Barber would target inmates who had histories of drug abuse, prostitution, or mental health treatment.

Barber began his tenure as a corrections officer at NCCC in December 1987. He began serving as a grievance officer in December 2005. He was fired Dec. 30, 2009.

As a grievance officer, Barber received complaints from inmates about medical care and quality-of-life issues. Grievance officers then interview inmates who file grievances and determine what action, if any, should be taken by the jail. Barber's position, as well as his added responsibilities as a Fire Safety Officer, gave him unique and unfettered access to the jail and the inmates confined to it.

"This man was supposed to help these women with their problems, but instead he preyed on their vulnerabilities for his own sick needs," Rice said. "He terrorized these women by abusing his limited jailhouse power, and for that, he could find himself on the other side of a locked prison cell door."

The DA's Office and the NCCC Internal Affairs Unit began investigating Barber in March 2009 after a female inmate alleged that Barber tried to kiss her while she was assigned to a work detail under his supervision. The investigation revealed that six other inmates had inappropriate and, at times, sexual contact with Barber.

Rice said that Barber would often arrange private phone calls, provide cigarettes and deposit money into the commissary accounts of the female inmates he was involved with.

"Not only was he preying on these women, but he was endangering the entire prison population and staff by disregarding the jail's safety protocols and flaunting the rules," Rice said.

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