

Department of Justice

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Former Chicago Police Officer Jon Burge Sentenced for Lying About Police Torture

WASHINGTON - The Justice Department announced today that former Chicago Police Department Commander Jon Burge, 63, of Apollo Beach, Fla., was sentenced to 54 months in prison followed by three years of supervised release for lying in a deposition in a civil case about torture and abuse of suspects by Chicago Police Department officers. Burge's sentence was an upward departure from the recommended Guidelines' sentence.

Burge was convicted last June of two counts of obstruction of justice and one count of perjury stemming from false answers he gave in a civil case in 2003. In those answers, Burge denied ever using, or being aware of other officers using, any type of improper coercion, physical abuse or torture with suspects who were in custody at Chicago Police Department's Area Two. However, evidence at trial showed that Burge abused multiple victims in Area Two, suffocating them with plastic bags; shocking them with electrical devices; and placing a loaded gun to their heads.

In a 23-year career with the Chicago Police Department, Burge rose through the ranks to commander before being fired in 1993 over allegations of abuse. Special prosecutors were appointed in 2002 to investigate claims of abuse by Burge and others. A four-year investigation concluded that the abuse was outside the statute of limitations. It was a pending civil suit that was the basis for the federal charges in this case.

"Burge abused his power and betrayed the public trust by abusing suspects in his custody, and then by lying under oath to cover up what he and other officers had done," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The department will aggressively prosecute any officer who violates the Constitution."

"Today, we put to rest the decades of denials that torture of suspects in police custody occurred," said Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. "This sentence delivers a measure of justice, which Burge obstructed for so long."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Weisman and April Perry from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois and Trial Attorney Betsy Biffel from the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.