



BCPO News

Scott A. Coffina, Prosecutor



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Two New York City High School Students Sentenced for Assaulting and Hazing Fellow JROTC Members During Trip to Joint Base MDL

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina announced that two members of a Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps program at a New York City high school have been sentenced to two years of incarceration at a New Jersey state facility for assaulting and hazing fellow cadets in a Westampton Township hotel during an overnight trip early last year.

The defendants, whose names are not being released because they are juveniles, pled guilty earlier this month to two counts of Aggravated Assault (Second Degree), Aggravated Hazing (Fourth Degree) and three counts of Hazing (Disorderly Persons). They will serve their time at the New Jersey Training School in Monroe Township.

The students were enrolled at the Francis Lewis High School in Queens and were on an overnight trip to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst for a JROTC competition in April 2018 when the hazing took place. The incidents, which were reported to police in late June and involved four male victims, occurred at the Hilton Garden Inn.

The investigation revealed that one of the victims was burned on his buttocks with a hot iron in addition to suffering other abuse at the hands of the defendants. A second victim in the room was also mistreated. Later, in another room at the hotel, the defendants forced two other members of the group to engage in humiliating conduct.

“We believe this outcome strikes the right balance in cases involving juvenile criminal conduct, providing sufficient accountability for the defendants while advancing the rehabilitative purposes of the juvenile justice system,” Prosecutor Coffina said. “I would like to commend the victims and their families for their courage in coming forward and seeing this case through. Their support of this prosecution has enabled us to send a message that assaulting another person is a crime, plain and simple, and no less so when it occurs via some perverse tradition of hazing as a so-called rite of passage in a youth organization.”

The case was prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Kristine Adler. The investigation was conducted by the Westampton Township Police Department. The lead investigator was Westampton Township Police Detective Sergeant Linda Chieffalo.

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