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FOREST PARK POLICE SERGEANT PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATION; AGREES TO RESIGN AND SERVE A YEAR IN PRISON

CHICAGO – A police sergeant in west suburban Forest Park pleaded guilty today to a misdemeanor federal civil rights charge and agreed to a recommended maximum sentence of a year in prison for assaulting an individual, federal officials announced today. The defendant, **Michael Murphy**, a Forest Park police officer since 1990, also agreed to resign from the police department and never work again as a law enforcement officer in any jurisdiction. Murphy, who was indicted last year, was scheduled to go on trial beginning Monday, April 21, in U.S. District Court in Chicago. The guilty plea was announced by Grace Chung Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, and Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Murphy, 43, of Aurora, pleaded guilty to a superseding misdemeanor count of violating civil rights. U.S. District Judge David Coar set sentencing for July 9.

In his plea, Murphy admitted violating the civil rights of the victim, Sidney Hooks by striking him without justification and acting “under color of law,” meaning through his official capacity as a police officer.

On August 6, 2003, while acting without any legitimate law enforcement purpose, Murphy admitted that he sprayed pepper spray into Hooks’ face and struck him with a police baton, depriving the victim of civil rights under the law. Hook suffered minor chemical burns to his eyes, a broken wrist and a bruised thigh. At no time did Hooks verbally or physically assault or threaten Murphy, who also admitted that he later made a false police report of the incident to conceal his use of excessive force.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sergio Acosta and Betsy Biffel, a trial attorney in the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division.

The misdemeanor count carries a maximum penalty of a year in prison and a maximum fine of \$100,000. The Court, however, will determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed.

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