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Prison Transport Officer Will Spend Life Behind Bars After Sexually Assaulting Convicts

A former prisoner transport officer will now spend life in prison himself after sexually assaulting two women that had been in his custody, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) said Thursday. A federal judge in Little Rock, Arkansas sentenced Eric Scott Kindlay, 53, to life in prison plus five years. Kindlay had previously been found guilty in March 2020 of two counts of sexual assault and possession of a firearm. Kindlay had previously run his own private prison transport company, signing contracts with local jails and correctional facilities. He would reportedly drive throughout the country transporting people who had been arrested on out-of-state warrants. The two assaults tied to the indictment both occurred in Arkansas in 2014 and 2017, respectively, according to the DOJ. The woman in the 2017 case testified that Kindlay was driving her from Alabama to Arizona, and the assault occurred when he pulled over on a deserted stretch of road to allow the woman to relieve herself. At this point, Kindlay sexually assaulted her while she was handcuffed, and also threatened her with his firearm, allegedly telling her that nobody would believe her since she was a prisoner. The woman assaulted in 2014 testified that Kindlay similarly pulled his van over in a deserted area after telling her that he had gotten lost. Kindlay then forced the woman to perform sexual acts on him, also while threatening her and also while she was handcuffed. While only two charges of sexual assault were listed on the indictment, a total of six women testified in court that Kindlay had threatened and assaulted them. All of the women had been handcuffed and sometimes were alone in the van with Kindlay for hundreds of miles, according to the DOJ. He "threatened to kill them and made sexually explicit comments that escalated in intensity and depravity," the DOJ continued. The acts ranged from forcing a woman to engage in sex in a park bathroom to assaulting women in his van on desolate hiking trails and in the middle of a snowstorm. The individual women did not apparently know that the others existed until the trial. An FBI case was opened in January 2017 when two women in an Arizona jail reported that Kindlay had assaulted them. Eventually, the investigation uncovered a total of 16 women who Kindlay had either harassed or assaulted from 2012 to 2017. Eleven of these women submitted victim impact statements that were read during the sentencing. "I'm wary of government officials because of what Eric Kindlay had said and [did] during my transport...The offender, in this case, used his so-called 'position of power' to cause [me] to endure undue stress, grief, and loss of self-worth," said one victim. Additionally, the DOJ praised the women for coming forward to reveal the assaults despite feeling threatened. "Those who act under color of law and commit sexual assault cannot rely on their position of power or their victims' vulnerabilities to escape accountability," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke. "We thank the survivors of these sexual assaults for having the courage to come forward despite the defendant's repeated attempts to silence them," Clarke continued. Newsweek reached out to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) for comment.