

Prepared remarks from Muscogee Nation Attorney General Geri Wisner regarding arrest warrant for Okmulgee Counter Jailer

Good morning. Thank you all for coming. I'm going to read a statement after which, I will take your questions.

The Violence Against Women Act of 2022 expanded Tribal authority to prosecute non-Indians who assault tribal justice officials. Based on this authority, the Muscogee Nation has issued an arrest warrant for Matthew J. Douglas, an Okmulgee County Jail official, for the charge of Protected Status Battery of Lighthorse Police Deputy Chief Dennis Northcross.

The incident took place at the Okmulgee County Jail on Monday, December 18, as Lighthorse Police Officers, acting under the cross-deputization commission of the Grand River Dam Authority, attempted to deliver a suspect arrested for fentanyl possession and driving recklessly in a school zone.

On Monday, December 18, a Lighthorse Police officer witnessed a driver moving on the wrong side of the road in a school zone. The officer affected a traffic stop and requested Okmulgee Police Department to attend the incident. Okmulgee Police Department informed him of their refusal to respond.

The officer noticed drug paraphernalia in the passenger seat and the suspect consented to a vehicle search. During a search of the suspect's person, the officer witnessed a rubber case fall from the suspect's waistband, which he then admitted to the officer, contained fentanyl.

Acting under the authority of a cross deputization commission with the Grand River Dam Authority, the officer affected an arrest and, as required by state law, transported the suspect to the Okmulgee County Jail for booking and processing.

Today, we are releasing bodycam video captured by Lighthorse Offices in the jail facility. In it you can clearly see jail officials belligerently refuse to accept a duly arrested suspect, threaten to fabricate charges against Lighthorse officers and of course the unprovoked assault on Deputy Chief Norcross.

The video shows, Matthew J. Douglas, a jail official, telling Lighthorse Police Deputy Chief Dennis Northcross that it was the jail's policy to not accept any suspects from Lighthorse Police. Later, you can hear jail staff say that they did not recognize Lighthorse as "real police."

Lighthorse Officers informed Mr. Douglas that it is a violation of state law for Okmulgee County Jail to refuse acceptance of any lawfully arrested person.

After much debate, Mr. Douglas threatened to fabricate charges for illegally bringing a weapon into the jail and arrest Lighthorse Police officers.

Lighthorse officers continued to explain that state law requires the jail to receive the suspect.

Mr. Douglas then threatened to lock Lighthorse Police officers in the receiving area with the suspect in custody if they did not leave and take the prisoner. Wallace can be heard in the video using his radio to instruct jail staff "do not roll my sally port door."

Douglas then moved from the receiving area into the final booking area and Lighthorse Deputy Chief Northcross followed him into the control room where Deputy Chief Northcross was assaulted.

Yesterday, After receiving the arrest warrant from the Muscogee Creek District court, three Lighthorse Offices went to inform Mr. Douglas of the warrant and provide him with the opportunity to turn himself in by 9am today.

Lighthorse officers were met across the street from the jail in the library parking lot where they had cordial conversations to try and serve. They informed them that we simply wanted to serve him the appropriate papers. They weren't able to do that, and because of that, it is still an outstanding warrant.

Bodycam video of these interactions will be available for release in the coming days.

We are having ongoing conversations with Attorney General Drummond and U.S. Attorney Chris Wilson and will be determining the best next steps.

The assault of a Lighthorse Police Officer at the Okmulgee County Jail is the direct result of policies set by Okmulgee County officials that disregard state law. This facility is already facing an ongoing investigation by the Oklahoma State Department of Health and the Office of Juvenile Affairs for the mistreatment of juveniles in their custody, including purposefully housing juveniles with adult inmates.

The video clearly shows jail staff explaining that it is official jail policy as directed by the administrator and sherrif to violate state law and selectively refuse prisoners. So, in addition to the prosecution of Mr. Douglas, we are in discussion with the Oklahoma Attorney General and the U. S. Attorney's Office and the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division regarding the unlawful policies and disrespect from Okmulgee County officials both here at the jail and beyond.

We understand that the Okmulgee County officials dislike federal laws that grant tribal law enforcement jurisdiction. But those political opinions do not give Okmulgee County the right to disregard and violate laws. It certainly does not give them license to assault another police officer.

We intend to ensure that Matthew Douglas is held accountable for his assault on Deputy Chief Northcross. But we also believe that to top officials in Okmulgee County must be held

accountable for the environment of lawlessness they are creating. None of these people are above the law.

Now, I will take any questions you have.