



Ex New Orleans Police Sentenced for Katrina Shootings

Subsequent reports noted that U.S. District Judge Kurt Engelhardt sentenced former Officer Robert Faulcon Jr. to 65 years in prison, former Sergeants Kenneth Bowen and Robert Gisevius, Jr. to 40 years in prison, and former Officer Anthony Villavaso, 38 years. Faulcon was convicted of shooting Ronald Madison, a 40-year-old mentally disabled man. A fifth defendant, former Sgt. Arthur Kaufman, received six years in prison for his role in the cover-up of the shootings, according to [nola.com](#), the website affiliated with New Orleans' *Times-Picayune* newspaper. On April 3, the men were convicted of unjustified shootings of unarmed civilians and a subsequent cover-up. All but Kaufman had been jailed without bond since July 2010.



Nola.com continued, "The five defendants were convicted in August after a seven-week trial that explored one of the city's most traumatic events following Hurricane Katrina." Six civilians were shot on or near the bridge. In addition to Madison, 17-year-old James Brissette was also killed, and four others wounded.

The report stated that the officers had responded to a distress call from another officer claiming men were shooting at police in the nearby I-10 Bridge, and they then drove to the Danziger Bridge where the shootings occurred. The Danziger Bridge is a vertical lift bridge spanning the Industrial Canal in New Orleans, connecting Gentilly and east New Orleans, which was one of the worst areas affected by the storm surge created by Hurricane Katrina.

The article also reported, about the 2011 trial, "Their pleas contained shocking details of a seemingly coordinated cover-up: a planted gun retrieved by Kaufman from his garage; officers successively revising their accounts of the shooting; phony witnesses; a secret meeting to coordinate stories."

Police had portrayed the victims as criminals, including Madison's brother, Lance, who was arrested for allegedly firing at officers, and jailed, but the case was eventually dropped.

A final defendant, retired sergeant Gerard Dugue, is scheduled for trial in May on charges concerning his alleged role in the cover-up.

Several other NOPD officers also pled guilty and testified for the government at the trial. Receiving more lenient sentences were Michael Hunter, eight years; Ignatius Hills, six and a half years; Robert Barrios, five years; Michael Lohman, four years; and Jeffrey Lehrmann, three years.

This case, considered a landmark civil rights case, is one of four federal cases involving use of force by NOPD officers. [The New American](#) reported on December 13, 2010 of one of the other cases, that of three other NOPD officers found guilty of killing an unarmed man, and attempting a cover-up. In yet



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another case, officer Ronald Mitchell was convicted in December of lying about a shooting he committed in the Convention Center following Katrina and will face sentencing soon.

The NOPD remains under heavy scrutiny by the U.S. Justice Department.

Photo: Former New Orleans police officer Robert Faulcon, Jr. leaves the city jail in New Orleans, Friday, Jan. 5, 2007: AP Images



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