

Madison County Wins Unanimous Jury Verdict In Federal Lawsuit From 2018 Arrest

by Submitted by Madison County State's Attorney's Office
December 8 2023 1:17 PM



EDWARDSVILLE — A jury in federal court returned a verdict Thursday in favor of Madison County in a civil lawsuit stemming from the 2018 arrest of an armed and suicidal motorist. The traffic stop happened on Sept. 11, 2018.

The Plaintiff filed a lawsuit in 2019. On Thursday, the jury seated in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Illinois deliberated less than two hours before returning a unanimous verdict in favor of Madison County and two sheriff's deputies. The plaintiff had alleged that his rights were violated by the deputies' actions.

The following facts were revealed at trial: Police received a report that the plaintiff (who was a concealed-carry card holder known to have many firearms and a trained fighter in mixed martial arts) was in a mental-health crisis, was suicidal, likely armed with a firearm, and mobile in a vehicle. The plaintiff was located by sheriff's deputies after statewide alerts were issued with this information.

After stopping his car, the plaintiff then emerged, refused to obey commands or allow the deputies to handcuff him, and attempted to fight the deputies. Knowing the danger of being overpowered by a trained fighter, and believing he may well be armed with a concealed firearm on his person, the deputies used a stun gun to facilitate the handcuffing of the plaintiff, who was then taken into custody without injury.

A firearm with a round in the chamber was found in the plaintiff's car after he was taken into custody. Based on these facts, the defense argued that not only were their actions reasonable, but these deputies also probably saved the plaintiff's own life at a significant risk to their own. Madison County State's Attorney Tom Haine, whose office also represents county government in civil lawsuits, said: "We appreciate the trial team's excellent work in this case, and the jury's full vindication of the county, the Sheriff's Department and its deputies.

These deputies were simply doing their best to save the life of this armed and suicidal individual while protecting the community's safety as well. We will always aggressively defend Madison County law enforcement's right to take necessary and appropriate actions to serve and protect our community without suffering from meritless lawsuits."

Sheriff Jeff Connor said: "We felt strongly that the deputies' actions did not violate the rights of the plaintiff and appreciate the jury's agreement here.

Haine and Connor commended Assistant State's Attorneys Heidi Eckert, Dan O'Donnell Jr. and Matt Banocy, and his office's Civil Division, led by Civil Chief David Livingstone, for their work on the case.

The case is: 19-cv-1326-SPM This charge and the statements made herein are based upon probable cause. The defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.