

Lake County Sheriff's Office

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Date: August 15, 2019



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John D. Idleburg
Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE

Unincorporated Gurnee Man Charged with Hate Crime, Aggravated Assault

On August 14, 2019, at approximately 11:35AM, Lake County Sheriff's Deputies responded to a 911 call from a victim who was assaulted with an ice pick during a traffic altercation.

Sheriff's Deputies arrived and learned the victim, a 57-year-old man of Unincorporated Gurnee, was traveling northbound on North Delany Road in the area of Sunset Avenue, in Unincorporated Gurnee, on his motorcycle. The victim is Hispanic and was displaying the Mexican Flag on his motorcycle. As the victim was traveling northbound, the driver of a 2009 Hyundai SUV abruptly changed lanes, cutting-off the motorcycle driver.

The driver of the motorcycle attempted to obtain the license plate and vehicle description of the Hyundai, as the driver of the Hyundai, Joseph L Zens, 67, of the 37100 block of North Shirley Drive, Unincorporated Gurnee, pulled onto West Meyer Road, where he stopped and exited his vehicle.

Zens began yelling anti-Mexican racial slurs/expletives at the victim and told him to go back to his country. Zens then retrieved an ice pick from his vehicle and began chasing the victim with it, continuing to yell racial slurs and racial expletives. The victim was able to get onto his motorcycle and move away before being struck with the ice pick. The victim then called 911 for police assistance.

Sheriff's Deputies spoke with Zens at his residence and located an ice pick in his Hyundai. He was arrested without incident and transported to the Lake County Jail.

After reviewing the facts of the case, Lake County State's Attorney Michael G. Nerheim approved charging Zens with a felony hate crime. If found guilty at trial, Zens could be sentenced up to three years in the Illinois Department of Corrections. Nerheim also approved a charge of misdemeanor aggravated assault. If found guilty of the class A misdemeanor at trial, Zens could be sentenced up to one year in Lake County Jail.

“This type of hateful conduct will never be tolerated in Lake County,” Nerheim said.

Sheriff John Idleburg added, “Hate has absolutely no place in Lake County. Being victimized because of the color of one’s skin, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, or any other protected classification is completely unacceptable. We will always be there to stand up for the victims of crime.”

Zens remains held in the Lake County Jail on \$15,000.00 bail. His next court date is August 28, 2019, at 9:00AM in courtroom T110.

All suspects are presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

Please contact Lake County Sheriff’s Public Information Officer Christopher Covelli for additional information about incident. Contact Lake County State’s Attorney’s Office Communication Manager Lee Filas for additional information about the charges.

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