

**TESTIMONY OF CAPTAIN ROBERT JOHNSON**  
**AT FCC COMMISSIONER PAI'S FIELD HEARING ON CONTRABAND CELLPHONES**  
**COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA**  
**APRIL 6, 2016**

**Proverbs 4:7- "Wisdom is the principal thing therefore get wisdom; and with all your getting get understanding."**

I once was able to do five sets of 80 sits-ups, five sets of 40 push-ups and work out with weights every other night. I was able to run, walk or ride my bike for miles - but that is over now. I have no abdominal muscles, sit ups are out and running is not part of the equation. Walking takes great effort and after collecting dust, I have donated my bike to someone who may actually ride it.

How did all this happen? It started with a cell phone. The Department of Corrections was not allowed to stop its signals from leaving the confines of Lee Correctional Institution in Bishopville, S.C., the state's most notorious maximum security prison. The FCC, with the backing of the cell phone industry, would not allow South Carolina to buy or use the equipment to stop cell phone signals from leaving the prison. This technology is available, but its use is not permitted.

If I sound angry I am. I am angry with this process and with myself. Why? Let me explain. My warden and inmates informed me that a contract was out on my life, but I did not think the inmates were smart enough or bold enough to carry out a complex plan to murder me. So, I violated one of the principles I was taught in the Air Force, "Never under estimate your opponent." I thought if anyone was going to come after me it would be a lifer with a can of jack-mac in a sock or a shank. I figured it would be at the prison, so I made sure my staff and I never walked the yard alone.

I always told my staff that many of these inmates hate the South Carolina Department of Corrections, and we are the face of SCDC. The Inmates can't touch SCDC but they can touch you. I talked to my wife and told her if this was to happen, she was not to help me but run away and get help. We created a signal that only the two of us knew and that would be her signal to go. You may say I brought my

work home with me. But what will you do when work follows you home like this former inmate followed me?

Because of a contraband cell phone, I am suffering from acute lead poisoning. For almost two months I had an all liquid diet. I lost over 50 pounds, for me that was over forty years' worth of weight gain. I went from 178 to 121 lbs. I had to guzzle Boost three times a day to gain twenty pounds. Even now I lose weight for no reason. I dislike Boost, but it is either Boost or poof. I am now in my fourth set of clothing. I am now up to 146 lbs and my eating restrictions were lifted.

For the first time in three years and after undergoing more than 20 surgeries, my abdomen is healing.

I served 23 years in the U.S. Air Force as a security force member. When I left the military, I was recruited by the Sumter police department. I turned them down because I thought it was too dangerous. So, I went to work for the Department of Corrections. I thought it should be pretty safe there. I worked my way up to Captain and in 11 years, I was the only Captain in the state assigned to contraband. I was good at what I did. I studied policy and asked myself, what is the intent of this policy? How can this policy help my staff and I do our job? I did not fight policy, instead I found a way to make policy work for us. I have been sued at least six times but never went to court because the judge threw out each case because I was following policy. I was often reminded of Proverbs 4:7- "Wisdom is the principal thing therefore get wisdom; and with all your getting get understanding." Policy is the wisdom, it is up to you to get understanding of the intent of that policy.

Lead poisoning was not my punishment for being crooked or evil, but because I developed effective techniques never before seen or used in the agency. We took a normal shakedown and reworked it into a comprehensive 3-part system. All shakedowns had to be systematic, conscientiously applied and thorough in nature. I taught my staff to always look for indicators and make mental notes. A few of the inmates told me "Johnson, we can't beat you, you never give up."

Because my staff and I did our job above and beyond what anyone had ever done before, two leaders of the Crips gang decided something drastic needed to happen. Using a contraband cell phone the leaders called an ex-inmate and current gang member and arranged for him to kill me. Using a green dot reloadable card with a sum of \$6,000 and the internet, the former inmate found my address and put my death sentence in motion.

On March 5, 2010, one day before my birthday, at 5:30 a.m. the attempt on my life began. I was in our second bathroom getting dressed for work. I was there so I would not wake my wife with all the noise I usually make. I heard a loud noise as my front door was kicked open and the flimsy door frame failed. We heard a voice yell "police!" I knew at once, this was it. In a moment I had to get whomever it was to come to me and away from my wife. I yelled twice very loud "who is it?" He took my bait and we met in the hallway.

I came face to face with a black male whom I recognized as an ex-inmate from Lee. My assassin had a weapon in his hands which he began to raise toward me. I rushed at him, but he was able to push me away.

By this time my wife had started down the hallway. She said she heard us fighting and then heard me yell twice, "You're going to shoot me." She recognized the code for her to get out of the house and then she heard two shots ring out. My shooter ran out of the house past my wife, who had made it to the porch to go for help. I had been shot six times in the stomach and chest with a .38 caliber revolver at point black range.

I do not remember being shot, nor did I feel pain at that time. My wife came back into the house, called 911, then came and put a towel on my chest. I looked at the wounds, hit the bathtub with my fist and said "Ah man".

I knew I had to take a stand or die and I started quoting scripture. I recited Psalm 118: 17 – I shall live and not die.....Isaiah 54:17 – No weapon that is formed against me shall prosper. Romans 8: 28 – And I know that all things work together for good to them that are called according to His purpose. Proverbs 18: 21 – death

and life are in the power of the tongue and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof. 1 John 4:4 – greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.

I did not call on luck. Where is luck's throne? I knew I needed some strong help. I called on The Almighty Father. I needed life-giving power. I knew my body was wrecked and only He who made this body could repair it.

The police took my wife to the police station trying to get as much information as possible. Because I was so talkative everyone thought I only had minor injuries.

The doctors at Tuomey Hospital could not stop the bleeding. By the time my wife got back to the hospital I was in surgery. The emergency room doctors told my wife there was nothing else they could do for me and a helicopter was on the way to airlift me to the trauma center at Palmetto Richland in Columbia. My wife then had the task to call our three adult children to tell them I had been shot. Two came from Atlanta, Georgia, and our youngest came from Portland, Oregon. He asked his mother should he bring funeral clothes, and she told him we are not having a funeral.

Once I got to Richland Memorial, the doctor said I had to be resuscitated. I bled-out three times and they had to give me 63 units of blood. They said I should have died, but was too stubborn to let go. I say The Almighty kept my heart beating. As James Cleveland says in one of his songs, "God works with high blood, low blood, or no blood at all."

Then one of the assisting surgeons came out of the operating room and said "Mrs. Johnson, we got the best doctors in the state working on your husband. My wife said to him, "someone has to pray in the operating room." He said "you better talk to the man upstairs," but little did he know.

Later he came back to her and told her to sit down in a chair and he said, "I am going to let you in the operating room, it is not a pretty sight, blood is everywhere; can you stand it?" My wife said "yes." He took her into the operating room without a gown or mask. Later I asked Dr. Fann why he let her in to see me. He said he was letting her in to see that there was no hope and to let her touch me

while I was still warm, before I died. But you see my wife firmly believes that “faith is the substance of thing hope for.” Once she got in the operating room she saw blood on the walls, on the floor, and on the staff working on me. The only one that didn’t have blood on them was the SCDC SORT security team members in the back of the room.

The doctor brought her up to the table and told her to go ahead and kiss me, which she did, but she also grabbed my head and prayed to The Almighty Father to let me live. Hours later the head surgeon came out of the operating room and said to my wife, “thank you.” The same chaplain who told my wife I was going to die said he had never witnessed what he had seen that day and asked if could he tell his church about this miracle. Some of you may not believe in miracles, but my doctor calls me the walking miracle. And he keeps saying, “you should be dead”

Many people quote the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and love to say the part which says “Yea, though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death.” They do not know what they are talking about. For I have been through the valley of the shadow of death. The doctors expected me to die for two weeks. The Father brought me through that valley, and I did not see any tunnels, no bright lights, no Aunt Sue, my soul did not float above the table, I heard no angels singing, and I definitely did not see any demons or feel any heat from hell’s fire.

One week after I was shot someone left a message on our answering machine. The caller said if I came back to work after my recovery they would come after me and my family again. For four months and three different hospitals, I had two armed SCDC officers outside my door 24/7.

I spent a month in the Richland trauma ward. I was then discharged to a hospital in Florence to be weaned off of the tracheotomy in my throat. There I had to learn to swallow food again, and sit upright in a chair. Liquid Jello never tasted so good. While at the Florence hospital I decided I was sick of this hospital stuff, and I was going to get up and leave. Early one morning one of the nurses failed to secure the left side rail in its upright position. And just like an inmate, I saw my chance to escape. My intentions were to get out of that bed and leave and go home with no idea how I would function. I could not even walk by myself. I grabbed my

left leg and threw it out of the bed and the pain almost knocked me out. I screamed for help. The officers ran in with their hands on their weapons, and I told them to get a nurse.

After almost a month there I was sent to Toumey Hospital for further rehabilitation. There I was taught to stand, walk, and dress myself. It took me three months before I could drive by myself. The Sumter police department posted an officer at my house for a month after I arrived home.

One cell phone in the hands of a locked up gang member brought terror to my house causing me to spend months in different hospitals. My wife almost lost her life in a car accident driving back and forth to see me. We saw one bill from one hospital, and it was almost one million dollars; I told my wife "I guess we will pay ten dollars a month."

I believe what The Father allows, he makes provision for. This has been declared an inmate assault and Workers Compensation has paid all my bills. But Workers Comp. cannot pay for the emotional damage my family has gone through!

The trauma of those six bullets travelling at 755 feet per second and hitting my upper body caused damage to my heart. I have had over 22 surgeries, and I'm still counting. I make myself go for a two and half mile walk two or three times a week. After I walk, I take a nap. I can wash the car, but after I finish, I take a nap. I used a battery powered weed eater around my yard and, once I finish, I take a nap. I cannot use a push lawn mower to cut the grass. I have to pay someone to cut it. I had to relearn certain words. Loud noises do cause me to jump. I cautioned my family not to surprise me nor try to sneak up on me. I did talk to a psychologist. After talking with me he said "you don't need me."

I have helped eight hospitals in five different counties make their yearly budget. II Tim. 1: 7 – says "God has not given me the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and a sound mind."

I firmly believe that if the South Carolina Department of Corrections had been allowed to block cell phones signals my ordeal may not have happened.

I was in the Florence hospital. I woke one morning at 3 am, and the word forgiveness was place in my mind. I had a fight within myself. Forgive? This was not a hunting accident. This man hunted me down like prey and tried to kill me. But my strong faith allows me to forgive. I do believe this is why I do not suffer from PTSD; because of my faith in The Most High God.

A contraband cell phone has caused my family and I more pain than we have ever experienced. I am here to tell you that one cell phone is deadlier than six bullets.