

Jail Guard Claims Discrimination

An Albany County Jail guard said he was repeatedly harassed with slurs about his Native American heritage.

He's been out on sick leave for more than a month and wants the case resolved before he returns.

Robert Hunter said he saw a poster that he says 'labeled' him, and felt threatened and angry. The poster showed four Native Americans holding rifles, and was labeled "the Hunter family."

"I consider myself a good officer, take pride in my work. I didn't understand why they'd treat me like this," said Hunter.

The 36-year old officer said it was posted in Building B, a housing unit, where corrections officers have access and inmates are kept. He said a female colleague brought it to his attention.

Hunter has worked as a corrections officer since September 7, 2001. He told some co-workers about his heritage, as a member of the Abenake Tribe, and how he lived on a reservation in Canada. He says supervisors took it too far.

"To the point I just couldn't take it anymore. Just got to the point I didn't feel good about myself, didn't sleep at night. Started causing problems with me and my wife," said Hunter.

One piece of evidence they say they have is an internal video that shows Hunter doing his job, interacting with an inmate. It's been sped up and there's some Benny Hill type music behind it and some crude jokes.

"In this case there was overt evidence and certainly the poster was proof enough." said Hunter's attorney Ariel Solomon.

Hunter filed formal complaints, although he said he had to do it on his own because the supervisor wouldn't give him the proper form. And he said there has been little tolerance training. As part of the case, they want that improved.

"I was there six years before I saw a sexual harassment video," said Hunter.

The Albany County Sheriff's Department oversees the jail.

Sheriff James Campbell told News Channel 13 that the County had no comment on pending litigation.