

‘Not Today, Satan’: Veteran Avoids Jail After Pleading Guilty to Destroying Satanic Exhibit

A Mississippi man who made national headlines for tearing down and beheading a Satanic display in the Iowa State Capitol last year pleaded guilty last month to criminal mischief.

Michael Cassidy, 36, facing a felony hate crimes charge, reportedly entered the plea in an exchange that would drop the felony charge over his destruction of the image of the Baphomet deity, the Des Moines Register reported.

Cassidy, a former candidate for the Mississippi House of Representatives, was reportedly set to go to trial June 3, and could have faced five years behind bars after failing to convince the court to dismiss his case. This led his attorney to file a guilty plea for third-degree criminal mischief without the felony enhancement, The Christian Post reported.

Under the agreement, Cassidy will potentially engage in dialogue with the Satanic Temple, pay an \$855 civil penalty, dole out restitution and receive “a deferred judgment with two years probation,” the outlet noted.

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The Backstory

As previously reported, Cassidy told CBN News in December he felt destroying the display was the “right thing to do.”

“We should not tolerate Satan,” he told CBN News at the time.

The entire ordeal unfolded after Cassidy learned on social media The Satanic Temple had installed a display in the capitol building. He found himself concerned over its presence and decided to take action.

"When I saw it, I thought, 'How on earth can Satanic icons be in the capitol?'" he said. "And I thought, 'You know, it's some kind of oversight. ... some little bureaucracy.'"

Cassidy said he assumed the government would take it down once they realized what it was, considering the symbol was an attempt to "honor Satan." But, once the display wasn't removed, he said he got a plane ticket to Iowa and went to see the symbol for himself.

"Whatever emotion you may have felt looking at it online, it's completely different when you are actually in the capitol," Cassidy said. "I'm an American. I've been in the Navy for my entire adult life. I've fought to protect the country, and it wasn't to protect Satan. We say, 'So help me God,' not, 'So help me Satan.'"

He continued, "It became very clear to me that this could not stand. ... It was intolerable for it to be there and, so I did what I did."

After destroying the symbol, Cassidy said he cleaned up some of the debris and went over to security to turn himself in.

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"It really boils down to: God is good and deserves praise and Satan is evil and does not deserve [it]," Cassidy said. "The devil is bad and it's not something that we should promote."

He also responded to those who charged his actions were merely a public relations stunt.

“I certainly saw this ahead of time,” Cassidy said. “But ... I did not have a full plan of what I was going to do ... there was no set plan. There was certainly an immense dislike that I had from seeing it online.”

In the end, he said the decision to destroy the Satanic display came along with risks – potential perils he knew the moment he took action.

“When I made that decision in the capitol, I knew that there is going to be potential penalties,” Cassidy said. “I don’t know what the exact ... charge was going to be, but I could imagine that ... it could lead to jail, could lead to ... severe financial hardship.”

He added, “But it was the right thing to do that; we should not tolerate Satan.”

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