



State of Michigan  
**Attorney General Dana Nessel**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Additional Charges Filed Against The Base Members for 2020 Larceny from Former MDOC Prisons**

**LANSING** – Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel is announcing new charges against members of The Base – a national white supremacist group with violent inclinations – in a case that will be co-prosecuted with Tuscola County Prosecutor Mark Reene. The charges are a result of a joint investigation assisted by the Michigan State Police (MSP) Caro Post and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF).

Last October, Justen Watkins, 25, was [one of two men charged in connection to a December 2019 incident in Dexter](#), in which a family was terrorized at their home after the men allegedly used intimidation tactics on the premises and posted messages to other The Base members targeting the home.

Following the authorization of those charges, the involved agencies found evidence of other felonies believed to be committed by Watkins and other members of The Base that occurred a few weeks prior to the Department charging him and his co-defendant, Alfred Gorman.

Watkins, Thomas Denton, 32, and Tristan Webb, 19, will now be charged with the following in connection to the newly discovered evidence:

- one count of larceny in a building, a four-year felony;
- one count of gang membership, a 20-year felony;
- one count of conspiracy to commit teaching use of firearms for a civil disorder, four-year felony; and
- one count of felony firearm, two-year felony.

The Department and the Tuscola County Prosecuting Attorney's Office allege the three men entered two former Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) sites – MDOC Camp Tuscola Annex and MDOC Tuscola Residential ReEntry Program – which were, and are, vacant in the city of Caro on Oct. 3, 2020. The properties are owned by the Michigan State Land Bank

Authority.

Investigators discovered the men took state-issued clothing from one of the locations. It is also alleged the sites were assessed as potential future training grounds for “hate camps”, which is what the group named their paramilitary firearms training exercises.

Denton and Webb were arrested and arraigned today in Tuscola County’s 71B District Court. Both men were given the following bond terms:

- \$250,000 cash or surety, no 10%;
- cannot leave the state;
- cannot possess firearms or dangerous weapons;
- cannot possess internet-connected devices;
- no alcohol or drugs;
- no contact with co-defendants; and
- no contact with other members of The Base.

The men will receive a GPS tether if they post bond and will remain under house arrest except for traveling to and from work and court appearances.

Watkins has been in custody in the Washtenaw County Jail since his [bond was revoked in May](#). Details of his arraignment on these new charges are not yet set, but it will be a video arraignment from the jail.

Denton and Webb’s next court dates are Aug. 25 at 8:15 a.m. for a probable cause conference and Sept. 1 at 9 a.m. for preliminary exam. Both will be in 71B District Court.

“As Michigan's chief law enforcement officer, it is my duty to protect the public from those who act upon dangerous anti-government and white supremacy ideologies,” Nessel said. “I appreciate the multiagency coordination that took place to secure these charges and I look forward to working with Prosecutor Reene as the case progresses.”

"Our Office wishes to recognize the extraordinary work completed on this case by the investigators at both the Federal and State level," Reene said. "We tremendously appreciate the leadership Attorney General Nessel has repeatedly demonstrated in matters of this type and will work with her to protect our communities and State against all forms of violence."

Founded in 2018, The Base is a White supremacy organization that openly advocates for violence and criminal acts against the U.S., and purports to be training for a race war to establish White ethnonationalist rule in areas of the U.S., including Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The group also traffics in Nazi ideology and extreme anti-Semitism.

Watkins claims to be the leader of The Base, and reportedly ran a “hate camp” for members of the group, where he led tactical and firearms training for participants with the goal of being prepared for the violent overthrow of the government.

In addition to the state and Tuscola County charges, Watkins faces charges in Huron County for possession of steroids and breaking and entering. Questions related to the breaking and entering should be directed to the Huron County Prosecutor.

Watkins and Gorman are due for preliminary exam in the Dexter case in front of Judge Cedric Simpson in Washtenaw County's 14A-4 District Court on Aug. 24-25 at 9 a.m.

While Watkins remains incarcerated, Gorman is currently out on bond.

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*Please note: A criminal charge is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. The Department does not provide booking photos.*