

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
DELTA DIVISION**

SAMUEL D. SMITH,

PLAINTIFF

V.

NO. 2:06CV185-P-D

SHAW POLICE DEPT., et al.,

DEFENDANTS

OPINION

The court, *sua sponte*, takes up the dismissal of Plaintiff's case filed under 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The court finds that Plaintiff has failed to state a claim upon which relief may be granted and dismissal is appropriate under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i) and (ii).

Plaintiff complains that Defendant Joe Lee Kent used excessive force against during his, Plaintiff's, arrest. Specifically, Plaintiff states that Kent sprayed him in the face with mace when he was arrested.

This case presents the court with a claim of excessive force in violation of the Eighth Amendment. Courts must balance the constitutional rights of prisoners with the needs of officials to effectively use force to maintain order; to establish liability on the part of defendants the plaintiff must prove the force was applied "maliciously and sadistically to cause harm," and not "in a good-faith effort to maintain or restore discipline . . ." *Hudson v. McMillian*, 503 U.S. 1, 6-7, 112 S. Ct. 995, 117 L. Ed. 2d 156 (1992) (citing *Whitley v. Albers*, 475 U.S. 312, 320-21, 106 S. Ct. 1078, 89 L. Ed. 2d 251 (1986)); see *Rankin v. Klevenhagen*, 5 F.3d 103 (5th Cir. 1993).¹ Not every malevolent touch gives rise to a constitutional claim of excessive force; in fact, the Eighth Amendment prohibition against "'cruel and unusual' punishment necessarily excludes from constitutional recognition *de minimis* uses of physical force, provided that the use of force is not of

¹The standard for analyzing an excessive force claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 is the same whether brought under the Due Process Clause by a pretrial detainee or under the Eighth Amendment by a convicted prisoner; therefore, in the following discussion the court will use citations pertaining to each interchangeably. *Valencia v. Wiggins*, 981 F.2d 1440, 1447 (5th Cir. 1993).

a sort ‘repugnant to the conscience of mankind.’” *Hudson*, 503 U.S. at 9-10 (citations omitted). A *de minimis* use of force, however, is insufficient to state a cognizable Eighth Amendment claim. *Jackson v. Culbertson*, 984 F.2d 699, 700 (5th Cir. 1993). A single incident of force or a single blow is *de minimis* and thus does not violate of the Eighth Amendment. *Id.* at 700.

Plaintiff has not alleged more than a *de minimis* injury and has, therefore, failed to state a claim for an Eighth Amendment violation based on the use of excessive force. *Hudson v. McMillian*, 503 U.S. 1, 9-10, 112 S. Ct. 995, 117 L. Ed. 2d 156 (1992)

A complaint is frivolous if it lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact, such as relying on an indisputably meritless legal theory. *Taylor v. Johnson*, 257 F.3d 470, 472 (5th Cir. 2001). Since Plaintiff’s claim lacks a legal basis, it shall be dismissed for failure to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Dismissal on this ground warrants the imposition of a “strike” pursuant to the “three strikes” provision of 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g). *See Adepegba v. Hammons*, 103 F.3d 383, 387-88 (5th Cir. 1996). Accordingly, Plaintiff is cautioned that if he accumulates three strikes he may not proceed *in forma pauperis* in any civil action or appeal filed while he is incarcerated or detained in any facility unless he is under imminent danger of serious physical injury. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g).

Therefore, it is hereby

ORDERED that the cause be dismissed with prejudice pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) for failure to state a claim. Plaintiff has also earned one strike pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(g). A separate order shall issue in accordance with this opinion.

THIS the 30th day of November, 2006.

/s/ W. Allen Pepper, Jr.
W. ALLEN PEPPER, JR.
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE