



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

P.O. BOX 10070 – BROOKSVILLE, FL 34603-0070 FAX 352 796-0493 PHONE 352 754-6830

Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
Community/Media Relations Manager, 352-797-3609

Re: Man Charged with Attempted Kidnapping

Date: February 3, 2021

On 02-02-21 just after 7 a.m., Hernando County Sheriff's deputies were dispatched to the intersection of E. Jefferson Street and N. Broad Street in the City of Brooksville for what was originally thought to be a Hit and Run Traffic Crash.

Callers reported seeing the driver of a red flatbed pickup truck strike a small silver car, then flee eastbound on Jefferson Street.

Upon arrival, deputies met with the victim (small silver car) and several witnesses who were still on scene.

The victim was extremely shaken and unable to provide an immediate statement.

In separate interviews, witnesses told deputies they observed a red flatbed truck travelling northbound on N. Broad Street in the area of Mt. Fair Avenue when the driver suddenly made a U-turn in the middle of the road. The driver of the truck continued southbound to the intersection of N. Broad Street and E. Jefferson Street where he purposely struck the small silver car and pushed it for several feet.

In obvious fear, the lone occupant of the car, the female driver, exited the car and ran in an easterly direction. The driver of the red flatbed pickup truck, later identified as Kenneth Michael Lengel Stage, exited his truck and ran after the female. Stage quickly caught up to the female, wrapped his arms around her from behind, lifted her off her feet, and began carrying her back toward his truck.

Several concerned citizens began screaming at Stage to "put her down." After carrying the female almost 20 feet, Stage dropped her, ran to his truck, and fled the area.

Deputies were eventually able to interview the victim. The victim provided the same account of events, adding that she and Stage were known to one another.

A warrant for the arrest of Stage was immediately authored. The warrant was signed by the Honorable Judge Merritt, and deputies continually searched for Stage throughout the morning and early afternoon.

Just after 1 p.m., deputies observed Stage's truck in the area of the Quality Inn near I-75 and Cortez Boulevard in Brooksville, where he'd reportedly been staying. Stage fled in the truck when he spotted law enforcement.

Florida Highway Patrol Troopers quickly apprehended Stage just inside Pasco County.

Kenneth Michael Lengel Stage B/M DOB/08-03-1998 was charged as follows:

- Attempted Kidnapping
- Aggravated Assault
- Bond – No Bond.

The Florida Highway Patrol has charges pending on Stage.

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in 2016, and was re-elected in 2020. Sheriff Nienhuis remains accountable to the people of Hernando County.