



## Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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### Media Release

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From: Denise M. Moloney  
Public Relations Manager, 352-797-3609

Re: Man Arrested After Striking HCSO Aircraft with Laser – 2023-00733

Date: January 9, 2023

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On 01-07-2023, at approximately 2 a.m., Deputy Pilot Roy McLaughlin and Tactical Flight Officer (TFO) B.J. Hart were conducting a proactive patrol flight in Air-1 in the area of Commercial Way and County Line Road in Spring Hill when the aircraft was struck by a green laser (light).

Utilizing technology in the aircraft, TFO Hart identified the location of the individual who was firing the laser at them, as behind the Circle K convenience store located at 16200 County Line Road, Spring Hill (Pasco County).

As TFO Hart directed patrol deputies to the location of the suspect, the suspect continued to fire the laser at the aircraft.

The suspect then fled the area on an all-terrain vehicle, attempting to hide in a cluster of trees. Unbeknownst to the suspect, trees do not obstruct the technology used by the TFO to see things on the ground.

Patrol deputies were directed to the suspect's location, Shady Hills Road, just south of Fridge Tree Drive, where he was taken into custody.

Patrol deputies from the Pasco Sheriff's Office also responded to the scene.

The suspect, identified as David Dean, denied firing the laser at the aircraft, stating it was a male on a bike. TFO Hart confirmed that he never lost sight of the suspect, monitoring him continuously until patrol deputies arrived on scene.

As deputies conducted a search of Dean's person, incident to arrest, they located a baggie containing a crystal-like substance in his jacket pocket. Dean told deputies the substance was not his. The substance, weighing 8.5 grams, field tested positive for the presence of methamphetamine.

Deputies also discovered a backpack in close proximity to Dean and the ATV. Inside the backpack, deputies located identification belonging to Dean, a laser light, and a green leafy substance. The substance, weighing 1.5 grams, field tested positive for cannabis. Upon turning on the laser, it displayed a green light.

Deputies asked Dean about the laser. Dean stated, he was "just messing around" and wanted to be taken to jail.

Due to being placed under arrest in Pasco County, Dean was booked into the Pasco County Detention Center in Land O'Lakes. **David Dean DOB/09-09-1975** was charged as follows:

- Possession of Controlled Substance
- Possession of Marijuana
- Point Laser Light at Driver or Pilot
- Bond - \$5,000.

#### *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.*