Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
Public Information Officer, 352-797-3609

Re: Deputy Involved Shooting - Brooksville - Update # 3

Date: May 16, 2014

Update

On 05-13-14 Sheriff Al Nienhuis and Colonel Michael Maurer, along with several Hernando County Sheriff’s Office support personnel, met with members of the State Attorney’s Office (SAO) and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to discuss details of the deputy involved shooting that occurred on 05-08-14 on California Street in Brooksville.

Preliminary reports indicate that when deputies arrived on scene, James Quenton Palmer was armed with a weapon that was later determined to be a pellet gun. FDLE agents and HCSO detectives have stated that the weapon that Palmer was armed with very closely resembled a Walther P99 semi automatic handgun. The weapon did not have an orange or red muzzle. Initial indications are that Palmer deliberately pointed the weapon at deputies as they arrived on scene.

Detectives located a suicide note that was written by Palmer. Portions of the note alluded to the fact that by the time the note was read Hernando County deputies would have already shot Palmer and that he was using deputies to commit suicide. The entire contents of the note will be made available upon the completion of the FDLE review of deadly force and the HCSO Internal Affairs Investigation.

It should be noted that Deputy Aaron Cochrane had worked the night shift and had ended his tour of duty. He was heading home when he heard the call being dispatched. Realizing he was not too far away, Deputy Cochrane responded to the call and was on scene within two minutes of Master Deputy Beckwith.

Master Deputy Michael Beckwith and Deputy Aaron Cochrane will return to full duty on 05-19-14.
Update

Hernando County detectives worked diligently throughout the day to locate Next of Kin for James Quenten Palmer; however, their efforts were unsuccessful.

Unfortunately, Mr. Palmer succumbed to his injuries and was pronounced deceased at 8:05 a.m.

Efforts will continue to locate Next of Kin.

The case remains under investigation.

Original Information

On 05-08-14 at 6:59 a.m., Hernando County deputies were dispatched to 6095 California Street in Brooksville regarding a Suspicious Incident. A male called 9-1-1, advising that he was being evicted from that address and he “was going to set the place on fire.”

Deputies were dispatched to the scene to evaluate the situation and check the well-being of the male caller.

The first deputies to arrive on scene were Master Deputy Michael Beckwith at 7:04 a.m. and Deputy Aaron Cochrane at 7:06 a.m.

At approximately 7:07 a.m., deputies on scene advised the dispatcher that the home was fully engulfed and to dispatch Fire/Rescue.

Less than one minute later, deputies on scene advised that shots had been fired.

The suspect, James Quenten Palmer W/M DOB/12-04-1944, was struck. Palmer was airlifted to Regional Medical Center Bayonet Point with life threatening injuries.

As per standard protocol, Deputies Beckwith and Cochrane have been placed on paid administrative leave.

Master Deputy Beckwith has been employed as a Hernando County deputy since 07-23-90. He is 47 years old.

Deputy Cochrane has been employed as a Hernando County deputy since 10-20-13. Prior to becoming a deputy, Cochrane was a Telecommunicator in the Emergency Communications Center; he was hired as a Telecommunicator on 04-25-10. He is 26 years old.

As stated in the original Media Release, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) will review the use of deadly force and will be working with the Hernando County Sheriff’s Office on this investigation.

This incident is also under review by HCSO Internal Affairs.