



Gulf County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Mike Harrison

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PRESS RELEASE
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DEPUTY CLEARED BY SAO IN OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING

Gulf County Sheriff Mike Harrison was notified by the State Attorney's Office that the deputy involved in the March 24, 2019, shooting was justified in his actions. The shooting resulted in the death of Joseph David Durman (46) of Kingsport, TN. In a letter addressed to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), Chief Assistant State Attorney Larry Basford concluded that the creditable evidence in their investigation supports a finding that the deputy's use of deadly force was lawful and appropriate under the circumstances and Sections 776.012 and 776.05 Florida Statutes.

The FDLE conducted the investigation into the incident and submitted their findings to the Office of State Attorney on June 12, 2019. The investigation revealed that on Sunday, March 24, 2019, at approximately 3:14 PM EST, deputies were notified of a pursuit in Bay County involving a white Ford Explorer. The driver, later identified as Durman, was eluding law enforcement and had rammed into a Tyndall Air Force Base Security Forces vehicle twice. Officers with the Mexico Beach Police Department, Port St. Joe Police Department, and a deputy with the Gulf County Sheriff's Office responded to the call. When the suspect entered Gulf County on Highway 98 the Gulf County Sheriff's Deputy attempted to stop the vehicle. The suspect turned onto Avenue A, in Port St. Joe, at which time the deputy stopped the vehicle utilizing a pit maneuver. The deputy reported Durman pointed a handgun at him when Durman exited the passenger side of the vehicle. The officers with the Mexico Beach Police Department and the Port St. Joe Police Department also reported Durman pointed a handgun at the deputy and ignored commands from the officers. The deputy fired his weapon eight times hitting Durman five times. Durman died as a result of his injuries. During the investigation of the scene, FDLE discovered a black battery pack under Durman's body. The battery pack (4" x 2 1/2" x 1"), is believed to be the object that was pointed at the officers as if it were a gun.

"I firmly believe that this is a suicide by cop incident," said Sheriff Harrison, "Durman had escaped from a work release program in Alabama and had absconded from his probation in Tennessee. He was driving a stolen vehicle and I believe he had no intentions of going back to prison." Toxicology revealed that Durman was driving with a blood alcohol level nearly twice the legal limit and that he had methamphetamines along with other illegal drugs in his system.

Prepared by: Capt. Chris Buchanan
Approved by: Sheriff Mike Harrison