

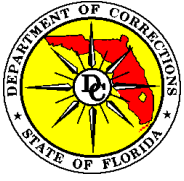
# Florida Department of Corrections



## Office of the Inspector General

**CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION  
INVESTIGATIVE ASSIST**

**Case # 14-12731**

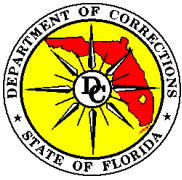


FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL  
**CASE SUMMARY REPORT**



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**CASE SUMMARY REPORT**



**Case Number:** 14-12731

**Inspector:** Inspector Mike Wyatt

**Date Assigned or Initiated:** 09-28-2014

**Complaint Against:** N/A

**Location of Incident – Institution/Facility/Office:** Tomoka Correctional Institution

**Complainant:** Captain Alberto Romo

**Use of Force Number:** N/A

**PREA Number:** N/A

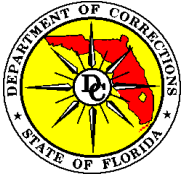
**Classification of Incident:** Death Investigation

**Confidential Medical Information Included:**  Yes  No

**Whistle-Blower Investigation:**  Yes  No

**Equal Employment Opportunity Investigation:**  Yes  No

**Chief Inspector General Case Number:** N/A



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**I. AUTHORITY**

The Florida Department of Corrections, Office of the Inspector General, by designation of the Secretary and § 944.31, Florida Statutes, is authorized to conduct any criminal investigation that occurs on property owned or leased by the department or involves matters over which the department has jurisdiction.

The testimony references included in this report are summations of oral or written statements provided to inspectors. Statements contained herein do not necessarily represent complete or certified transcribed testimony, except as noted. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all interviews with witnesses, complainants, and subjects were audio or video recorded.

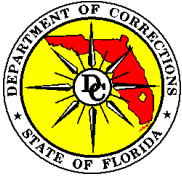
**II. METHODOLOGY**

The investigation reviewed the derivations of the allegation advanced by the complainant. The scope of this investigation does not seek to specifically address tort(s), but violations of criminal statutes. The criterion used to evaluate each contention or allegation was limited to the following standard of analysis:

1. Did the subject's action or behavior violate Florida criminal statutes?

**III. ANALYSIS**

The standard and analysis in this investigation is predicated with the burden of proving any violation of law, established by probable cause. The evidence considered for analysis is confined to the facts and allegations stated or reasonably implied. The actions or behavior of the subject are presumed to be lawful and in compliance with the applicable Florida law, unless probable cause indicates the contrary.



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**IV. DEFINITIONS**

**Unfounded:**

Refers to a disposition of a criminal case for which probable cause does not exist to suggest the suspect's behavior or action occurred nor is an arrest or formal charge being initiated.

**Closed by Arrest:**

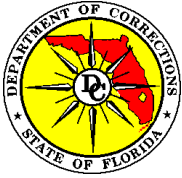
Refers to a disposition of a criminal case for which probable cause exists that an identified subject committed the offense and one for which an arrest or formal prosecution has been initiated.

**Exceptionally Cleared:**

Refers to a disposition of a criminal case for which probable cause exists that an identified suspect committed the offense, but one for which an arrest or formal charge is not initiated, or in the case of a death investigation, one for which no evidence exists that the death was the result of a crime or neglect.

**Open-Inactive:**

Refers to a disposition of a criminal case for which a criminal investigation commenced, but where evidence is insufficient to close as unfounded, closed by arrest, or exceptionally cleared.



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**V. PREDICATE**

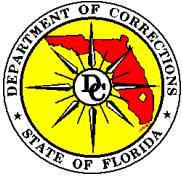
On September 29, 2014, at approximately 6:38 PM, I, Inspector Mike Wyatt was contacted by Inspector Supervisor Robert Calamari and directed to respond to Tomoka Correctional Institution along with Agents from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to assist in a suicide investigation. Allegedly Inmate Steven Russell hung himself in his cell at Tomoka Correctional Institution on September 29, 2014. Upon initial review of the information, the Office of the Inspector General assigned an Investigative Assist to Inspector Mike Wyatt on September 30, 2014.

**VI. SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS**

Based on the exhibits, witnesses' testimony, subject officer's statements, and the record as a whole, presented or available to the primary inspector, the following findings of facts were determined:

On September 29, 2014, at approximately 6:38 PM, Inspector Supervisor Robert Calamari advised me, Inspector Mike Wyatt, of an inmate suicide at Tomoka Correctional Intuition. Calamari also notified FDLE. At approximately 8:10 PM, I arrived at Tomoka CI and met with FDLE Agent Troy Cope and Volusia County Sheriff's Office Major Case Unit Sergeant Patrick Thomas and together we were briefed by Warden Terry Royal. At approximately 8:35 PM, FDLE Agent Steve Brenton Arrived at Tomoka CI. At approximately 8:43 PM, we went to B-Dorm and observed Inmate Steven Russell lying on the floor in Wing two outside of his cell covered with a sheet. [REDACTED] At approximately 9:06 PM, Volusia County Crime Scene Techs Josh Mott and Amanda Gallagher arrived on scene and begin processing. At approximately 9:31 PM, Medical Examiner Investigator Tara Clark arrived and began processing the deceased. At approximately 9:32 PM, FDLE Agent Steve Brenton interviewed Inmate James Polite. At approximately 9:43 PM, Medical Examiner Tara Clark departs with the deceased. At approximately 9:45 PM, FDLE Agent Steve Brenton interviewed [REDACTED]. At approximately 9:50 PM, FDLE Agent Troy Cope interviewed Officers David Hyman and Michael Lavorando. At approximately 10:50 PM, myself along with Agents Brenton and Cope departed Tomoka CI. A synopsis of the case is as follows:

On September 29, 2014, at approximately 5:58 PM, Officer Michael Lavorando initiated Incident Command System due to inmates reporting to the Officer's Station yelling "man down." Officer Lavorando exited the Officer station and responded to B-Dorm wing two downstairs cell B2-117. Upon entry Lavorando observed Inmate James Polite [REDACTED] Inmate Steven Russell. Inmate Polite found Russell hanging from the top bunk in the cell by a bed sheet tied to his neck. At this time DC Staff began [REDACTED]. At 6:00 PM, Assistant Warden Shellie Baker was notified. At approximately 6:03 PM, Major Alan Williams notified their control room to call, 911. Sergeant Joshua Yancey called 911. At approximately 6:06 PM, [REDACTED] arrived and relieved Security staff and [REDACTED]. At approximately 6:07 PM, Volusia County Fire Rescue Unit #15



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arrived. At 6:08 PM, Warden Terry Royal was notified. At 6:10 PM, [REDACTED] arrived at B-Dorm. At approximately 6:19 PM, Inmate Russell was pronounced deceased by Lieutenant Heather Love.

Inmate Russell was found hanging by a bed sheet on the top bunk of their cell. Polite removed the sheet from around Russell's neck and placed him on the ground [REDACTED] Staff arrived and continued [REDACTED] Russell was pronounced deceased.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Inmate Russell hung himself utilizing a bed sheet tied around the top bunk and around his neck. When the Dorm went to the Dining Hall, Russell stayed behind. It was learned he was despondent and tired of being in prison and reportedly attempted suicide a few weeks ago. That attempt was never reported. There was no evidence collected or discovered to suggest this was not a suicide.

Myself along with Agent Brenton received the housing logs and fixed wing video [REDACTED] from Officer Chassady Pendleton.

On March 3, 2015, I, Inspector Mike Wyatt received the final case report (FDLE Case #OR-37-0012) for Inmate Steven Russell prepared by FDLE Special Agent Stephen Brenton. Brenton closed his case listing Russell's death as a Suicide. Benton based his conclusion from the findings from the Medical Examiner's Office. The Medical Examiner's Office determined that Russell died of a Suicide [REDACTED]

*The fixed wing video is too large to be uploaded into IGIS, therefore it will be submitted with the final report.*

## **VII. CHARGES**

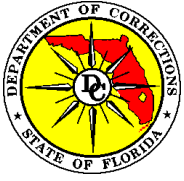
**List alleged violations of Florida Law:**

1. N/A

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

Based on the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's investigative findings that Inmate Steven Russell's death was a Suicide, this investigative assist is closed.

1. Exceptionally Cleared



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During the course of the death investigation, there were no administrative issues discovered.