

Florida Department of Corrections



Office of the Inspector General

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION

Case # 13-7376



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



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Case Number: 13-7376

Inspector: Inspector Ben Smith

Date Assigned or Initiated: 07/16/2013

Complaint Against: Joshua Curtis Meseke (Citizen)

Complainant: Inmate Lawrence Houze DC# 215722 (Deceased)



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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.

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.



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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.

V. PREDICATE

On July 12, 2013, the Department of Corrections, Office of the Inspector General received information alleging, at approximately 6:35 a.m. a county work squad from Okaloosa Correctional Institution's Work Camp was involved in a traffic crash in The City of Crestview, Florida, at the intersection of P.J. Adams Parkway and Vallacrest Drive. As a result of [REDACTED] Inmate Lawrence T. Houze DC# 215722, who was assigned to the work squad, was pronounced deceased at approximately 6:52 a.m. by paramedics on the scene. The City of Crestview Police Department is investigating the vehicular homicide reference to their case number 13-370-AC. Upon initial review of the information, the Office of the Inspector General initiated a criminal investigation into the allegations on July 15, 2013.

VI. SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

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



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On July 12, 2013, at approximately 6:30 a.m., Officer Glenn Tatum indicated he was traveling west bound on P.J. Adams Parkway with a work squad consisting of six inmates. The work squad was in route to the Baker Area Recreation Center and Arena. Officer Tatum was driving Department of Corrections van DC1503. Inmate Billy Barnes was in the front passenger seat, in the first row was Inmate Melvin McCray and Inmate Jeremy Burleson, Inmate Ray Reinhardt and Inmate Patrick Kelly were in the second row, Inmate Houze was in the back row seat. Officer Tatum stated he was traveling at approximately 40 miles per hour, having just made the turn onto P.J. Adams Parkway from Highway 85, a short distance earlier.

Officer Tatum stated as he approached Vallacrest Drive, he observed a green sedan approach the stop sign and slow as if it was going to stop. All at once Officer Tatum felt a hard impact into the right side of the state van. Officer Tatum stated the van lifted and rolled several times coming to rest in a ditch, on the west bound side of the road, lying on the left, driver's side of the vehicle. The engine was still running so he turned off the ignition and began yelling to the crew asking if everyone was alright. Inmate Barnes was hanging upside down, still strapped into his seat belt, and was complaining [REDACTED]. Officer Tatum stated he supported Inmate Barnes' neck, until [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] At about the same time Officer Tatum stated he was informed by Inmate McCray, Inmate Houze apparently was deceased.

Officer Tatum stated within minutes [REDACTED] and off duty Department of Corrections [REDACTED] and officers were on the scene and [REDACTED] for his work squad. Officer Tatum indicated he and the surviving inmates were [REDACTED].

On July 12, 2013, Officer Brian Mulbach, with the City of Crestview Police Department, responded to a traffic crash at the intersection of P.J. Adams Parkway (*County Road 189*) and Villacrest Drive in the City of Crestview, Florida. Officer Mulbach arrived on the scene at approximately 6:46 a.m. and observed [REDACTED].

Officer Mulbach indicated, based on his, on scene, investigation, he determined a van (*Vehicle 2*), transporting a Department of Corrections work squad, driven by Officer Glenn Tatum and occupied by six inmates from Okaloosa Correctional Institution, was west bound on P.J. Adams Parkway. Officer Mulbach determined a Honda Accord, driven by Joshua C. Meseke was south bound on Villacrest Drive and stopped for the posted stop sign at the intersection of P.J. Adams Parkway. Officer Mulbach indicated the Honda attempted to make a left turn onto P.J. Adams Parkway and crossed directly into the pathway of the Department of Corrections van. Officer Mulbach indicated the van driver took evasive action and swerved to his left to avoid the collision but was struck on the right side by the Honda. Officer



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Mulbach indicated the right side tire of the van lifted off the pavement, the van over turned, the roof of the van struck a guard rail, causing the rear of the roof to split open. Officer Mulbach determined Inmate Houze, who was sitting in the rear seat of the van, was ejected through the opening in the roof of the van. Officer Mulbach indicated Inmate Houze sustained [REDACTED] as a result of the vehicle crash. Officer Mulbach indicated the driver of the van and five inmates were [REDACTED]

Officer Mulbach stated the driver of the Honda declined medical attention at the scene. Officer Mulbach indicated the driver of the Honda indicated his windows were fogged up, limiting his view out of the vehicle and therefore he did not see the van approaching. Officer Mulbach stated when he arrived on the crash scene he looked at the Honda and the windows were still completely fogged over and visibility from the interior of the vehicle was extremely limited.

Officer Mulbach stated charges are pending the results of the Traffic Homicide investigation being conducted by Officer Jose Perira with the City of Crestview Police Department.

On July 17, 2013, Inmates Jeremy Burselson, Patrick Kelly, Billy Barnes, Ray Reinhardt, and Melvin McCray stated, on July 12, 2013, they were part of the work squad in the van being driven by Officer Tatum when the van was struck on the right side by a car. They indicated the van flipped over and rolled several times coming to rest in a ditch on the side of the road. All of the inmates indicated they [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] All five of the inmates were [REDACTED] Correctional Institution upon returning to the institution. [REDACTED] Inmate McCray indicated he told Officer Tatum he believed Inmate Houze was deceased at the scene.

Numerous digital pictures were taken at the crash scene and at the autopsy that have not been attached to this report, due to the large size of the files. The pictures have been down loaded to compact disks and will be mailed into central office with the case file once this report has been approved.

It must be noted that the autopsy report and the vehicular homicide report have not been finalized at the time of the writing of this report, but will be forwarded to central office when they are obtained

VII. CHARGES

- None



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VIII. CONCLUSION

Based on the information gathered during this investigation, it is the recommendation of Inspector Ben Smith the death of Inmate Lawrence Houze is deemed as a accidental death and be termed as follows:

- **Exceptionally Cleared**