

**VOLUSIA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

REPORT NUMBER: IA-15-008

PERIOD COVERED: March - April 2015
DATE REPORTED: April 16, 2015
SUBJECT(S) NAME: Communications Training Officer Jacqueline Esposito #7422
INVESTIGATING OFFICERS: Investigator Glen Bennett #1452

BASIS FOR INVESTIGATION:

On April 16, 2015, the Internal Affairs Unit received a supervisor's inquiry authored by Communications Coordinator Claudine Boring. The inquiry alleged that certain actions and comments made by Communications Training Officer Jacqueline Esposito created an unprofessional work environment for Telecommunicator Trainee Samantha King. During one particular incident, both CTO Esposito and Trainee King engaged in a verbal altercation resulting in a supervisor having to physically separate the two.

The inquiry also documented certain instances where front line supervisors were aware of the escalating issues but failed to take action.

OFFENSES:

This investigation is relevant to an alleged violation of Department Standards Directive:

26.2.47 Courtesy - Employees shall be civil and respectful toward each other and toward the public in general. They shall be especially courteous to visitors, guests, speakers and instructors. *(Violation subject up to a 1 day suspension.)*

26.2.49 Rumors and Gossip - Employees shall not engage in or convey gossip detrimental to other employees, the general public, County, Department, or Office of the Sheriff. *(Violation subject up to a 1 day suspension.)*

Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453 (13). Any conduct, on or off duty, that reflects unfavorably on the County as an employer. *This violation may be sufficient grounds for disciplinary action ranging from oral reprimand to dismissal, depending on the seriousness of the offense and other circumstances related to the situation.*

INVESTIGATIVE SUMMARY:

On April 13, 2015, Chief Deputy Robert L. Jones, III assigned the above incident to the Internal Affairs Unit. This report details the internal affairs investigation conducted by Investigator Glen Bennett.

On April 24, 2015, Investigator Bennett served CTO Esposito with a Notice of Internal Investigation in Daytona Beach, FL. *(See Tab – B for Official Correspondence)*

The supervisor's inquiry explained a time line of events involving Trainee King, CTO Esposito and their supervisors. There were allegations of spreading rumors and gossip between both Trainee King and CTO Esposito. In both cases supervisors were made aware but the tension between the two continued to grow as they both worked on the same shift.

During one particular incident it was alleged that CTO Esposito threatened Trainee King. Trainee King alleged that CTO Esposito made the comment that she was going to "cut somebody" as Trainee King walked past her in the hallway of the communications center. A threat that Trainee King said she took seriously.

There was the verbal confrontation that occurred in the parking lot of the communications center which resulted in a supervisor having to physically intervene. The physical confrontation on April 8, 2015, was the culmination of the tension that built up between both Trainee King and CTO Esposito. The two engaged in a verbal argument which included insults and the use of profanity while on Sheriff's Office property. The altercation was witnessed by a senior supervisor who took action and diffused the situation.

The inquiry also mentioned an inappropriate photograph being received by Trainee King from a co-worker while the two were allegedly on duty. *(See Tab – C for Supervisors Inquiry)*

Communications Trainee Samantha King

On April 30, 2015, Investigator Bennett and Sergeant Justin Sawicki conducted a sworn recorded interview with Telecommunications Trainee Samantha King at the Sheriff's administrative offices in Deland, FL. The following is a summary of that interview:

Trainee King has been employed as a telecommunicator since April 2014.

On April 8, 2015, Trainee King was involved in a verbal altercation with Communications Training Officer Jaqueline Esposito in the parking lot of the communications center. The incident occurred off duty at the conclusion of their shift. Trainee King said she stood waiting on the side walk for a ride from a fellow co-worker who parked on the other side of the parking lot. Trainee King said she didn't walk to the car with the co-worker because CTO Esposito was present and she knew there could be a problem. Trainee King was trying to avoid contact with CTO Esposito because of prior issues.

After a few minutes, CTO Esposito walked over to Trainee King and said, “...something about like keep my fucking name or keep my damn name out of your mouth and then I told her to get away.” Trainee King told her that she didn’t walk over towards her for a reason and to stay away. Trainee King explained that the conversation between the two started to get loud as CTO Esposito told her, “...you’re just a fuckin trainee...” adding, “She [CTO Esposito] was just saying you don’t think that people don’t tell me what you say about me...” Trainee King did not know what CTO Esposito was talking about since she didn’t have anything to do with people at work associated with CTO Esposito. Trainee King described CTO Esposito’s associates as “Jackie’s Minions” because she would have her co-workers do stuff for her.

Prior to the incident on April 8th, Trainee King had gone to her supervisors expressing her concerns with CTO Esposito. Trainee King first approached Training Coordinator Denesha Miller, “...she explained to me that um Jackie [CTO Esposito] is, she’ll find somebody, she’ll pick on them and uh that’s just the kind of person she is.” Trainee King didn’t want TC Miller to take any action because she was being trained by Assistant Training Coordinator Paul McGovern, a friend of CTO Esposito.

Just before the verbal altercation in the parking lot on April 8th, Trainee King said she felt she had no choice but to speak to ATC McGovern about her problems with CTO Esposito. Trainee King said she advised ATC McGovern that she didn’t want to talk with him given the personal relationship he had with CTO Esposito. Never the less, ATC McGovern advised Trainee King that he spoke to CTO Esposito and requested that the three of them sit down together and try working things out. Trainee King refused the meeting because she believed it would turn into a screaming match with CTO Esposito.

Trainee King was asked if CTO Esposito ever threatened her and she replied, “She looked at me and said I’m gonna stab some bitches today and walked passed me.” The incident occurred on April 1, 2015, as the two walked past one another in the hallway of the Communications Center. Security cameras confirmed the physical encounter at approximately 5:48PM; however, there was no recorded audio. After the comment from CTO Esposito, Trainee King said she went to report the incident to TC Miller but she was not at work that day. According to Trainee King, CTO Esposito did not have a weapon, nor did she make any hand gestures while making the statement. She does believe that CTO Esposito had the ability to carry out what she perceived as a threat.

Trainee King explained that some of the comments CTO Esposito made were associated with her work performance. CTO Esposito would over hear Trainee King either enter or say something wrong over the radio and she would proceed to make comments that could be overheard by fellow co-workers on the dispatch floor. Trainee King felt CTO Esposito’s comments were uncalled for and unprofessional.

According to Trainee King, it wasn’t just the comments that bothered her. Trainee King said CTO Esposito would spread what she considered rumors saying, “...she was calling me crazy and psycho and telling people uh those kind of things... Who wants to be called crazy to your co-workers?”

Trainee King said the comments and behavior of CTO Esposito made it difficult for her to perform her duties. She further stated, "...it was physically getting sick coming to work...Jackie [CTO Esposito] was making it uh just extremely stressful for me."

Trainee King was questioned about the inappropriate photograph she received by a male co-worker. According to Trainee King, the photograph was not taken on duty nor was she on duty when she received it. When asked when she received the photograph Trainee King stated, "I was at home asleep in the bed." Trainee King never received or observed an inappropriate photograph from the male co-worker while on duty nor was she aware of any other employee.

Other communications employees were spoken to and neither could confirm the receiving or viewing of an inappropriate photograph while on duty. (See Tab – E for Official Transcript)

Communications Training Officer Stephanie Kettler

On May 1, 2015, Investigator Bennett and Sergeant Sawicki conducted a sworn recorded interview with Communications Training Officer Stephanie Kettler at the Sheriff's administrative offices in Deland, FL. CTO Kettler received discipline as a result of the findings documented in the supervisor's inquiry conducted prior to this investigation. CTO Kettler's interview for this investigation was for purposes of clarification on the circumstances surrounding that inquiry. The following is a summary of that interview:

CTO Kettler began her career in communications with Putnam County before coming to the Sheriff's Office in 2013 and has been a training officer since September of 2014. CTO Kettler said she was friends with CTO Esposito outside work.

On one occasion Trainee King mentioned to CTO Kettler that she was upset at the beginning of one of her shifts. Trainee King advised CTO Kettler about, "Some nasty message she had received the shift before," from CTO Esposito. CTO Kettler was asked how she addressed the issue and she replied, "I went and talked to Jackie [CTO Esposito] and I should have went and talked to the STC [her supervisor]." CTO Kettler said she had no knowledge of any other issues between Trainee King and CTO Esposito.

CTO Kettler stated that she has learned to separate her personal relationships with her co-workers in order to maintain a more professional work environment. (See Tab – F for Official Transcript)

Shift Training Coordinator Paul McGovern

On May 8, 2015, Investigator Bennett and Sergeant Sawicki conducted a sworn recorded interview with Shift Training Coordinator Paul McGovern at the Sheriff's administrative offices in Deland, FL. STC McGovern received discipline as a result of the findings documented in the supervisor's inquiry conducted prior to this investigation. STC McGovern's interview for this

investigation was for purposes of clarification on the circumstances surrounding that inquiry. The following is a summary of that interview:

STC McGovern has worked for the Sheriff's Office for four and a half years and has been a training coordinator for the last two. As a shift training coordinator, his duties included overseeing the communications training officers and trainees assigned to his shift.

CTO Esposito and Trainee King were both under STC McGovern's supervision while they were assigned to the Charlie shift rotation. During this time, STC McGovern said he considered himself close friends with CTO Esposito and the two, along with other co-workers, would often engage in social activities outside of work.

According to STC McGovern, there was tension between Trainee King and CTO Esposito. Because of the tension, CTO Esposito went to STC McGovern and requested a meeting with Trainee King and their supervisors in order to resolve their differences, but Trainee King refused. STC McGovern was advised by his superiors that Trainee King did not have to attend the meeting; therefore, the meeting never took place. STC McGovern went on explaining, *"So I felt that I allowed my friendship to impact my decision because I didn't want to fight to get the meeting, because I didn't want it to make it look like I was only doing it because I'm friends with Jackie, or Ms. Esposito."*

On April 7th, Trainee King had entered incorrect information regarding a call for service. CTO Esposito, whom was seated across the dispatch floor, became aware of Trainee King's error. According to STC McGovern, he was advised by Trainee King that CTO Esposito was making comments about her error that she felt were unprofessional. Trainee King went to STC McGovern and explained that she didn't feel comfortable coming to him since he and CTO Esposito were friends. STC McGovern said he confronted CTO Esposito and explained, *"I talked to Ms. Esposito you know real quiet on the floor and I just said you know if you're going to have a comment about it address me or just keep it to yourself, keep it low so that you're not putting her [Trainee King] you know... in the spotlight I guess you could say."*

On April 8th, the morning the verbal altercation occurred; STC McGovern said CTO Esposito asked him about speaking to Trainee King in order to address the growing conflict between the two. According to STC McGovern, CTO Esposito wanted to know if she was allowed to speak to Trainee King on the communications center property or if she had to go somewhere else. STC McGovern didn't recall what he advised her but when he left the communications parking lot Trainee King was standing by herself and CTO Esposito was in her truck. STC McGovern said it wasn't until later that morning that he learned of the verbal altercation when CTO Esposito called him. STC McGovern explained, *"Well she [CTO Esposito] told me she's pissed at me and she dropped the F-bomb at me a few times because like she was pretty much blaming me for what had happened because I didn't do anything to stop it."* (See Tab - G for Official Transcript)

Telecommunications Supervisor Shonna Foster

On May 13, 2015, Investigator Glen Bennett and Sergeant Justin Sawicki conducted a sworn recorded interview with Telecommunications Supervisor Shonna Foster at the Sheriff's administrative offices in Deland, FL. The following is a summary of that interview:

TS Foster has been working in the Sheriff's Office Communications Center since October of 2004 and is presently one of three supervisors on the Charlie shift rotation.

On April 8th, TS Foster was leaving the communications building after her shift when she encountered both TCO Esposito and Trainee King in a verbal argument. TS Foster described both parties as "face to face" with one another. As TS Foster approached she could tell by the tone in their voices that it was escalating and the two needed to be separated. TS Foster has known CTO Esposito for approximately eight years so she felt more comfortable advising her to walk away. TS Foster advised Trainee King to stay where she was and that she would speak to her momentarily.

As TS Foster addressed CTO Esposito, Trainee King continued speaking to CTO Esposito after being instructed to stop. According to TS Foster, CTO Esposito then made the comment about Trainee King, "*She was nothing but a piece of crap and she's just a trainee. She's nobody. She's nothing.*" TS Foster explained that both Trainee King and CTO Esposito used profanity directed toward one another.

When asked who was the primary aggressor between the two, TS Foster explained, "*...Jackie [TCO Esposito] tried to approach Trainee King and I was standing in front of Jackie and I did have, I grabbed her [CTO Esposito] by the shoulders and told her to stop and that she wasn't gonna walk over to her [Trainee King] like that.*" Furthermore, as CTO Esposito advanced towards Trainee King she said, "*I'm gonna beat her ass.*" Shortly after that CTO Esposito walked away and left the scene. TS Foster took Trainee King back to her office where the two talked.

Trainee King advised her that issues between her and CTO Esposito had escalated throughout her training phases. Issues like CTO Esposito telling co-workers she was crazy and that she had problems. TS Foster said she could not attest to the rumors being spread by CTO Esposito since she had no knowledge of the comments.

During the conversation, Trainee King told TS Foster that she didn't trust her because she did CTO Esposito's taxes. TS Foster responded, "*And at that point I told her she was completely incorrect and that was a totally unfair judgment of me and I've never been unfair and I never will be unfair and I take my job seriously and my job's more important than any friendship and my friends understand that.*" Trainee King continued to express her distrust for her supervisors, saying she did not approach them with her concerns because they engaged in a personal

relationship with CTO Esposito. Following her conversation with Trainee Foster, TS Foster followed proper procedure in notifying her chain of command of the incident.

TS Foster stated that she had some knowledge of the issues between CTO Esposito and Trainee King. According to TS Foster, their immediate supervisors were aware of the bickering and they advised them to cease and desist but nothing was ever documented. It was TS Foster's belief that had discipline been handed down earlier, it would not have ended the problem between Trainee King and CTO Esposito. TS Foster then advised, *"I don't think the two of them would ever be able to or will ever be able to work together on the same shift. I just don't."* (See Tab – H for Official Transcript)

Communications Training Officer Jacqueline Esposito

On May 21, 2015, Investigator Bennett and Sergeant Sawicki conducted a sworn recorded interview with Communications Training Officer Jacqueline Esposito at the Sheriff's administrative offices in Deland, FL. The following is a summary of that interview:

CTO Esposito has been with the Sheriff's Office for approximately nine years and has been a training officer for the last four.

At the end of their shift on the morning of April 8th, CTO Esposito said she was in the parking lot of the communications center and realized she left her drink inside. As she walked back to the communications center she noticed Trainee King standing alone, *"...so I took the opportunity to approach her and tell her to please stop talking about me as a common courtesy and she went berserk."* CTO Esposito said the two engaged in a verbal argument with Trainee King telling her, *"I'm a piece of shit and of course I said things back to her as well and that she's just a trainee."* At that point TS Foster had grabbed her and pulled her aside to discuss what was going on. CTO Esposito said that while she was trying to speak to TS Foster, Trainee King, *"Kept interrupting and yelling and cursing and finally I just said to her just shut your mouth 'cause I'm gonna beat the shit out of you."* According to CTO Esposito, her intent in approaching Trainee King that morning was to speak to her as an adult, not to have her "flip out." After TS Foster got in between the two, CTO Esposito said she refused to sit down and talk about the incident and advised that she was going home.

CTO Esposito explained that there was friction between her and Trainee King prior to the morning of April 8th. When asked why she would approach Trainee King if there was friction she responded, *"Because I wanted it done and over with. Because I went to a supervisor to ask them to have a meeting because I was tired of her running her mouth and nothing was done. They told me it was handled and it wasn't."* CTO Esposito stated the issues between her and Trainee King were not work related and had nothing to do with her responsibilities with the Sheriff's Office. CTO Esposito said she was tired of Trainee King making comments to other trainees about her, *"That I'm a F-ing B [fucking bitch] and she's not gonna run her mouth to other trainees and other training officers..."*

CTO Esposito agreed it maybe a possibility that she and Trainee King just couldn't see "eye to eye." CTO Esposito said she ran into Trainee King at Target the day before the incident and the

two had a civilized conversation. CTO Esposito was unaware of any reason why she and Trainee King don't get along.

According to CTO Esposito, she never made comments to Trainee King about her work performance while on the dispatch floor. She did recall an incident when Trainee King had entered the wrong information into the computer aided dispatch system and she did discuss the mistake with her trainee seated beside her. CTO Esposito said she speaks very loud and her discussion with her trainee may have been overheard by Trainee King. CTO Esposito said that yelling across the dispatch floor at a trainee would have been unprofessional.

CTO Esposito agreed that that it wasn't courteous or professional of her to engage Trainee King in the parking lot and stated, "*I should never have done it.*" She said she should have walked away and try to fix the problem a different way. CTO Esposito said she was told by a supervisor there wasn't going to be a meeting to discuss the issues and that the issue was being handled, when according to her it wasn't.

When asked about making the comment in reference to, "cutting somebody" in the hallway of the communications center, CTO Esposito said, "*If I said that to anybody it would be like hey we're gonna stab each other because we work too much and it's a common thing that we say in there [dispatch] constantly or we're gonna shoot somebody.*" Additionally, CTO Esposito also denied spreading rumors about Trainee King by telling fellow workers that she was crazy.

CTO Esposito was asked if she felt she violated the following policies:

26.2.47 Courtesy - Employees shall be civil and respectful toward each other and toward the public in general. They shall be especially courteous to visitors, guests, speakers and instructors. **YES**

26.2.49 Rumors and Gossip - Employees shall not engage in or convey gossip detrimental to other employees, the general public, County, Department, or Office of the Sheriff. **NO**

Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453 (13). Any conduct, on or off duty, that reflects unfavorably on the County as an employer. **YES**

(See Tab – I for Official Transcript)

CONCLUSION:

On July 21, 2015, this investigation was presented to the Sheriff. After review, the Sheriff determined the violations of the below listed Department Standards Directive to be:

26.2.47 Courtesy - Employees shall be civil and respectful toward each other and toward the public in general. They shall be especially courteous to visitors, guests, speakers and instructors. **Sustained**

26.2.49 Rumors and Gossip - Employees shall not engage in or convey gossip detrimental to other employees, the general public, County, Department, or Office of the Sheriff. **Sustained**

Volusia County Merit System Rules and Regulations 86-453 (13). Any conduct, on or off duty, that reflects unfavorably on the County as an employer. **Sustained**

On July 23, 2015, Investigator Bennett served TCO Esposito with an Intent to Suspend letter at the William R. Lee Communications Center in Daytona Beach, FL. *(See Tab – B for Official Correspondence)*

On August 5, 2015, Investigator Bennett served TCO Esposito with a Final Suspension letter at the William R. Lee Communications Center in Daytona Beach, FL. *(See Tab – B for Official Correspondence)*


EXHIBITS:

- A. Report of Investigation
- B. Official Correspondence
- C. Supervisors Inquiry
- D. Advisement Administration of Oath/Perjury Warning/Garrity Warning
- E. Official Transcript of Communications Trainee Samantha King
- F. Official Transcript of Communications Training Officer Stephanie Kettler
- G. Official Transcript of Shift Training Coordinator Paul McGovern
- H. Official Transcript of Telecommunications Supervisor Shonna Foster
- I. Official Transcript of Communications Training Officer Jacqueline Esposito
- J. Miscellaneous Documents
- K. Digital Media

I, the undersigned, do hereby swear, under the penalty of perjury, that, to the best of my personal knowledge, information, and belief, I have not knowingly or willfully deprived, or allowed another to deprive, the suspect of the investigation of any rights contained in ss. 112.532 and 112.533, Florida Statutes.

INVESTIGATOR:  DATE: 8/5/15

**Investigator Glen Bennett
Internal Affairs Investigator**

APPROVED BY:  DATE: 08/06/15

**Chief Deputy Robert L. Jones, III
SHERIFF BEN F. JOHNSON
VOLUSIA COUNTY FLORIDA**