



St. Johns County Sheriff's Office

Media Release

"Taking Care of People"

SHERIFF DAVID SHOAR'S RESPONSE TO GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL PROSECUTOR

3 October 2014

"Since 2010, many of you have become aware of the tragic death of Michelle O'Connell. The more this case became controversial, the more we embraced the idea of having two experienced death investigators who are "objective," "expertly trained," with years of experience and who have not been subjected to the vagaries of social media, examine and review this case. On many occasions I have thought about asking for this but chose not to once I realized the utter unfairness it would be to Deputy Banks. Along that same line, I often wish some of us could walk for a bit in his shoes. We are confident that the new Special Prosecutor will reach the same conclusion that one law enforcement agency, two State Attorney's including one who was assigned as a Special Prosecutor by the Governor, and three medical examiners; that the tragic death of Michelle O'Connell was the result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. We certainly hope that the O'Connell family finds peace and acceptance in the findings of this new Special Prosecutor, something we have never been able to provide."

"We must also remember that a year and a half ago I filed a very serious complaint with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement accusing two of their personnel with serious misconduct relating to this case. Immediately after filing this complaint, one agent retired and the other was placed on paid leave where I believe he remains today."

"Additionally, State Attorney Bill Cervone is currently investigating one of those agents (Rusty Rodgers) for "Official Misconduct" in regards to this case and his treatment of Deputy Banks."

"Finally and very importantly, Deputy Banks and Michelle's brother Deputy Scott O'Connell have both filed civil lawsuits against the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and their agents Pape and Rodgers. It is truly ironic that the man that certain members of the O'Connell family have accused of being culpable in Michelle's death is the one filing a civil lawsuit where one cannot hide behind the Fifth Amendment."

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