



**Reference:** Internal Affairs Investigation

**Case Number:** AI2024-010

**Investigator:** Sergeant Damon Pifer  
Internal Affairs

**Involved Employee:** Deputy Octavia Smith

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**Basis for Investigation:**

On June 25, 2024, Lieutenant Joseph Lukaszewski submitted a Request for Administrative Inquiry Memorandum through his Chain of Command regarding a complaint on Deputy Octavia Smith. Sergeant Andrew Huskey contacted Sergeant John Noble concerning a possible inappropriate relationship between Deputy Smith and Bruce Clewis who is a registered sex offender. Clewis' cousin Joshua Hewett relayed information to Sergeant Huskey that Deputy Smith and Clewis were going out to dinner, going to the beach and to the springs together. Hewett also stated Clewis knew information about other individuals' cases and believed Deputy Smith may be giving him the information.

On June 26, 2024, Director Howard Cole authorized an administrative inquiry into these allegations.

After a review of the evidence and complaint, it was determined there were enough existing facts to open a criminal investigation on Deputy Smith for misuse of law enforcement databases and for a possible violation of sexual offender registration law. Detective Corporal Dennis Camden and the Special Victims/ICAC Unit were notified to begin an investigation by Captain Ryan Smith on July 1, 2024. Corporal Camden completed the criminal investigation on August 1, 2024. This case was staffed with the State Attorney's Office and they declined to prosecute Deputy Smith. The criminal complaint has been closed.

**Items reviewed for this investigation:**

Bruce Clewis SJSO Arrest Report SJSO24OFF007484 from 7/18/2024  
Bruce Clewis SJSO FIBRS Incident Report SJSO24OFF007484 from 7/18/2024  
Informational Report SJSO24OFF006939  
Bruce Clewis JSO Arrest and Booking Report from 8/06/2024  
Detective Camden's Interview with Bruce Clewis  
Detective Camden's Interview with Deputy Octavia Smith  
Detective Camden's 2<sup>nd</sup> Interview with Deputy Octavia Smith

**Persons interviewed for this administrative inquiry:**

**Civilian Joshua Hewett**                      **Witness**

**Deputy Octavia Smith's Job Description:**

Deputy Smith is a Bailiff assigned to duties consistent with a Fingerprinting Specialist. She is responsible for processing face-to-face registrations which are a requirement for several types of convicted offenders. She must understand the relevant law and requirements associated with criminal registrations in order to collect the appropriate information. She must be certified to access D.A.V.I.D. and FCIC/NCIC.

Deputy Smith's duties consist of the following:

- Conducting career criminal, felony, and sex-offender/predator registrations.
- Fingerprinting certain defendants for court and criminal registration purposes by ink/electronically.
- Fingerprinting government employees and/or applicants electronically.
- Offer fingerprinting services for public licensing needs.
- Process registration information obtained during registration process in multiple databases.
- Maintain knowledge of Sex Offender/Predator laws and requirements.
- Collect DNA from certain convicted offenders.
- Perform NCIC/FCIC checks.
- Report criminal violations of any law as directed (riots, fights, disorders, or unusual activity).
- Disseminate certain public record information as mandated by law and policy.
- File and/or retrieve reports, files, and documentation.

- Must Maintain confidentiality/security of files and information obtained in the course of employment.

### **Interview with Joshua Hewett**

The following is a synopsis of the sworn recorded phone interview with Joshua Hewett which occurred on June 27, 2024. For complete details, refer to the recording in its entirety.

Joshua Hewett verified he is the cousin of Bruce Clewis. Hewett stated Clewis is a sex offender from North Carolina and moved to Florida in January 2024. Due to Clewis moving to the area, he had to register in St. Johns County which is how he met Deputy Octavia Smith. Hewett stated every time Clewis would have to register another address or be checked on, Clewis would register with Deputy Smith. Hewett believes during the course of these registrations and meetings, Deputy Smith and Clewis developed a relationship. Deputy Smith and Clewis started their relationship by going out to eat and spending time together outside of Deputy Smith's work hours. Hewett stated Deputy Smith and Clewis would go to the springs to spend time together and Clewis would spend the night with Deputy Smith at her house in \_\_\_\_\_ Hewett said he didn't know how many times this occurred, or if it's still occurring, but he knows there have been several occasions they spent time together outside of standard work hours.

Hewett was asked if he knew when the relationship between Deputy Smith and Clewis started. Hewett stated the first time Deputy Smith and Clewis went out together was about 4 to 5 weeks ago. Hewett stated he was told by Clewis, they had dinner at the Cantina Louie Mexican Restaurant in St. Augustine and afterwards stayed on the back of the vehicle talking until 0100 hours. I asked Hewett if he has ever seen or met Deputy Smith before. Hewett stated he has only heard about her through his cousin Clewis. Hewett stated since Clewis has moved down to Florida, Clewis has talked about Deputy Smith and had the "hots" for her.

Hewett was asked what his main objective was in telling Sergeant Huskey about Deputy Smith and Clewis' relationship. Hewett stated Clewis has to register with every address that he would be present at longer than a 48-hour period. Hewett stated he has a problem with Deputy Smith indulging in conversation with Clewis involving a confidential case she shouldn't be discussing with Clewis because that information could be "Sensitive to the case." Hewett was referring to his own personal case. Hewett felt this information shouldn't be discussed outside of Deputy Smith's profession. Hewett stated he was told, Deputy Smith pulled up information from other cases as well near the permanent address of Clewis and she asked Clewis if he knew people from the area. Hewett stated a "red flag" went up in his eyes because this is Deputy Smith's job to protect certain people and she is allowing conversations to go a little too far.

Hewett was asked about Clewis wanting to invite Deputy Smith to spend time with him and his family at the beach. Hewett said Clewis invited Deputy Smith to go to the beach with them the next day on the night they had dinner at Cantina Louie. Hewett advised Clewis he was uncomfortable with Deputy Smith hanging out with them and knowing sensitive information and names involving his own personal case. Hewett stated Clewis spoke to Deputy Smith about

registering Hewett's address because he spends time on the weekends at Hewett's house in Putnam County. Hewett was asked if he thinks Deputy Smith knows the reason why Clewis has to register. Hewett stated she absolutely knows the reason why. Clewis said Deputy Smith told him he shouldn't register Hewett's address because there is a daycare nearby. Hewett said Clewis told him Deputy Smith has been looking out for him and trying to keep him safe because of the situation at his permanent residence. "She's got him in her best interests. She wants to make sure he doesn't get into any trouble if anything goes down."

### **Investigator Notes:**

On June 28, 2024, I contacted Clewis on the phone and asked if he would be willing to provide a sworn statement for this administrative investigation to which he declined, stating he only knows Deputy Smith because she is the one he registers with at the fingerprinting office. Clewis asked me what this investigation pertained to. I advised Clewis it was concerning his inappropriate relationship with one of our Deputies at the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office. Clewis stated he doesn't have a relationship of any kind with anyone that works for the Sheriff's Office.

On August 9, 2024, Deputy Smith was brought in to complete the evidence review prior to conducting a sworn interview. After reviewing the evidence, Deputy Smith voluntarily chose to resign from the Sheriff's Office prior to being interviewed.

The evidence gathered in the criminal investigation shows according to the Sexual Predator/Offender Tracking registration logs, Clewis has checked in with the SJSO SPOT registration office several times since December 6, 2023. He met with Deputy Smith on December 8, 2023, March 6, 2024, May 24, 2024 and on June 14, 2024. Corporal Camden obtained a Verizon Wireless subpoena for Clewis and Deputy Smith's personal cell phone numbers on record from March 6, 2024 thru July 3, 2024. Records showed Deputy Smith initiated contact with Clewis from May 24, 2024 thru June 27, 2024 approximately 20 times for a total of 598 minutes and 83 seconds. Clewis initiated contact with Deputy Smith from May 29, 2024 thru June 27, 2024 approximately 320 times.

On May 26, 2024, it was discovered through a law enforcement database both Clewis and Deputy Smith's vehicles went through the intersection traveling  
at 03:52:06 a.m. EDT.

On July 17, 2024, Corporal Camden conducted an interview with Deputy Smith as part of a criminal investigation. Deputy Smith was asked about her involvement with the Sexual Offender Clewis and she stated, their communication exceeded her duties beyond just registering him as a sexual offender and they had a "personal relationship." During the interview Deputy Smith was hesitant about clearing up the situation involving Clewis. Deputy Smith stated "I will end up not having a job." She admitted Clewis and her are engaged in a sexual relationship. She admitted Clewis has spent the night at her residence more than 3 nights since May 24, 2024 and she acknowledged Clewis was required to register her address as a temporary residence because of it. Not registering her address would violate Clewis. Deputy Smith stated because of her job as a

Deputy in the Sexual Offender Registration Office, Clewis never registered her address in order to protect her. Deputy Smith acknowledged per Florida State Statute Clewis committed a violation not registering her address. Deputy Smith stated she did not know if she would have got into trouble if Clewis registered her address.

On July 18, 2024, Clewis was taken into custody for violation of F.S.S. 322.212.5c, a sex offender in possession of a Florida driver's license without designation. Corporal Camden conducted an interview with Clewis surrounding that case but also clarified some questions surrounding the case involving Deputy Smith. Clewis verified that he and Deputy Smith are in a relationship and she has been looking out for him making sure he doesn't get into any trouble. Clewis verified that he has spent the night on several occasions at Deputy Smith's residence. Many text messages were deleted between Clewis and Deputy Smith. Clewis explained Deputy Smith was just being paranoid in telling him to delete the text messages between the two of them so she wouldn't lose her job.

#### **Timeline:**

- December 8, 2023- Clewis checked in with Deputy Smith at the SJSO SPOT registration office.
- March 6, 2024- Clewis checked in with Deputy Smith at the SJSO SPOT registration office.
- May 24, 2024- Sergeant Huskey conducted an interview with Clewis and Hewett.
- May 24, 2024- Clewis checked in with Deputy Smith at the SJSO SPOT registration office.
- May 24, 2024- Deputy Smith first initiated contact with Clewis via personal cell phone and continued through June 27, 2024.
- May 26, 2024- Clewis and Deputy Smith personal vehicles were traveling together through the intersection at 03:52:06 a.m. EDT.
- May 29, 2024- Clewis first initiated contact with Deputy Smith via personal cell phone and continued through June 27, 2024.
- June 14, 2024- Clewis checked in with Deputy Smith at the SJSO SPOT registration office.
- June 25, 2024- Lieutenant Lukaszewski authored a request for an AI Memo.
- June 26, 2024- Director Cole authorized an AI for Deputy Smith.
- June 27, 2024- Sworn interview with Hewett.
- June 28, 2024- Clewis declined to be interviewed concerning inappropriate relationship with Deputy Smith.
- July 1, 2024- Captain Smith authorized a criminal investigation assigned to Corporal Camden.
- July 17, 2024- Corporal Camden conducted interview with Deputy Smith.
- July 18, 2024- Clewis taken into custody for violation of F.S.S. 322.212.5c, a sex offender in possession of a Florida driver's license without designation. Corporal Camden conducted interview.
- August 1, 2024- Criminal Investigation Complete.



- August 9, 2024- Deputy Smith resigned from the Sheriff's Office prior to being interviewed by Internal Affairs.

### Findings:

Based on the FIBRS Incident Report (SJSO24OFF006939) and the interviews conducted with Deputy Smith, she knowingly and intentionally associated herself with Clewis who she knew was a registered sex offender. Deputy Smith maintained a sexual relationship with Clewis who she also knew to be a convicted felon. Therefore:

As it pertains to **Policy 26.1 (3.17)** Association or participation with persons engaged in any unlawful activity on or off-duty is prohibited. Employees shall not knowingly commence or maintain a relationship with any person who is under criminal investigation, indictment, arrest, or incarceration by this or another law enforcement or criminal justice agency, and/or who has an open and notorious criminal reputation in the community (for example, persons who they know, should know, or have reason to believe are involved in felonious activity, or convicted felons), except as necessary to the performance of official duties, or where unavoidable because of familial relationships. (LEVEL THREE VIOLATION) The finding is **SUSTAINED**.

Deputy Smith knew Clewis was in violation of F.S.S. 322.212.5c, a sex offender in possession of a Florida driver's license without designation and did not report the violation. Therefore:

As it pertains to **Policy 26.1 (3.14) Failure of an employee to perform the duties of their rank or assignment. (LEVEL THREE VIOLATION)** The finding is **SUSTAINED**.

Deputy Smith's decision to engage in a relationship with Clewis after meeting him while conducting her duties in the Sex Offender Registration Office led to irresponsible choices not upholding the integrity, set of values and principles that guide St. Johns County Sheriff's Office. Therefore:

As it pertains to **Policy 26.1 (3.25)** Employees shall maintain a level of moral and ethical conduct in their personal and business affairs which is the highest standards of the law enforcement profession. Conduct which violates the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics or to the contrary shall be considered Conduct Unbecoming. (LEVEL THREE VIOLATION) The finding is **SUSTAINED.**

Deputy Smith acknowledged Clewis was required to register her address as a temporary residence because he spent several nights at her house in [REDACTED] Deputy Smith knew if Clewis didn't register her address he would be in violation of sexual offender registration laws which constitute a felony crime. Deputy Smith stated Clewis never registered her address in order

to protect her job and that she knowingly allowed this violation to occur, which makes her an accessory to the crime regardless of prosecution. Therefore:

As it pertains to **Policy 26.1 (5.4)** Commission of a criminal act in violation of a county, state or federal statute. (LEVEL FIVE VIOLATION) The finding is **SUSTAINED**.

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Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have read the foregoing Administrative Inquiry and that the facts stated in it are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Furthermore, I, the undersigned, do hereby swear, under 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 subject of the investigation of any of the rights contained in ss.112.532 and 112.533, Florida Statutes.

Sgt. D. Pifer 10472

Sergeant Damon Pifer

Internal Affairs

St. Johns County Sheriff's Office

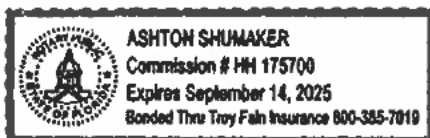
State of Florida

County of St. Johns

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me  
this 30<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2024

by Damon Pifer

who is personally known to me.



Ashton Shumaker

Signature of Notary Public