

Chief Michelle Cook accused of falsely arresting black Navy veteran

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With the U.S. Department of Justice currently investigating the alleged corruption within the **Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)**, the scrutiny on corruption within law enforcement agencies across the nation has reached a fever pitch.

Police over-stepping their authority runs rampant in many law enforcement agencies, especially in small-to-mid-sized cities like Jacksonville, Florida.

Former Asst. Chief of the Jacksonville Sheriff's office **Michelle Cook**, has been accused of using her position in 2012 to "intimidate" and having a U.S. Navy veteran wrongly arrested.

Cook, the current Chief of Police for the City of Atlantic Beach, Florida, and candidate for [Clay County](#) Sheriff has been accused by **Chief Derek Cashaw** of using her position to sweep a 2012 dog park incident under the rug, and having him arrested without just cause.

The Incident

During a recent video interview obtained by The Floridian, Cashaw said that he was at a dog park walking his dog when "another dog ran out of the water and attacked" his dog. Cashaw said he "yelled for the owner of the dog, but no one came, forcing him to "kick the dog" so that it would release his dog from its mouth.

The owner of the dog finally arrived and instinctively took her dog and began to leave with it. Crashaw then directed his wife to speak to the dog owner and ask her for her personal information.

The "nasty and disrespectful lady" refused to offer her personal contact information. When she refused, Crashaw himself attempted to talk to the lady to try to get her information so that he could contact her after he took his dog to the veterinarian for treatment.

Here is where Chief Michelle Cook got involved.

According to Cashaw, "the lady got on the telephone and claimed she was calling the police department and gave a description about him." Cashaw added that he gave her his name and told her that "there was no need to describe me by my race, color, or what have you."

Cashaw said that minutes later, a Honda Odyssey mini-van pulled up and the lady, her dog and child she was with, and "jumped up and ran towards the van, and the door –the lady jumped in."

Cashaw said he jumped in front of the van because the driver was attempting to leave the scene.

“Ma’am, your friend's dog attacked my dog,” said Cashaw and said he continued to explain the situation to her.

The driver, who was later identified as Michelle Cook, never told him her name, but spoke loudly as if she had her phone on speaker, and “made gestures as if she had a weapon.”

Cashew said that he just stood there and waited for law enforcement to arrive, and upon their arrival, they “aggressively” approached him.

One of the group officers or deputies that arrived, who was the only one speaking at the moment, went directly to the driver of the mini-van, not to him or the woman with the dog, but to the driver.

After the officer spoke to everyone inside the van, the police turned to Cashaw and according to Cashaw, treated him like a perpetrator,” as the other officers' tried to intimidate him by threatening to take him to jail.

The Arrest

Cashaw said he felt as if he was being “ganged up on,” and when he saw that he was not being treated fairly and the situation was not going anywhere, he asked to leave the scene.

“When I stood up to walk away, the officer went to draw his pistol,” said Cashaw.

Cashaw then said that when he tried to address how he felt he was not being treated fairly, he was arrested.

“I was placed under arrest. I was handcuffed and thrown to the back of the vehicle,” added Cashaw

Cashaw said that when his wife and daughter came over to him, one of the officers began to call his daughter “bitches” and told her to “sit down and

shut up."

The driver was then allowed to drive off with the woman, the child, and the attacking dog.

The police intimidation continued until a female lieutenant arrived and approached Cashaw, asked him to explain what had happened. Upon explaining himself again, Cashaw was released from custody by that lieutenant and went home with his family.

"Messing with Organized Crime"

When Cashaw went to pick up a copy of the incident report at the police station, he said that upon arriving, he recognized the woman driving the van from a framed picture that was on the wall identifying her as the chief of police.

Cashaw then said that "everything made sense to him" then," adding that he believed she was the chief of police at the Powell Avenue station "and all the officers came from that location."

A discouraged Cashaw said he became "very fearful and uncomfortable" and felt as if he was "messing with organized crime."

Cashaw said he left the substation and went to the downtown police station to file his paperwork.

He then sought an internal investigation into Cook and her officers for the false arrest, saying that he wanted "to have those guys look into it."

Cashaw said that calling everyone in the chain of command to have his case heard, someone identifying himself as Cook's superior officer finally spoke to him but began defending her position. Cashaw added that everyone in the police department, including internal affairs, appeared to have dragged their feet in support of Cook.

We reached out to Chief Cook's campaign for comment but have not heard back.

Cook is running in contested Clay County Sheriff's race along incumbent **Sheriff Darryl Daniels, Mike Taylor, Ben Carroll, Catherine Webb, and Harold Rutledge.**