



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: Deputies Arrest Police Impersonator

Date: December 26, 2014

On 12-25-14 at approximately 8:45 p.m., Hernando County deputies were dispatched to the area of 3535 Portillo Road regarding a Suspicious Incident. The caller stated that he was driving northbound (to this location) from Mariner Boulevard and County Line Road and had nearly been involved in a traffic crash with a reckless driver in a vehicle, described as a full-size black sport utility vehicle (SUV).

After the near miss, the driver of the black SUV began following the caller while activating emergency style lights which were mounted within the grille, dashboard, and windshield of his vehicle in an attempt to get the caller to pull over. When the caller failed to pull over, the driver of the SUV began chasing the caller northbound on Mariner Boulevard, at extremely high rates of speed with all of the aforementioned lights illuminated and flashing.

The “pursuit” continued approximately 3.7 miles.

As deputies arrived in the area, they observed the suspect vehicle exiting Portillo Road turning southbound onto Mariner Boulevard. Deputies conducted a traffic stop.

As deputies made contact with the suspect, they quickly observed a shield style badge hanging from the rear-view mirror. Upon requesting identification and vehicle documents from the suspect, deputies further observed a second silver shield-style badge located within his wallet. Deputies also noted the wallet that the suspect produced was a black leather wallet, specifically designed to hold a badge, commonly issued to and utilized by law enforcement.

Meanwhile, the caller and the passenger in his vehicle both positively identified the suspect’s vehicle as the vehicle that pursued them with flashing lights. They explained that the driver of the vehicle was undoubtedly “acting like a cop and trying to pull us over.”

Deputies observed the suspect's vehicle to have four (functional) light-emitting diode (L.E.D.) flashing lights mounted within the grille, one (functional) additional L.E.D. light mounted on the interior of the windshield, and one (functional) siren and/or public address speaker mounter under the hood of the vehicle. Deputies also located a front-facing surveillance camera mounted inside the windshield as well as a sticker affixed to the windshield which read "Department of Defense registered vehicle." Additionally, the vehicle had a "Police Interceptor" emblem affixed to the rear. Said emblem is commonly seen on Ford Crown Victoria police model vehicles.

A consensual search of the defendant's vehicle was performed by deputies. The search yielded an additional "Police Interceptor" emblem and one Hernando County Sheriff's Office business card. Also located inside the vehicle was the DVD "Let's Be Cops."

Post Miranda, the defendant stated, "If I could do tonight over again, I never would have done this." The defendant also stated that he installed all of the police related equipment on/in his vehicle so that "no one would mess with him."

Sheriff Al Nienhuis said, "This is obviously a very alarming situation. Law enforcement works very hard to earn the trust of the community, and it only takes one incident like this to call that trust into question. We always, in an effort to avoid these situations, welcome calls to 9-1-1 requesting confirmation that the person you are dealing with is a legitimate law enforcement professional. If not, you can rest assured that a real deputy will be on the way immediately.

The defendant was placed under arrest, charged as follows.

James Michael Buck W/M DOB/12-31-1990

- Fraud – Impersonation of Law Enforcement Officer
 - o Bond - \$5,000.

Buck remains in the Hernando County Detention Center.