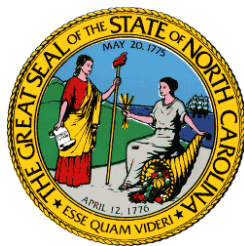


Office of the Thirteenth Prosecutorial District of North Carolina



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May 20, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bald Head Island Incident

Officer Davina Buff Jones of the Bald Head Island Police Department died on October 22, 1999. The cause of death was a single gunshot wound to the back of her head. District Attorney Rex Gore, in consultation with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Office and the State Bureau of Investigation determined that Officer Jones died as a result of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Accordingly, District Attorney Rex Gore ruled the death a suicide.

Since the time that District Attorney Rex Gore made his initial determination, several questions have arisen regarding the cause of death. There are many people, including the family members of Officer Jones, who believe that Officer Jones was murdered. Their primary concerns are whether there was a rush to judgment in this case and whether those responsible for the investigation were thorough in their analysis.

After District Attorney Rex Gore closed the criminal investigation, the Buff family filed a civil action for the purposes of determining the cause of death. In 2003, a N.C. Industrial Commission hearing resulted in a finding that Officer Jones' death was a homicide. Furthermore, subsequent legal rulings have reinforced this opinion. Despite these findings, District Attorney Rex Gore was unwilling to change his initial determination or rule the cause of death as undetermined. Unfortunately, this action on Mr. Gore's part lead many to conclude that he was not acting in a fair and impartial manner. Regardless of the truth of this assertion, such a perception is damaging to the Office of the District Attorney.

It is important that cases in the Criminal Justice System have a sense of finality. It is crucial to proceed with extreme caution when reviewing previous decisions. Only in those instances where there is a danger that there has been a severe injustice will I consider re-examining a closed case. The facts of all cases are unique. Given what I know about the investigation in this case, and in light of the findings of the Industrial Commission, I believe that it is prudent to re-open this matter. In doing so, I want to

emphasize that I am not committed to a particular result. Quite simply, my office is committed to going wherever the truth leads.

In our search for the truth, we have decided to follow a process. In essence, we are going to look at everything with a fresh set of eyes. The first step in this process will be to examine the evidence gathered as part of the initial investigation. We will review the information generated in connection with the civil court proceedings. Finally, we are asking members of the public to come forward with any new information they have regarding this particular case. Anyone with information is encouraged to contact the District Attorney's Office at 910 253-3910. At this juncture, I am not requesting a new investigation by the State Bureau of Investigation or the Brunswick County Sheriff's Office. I will keep an open mind for an additional investigation should circumstances warrant it necessary.

In making the decision to re-open this case I want to emphasize that I am not wedded to a particular outcome. Again, we are committed to going wherever the truth leads. I feel strongly that the victim's family deserves to have the answers to what happened in this incident, regardless of the cause of death. I realize that we are at a disadvantage from an investigatory standpoint, given that the incident occurred over ten years ago. Nonetheless, justice never sleeps, and my office is committed to doing our part in seeking a definitive answer to the cause of death of Officer Davina Buff Jones.