

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC PROTECTION
INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**Russell St. John, Witness Interview
IA 2013-07-318**

July 24, 2013

Present:

Russell St. John, Officer, Beach Safety

David Vanis, Captain

Lynea Baker, Transcribing Secretary

Vanis: This is Captain Vanis with the Volusia County Department of Public Protection, Internal Affairs Unit. Today's date is July 24th, 2013, time is now 0830 hours. I am at Volusia County Beach Safety Headquarters at 515 S. Atlantic Ave, Daytona Beach. Sir for the record can you state your name?

St. John: Officer Russell St. John.

Vanis: Ok, & what division do you work for? Or who do you work for?

St. John: Beach Safety Ocean Rescue.

Vanis: Ok. We're here to discuss Internal Affairs case # 2013-07-318, & sir you understand you're going to be providing a sworn witness statement in regards to this case?

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: Alright, would you raise your right hand for me? Do you swear & affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth & nothing but the truth so help you God?

St. John: I do.

Vanis: Ok. Sir, you're hereby advised that you're being interviewed as part of an official administrative investigation being conducted by the Volusia County Dept of Public Protection Internal Affairs Unit. You'll be asked questions specifically directed & narrowly related to the performance of your official duties, and/or fitness for continued employment. You're entitled to all the rights & privileges guaranteed by the laws and the constitution of this state & the

constitution of the United States, including the right not to be compelled to incriminate yourself. I am further advising you that if you refuse to testify or answer questions relating to the performance of your official duties, or the fitness for continued employment it will be considered an act of insubordination & a violation of the direct order given by a superior or competent authority. If you do answer neither your statements, nor any information or evidence that is gained by reason of said statements can be used against you in any subsequent criminal proceeding. These statements may be used against you in relation to divisional disciplinary actions. Do you understand that sir?

St. John: Yes I do.

Vanis: Do you have any questions regarding that?

St. John: Not yet.

Vanis: Ok. Sir, can you describe the relationship between you & Captain Snipes?

St. John: He's my Captain and, uh, coworker at Volusia County Beach Safety Ocean Rescue.

Vanis: Alright, by saying he's your captain, is he your direct supervisor? Does he do your evaluations, fix your timecard, any of that stuff?

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: Ok. Do you socialize outside of work?

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: Frequently? How long, how long have you been socializing?

St. John: Uh, infrequently for several years, I mean I've been at the department for 5 years so I've known him since then.

Vanis: Alright. Do you & Captain Snipes frequently exchange text messages?

St. John: Sure. I mean what's frequently?

Vanis: Work related. I mean, do you exchange text messages?

St. John: We exchange text messages, that's a better question, yes.

Vanis: Work related?

St. John: Sometimes.

Vanis: Personal?

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: Personal, socially related?

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: Did you receive a text message or a picture message from Captain Snipes on July 14th, 2013?

St. John: I'm sure I did, if you're asking me. I receive text messages from him regularly, I couldn't recall a specific date.

Vanis: If you'd like to look at your phone you're more than welcome.

St. John: What was the date?

Vanis: July 14th, 2013.

St. John: What was the date again?

Vanis: July 14th

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: Ok. What was the content of this message?

St. John: Umm, work related on my personal text with him & any other text that I got was possibly a group message.

Vanis: Ok.

St. John: Which was not directly from him, there were several people attached to it.

Vanis: Ok you said work related? You did receive a work related text from him that day?

St. John: Yeah, it was just about training. He was off that day.

Vanis: Can you tell me

St. John: July 14th

Vanis: July 14th?

St. John: Yeah.

Vanis: What was the

St. John: Just about training

Vanis: the message? What was it?

St. John: It was just about training.

Vanis: Please, please describe it.

St. John: Oh.

Vanis: Read it for me.

St. John: Oh. "I'm gonna come in & train at 11:30, see if you can join me."

Vanis: Referring to?

St. John: My training hour because I was working that day.

Vanis: You were working on the 14th?

St. John: Correct.

Vanis: Ok. And you said you received another group message involving him?

St. John: If that's what you're suggesting, yeah I don't have it.

Vanis: Ok well my records indicate that you did receive a group message from him.

St. John: Ok.

Vanis: Do you remember this message?

St. John: If it's the one that I read in the newspaper, yes.

Vanis: Ok, did you delete this message?

St. John: I always delete group messages.

Vanis: Ok.

St. John: Almost always delete group messages, especially when there's numbers in it that I don't know.

Vanis: Ok. What kind of phone do you have?

St. John: Uh, iPhone 5.

Vanis: Ok, so with it, just, I'm not clear on this, you delete it, will you receive any more, if that group message is getting updated will you still receive those or will, if you delete it

St. John: Yes. If, if I get additional group messages, a lot of times with the iPhone if it's not set to be off group messages, I'll get other peoples messages in that group message, yes.

Vanis: So, if any other messages were sent in this group message will you receive them?

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: And, did you

St. John: Again, if you're referring to the messages that I read about in the paper, yes.

Vanis: Yes, I believe we are.

St. John: Ok.

Vanis: But the first message involved a picture of Paula Dean holding a pie.

St. John: Correct.

Vanis: Does this sound correct to you?

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: Do you remember receiving that text message?

St. John: Yes.

Vanis: Ok. Do you remember who sent that message?

St. John: I mean I believe it was Captain Snipes, I believe it was, & that was the original text, again, it was a, it was a group thread with like 8 or 9 numbers in there.

Vanis: Ok. And did you recognize any of the numbers, or

St. John: I recognized very few of the numbers because almost none of them were programmed in my telephone.

Vanis: Ok, do you remember any of the other people that you did recognize?

St. John: Um, Captain Berard was the only other name that I can recall off the top of my head.

Vanis: Ok.

St. John: Then again I don't have that group message.

Vanis: Ok, because you said you already deleted it?

St. John: Yup.

Vanis: Ok. So as it, as that group message was getting updated you were deleting those as well?

St. John: Yeah, when the thread was over, because I don't think that group message lasted more than maybe an hour, I'm not sure I'm just guessing, the entire thread I deleted.

Vanis: Ok. So you think you were on duty when you were receiving these messages, because you said, you were saying you worked on the 14th?

St. John: I did work on the 14th, but I can't recall what time, I can't recall what time of the day that those text messages were sent. I mean I just don't recall.

Vanis: Ok.

St. John: But if you're saying that, that was the day, then I was work, I was working that day.

Vanis: When the, when the group messages started?

St. John: I was working the day of the group message, I don't know if I was working when I was receiving them.

Vanis: Ok.

St. John: I just don't recall.

Vanis: Ok, you don't remember if you were working at the time, but you remember working that day?

St. John: Yeah, exactly. I was working that day, I do remember that.

Vanis: Alright. Now you say you delete group messages as you get them, did you even look at them, or just delete them right away?

St. John: Um, I saw all the messages in that thread I imagine.

Vanis: Do you remember any of the other pictures?

St. John: They were like picture beams, with writing on them. It was whatever I read in the paper. I mean, those are the only ones that I recall.

Vanis: Alright, did you request to receive these messages from Captain Snipes?

St. John: Um, I couldn't tell you who I received all the messages from.

Vanis: Did you, did you request to get them?

St. John: Oh, did I request them? No.

Vanis: Ok. Did you, did you forward any of these pictures?

St. John: I didn't save any of them, or forward any pictures. I generally don't.

Vanis: Do you use your phone for work, for work related purposes at all?

St. John: Um only, well, yeah when you guys call me.

Vanis: Ok.

St. John: What do you mean?

Vanis: Well you said you were texting him back & forth about training that day so is it, that would be, that would

St. John: Oh he, he was off, & he asked, on his off day I imagine, because he was coming in to train if I would train with him so if you call that work related.

Vanis: Ok, do you use it to punch into Kronos?

St. John: Yes I do use it to punch into Kronos.

Vanis: Call the scheduling, call the scheduling, ask for days off?

St. John: Yes, this is, it's my only phone

Vanis: Ok.

St. John: Line of communication I guess.

Vanis: Have you spoken with Captain Snipes about this?

St. John: I have not.

Vanis: This case? Has he contacted you?

St. John: Uh, we texted the day that I, that I got to Michigan, so I was in Detroit & that was the last day that I had any text messages back & forth with him which was the day I got there, which was the 17th or the 18th & then I hadn't texted him again or had any conversation with him until I returned yesterday & it was just simply text messages.

Vanis: And what was, what were the content of those messages?

St. John: Uh, just to let him know that I was back in town, &, uh, I was wondering what he was up to, that was generally it. I didn't have any phone conversation, just text.

Vanis: He didn't bring up this case at all with you?

St. John: Nope, not at all.

Vanis: I'm gonna need you to show me those text messages.

St. John: Which ones?

Vanis: The ones from the 17th or the 18th, & the ones from when you got back from Michigan so I'm assuming that was yesterday?

...pause...

St. John: Ok, it's from here down.

Vanis: Alright, just so you know I'm going to look from the 14th on if you want to, if you want to come over here & watch me you're more than welcome to.

St. John: Well, what's the 14th?

Vanis: The 14th was the day this initial text was sent.

...pause... (inaudible)

Vanis: Alright and, you definitely deleted the group thread?

St. John: Yup.

Vanis: Can you show me your text message list from the 14th, that area, just so I can verify that.

St. John: I don't know if it goes by date like that. Yeah, I mean

Vanis: Here it is

St. John: Ok, ok, alright, what date was it?

Vanis: It was the 14th

St. John: 14th, & the 14th was a what?

Vanis: I believe it was a Sunday.

St. John: So here's all the date, here's the only text (inaudible)

Vanis: I don't need to see the actual text messages, just the

St. John: That's all the, all the 14th dates that I have, any of, any of the threads or any of that that I got that day.

Vanis: Ok.

Vanis: Alright. Did you, did you find any of the content of those, the pictures threads, offensive?

St. John: Me? No.

Vanis: Ok, did you report this content to any supervisors?

St. John: Nope.

Vanis: And, I was, I was gonna ask why but probably because you didn't find it offensive.

St. John: Correct.

Vanis: Did you ever send Captain Snipes a text, or call him on the phone & say you didn't think this something he should be sending out or anything like that?

St. John: No.

Vanis: Ok.

St. John: I mean I didn't send the message.

Vanis: No, that, that I know.

St. John: Ok, I don't feel that's my responsibility.

Vanis: Ok, fair enough. You have anything else you'd like to add?

St. John: Nope.

Vanis: Ok, from this point forward I'm directing you not to contact or speak to Captain Snipes about this, not to uh, have you spoken to Captain Berard about it?

St. John: Nope.

Vanis: What about Officer Texter?

St. John: No. I haven't talked to any of them.

Vanis: Ok, alright, well from this point forward, please don't talk about, don't talk about this case with any, any employees.

St. John: Ok.

Vanis: Because you are a witness so

St. John: Anything I have to talk about has already been written in the newspaper.

Vanis: And we'll leave it at that.

St. John: Easy enough.

Vanis: Ok, if you have nothing else to add we're going to go off the record.

St. John: No.

Vanis: Alright, the time is now 0848 hours & we'll be off the record.