

State won't prosecute officer Series: BRIEFLY

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TAMPA - The Tampa police officer who shot a man holding a phony gun was defending himself when he fired his weapon, according to a letter from the state attorney's office, which has closed the case. ``From the facts available to us, it is our opinion that Officer (Steven) Borden's action in using deadly force to defend himself was not criminal,`` according to the letter dated Wednesday from Assistant State Attorney Lee Atkinson. Borden shot Harold T. Darnell Jr. in a confrontation late Monday in front of Darnell's home on Wilder Avenue. Darnell, 38, was carrying a replica of a gun that appeared to be a .357-caliber Magnum handgun. When Darnell took the gun from his pocket and extended it toward the officer, Borden fired once. Darnell was released Wednesday from St. Joseph's Hospital, a hospital official said. Tampa police still are investigating.

Judge sentences killer to life

CLEARWATER - Paul Oppenheimer, the Pinellas Park youth who killed his friend so he could take her car, was sentenced Thursday to life in prison. Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Judge Crockett Farnell also ordered Oppenheimer to serve another five and half years in prison on his armed robbery conviction. Oppenheimer, 20, will have to serve at least 28 years of his sentence before he can be considered for release. A jury convicted him in May of fatally shooting 19-year-old Stacy Lynn Taylor and stealing her jewelry and Pontiac Firebird. Miss Taylor was last seen alive leaving her Pinellas Park apartment with Oppenheimer on June 15, 1987. A month later her body was found in a ditch, and Oppenheimer was discovered driving her car.

Busch Gardens to review order

TAMPA - Busch Gardens officials said Thursday that they plan to review a federal safety order citing the park for serious safety violations in the February death of an elephant handler. Park spokeswoman Glenda Gilmore said general manager Joseph Fincher and park attorneys will respond to the citation after the review. The park has until July 11 to contest the order or request a hearing with the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Last week, the federal agency fined the park \$490 for safety violations after a two-month investigation. The elephant's owner, Roman Schmitt, was cited for the same violations and fined \$420.

Carriage operator told to leave

ST. PETERSBURG - A horse-and-carriage operation was ordered off city streets Thursday after officials decided its owner was not properly caring for his animals. The horses likely will be ``sold and sent to butcher,`` said Cowford Carriage Service owner Mickey Wells. Downtown development manager Kevin M. Dunn said he made the decision after a veterinarian reported that at least one of Wells' horses was infested with worms. Wells, however, said he has spent \$85,000 on his operation and insists he treats his horses well. Dunn said he plans to find a company to replace Wells' business. Workers revive drowning girl

ST. PETERSBURG - Three city recreation workers revived a 5-year-old girl who had jumped into water over her head Thursday at the Wildwood community pool, city fire officials said. Lawanda Jones was under water for about three minutes. City employees Louis Rowe, Anthony Bryant and Edgar Scrivens used cardiopulmonary resuscitation to revive Lawanda before paramedics arrived at the pool, 2650 10th Ave. S. The child was in fair condition Thursday night at All Children's Hospital. Sunshine Skyway lanes closed

ST. PETERSBURG - The southbound lanes of the Sunshine Skyway were closed for about an hour Thursday night because of a problem in a drawbridge on the Skyway approach. Southbound motorists had to turn around between 9:10 p.m. and 10 p.m. until a mechanic repaired the problem, police said.

Straight Inc. appeals limit

PINELLAS PARK - Officials with Straight Inc., a Pinellas Park drug and alcohol treatment program, have appealed the state's decision to limit to three months the center's operating license, which is normally renewed for a year. The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) won't grant the full year renewal until health inspectors examine the program Aug. 22 to determine whether recommended changes have been made, according to a report sent to Straight last week. The HRS report cited a lack of client privacy, improper restraining methods and inadequately maintained records. Straight officials say the report is wrong. Body discovered in Sarasota Bay

BRADENTON - The body of a Manatee County man was found floating near a dock Thursday in Sarasota Bay, the Sheriff's Department said. The body was removed from the water near the A.P. Bell Fish Co. in the 4600 block of 124th Street W in Bradenton, a Sheriff's Department spokesman said. Foul play apparently wasn't involved. The name of the man, in his 20s, was being withheld pending notification of relatives.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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