



**Rick Staly, Sheriff**

# **FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

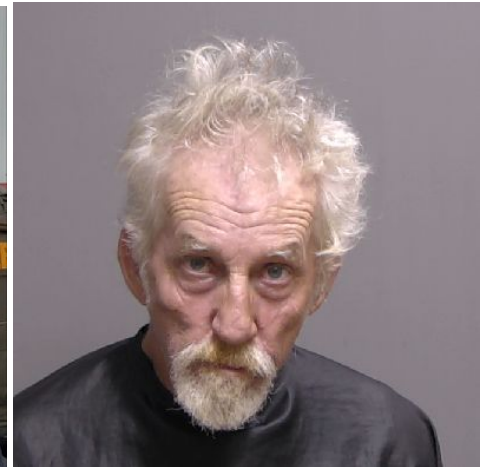
*"An honor to serve, a duty to protect."*

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**Date:** October 25, 2021  
**Prepared by:** Melissa Morreale  
**Phone and Email:** 386-529-4086; [mmorreale@flaglersheriff.com](mailto:mmorreale@flaglersheriff.com)  
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### **Traffic Stop Leads to Recovery of Grenade and Drugs**

On Monday, October 25, 2021, the Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) conducted a traffic stop on County Road 305 in Bunnell on a Dodge pickup truck with an expired tag and a registered owner whose driver's license expired in 2019. The driver was identified as Louis Branson (DOB: 6/5/1956).



*L: The grenade being rendered safe by SJCSO EOD R: Branson during his jail booking.*

Deputies made contact with Branson and asked him to provide his driver's license. He advised there was an issue with his license and he needed to clear it up with Georgia. Upon questioning it was determined Branson was aware that his license was expired for more than six months and he was arrested without incident.

An inventory search of his vehicle was conducted and a glass pipe was found in the driver's side door and another pipe in a storage compartment. Both pipes had burn marks with residue believed to be narcotics. Also found was a device appearing to be a grenade in the vehicle. Branson stated he had cleaned out a veteran's home and found the grenade and decided to keep it. He was unaware if it was

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active or not.

FCSO closed SR 305 between SR 100 West and CR 302 and diverted traffic to ensure the safety of the community. FCSO requested assistance from the St. John's County (SJCSO) Explosive Ordinance Disposal (EOD) to determine if it was a real grenade or a prop replica. SJCSO responded and after conducting an investigation, including an x-ray of the device, it was believed to be a real grenade based on the x-ray revealing its internal mechanisms. The grenade was removed from the vehicle and safely detonated by SJCSO EOD experts at a nearby county-owned facility.

Branson has a criminal history in both Florida and Georgia. He's been previously charged with Burglary, Possession of Sea Oats, Trespassing, Rape, and Burglary of an Occupied Dwelling, Armed Robbery, Possession of Marijuana, Forgery, Possession of Drug Equipment, Grand Theft, Battery, Possession of Cocaine, Driving While License Suspended, and Giving False Name to Law enforcement.

"Here's a prime example of how deputies never know what a traffic stop may turn into," Sheriff Rick Staly said. "This guy was pulled over because his tag and license were expired, and then deputies found drugs and a grenade in his vehicle. This idiot is lucky he did not blow himself or his truck up. Carrying around an explosive device is very dangerous and illegal. I'm proud of how deputies utilized their training to close the area to ensure everyone stayed safe and took this situation seriously."

Branson was arrested for Driving with an Expired License for More than Six Months and Possession of Drug Paraphernalia and booked into the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility. The investigation is continuing on the grenade and additional charges are possible.

Watch the detonation of the grenade by SJCSO EOD here: <https://youtu.be/oPdv-qWta00>

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