



Rick Staly, Sheriff

FLAGLER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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

NEWS RELEASE

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Prepared by: Brittany Kershaw

Phone and Email: (386) 586-2637; bkershaw@flaglersheriff.com

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Man Arrested for Robbery, Kidnapping and Beating Person Accused of Stealing Marijuana

The Flagler County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) responded to the Circle K gas station at 5484 North Ocean Shore Boulevard just before 3:30 a.m. Wednesday morning after reports that someone came to the business after being beaten up.

Deputies made contact with the victim, 21-year-old Joshua Hiatt, who had a laceration to his eye, a lump on the back of his head, and red marks and scratches on his neck and wrist. Hiatt told deputies that he was hanging out with people at 3 Hernandez Avenue, one of whom began accusing Hiatt of stealing his marijuana. Hiatt then told deputies that the suspect, identified as Peter Palazzotto (DOB 9/15/1972) of 3 Hernandez Avenue, forcibly removed all of Hiatt's clothing in search of the missing marijuana, which was not located.

Hiatt attempted to leave the residence but Palazzotto grabbed a gray surfboard leash, put Hiatt in a "hog tie" position on the kitchen floor, and wrapped the gray surfboard leash around his neck constricting his airflow. Palazzotto then tied the surfboard leash, which was wrapped around Hiatt's neck, to his hands and feet putting Hiatt in a completely immobilizing position.

While Hiatt was "hog tied" on the kitchen floor, Palazzotto repeatedly punched and kicked Hiatt in the back of the head. Hiatt told deputies that after being beaten, Palazzotto released him from the restraints. Once Hiatt was released, Palazzotto grabbed Hiatt's blue iPhone X and his brown wallet containing \$300.00 cash and told Hiatt to leave.

Deputies attempted to make contact with Palazzotto at 3 Hernandez Avenue but he initially would not speak with deputies. A short time later, after deputies interviewed other witnesses, Palazzotto threw a blue iPhone out of the front door near where deputies were standing. A passerby located Hiatt's wallet on the street and returned it to deputies. It was empty.

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386-437-4116 – Fax 386-586-4820

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"This victim was lucky to walk away with his life," Sheriff Rick Staly said. "Thankfully he was able to get to a safe place and the store clerk called us immediately. This is a reminder of the dangers when you associate with others in the illegal drug world. Not much good happens at 3:30 in the morning when drugs and alcohol are involved."

Palazzotto was taken into custody and arrested. He is charged with Kidnapping, Battery by Strangulation, Grand Theft, and Robbery. He will be booked into the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility and held without bond pending a hearing by a judge.

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