



NEWS RELEASE

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CASE UPDATE: Kidnapping, Other Charges Added Against Man who was Arrested and Found with Missing Juvenile During Traffic Stop

"See Something, Say Something" Results in Rescue of 11-Year-Old from Grasp of Sex Offender

BUNNELL, Fla. — Following an extensive investigation led by the Flagler County Sheriff's Office Major Case Unit, additional charges have been added — including kidnapping and child abuse — against Darnell Hairston, a registered sexual offender who was found travelling in a vehicle with a juvenile who had been previously reported missing.

Deputies rescued the missing juvenile following a traffic stop on Dec. 31, 2025, after a caller reported to the Flagler County Emergency Communications Center they had seen Hairston, who they knew to be a sex offender, travelling with two juvenile passengers. The caller further told dispatchers they knew one of the juveniles was reported missing in St. Johns County.

During the traffic stop and after deputies had separated Hairston and each of the juveniles, one of the juveniles stated to a deputy that they had been kidnapped, were not safe, and believed they would be killed if deputies did not intervene. The 11-year-old victim was clearly traumatized and in fear. The deputy quickly secured the child in the safety of their patrol vehicle and went to detain Hairston, but he tried to flee on foot. Hairston was arrested shortly after for resisting an officer with violence and attempting to deprive a law enforcement officer of their firearm.

Following Hairston's arrest, deputies confirmed the juvenile had been reported missing three days earlier and he was transported to a local hospital for medical treatment. The FCSO Major Case Unit responded to interview the child.

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During the interview, the child stated he had been lured to a wooded campsite in Flagler Estates where Hairston choked him until he lost consciousness. After regaining consciousness, the child told detectives he was threatened with a knife and a firearm, tied up with shoelaces and an extension cord, and had duct tape placed over his mouth. The child also told detectives that Hairston held him at the campsite for multiple days and made him travel on the floorboard of his truck covered by a blanket.

With assistance from the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office and the FCSO Crime Scene Investigations Unit, detectives conducted search warrants on Hairston's vehicle, his residence in Hastings, and the campsite. Across the three locations, detectives recovered multiple items, including duct tape, video surveillance equipment, and weapons consistent with the child's statements.

Detectives from both FCSO and SJSO conducted extensive interviews with Hairston. During the interview, detectives determined that Hairston knew the child was missing and endangered, but he could not explain any reason for keeping the child from his parents when he knew that law enforcement was actively searching for him.

On Jan. 2, detectives obtained an arrest warrant for Hairston for kidnapping of a child under 13, aggravated child abuse, battery by strangulation, and robbery with a deadly weapon. Detectives served the warrant at the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility, where Hairston was already being held on a \$125,000 bond for the prior arrest. He is now being held without bond.



Darnell Hairston (Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility mug shot)

"Clearly, thanks to 'see something, say something' and our deputies recognizing the victim was very afraid, we rescued a missing child who was in fear Hairston had planned to kill him," said Sheriff Rick Staly. "In the hours after Hairston was initially arrested, our team put in a tremendous amount of effort on this investigation — working throughout the day, night, and well into the early hours of New Year's Day — as they followed every lead, processed multiple crime scenes, and conducted interviews to make sure this child was protected and this pervert would be arrested for the crimes he committed. I commend everyone involved, starting with the caller who 'saw something, said something;' our deputies, detectives, analysts, and CSIs; and our partners at the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office and

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State Attorney's Office who worked closely with us on a very fast-moving case to make sure this pervert will face justice and hopefully serve the rest of his life in prison."

The investigation remains active and ongoing. The other juvenile, Junior Bishop, who was arrested on multiple charges after he fled from the traffic stop by stealing Hairston's vehicle, is possibly a co-conspirator in the kidnapping with Hairston. Bishop may be facing additional charges once the investigation is concluded. One additional charge for grand theft of a motor vehicle was added since his initial arrest after detectives determined he did not have Hairston's permission to take his vehicle. Bishop is currently in the custody of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.

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'See Something, Say Something' Leads to Two Arrests, Missing Child Recovered Following Driver Fleeing Traffic Stop

BUNNELL, Fla. — The Flagler County Sheriff's Office has made two arrests and recovered a missing juvenile following a traffic stop that turned into a vehicle apprehension through western Flagler County.

On the morning of Dec. 31, deputies conducted a traffic stop on a white Ford F150 on U.S. Highway 1 near Whiteview Drive after a caller "saw something, said something" when they witnessed suspicious activity. During the traffic stop, deputies contacted the driver, identified as Darnell Hairston, 60, of Hastings, and two juvenile passengers. Deputies asked the occupants to exit the vehicle.

While speaking with the three occupants, deputies determined one of the juvenile passengers had been reported missing in St. Johns County. Deputies recovered the missing juvenile and placed them in a patrol vehicle while the investigation continued.

As deputies were gathering further information, Hairston suddenly fled, running and tripping into the roadway. After a brief struggle, in which Hairston attempted to grab a deputy's gun, deputies quickly apprehended him. Deputies arrested Hairston for resisting an officer with violence and attempting to deprive a law enforcement officer of their firearm.

While deputies were arresting Hairston, the other juvenile, whom deputies had identified as Junior Bishop, 15, of Hastings, entered the truck and fled, nearly hitting a deputy in the roadway.

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Deputies pursued Bishop southbound along U.S. 1, then westbound along State Road 100. As the vehicle apprehension neared the Putnam County line, a deputy passed Bishop on the left and got in front of his vehicle in an attempt to stop him. Bishop then briefly entered the eastbound lane into oncoming traffic, then re-entered the westbound lane and purposely rammed into the deputy's patrol vehicle, causing both vehicles to crash into the wood line and Bishop's vehicle to roll over.

After Bishop exited the vehicle, deputies quickly apprehended him. Deputies arrested Bishop for aggravated fleeing and eluding, aggravated battery on a law enforcement officer, reckless driving, driving without a license, and resisting an officer without violence.

During the vehicle apprehension, a second deputy lost control of his patrol vehicle and struck an automotive repair building in Bunnell.

Two deputies received minor injuries during this incident. Both were treated at AdventHealth Palm Coast and released. Bishop was also evaluated by medical personnel and was not injured.

Deputies transported Hairston and Bishop to the Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility, where they are currently being processed. Hairston is being held without bond until first appearance, while Bishop will be turned over to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice after being booked.



Darnell Hairston (Florida Department of Corrections) and Junior Bishop (Sheriff Perry Hall Inmate Detention Facility mug shot)

Hairston is a registered sexual offender and was released from the Florida Department of Corrections in 2009, where he had been serving a 12-year sentence for three counts of false imprisonment. He has a lengthy arrest history, including previous arrests for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, burglary with assault or battery, cruelty toward wife, disorderly intoxication, lewd or lascivious offenses committed upon a child, property damage, and sexual battery.

"This was a very suspicious incident that is still under investigation by our detectives, but I am thankful that nobody was seriously hurt and that we were able to recover a missing child from this pervert's grasp," said Sheriff Rick Staly. "I also do not understand why a pervert who was

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sentenced to 12 years in prison in 2004 was released after only five years in 2009. Clearly, he has not learned anything!"

The investigation is still ongoing, including the relationship between Hairston, Bishop, and the missing juvenile.

View [footage](#) from the arrests and vehicle apprehension.

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