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VVD: Sheriff weighs suspension of more deputies

Editor's Note: This is the second in the series of stories related to the sex scandal in Victorville Sheriff's Department 25 years ago. This story ran in the [Daily Press](#) on February 21, 1986. Note how similar former Sheriff Tidwell's response to this scandal is to Sheriff Hoops' response to the POST scandal. Also of interest is that the crime that started this whole thing occurred on February 14. The case was expected to be submitted to the district attorney just 11 days later. Compare that to the POST scandal.

Tidwell says 2 could be sent home today

By Elizabeth Chambers

Daily Press Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO—At least two more of the Victorville station's 43 street deputies will probably be suspended today by county Sheriff Floyd Tidwell, as an investigation into alleged sexual misconduct continues.

So far, three deputies are under administrative leave, stripped of their badges and guns, and two have resigned. Tidwell said this morning he anticipates “two more suspensions today, and possibly a third.”

The sheriff added that he is “devastated” by the events leading to his investigation of charges that the deputies had sexual relations with an Explorer Scout from the Victorville station before she turned 18 years of age, and that one raped her Feb. 14.

Robert M. Swindle, 31, a deputy since 1978, and James B. Dawson, 39, who joined the department in 1981, resigned during the course of the investigation, which began Sunday after the woman told authorities about the incidents.

Swindle and Dawson are not being investigated in connection with the rape, but reportedly were involved with the woman when she was still a minor.

Dawson was the first person to be honored in the Victorville sheriff's station “Employee of the Month” program in August of last year. He was selected for making 10 arrests and stopping a large number of drivers who were under the influence of alcohol. During the four years he's been with the Victorville station, Dawson has worked patrol, the jail, and criminal investigation.

Swindle, who had been assigned to the Victorville station since July 1979, recently was demoted one step in the rank of deputy as a result of “inferior work performance,” Tidwell said.

“It is illegal for me to release the names of the other deputies— the ones who are under investigation — because of the Peace Officer's Bill of Rights,” Tidwell said.

He added that the investigation is still going strong. “We have lots of interviews yet to do, and our people worked most of the night last night. We anticipate more suspensions today,” the sheriff added.

Deputies suspended with pay include the one accused of raping the woman after a wedding and reception Feb. 14. According to a source close to the investigation, the deputy took the woman to a motel near the Victorville Bob's Big Boy, and raped her by using intimidation and threats.

“He is innocent until proven guilty,” Tidwell said, “but he is taken off the job until we get to the bottom of this.”

The sheriff added, “I'm absolutely devastated by this. I can't understand why this took place. I hope this doesn't taint the Explorer

Scout program, which is an excellent one, or the 895 other good deputies working very hard to serve the county properly.”

Tidwell said that in his 34 years on the job, he can only remember one other such instance, and that occurred 25 years ago. “This type of thing is few and far between; very isolated. I hope because of the mistakes of a few bad apples have made, it doesn’t taint the rest of the departmnet in the public’s eye. We have some exceptional officers; some excellent officers,” he added.

The administrative end of the investigation is “running very parallel” to the criminal end, Tidwell said. The administrative portion should be completed by Tuesday, and the criminal portion by Monday.

At that point, the package will be presented to the district attorney’s office for a decision on whether or not to prosecute anyone involved.

The Explorer Scout program is part of a sheriff’s project which gives young men and women from 15 to 20 years of age a head start on careers in law enforcement.

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