

Officer commits suicide after admitting molestation

[Jerry Mitchell](#)

Tishomingo Police Officer Russ Robinson admitted to authorities he had molested minors before committing suicide. Authorities are continuing to investigate.

Tishomingo Police Officer Russ Robinson committed suicide March 24 after admitting to authorities he had molested minors.

His admission came after the Alcorn County Sheriff's Department, with assistance from the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation, questioned the 53-year-old officer about allegations he molested a 17-year-old boy after flashing his headlights to get the teen to pull over.

A day after that questioning, Robinson was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound inside his home in the Crossroads Community near Iuka.

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It was not the first time molestation allegations had arisen against Robinson, but it was the first time authorities took action to address them.

Several years earlier, Robinson, a deputy then for Tishomingo County, left his part-time job at Brooks Grocery in Iuka following another such accusation.

Asked if Robinson had been fired, owner Davis Brooks replied, "I don't want to comment. That's private information."

Asked if Robinson had been fired because he allegedly molested a young male there, Brooks replied, "I told you before, that's private information."

Robinson left the Tishomingo County Sheriff's Department after a new sheriff was elected in 2015 and began working for the Tishomingo Police Department.

Tishomingo Police Chief Mike Kemp said he was aware that authorities on March 23 were questioning Robinson about molestation allegations.

"(The allegations of molestation) happened in another county," Kemp said. "I knew he wasn't charged."

He said Robinson was still working for the police department at the time of his death.

Asked about Brooks Grocery, Kemp said Robinson was never fired from there.

"There were some innuendoes," Kemp said. "We determined that he resigned from Brooks Grocery. I don't think there was any molesting. Certainly no charges were made."

The rumor, Kemp said, was that Robinson had said something inappropriate.

"Nobody ever contacted us or said anything," he said. "I had heard the rumor, but until I had concrete information, there was nothing I could do."

Asked if he questioned Robinson about this, Kemp said no.

He explained that he was never approached by anyone with any information.

But Kemp was working at the sheriff's department several years ago with Robinson and then-narcotics officer Jeff Palmer.

Palmer's estranged wife, Leigh, recalled him coming home several years ago and talking about a surveillance video from Brooks Grocery, which supposedly showed molestation by Robinson.

She said he worried this matter could "come back and bite them" since no criminal action was taken against Robinson.

Palmer denied all of this, saying it was a lie and that his wife has admitted under oath to lying in the past when she was mad.

Documents show Jeff Palmer's veracity was called into question when he failed a polygraph test in which he was asked about using drug buy money for personal use.

Palmer, who is no longer in law enforcement, had been suspended from the state Bureau of Narcotics after he was accused of falsifying and forging vouchers "for the purchase of information and evidence." A 2014 letter from the bureau's lawyer concluded no money was "actually diverted by Palmer. ... There was no definitive determination as to whether Palmer financially benefitted."

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Still at the request of prosecutors in Tishomingo County, judges threw out dozens of Palmer's drug cases after problems with his cases were revealed.

Asked if he knew about the molestation allegations concerning Robinson, Palmer replied, "I did not participate in any part of anything pertaining to Russ."

Under Mississippi law, failure by law enforcement to report allegations of suspected child abuse to the state Department of Human Services is a misdemeanor.

Regarding the more recent allegation against Robinson, investigators discovered the following: A teen had stopped at Dollar General in the small town of Glen to get something for school when Robinson came into the parking lot.

When the teen drove away in his car, Robinson followed him in an unmarked car and flashed his headlights.

The teen pulled his car over into the median, and Robinson got out of his car and began speaking to the teen.

The teen told authorities that Robinson remarked that he had had sex with two boys before reaching down and putting his hand on the teen's groin.

The teen told authorities that he told Robinson that he didn't swing that way.

When the teen arrived home, he told his parents, who contacted authorities.

The teen told the Alcorn County Sheriff's Department what happened, and Robinson admitted to authorities that he had touched the teen as well as had molested other minors.

Under Mississippi law, a probable cause hearing must be held before charging a law enforcement officer with a crime "in the performance of official duties ... The purpose of the hearing shall be to determine if adequate probable cause exists for the issuance of a warrant."

The hearing never took place. Robinson committed suicide.

Despite his death, authorities are continuing to investigate, seizing the computer that Robinson used and interviewing Brooks, who confirmed that Robinson had molested a young male at the store and that he had turned over his store's surveillance video of what happened to the sheriff's office.

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