

NEWS RELEASE



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GRAND JURY INDICTS DIANA HOFFMAN FOR TROOPER'S DEATH

Today, a Monmouth County Grand Jury returned an indictment against Diana Hoffman, 30, of Almonesson Road, Blackwood, New Jersey for her role in the death of New Jersey State Police Trooper Marc Castellano on June 6, 2010. The Grand Jury indicted Hoffman on the following counts: Eluding, a second degree crime; False Public Alarms, a first degree crime; Hindering her own Apprehension, a third degree crime; False Reports to Law Enforcement – incriminating another, a 4th degree crime; and three counts of Possession of a Controlled Dangerous Substance, including, Cocaine, Heroin, and Chlorazepan, all third degree crimes.

Hoffman was arrested by members of the New Jersey State Police for most of these crimes on June 6, 2010. The charge of False Public Alarms was added the next day, Monday, June 7, 2010 and her total bail was set at 1.25 million dollars by Superior Court Judges Paul A. Kapalko and Thomas F. Scully, the Presiding Criminal Judge. She was lodged in the Monmouth County Correctional Institution in lieu of bail. Her bail was reduced to 1.1 million dollars in a subsequent bail reduction hearing before Judge Scully on September 17, 2010. Hoffman remains in custody today.

The case stems from events which unfolded in the morning hours of Sunday, June 6, 2010. Hoffman had stopped her car on the shoulder of the northbound lanes of the Garden State Parkway when a State Trooper drove toward her to render assistance. Hoffman drove away at a high rate of speed and when the Trooper activated his lights in an attempt to pull her over she accelerated to speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour while weaving in and out of traffic and almost losing control of her vehicle more than once. Hoffman left the parkway at Exit 98 and continued east on Route 138 where she again reached speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour and ran a red light. The pursuit was terminated by the State Police due to the danger posed by Hoffman's driving.

Hoffman's car was later spotted by a Howell Township Police Officer in Howell and another State Trooper in Freehold Township. Both times she accelerated away from the officers

at a high rate of speed despite the fact that neither officer pursued her or activated his lights or siren. Her car was eventually located stopped near a ramp to Route 195 in Howell Township by an off-duty State Police Sergeant. He activated the lights of his unmarked car and pulled near her car. Hoffman was outside of her car at that time and standing near its front. She immediately ran away.

She was eventually located in the wood-line near the highway by State Troopers and Howell Township police officers. As she was taken into custody, she claimed to have been forced to drive erratically and elude police by a man that held her at gunpoint in her car. Hoffman identified the gunman as a specific individual to police.

This information was disseminated and law enforcement personnel from the New Jersey State Police, the Howell Township Police, the Wall Township Police, the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office, the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office and the Monmouth County Emergency Response Team responded to that location along with many other officers from various municipal, county and federal agencies in Monmouth and Ocean Counties. Specialized units from the State Police; the Aviation and Tactical Emergency and Mission Specialist (T.E.A.M.S.) units also responded and participated in a search of that area for the armed man described by Hoffman. The T.E.A.M.S. unit set up a perimeter and instituted a systematic search of the area by Tactical Officers from the T.E.A.M.S. unit and the Monmouth County Emergency Response Team (M.O.C.E.R.T.) along with multiple canine units from many area departments.

It should be noted that the T.E.A.M.S. unit and M.O.C.E.R.T. members are police officers trained in use of special weapons and tactics. The T.E.A.M.S. unit is part of the State Police and troopers assigned to it, perform those duties full-time. The M.O.C.E.R.T. team is comprised of members of municipal police departments who are specially trained and participate as part of the team in addition to their regular law enforcement duties.

Among those responding to the report from Hoffman was New Jersey State Trooper Marc K. Castellano. Tpr. Castellano was participating in a training exercise that morning at Freehold Raceway Mall with other member of his Tactical Patrol Unit, the T.E.A.M.S. unit, M.O.C.E.R.T. and the Freehold Township Police Department. Upon the apprehension of Hoffman and her reporting of the gunman, those State Police members participating in the training exercise moved toward Route 195 to participate in the search.

Tpr. Castellano was assigned to a perimeter location on the shoulder of the westbound lanes of Route 195 between Exits 31A and 31B. His car was parked on the grass of the shoulder of the highway and he was on-foot. While manning his post in search of the gunman, along with other officers from various agencies, he was struck by a passing motorist. Despite being flown to the Jersey Shore University Medical Center Trauma Unit by a State Police Helicopter participating in the search for the gunman; he later succumbed to his injuries.

An investigation into the collision conducted by the State Police led to Motor Vehicle summonses being issued to the driver of the car. However, the same investigation found that criminal charges against the driver were not warranted.

The investigation of Hoffman's self-reported victimization revealed that there was never any gunman forcing her to commit the actions leading to her apprehension. The person she

identified as being the gunman was later located in the City of Camden. This revelation led to charges being brought against Hoffman for Eluding and other crimes. Tpr. Castellano's death led to her being charged with the False Public Alarm charge wherein the law holds her strictly liable for his death where she initiated the false report that led to the police response and the Trooper's death even though she did not directly cause his death.

If convicted of the first degree False Public Alarm charge, Hoffman faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in State Prison. If convicted of the second degree Eluding Offense, Hoffman faces a maximum of 10 years in State Prison. If convicted of any of the third degree offenses, Hoffman faces a maximum of 5 years in State Prison. If convicted of the fourth degree offense, Hoffman faces a maximum of 18 months in State Prison.

The next court proceeding will be an arraignment which is the formal presentation of the Indictment to the defendant. The arraignment will be scheduled within the next 45 days before the Honorable Thomas F. Scully, to whom the case has been assigned.

The case is assigned to Executive Assistant Prosecutor Richard E. Incremona and Assistant Prosecutor Marc C. LeMieux.

Despite these charges, every defendant is presumed innocent, unless and until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, following a trial at which the defendant has all of the trial rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and state law.

Released: November 17, 2010