

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE SIXTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
IN AND FOR PINELLAS COUNTY, FLORIDA

Case Number: 22-09348CFANO

STATE OF FLORIDA,

Plaintiff,

VS.

JUAN ARIEL MOLINA-SALLES,

Defendant.

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DEPOSITION OF: NELSON DELEON  
TAKEN BY: Counsel for the Defendant  
DATE: March 28, 2024  
TIME: 1:00 p.m. - 1:25 p.m.  
PLACE: ZOOM videoconference  
REPORTED BY: Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR  
Notary Public, State of FL

Pages 1 - 22

## ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE APPEARANCES

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INDEX

NELSON DELEON	PAGE:
Examination by Ms. Blaquiere.....	4
Certificate of Oath.....	20
Errata/Signature Page.....	21
Certificate of Reporter.....	22

EXHIBITS

(No exhibits were marked for identification.)

1 WHEREUPON,

2 CORPORAL NELSON DELEON

3 (the deponent herein, being first duly sworn, was examined  
4 and testified as follows:)

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY MS. BLAQUIERE:

7 Q Hi, Corporal. My name is Nichole Blaquiére, and  
8 with Maria DeLiberato, who is not here today, we represent  
9 Juan Molina-Salles. Present also is Mr. Nathan  
10 Vonderheide with the State.

11 A Yeah.

12 Q Just some preliminary questions. Can you tell  
13 us your background and experience in law enforcement,  
14 please.

15 A I'm with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office.  
16 I'm going on 25 years. I've been in robbery/homicide for  
17 approximately going on eight years. I was in narcotics  
18 for eleven, community policing. So I've been in  
19 investigations since '04.

20 Q And in that lengthy period of time, have you had  
21 any complaints sustained?

22 A No.

23 Q I see a few supplements in this case, 66 through  
24 71 that you authored. Is that right?

25 A That's correct.

1 Q Were there any others that I missed?

2 A It was -- yeah, 66 through 71, and then there  
3 was Supplement No. 125.

4 Q Okay. So can you -- have you had a chance to  
5 review your supplements that you authored for today's  
6 deposition?

7 A Yes. I reviewed the transcription that's in the  
8 narrative, yes.

9 Q If you need to refer to any of your reports for  
10 today, just let us know if you are going to refer to your  
11 report to find an answer. Okay?

12 A Yes.

13 Q All right. Can you please tell me about your  
14 involvement in this case?

15 A I just initially responded out, and then I was  
16 assigned and spoke to paramedics and some of the workers  
17 that were on scene.

18 Q Okay. When did you arrive on scene? Do you  
19 recall?

20 A I can't tell you exactly. I can't give you the  
21 exact time.

22 Q Okay. When you arrived on scene, where did you  
23 first arrive?

24 A Well, I parked up on the interstate that was  
25 blocked. There was a lot of cruisers there, and people

1 were there. I just parked on the interstate.

2 Q Okay. Do you know about how far away you were  
3 from where --

4 A I can't recall.

5 Q You can't recall?

6 A I can't recall the exact spot where I parked. I  
7 know I got out and had to walk towards the area.

8 Q Okay. Was Deputy Hartwick's body still at the  
9 scene when you arrived?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Did you --

12 A Did I go up to his body? Is that what you  
13 wanted to ask me?

14 Q Yes.

15 A No. I wasn't right up to his body, but I could  
16 see it.

17 Q It looks like you interviewed Lieutenant  
18 Deschryver, David Deschryver in this case with the  
19 St. Pete Fire Department?

20 A Yes.

21 Q And he was in charge of one of the fire  
22 department trucks. Is that what he explained to you?

23 A Yes.

24 Q And they were the first on scene that day?

25 A Yes.

1 Q And did Deschryver describe to you that Deputy  
2 Hartwick was lifeless when he arrived?

3 A He did say he was facedown. There was blood  
4 towards, if I'm not mistaken -- I'm just going by just my  
5 memory. The transcripts are exactly what he said, so I  
6 don't want you to lock me in to something. He was face --  
7 I believe he was facedown, and they did hook up the AED on  
8 him.

9 Q I'll get there. You're a little ahead of me.  
10 You're doing great. You're doing great. I was just going  
11 to make it shorter for you.

12 A Oh, okay. That would be perfect.

13 Q Did Lieutenant Deschryver have any trouble  
14 answering any of your questions?

15 A No.

16 Q Did he answer all of your questions?

17 A Yes.

18 Q Was there anything of note about Lieutenant  
19 Deschryver's interview that you had with him that night?

20 A Say that again. I'm sorry, let me turn this up.

21 Q Was there anything of note, out of the ordinary  
22 about Lieutenant Deschryver's interview that you had with  
23 him that night?

24 A No. Not that I can recall.

25 Q And then your next supplement, 68, references an

1 interview with EMT Benjamin Wendell with the St. Pete Fire  
2 Department?

3 A Yes.

4 Q He let -- same questions about his interview  
5 with you, was he able to answer all of your questions?

6 A Yes.

7 Q was there anything of note about Officer  
8 Wendell's interview that you had with him that night?

9 A Say that again. Like anything --

10 Q out of the ordinary.

11 A Oh, no.

12 Q Okay. And I think on page 7 of 10 in that  
13 supplement, Wendell advised you there was no pulse for  
14 Deputy Hartwick when they checked. Is that --

15 A My pages are not exactly like yours. Yeah.  
16 Yeah, he said there was no pulse. He already had the  
17 AED -- I asked him did he have a pulse, and he said no.  
18 No pulse.

19 Q Maybe a few questions above that in the  
20 transcript of the interview, Mr. Wendell was referencing a  
21 key-up noise.

22 A Yeah.

23 Q Do you know what that is? What's that in  
24 reference to?

25 A A key-up?



1 Q Yeah.

2 A Like for the radio.

3 Q Okay. That's what I was wondering.

4 A without actually listening to the audio, but a  
5 key-up is, you know, the radio.

6 Q Okay. Great. And then your next supplement,  
7 69, references your interview with EMT Christopher Oliver  
8 with St. Pete Fire Department.

9 A Uh-huh. Yes, ma'am.

10 Q Was Mr. Oliver about able to answer all of your  
11 questions that night?

12 A Yes.

13 Q He didn't have any trouble with any of the  
14 questions?

15 A No.

16 Q And it was actually Mr. Oliver that is the one  
17 who hooked up Deputy Hartwick to the AED machine, right?

18 A Yeah. I would have to --

19 Q Take a second.

20 A The AED I got -- he actually got it to the body  
21 first, turned him over. Flipped him up, yes.

22 Q And the AED did not advise to shock Deputy  
23 Hartwick?

24 A Yes.

25 Q Because Deputy Hartwick didn't have a pulse. Is

1 that what he explained?

2 A Yes. That's also what the Lieutenant explained  
3 as well, that if you don't have a pulse -- I'm not a  
4 paramedic or anything, but it would tell you whether to  
5 shock, stand by or whatever.

6 Q And then I think you also interview Cinthia  
7 Melissa Gomez in Supplement 70?

8 A Yes.

9 Q Can you tell me -- her alias was Nicole Denabria  
10 Iyala (phonetic). Is that right?

11 A Correct. That's the name she gave me, yes.

12 Q Did she eventually tell you her name was Cinthia  
13 Gomez, or did somebody else tell you that?

14 A I believe I ended up getting that info from the  
15 other detective, Corporal Syers or somebody. I can't  
16 recall exactly, but we ended up getting her real name.

17 Q Did she ever -- did Cinthia ever admit to you  
18 that her real name was Cinthia Melissa Gomez?

19 A No, I don't recall that.

20 Q Okay. Did she seem to have the cognitive  
21 ability to answer all of your questions?

22 A Yes. She answered all the questions I had asked  
23 her, and it's all in the transcription, yes.

24 Q Was there anything significant about her  
25 interview aside from what's already in the transcript?

1           A     No, what's in the transcript that you have  
2 there, basically that she knew the defendant as Victor, I  
3 believe.

4           Q     Okay. And we're going to come back to Cinthia  
5 in a minute, but I just want to discuss with you really  
6 quickly the next supplement, 71, with Elias Amaya  
7 Enriquez?

8           A     Yes.

9           Q     He went by Jorge. Is that right?

10          A     He told me -- I asked him what his -- what's  
11 your name. He said Elias.

12          Q     So he was forthright right away. He told you  
13 his legal name and that he had an alias of Jorge?

14          A     Well, he didn't really -- I don't recall without  
15 going through everything whether he told me Jorge, but  
16 when I asked him -- if you look on the first page of my  
17 transcription, I said, All right, go ahead. I said,  
18 what's your name? He said, Elias. Elias? He says yes.

19          Q     Yeah. And I think further down in your  
20 transcript, if you want to run down it, you ask him if he  
21 also goes by either Jorge or the English version George?

22          A     Okay. Yes, Jose -- okay. I would have to go  
23 through it again totally to see. Do you know what page on  
24 that transcription, which one?

25          Q     I just had it up. I apologize, I'm looking. It

1 would be on your supplement, if you have a 19-page  
2 supplement for 71, it would be on page six, about a third  
3 of the way through.

4 A Six. Okay. Do they call you Jorge? Is that  
5 your name, Jorge? Oh, that's my name for here.

6 That's right. I remember that, yes.

7 Q And he was in the vehicle with Laura. He  
8 explained to you that he was in the vehicle with Laura  
9 Caudill that evening?

10 A Yes. That's what he tells me.

11 Q And he also explained to you that he heard Laura  
12 take a phonecall from Victor that evening after the  
13 accident and that -- is that right?

14 A Yes. He said that he could hear Victor crying.  
15 And I asked him if it was on speakerphone, and he said no.  
16 He said that he could hear it from the phone. I said was  
17 the volume up or whatever. He said that -- if I'm not  
18 mistaken, he said it was a low voice, but he heard him  
19 cry.

20 Q Anything else significant about Elias's  
21 interview that's not obvious from the transcript?

22 A No.

23 Q And then it looks like -- let's go back to  
24 Cinthia. It looks like Cinthia showed you and Detective  
25 Leib and maybe Ryan Dunning -- I apologize, I don't

1 know --

2 A There was a vehicle. She took me down to see  
3 where Victor's vehicle was parked that he drove.

4 Q Was Detective Leib with you?

5 A I can't remember who was actually with me. I  
6 think so. I think there was a female with me. Yes.

7 Q Ryan Dunning, I forget his title. Is he a  
8 detective?

9 A Yes.

10 Q Was Detective Dunning with you as well?

11 A I can't really recall who was actually with me  
12 without -- I can't really recall. I know someone was with  
13 me.

14 Q One person or more than one person?

15 A I can't recall to be honest with you.

16 Q Okay.

17 A I'll have to listen to the audio to figure that  
18 out.

19 Q Did you have -- did Cinthia take you to where  
20 the Honda CRV was?

21 A Yes. It was underneath the overpass.

22 Q And is that the overpass -- which overpass is  
23 that?

24 A 275 and Roosevelt. I guess they park down  
25 there. They have, like, containers down there, if I'm not

1 mistaken. It was where they parked down underneath the  
2 interstate.

3 Q Is that part of the construction project?

4 A Yes. If I'm not mistaken, that was -- yeah, his  
5 vehicle was parked underneath 275 where it was.

6 Q Was that part of -- I know this was a big scene  
7 because everyone was looking for the suspect. Was that  
8 vehicle found within the scene?

9 A Within where Hartwick was located, no.

10 Q Like the overall scene of where the deputies  
11 were?

12 A It was off -- it was a good -- I mean, I had to  
13 drive off the interstate to get there. It was underneath  
14 Roosevelt. So the scene where Hartwick was located, if  
15 you get on from Roosevelt onto the interstate, it was a  
16 little bit down the ways. I don't know the amount of feet  
17 or whatever.

18 Q All right. Did you go inside of the Honda CRV?

19 A No, I don't believe I did. I would have  
20 documented if I did.

21 Q Okay. Were you present when Detective Melanie  
22 Leib went inside the Honda CRV?

23 A No.

24 Q Do you know where Mr. Molina-Salles was found  
25 that night?

1           A     He was found the next day. It was -- I know  
2 that K-9 located him. It was a good distance down in the  
3 -- I think there's like an off/on ramp or so or like on  
4 the exit in the grass.

5           Q     Do you remember which exit?

6           A     I can't recall which exit.

7           Q     Was it part of the Roosevelt and Fourth Street  
8 area?

9           A     I think Fourth Street. Yeah, I think maybe the  
10 Fourth Street exit, up that way. It was -- he was  
11 actually found north of where Hartwick was.

12          Q     Do you know if -- were you present when Juan was  
13 later found?

14          A     I was not present when he was located by the  
15 K-9; however, I did head that way once I heard that he was  
16 located. They were escorting him out, and they put him in  
17 a cruiser.

18          Q     Did you -- how close did you get to him?

19          A     I was close. I didn't talk -- I mean, I was  
20 close to him. I was right there with him when they got  
21 him into the cruiser, but I did not put handcuffs on him  
22 or anything.

23          Q     Were you part of his interview at all?

24          A     No.

25          Q     And did you ask him any questions?

1           A     I did not.

2           Q     Okay. Have you attended any briefings on this  
3 case either at the State Attorney's office or your own  
4 department?

5           A     Any briefings? well, I know we've had  
6 discussions after about this or, you know, we would meet.  
7 That's about it.

8           Q     who would meet and how often?

9           A     I don't know how often. I know we've -- when we  
10 first get there, we had a briefing where we were informed  
11 of the situation of what happened, what's going on, and we  
12 start from there. Then afterwards, they give out  
13 assignments and stuff like that.

14          Q     Okay. So I apologize, that was not a clear  
15 enough question by me. Were you part of any briefings  
16 after the 23rd, after Juan Molina-Salles was arrested and  
17 everyone was done on the scene on the 23rd?

18          A     I can't recall. I know -- because we're a unit,  
19 I mean, we do discuss things. I mean, I was present -- I  
20 can't say for sure. I don't understand. I mean, I don't  
21 know what you're trying to get at.

22          Q     I'm asking if you attended any meetings or  
23 discussions or briefings either at the State Attorney's  
24 office --

25          A     At the State Attorney's office I did not, no.



1 Q Were there any at the Sheriff's office or any of  
2 the branches?

3 A Well, we have our -- we have in our unit, we  
4 discuss who is doing what, and we discuss what we got out  
5 of the interview. I mean, everything here, what we've  
6 transcribed and who's doing what. You know, get out other  
7 assignments to do follow-ups, whatever needs to be done.  
8 That's in any investigation.

9 Q Okay. But no extra ones aside from the normal  
10 course of business?

11 A Normal course of business. I mean, that's just  
12 normal stuff.

13 Q Yeah, I was just asking if there were any extra  
14 additional ones by the Sheriff's department.

15 A No, just -- I mean, we lost a deputy. You know,  
16 it's a tough case.

17 Q Very much.

18 A So, I mean, we're going to have discussions, and  
19 we're going to have things like that. We just get there,  
20 and we've just seen our fellow deputy facedown.

21 Q It was a tragedy, and I'm sorry for your loss.

22 I just have a few more questions. When you saw  
23 Juan that evening, how did he appear? What was his  
24 demeanor like?

25 A I can't explain. I can't recall exactly how his

1 demeanor was. He was just -- he appeared to be, you know,  
2 out of breath, tired. I can't give you exactly how he  
3 was. We did take photographs of him after the fact.

4 Q Yeah. Did you see if he was scared or nervous  
5 or cooperative at times?

6 A At that time, I'd been up for hours. Like I  
7 said, you know, he was apprehended. He was placed in  
8 handcuffs and, you know, secured in a vehicle. Whether  
9 scared or whatnot, I don't -- I can't tell you how he was  
10 feeling.

11 Q Yeah. I just didn't know if you could tell from  
12 looking at him. I understand. That's an acceptable  
13 answer if you don't know.

14 A I can't explain how he was.

15 Q What was the other supplement you said?

16 A Supplement No. 125.

17 Q And what's in that supplement?

18 A It's just a review of Elias's call log on his  
19 phone. So I just documented the call logs from his phone  
20 from that day and that time, from 10:37 p.m. It's all  
21 written out all the way down to 0309 in the morning.

22 Q And who handed you his phone?

23 A What's that?

24 Q Who handed you his phone?

25 A I got it from him.

1 Q Was there a search warrant for his phone?

2 A He gave me consent.

3 Q How was -- how did you ask him about that?

4 A I asked him for consent to take a look, search  
5 his phone, which he did provide.

6 Q Was that -- were you wearing a body camera that  
7 morning?

8 A No, I don't -- I didn't have a body cam.

9 Q Is there anything else you recall about your  
10 involvement that we haven't already discussed?

11 A No.

12 MS. BLAQUIERE: Thank you so much for coming in  
13 today, Corporal DeLeon.

14 THE DEPONENT: No problem.

15 MR. VONDERHEIDE: No questions.

16 (Deposition concludes at 1:25 p.m.)  
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1 COUNTY OF PINELLAS )

2 STATE OF FLORIDA )

3 CERTIFICATE OF OATH

4

5 I, the undersigned authority, certify that  
6 NELSON DELEON personally appeared before me by ZOOM  
7 videoconference and was duly sworn.

8 witness my hand and official seal this 13th day  
9 of OCTOBER, 2024.

10

11

Tamara M. Pacheco

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Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR  
COMMISSION # 474485  
EXPIRES: March 30, 2028

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ERRATA SHEET

IN THE CASE OF: STATE OF FL V. JUAN MOLINA-SALLES  
NAME OF DEPONENT: NELSON DELEON  
CASE NUMBER: 22-09348CFANO

Please read the transcript of your deposition.  
If you feel you need to make corrections, please note on  
this page. DO NOT mark on the transcript itself.  
Sign and date the transcript below.

PAGE	LINE	ERROR/AMENDMENT	REASON FOR CHANGE

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA )

COUNTY OF PINELLAS )

I, Tamara M. Pacheco, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the Deposition of NELSON DELEON; that a review of the transcript was requested; and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

I further certify that I am not a relative, employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

*Tamara M. Pacheco*

Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR