

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.

DEPOSITION OF:

JOHN SUESS

TAKEN BY:

Counsel for the Defendant

DATE:

November 21, 2024

TIME:

1:03 p.m. - 1:16 p.m.

PLACE:

ZOOM Videoconference

REPORTED BY:

Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR  
Notary Public, State of FL

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ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE APPEARANCES

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## EXHIBITS

(No exhibits were marked for identification.)

1 WHEREUPON,

2 JOHN SUESS

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

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY MS. DELIBERATO:

7 Q Good afternoon. Could you please state and  
8 spell your name for the record.

9 A Good afternoon. John Suess, J-O-H-N, S-U-E-S-S.

10 Q And how are you employed?

11 A Currently employed for the Boeing Company.

12 Q And were you previously employed with the  
13 Pinellas County Sheriff's Office?

14 A Yes, ma'am.

15 Q Okay. We're here for your deposition today. My  
16 name is Maria DeLiberato. I'm an assistant public  
17 defender. Myself and Nichole Blaquiere, who may join us  
18 shortly, represent Juan Molina-Salles. It's Pinellas case  
19 number 22-305232. And Elizabeth Constantine is here for  
20 the State.

21 I have that you authored one supplement,  
22 Supplement 90. Is that right?

23 A Yes, ma'am.

24 Q Have you had a chance to review it before our  
25 deposition today?

1 A Yes, ma'am.

2 Q Okay. And just before we get into that, can you  
3 just walk me a little bit through your career with law  
4 enforcement and then when you left PCSO?

5 A Yes, ma'am. I worked for the Ocala Police  
6 Department from approximately 2004 to 2006; Pasco County  
7 Sheriff's Office from approximately 2008 to 2012, two  
8 years on patrol, two years as an economic crimes  
9 detective; and then Pinellas County Sheriff's Office from  
10 2013 to 2023, about a year on patrol and then the  
11 remainder was various investigative assignments or  
12 administrative assignments.

13 Q And were you a lieutenant when you left PCSO?  
14 Was that your rank?

15 A Yes, ma'am.

16 Q Okay. And did you leave PCSO in 2023 and go  
17 straight to Boeing, or was there something in between?

18 A Yes, ma'am. Straight to Boeing.

19 Q Okay. Any particular reason for leaving?

20 A Just personal, work-life balance.

21 Q Okay. This is a question I ask everybody. I  
22 mean no offense. Any disciplinary complaints sustained  
23 against you for any reason either at Ocala, Pasco, or  
24 Pinellas?

25 A No. The only thing I received was at Pasco like

1 a counseling letter for leaving my vehicle unlocked.

2 Q Okay. Do you have an independent recollection  
3 of what you did in this particular case?

4 A Yes, ma'am.

5 Q Okay. And did you know Deputy Hartwick  
6 personally or professionally?

7 A I don't think I ever met him.

8 Q Okay. No conversations with him that you can  
9 recall or anything like that?

10 A Certainly nothing that I recall, no, ma'am.

11 Q So can you just tell me a little bit of how it  
12 was you got out to the scene? It sounds like you were  
13 mostly in a supervisory role, but let me know how it was  
14 that you got called out and what you did.

15 A Yes. I just received a call from my supervisor,  
16 Captain John Tobeck. He informed me that there had been a  
17 line-of-duty death and just directed me to respond to the  
18 scene. So then I notified supervisors who reported to me  
19 and started gathering the investigative team.

20 Q And so when do you actually get on the scene?  
21 And if you need to refer to the report, you're more than  
22 welcome to.

23 A Yeah, I will pull that up real quick. It says I  
24 arrived at approximately 15 minutes after midnight, so  
25 that would have been on Friday, the 23rd.

1 Q Okay. And Deputy Hartwick had been pronounced  
2 by that time. Is that right?

3 A Yes, ma'am.

4 (Mr. Vonderheide enters deposition.)

5 Q Okay. And were you kind of one of the first  
6 supervisory officers on scene?

7 A I don't recall where I arrived in the order.  
8 Yeah, I don't.

9 Q And your report notes that you coordinated with  
10 Captain Tobeck and Sergeant Robinson to do the case  
11 assignments. Are you guys talking on the phone? How does  
12 that work?

13 A I don't recall if there were any discussions on  
14 the phone while we were in route, but I know that, you  
15 know, there were discussions once we arrived on scene.

16 Q Okay. I'm just trying to figure out who made  
17 the decision to make Corporal Syers the lead and Detective  
18 Orlowski the second and the crime scene. Who made the  
19 assignments?

20 A It's really a collaborative effort. There's no  
21 -- I don't recall any instance in any one person said this  
22 is who's doing what.

23 Q Okay. And what are those decisions based on?

24 A A multitude of things. More generally speaking,  
25 I don't recall what this decision was based upon, but, you

1 know, tenure, capability, current caseload, if somebody is  
2 leaving on vacation the following week for two weeks.  
3 It's a multitude of factors.

4 Q So the three of you in collaboration kind of get  
5 all the case assignments together. What do you  
6 specifically do in terms of the investigation yourself?

7 A Very little on the investigation itself. It's  
8 more coordinating individuals and assets.

9 Q Okay. And you note I think there's some -- a  
10 bit of a note about a cellular phone ping that I think you  
11 potentially had some involvement with. It says  
12 description cell phone ping and obtained suspect's North  
13 Carolina ID card.

14 A Yes, ma'am.

15 Q And so can you tell me what you did with respect  
16 to that?

17 A Yeah. It was a matter of reaching out to the  
18 Communications Center to initiate the ping, and that  
19 ultimately was connected with a carrier. I spoke with  
20 them about it. They facilitated sending the information.

21 And then as far as the driver's license, I know  
22 just one of the -- I think superintendent was his title  
23 that showed up, and he was able to facilitate us getting  
24 some records from -- some employment records from the  
25 company.



1 Q Okay. And with respect to the cell phone ping,  
2 that was -- you were trying to sort of locate him in  
3 realtime. Is that right?

4 A Yes, ma'am.

5 Q And it looks like were you getting -- it says I  
6 began receiving updates on the pings. Were you getting  
7 the updates directly from the cell phone provider, or were  
8 they coming to you from someone else?

9 A I do not recall that part.

10 Q Okay. And were you relaying them to other  
11 individuals when you were getting them?

12 A So the information would have been shared  
13 amongst a multitude of people. I don't recall exactly who  
14 they were going to and to anyone -- if anyone they were  
15 being disseminated.

16 Q And were you -- you remained on scene all  
17 through the night?

18 A Yes. I mean, I remember the sun rising. Yes,  
19 ma'am.

20 Q Were you on the scene still when my client,  
21 Mr. Molina-Salles was taken into custody?

22 A Yes, ma'am.

23 Q Did you actually lay eyes on him and see him?

24 A Yes, ma'am.

25 Q Anything that you remember about his demeanor or

1 his appearance?

2 A No, ma'am. I mean, I just recall him being a  
3 heavysset gentleman. I knew there were some logistics  
4 involved in getting him in the vehicle but nothing  
5 remarkable.

6 Q Do you remember hearing him say anything?

7 A Not at all.

8 Q And did you speak to him at all directly  
9 yourself?

10 A Again, it would have been -- it would have been  
11 can you move this leg or, hey, let me give you a boost.  
12 Something to that effect. Nothing -- not in any way  
13 questioning him about what happened.

14 Q Okay. And was he cooperative with the officers  
15 that were taking him into custody and putting him in the  
16 car and stuff?

17 A So I was not present when he was taken into  
18 custody when the K9 units found him. I don't recall there  
19 being any issues as far as him being uncooperative getting  
20 in the vehicle.

21 Q And did you actually interview any witnesses  
22 yourself?

23 A witnesses to the event, no, ma'am. The only  
24 individual really that I spoke with was that construction  
25 superintendent about records.

1 Q So tell me about that.

2 A I'm going to check the report again.

3 Q Perfectly fine. It's Mr. Short, I think. No,  
4 maybe not. Wilder.

5 A Yeah, Russell Marshall, yeah, said he was the  
6 general superintendent for that site. Yeah. We were just  
7 trying to locate any records, and at some point he showed  
8 his cell phone that had a photo of Mr. Sallas -- I  
9 apologize if I'm mispronouncing it -- his -- well, a  
10 driver's license from North Carolina that had a photo on  
11 it. And I asked Detective Dunning to coordinate getting  
12 whatever records he could that Mr. Marshall was willing to  
13 provide.

14 Q Okay. And it sounds like then you asked Analyst  
15 Priest to do an investigation into that North Carolina ID?

16 A Yeah, if that's what the report says. I don't  
17 know that I asked her. But, yes, certainly she did some  
18 research and ultimately, we learned from her -- I don't  
19 know if it was directly from her, but based off her  
20 research, it appeared to be counterfeit because she  
21 couldn't find any records.

22 Q Okay. I'm just sort of looking through your  
23 report. It looks like you requested a member of  
24 Clearwater Police Department to attend the autopsy of  
25 Deputy Hartwick.

1 A Yes, ma'am.

2 Q Is that just sort of to protect your deputies  
3 from having to attend the autopsy of a fellow officer, or  
4 was there a different reason for that?

5 A That's the only reason.

6 Q Okay. And then you did not inspect Deputy  
7 Hartwick. I assume that means you didn't touch the body  
8 or go -- how close did you get to where he was or anything  
9 like that?

10 A Yeah. Best estimate, the closest I got was  
11 probably 30 feet. But, no, certainly didn't touch his  
12 body.

13 Q Okay. And then sort of after this, do you know  
14 when you were released from the scene or when you left the  
15 scene?

16 A Let me check the report again real quick. Yeah.  
17 So it just says I was there until the suspect was  
18 transported -- no, I apologize. I misread that. I  
19 certainly don't know what time. I recall it was daylight.  
20 I don't recall.

21 Q That's okay. So were you -- do you remember if  
22 you were back at the station when my client,  
23 Mr. Molina-Salles was being interrogated by the  
24 detectives?

25 A I believe at some point I was.

1 Q Okay. Because I know we've heard it described.  
2 It's kind of on the monitors, and I think somebody  
3 described everybody's eyes were glued to it as it was  
4 happening. I didn't know if you were kind of watching the  
5 interrogation happen as well.

6 A I don't recall. You know, I watched so many of  
7 those. It's tough to keep them organized.

8 Q I understand. You don't have an independent  
9 recollection of watching it?

10 A No, ma'am.

11 Q And then after that day, after you left the  
12 scene, went back to the station, did you do any further  
13 follow-up work on this case?

14 A Again, any work would have been administrative.  
15 Certainly nothing, you know, investigative. Just  
16 coordinating people and assets. I have no recollection of  
17 any specific activity.

18 Q Did you attend any briefings or meetings either  
19 in your department or at the State Attorney's office about  
20 this case?

21 A I don't recall any at the State Attorney's  
22 office. Anecdotally, yes, there would have been follow-up  
23 meetings, but I do not recall any specifics from any of  
24 those meetings.

25 Q Were you at all involved in the charging

1 decision from the Sheriff's office -- I understand not at  
2 the State Attorney's office -- in terms of what crime or  
3 crimes to charge Mr. Molina-Salles with?

4 A I don't have any recollection of that.

5 Q Okay. I just didn't know if that was kind of a  
6 group decision or if that was a decision once the agents  
7 were assigned that made that decision?

8 A Right. I understand.

9 Q You don't have any recollection of having any  
10 input in that decision?

11 A Correct.

12 Q Have you followed the case at all through the  
13 news in terms of what my client is charged with or his  
14 background or anything like that?

15 A No, ma'am, I have not.

16 Q Do you remember sort of hearing anything or  
17 knowing anything about his immigration status or anything  
18 like that?

19 A Yeah. I recall hearing things, but -- I recall  
20 there being discussion that he was not in the country  
21 legally, but I -- that's really the extent of it.

22 Q Okay. Were you involved in any conversation  
23 about the investigation or potential investigation into  
24 Archer Western and their hiring practices?

25 A I know there was some discussion about it, but I

1 was not involved in the investigation.

2 Q what was the discussion that you remember?

3 A That there were just concerns about their hiring  
4 practices and how thorough they were in those practices.

5 Q Do you know who was sort of making those  
6 concerns known?

7 A I don't. No, ma'am.

8 Q But you didn't participate in any investigation  
9 or get any records from any follow-up on that?

10 A No, ma'am.

11 MS. DELIBERATO: I don't have any further  
12 questions for you. I thank you very much for your  
13 time today. I don't imagine the State does but they  
14 might.

15 MR. VONDERHEIDE: No questions.

16 MS. CONSTANTINE: No questions. Thank you.

17 (Deposition concludes at 1:16 p.m.)  
18  
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25

1 COUNTY OF PINELLAS )

2 STATE OF FLORIDA )

3 CERTIFICATE OF OATH

4  
5 I, the undersigned authority, certify that JOHN  
6 SUESS personally appeared before me and was duly sworn.

7 witness my hand and official seal this 4th day  
8 of February, 2025.

9  
10 Tamara M. Pacheco

11 Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR  
12 COMMISSION # 474485  
13 EXPIRES: March 30, 2028  
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## 1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2 STATE OF FLORIDA )

3 COUNTY OF PINELLAS )  
4

5 I, Tamara M. Pacheco, certify that I was  
6 authorized to and did stenographically report the  
7 Deposition of JOHN SUESS; that a review of the transcript  
8 was requested; and that the transcript is a true and  
9 complete record of my stenographic notes.

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

15 Tamara M. Pacheco16 Tamara M. Pacheco, RPR  
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IN THE CASE OF: STATE OF FL v. JUAN MOLINA-SALLES

NAME OF DEPONENT: JOHN SUESS

CASE NUMBER: 22-09348CFANO

PAGE	LINE	ERROR/AMENDMENT	REASON FOR CHANGE
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Date