

*Supplemental Investigation Narrative #1

On 10-08-09 at approximately. 2050 hrs, after completing firearms training in Prescott, dispatch notified me of this incident. I called Lt. PARKISON E01 and asked where I needed to respond. I was told to go to Verde Valley Medical Center in Cottonwood, where many of the injured persons were taken, and to contact Det. Sgt. T. BOELTS C11. I was also told to contact Eastern Area V.I.P. coordinator P. DICKERSON E927 to arrange for V.I.P.'s to provide scene security for the duration of the investigation. I called V.I.P. DICKERSON, who made the necessary arrangements.

I arrived at the hospital at approximately. 2145 hrs. Deputies TIEMAN E51 and BRAZELL E30 were already there. I was directed to the Cardiac Catheterization Lab, where Sgt. BOELTS and Det. SURAK C31 were examining two deceased persons from the incident. Sgt. BOELTS said the patients who were there being treated at that time had been interviewed. He asked that any additional patients to arrive be interviewed and given forms authorizing the release of the medical records for their diagnosis and treatment that night.

I told Deputies TIEMAN and BRAZELL what we were asked to do and we awaited the arrival of additional patients.

Upon their arrivals, I interviewed the following three patients individually, Amy Michelle GRIMES, Linnette VEGUILLA and Brandy Kay RAINEY. I audiotaped their statements to submit to evidence. The following are summaries of their statements:

Amy GRIMES-

Ms. GRIMES said she arrived in Arizona on 10-03-09 to attend the event at the Angel Valley Retreat. She said she had been there the entire time since her arrival. She said her memory was not too good at that time, but related what she could of that day's activities. She said all the participants had fasted for at least one day before that day. She said she had fruit for breakfast that morning, then there was some kind of seminar and at approximately. 1430 hrs, they went into a "sweat lodge."

Ms. GRIMES said she drank about four containers of water before she went in the sweat lodge. She said it was very hot in the sweat lodge, but she stayed inside. She said she did not know how long she was inside the sweat lodge, because she had no concept of time. She said she believed she passed out at some point while she was inside. She said a friend told her she "balled her eyes out" after being removed from the sweat lodge. She said she believed she was unconscious for about twenty minutes. She said when she awoke, she was being sprayed down with water and she was very sick.

Ms. GRIMES described the sweat lodge as low to the ground, built of sticks with a tarp over the top, with one door. She said the participants sat around a pit dug in the center of the sweat lodge, which had superheated rocks in the pit. She said water was poured over

the rocks. She said the water was poured on the rocks while they were inside. I asked if there were any fires in the sweat lodge while she was inside. She said no. She said only the rocks were in the pit, but they glowed red hot.

Linnette VEGUILLA-

Ms. VEGUILLA said she arrived in Arizona on 10-03-09 and was at the Angel Valley Retreat since her arrival. She said for two days before that day, they had been on a "Vision Quest" and had fasted while left in the desert. She said they were picked up on the morning of 10-08-09 and taken back to the main area of the retreat center. She said they had breakfast, followed by a class and then went into the sweat lodge. She was not exactly sure, but said it was approximately. 1415 hrs when they went into the sweat lodge. I asked how long she was in the sweat lodge. She said she was inside for four "periods" but she was not sure how long each "period" lasted. I asked if she took water in the sweat lodge. She said no. I asked if she was allowed to take water inside. She said there was water available outside and they could go out for water if needed. Ms. VEGUILLA said she did not stay as long as many other people stayed. She said she left on her own power and felt nauseous and dizzy some time after she left the sweat lodge.

Brandy RAINEY-

Ms. RAINEY said she was still very nauseous when I spoke to her. She said she arrived in Arizona on 10-03-09 and had been at the Angel Valley retreat since arriving. She said for almost the entire time since arriving, they had been only allowed about one hour sleep each night and had been deprived of food and water.

Ms. RAINEY said they were taken to a desert area and deprived of all food and water for approximately. two nights and one day prior to that day. She said they were picked up at approximately. 0630 or 0700 hrs that morning got back to the main area of the retreat center and had breakfast at approx. 0730 hrs. She said they had a class prior to the sweat lodge. She said they had minimal water before being taken to the sweat lodge.

I asked Ms. RAINEY if they were denied water during the course of their stay. She said "the rules of the game" were no food or water during the "Vision Quest" portion of the retreat. She said the Vision Quest consisted of making a "Medicine Wheel" and then staying inside that area until staff members returned to pick them up. She said to leave the Medicine Wheel was considered "Breaking your honor." She said some of the people on the Vision Quest could have had water, but that was not the way it was supposed to be done. She said at any time during the Vision Quest a participant could have left their Medicine Wheel and gone to get a drink of water. She said they all chose to do it and could have left at any time.

Ms. RAINEY said on that day, after having breakfast and their class, they were released from class at approx. 1300 hrs and told they had about fifteen minutes to prepare for the sweat lodge. She said they were told to hydrate before going to the sweat lodge. She said she drank almost a gallon of water before going to the sweat lodge.

Ms. RAINEY said when she went in the sweat lodge, it was very smoky. She said "they," as though referring to staff, brought in twelve heated stones, which she said was unheard of, closed the door and put Sandalwood on the stones, which burned, then put approx. five gallons of water on the stones, which produced an extreme amount of steam. She said she almost vomited, but was encouraged to "hang in there." She said she sat as long as she could and finally laid down on the floor where it was somewhat cooler. She said several other people in the sweat lodge were "freaking out," which was scary in the pitch black interior of the sweat lodge.

Ms. RAINEY said she was in the sweat lodge for five "rounds." She said the staff removed or added heated stones prior to each round. She said she finally said she could not do it any more and left the sweat lodge. She said when she went to leave, she was so drained that "they," as though referring to staff members, had to drag her out. She said she was then hosed down with cold water. She said she was very disoriented, very emotional and very cold. She said she was so cold she thought it was hypothermia. She said she laid on the ground and was brought a couple of towels.

Ms. RAINEY said after she was out of the sweat lodge, others were brought out. She said one man was vomiting and a woman appeared unconscious as she was brought out. She said a woman she knew was laid down nearby and when she tried to talk to her, staff said she could not talk to the woman, as it "was her experience." She said the woman laid there for approx. twenty minutes before she woke up. She said the woman then rolled over and started to vomit. She said a man named Dennis, who was later identified as Dennis MEHRAVAR, came out of the sweat lodge and yelled out for help as though he was dying.

Ms. RAINEY said another man apparently fell onto the heated stones in the sweat lodge and suffered severe burns to his hands and arms. She said the staff put his hands and arms in a bucket of ice and water and she saw what she described as big chunks of flesh coming off his hands and arms. She said the man started to shake uncontrollably.

Ms. RAINEY said others were removed from the sweat lodge and laid out on a tarp. She said one woman was rolled over and was foaming at the mouth and having an apparent seizure. She said another woman was pulled out and was kicking, screaming and hitting people. She said the woman said, "'Why would you do this to me.'" She said the woman's behavior was not normal.

Ms. RAINEY said "James" their leader, came out to the area of a tent where people were being treated and acted as though he was judging whether or not they were alright. She said a couple of the people called James' by name and he went over to them. She said James told her friend Amy to go to the back and throw up, like it was no big deal. She said she believed someone called 911 after several of the people appeared unresponsive or continued to behave in an unusual manner.

Ms. RAINEY said she watched the entire incident unfold in front of her until they were moved to another area. She said she then went back and showered and drank some water.

She said she was nauseous and vomited and saw her skin color was not normal. She said was told she needed to get checked out, went to the EMS personnel on scene and was taken to the hospital.

I remained on scene with Deputies TIEMAN and BRAZELL until we knew there were no more patients enroute to the hospital. I then notified Det. Sgt. D. WINSLOW C16 of the situation and was told we could leave the hospital. No other assistance was requested of us that night.

No further actions taken. This concludes my activity in this matter.

Date, Time, Reporting Officer:
Sun Oct 11 06:06:25 MST 2009
Sgt. D.E. Williams, #2679