

Stand Your Ground immunity hearing held in Florida deputy shooting

John DeRossett thought police were kidnapping his niece, attorneys say

By Cathleigh Winningham

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TITUSVILLE, Fla. – A man accused of opening fire on three Brevard County deputies during a prostitution sting will appear in court Monday for the start of a Stand Your Ground hearing.

John DeRossett is attempting to use the controversial law to explain the 2015 shooting and faces three counts of attempted murder of a law enforcement officer.

DeRossett told investigators he had no idea the men pulling his niece, Mary DeRossett Ellis, from his Cocoa home were sheriff's deputies. Instead, he feared she was being abducted.

One deputy ended up being shot, but he survived.

DeRossett's sister testified Monday that he reluctantly took his niece in, and she struggled with drug and alcohol addiction. She said her brother tried to get his niece Baker Acted, but he was denied.

The state said DeRossett assisted his niece in prostitution and was aware deputies were investigating her. DeRossett bailed her out when she was arrested on prostitution charges one month before shootout.

Under Florida chapter 776.012, a person is justified in using or threatening to use deadly force if he or she reasonably believes that using or threatening to use such force is necessary to prevent imminent death or great bodily harm to himself or herself or another or to prevent the imminent commission of a forcible felony.

The statute also notes that a person who uses or threatens to use deadly force in accordance with this subsection does not have a duty to retreat and has the right to stand his or her ground if the person using or threatening to use the deadly force is not engaged in a criminal activity and is in a place where he or she has a right to be.

The hearing is expected to last up to four days.