

'Cougar' at center of Brevard deputy shooting sentenced

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TITUSVILLE — The woman at the center of a deputy-involved shooting and a sex sting investigation that led to two deputies being released from duty was ordered to serve 180 days in jail and 18 months of probation after pleading no contest to prostitution and resisting arrest charges.

Mary DeRossett, 42, known to clients as "Cougar," confessed that she was running a prostitution business from her Port St. John home that she shared with her 65-year-old uncle John DeRossett. She did not make any statements about the Aug. 20 shooting of Deputy John 'Casey' Smith at her home as she stood in court, quietly answering yes or no to the judge's questions.

DeRossett, described by her attorneys as 'traumatized' by the deputy's shooting, was also credited with time served, reducing a portion of her six-month sentence by about 50 days.

"We respect what the judge did," said Doug Reynolds, who oversees the misdemeanor division of the public defender's office. "She didn't know they were police officers up to that point," he added.

The plea — with details hashed out up to the time of the hearing - comes just over a month after her arrest in a botched prostitution sting that ended with Smith being badly wounded. The plea covered three separate cases, including the most recent dealing with prostitution and resisting an officer without violence.

Brevard County Judge Kenneth Friedland also ordered DeRossett, who was shackled, handcuffed and wearing a blue jail uniform, to serve out her time at the Brevard County Jail Complex rather than the Seminole County jail where she's been held since the shooting.

"She never intended for anyone to be hurt," Public Defender Michael Panella told the judge during the hearing.

As a condition of her probation, she was ordered to stay away from Internet classified ad sites like Backpage, where law enforcement officials first linked her to sex-for-hire advertisements.

Admitted prostitute must give blood to Brevard sheriff's office

"It could have been worse, said Judge Friedland of the sentence. "I can't ignore the fact that because of your actions a Brevard County deputy was almost killed. I think this is a fair sentence."

Brevard County Agent John "Casey" Smith, shot in the lower abdomen, just below his protective vest, underwent multiple surgeries and was released from Orlando Regional Medical Center last week after a month-long stay.

Records show Smith was one of three agents who were at DeRossett's home to arrest her when she yelled, prompting her uncle to run out of another room. John Derossett told investigators he heard a commotion and raced out of his bedroom to see what was happening, records show. He looked out of a screened door and saw three men surrounding his niece, went back to retrieve his gun, stepped out into the grass firing several rounds, first in the air, then toward deputies. Derossett later said he was protecting his home and did not know the men were deputies.

The case took a turn for the scandalous after investigators discovered that DeRossett kept a ledger naming several of her clients including two sheriff's deputies. The two deputies have since resigned from the department. One Brevard deputy even texted Mary DeRossett nearly 15 minutes prior to the shooting.

Friedland reiterated that Mary DeRossett must provide a blood sample to the sheriff's office to determine if she may have exposed deputies to a sexually transmitted disease.

There remains a possibility that she could become a witness in the attempted murder case faced by her uncle.