St. Petersburg Police Department
News Release

Media Relations Office
Yolanda Fernandez
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For Immediate Release
Jun 12, 2016

Assistant Chief Blinded by Laser Pointer

On Saturday, June 11, 2016, at 8:45 p.m., St. Petersburg Assistant Chief of Police Jim Previtera was driving his unmarked police vehicle northbound in the 5600 block of 4th Street North. The windshield of his vehicle was then illuminated by a bright blue light flash, impairing his vision. Assistant Chief Previtera was able to determine that the source of the blue light had come from a parked vehicle at 5625 4th Street North.

Assistant Chief Previtera and patrol units made contact with the occupants of the parked vehicle. They were able to establish that the driver of the parked vehicle, David R. Smith, W/M, 5/4/1974, of 6809 Circle Creek Drive, Pinellas Park, had pointed a Class 3B laser device at Assistant Chief Previtera’s vehicle. Smith was arrested and charged with Misuse of a Laser Lighting Device, a third degree felony.

Assistant Chief Previtera’s vision was impaired for approximately 30 minutes after the incident. Research conducted on the Class 3B laser device possessed by Smith showed that the laser pointer can cause serious damage to the eye. Later at the St. Petersburg Police Department, to demonstrate the power of the seized device, the laser was pointed at a paper bag and it started the paper bag on fire.

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David R. Smith