

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE  
SECOND JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN  
AND FOR LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA.  
GRAND JURY, SPRING TERM, 1997

IN RE: Under Utilization Of The Leon County Boot Camp

**PRESENTMENT**

IN THE NAME OF AND BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA:

THIS CAUSE came to the Grand Jury upon a referral by the State Attorney requesting our review of the under utilization of the Leon County Boot Camp. The Grand Jury is not to substitute its judgement on legislative or executive decisions, duties, or policies that are vested in our public officials who are elected or appointed. However, according to the Florida Grand Jury Instructions we are authorized to inquire into matters of local governmental administration, and if we deem it appropriate, make a Presentment or report of our findings which may include criticisms or commendations when fairly supported by the evidence. The Grand Jury heard testimony from Major Keith Daws, Leon County Jail Supervisor and Supervisor of the Boot Camp; Leon County Sheriff Larry Campbell; Leon County Commission Chairman Gary Yordon; Assistant State Attorney Laudelina McDonald, Juvenile Court prosecutor; Amy Lee, supervising secretary State Attorney's Office; Calvin Ross, Secretary of Department of Juvenile Justice; District II Juvenile Justice Administrator Joe DeVolentine; and Department of Juvenile Justice Case Manager Ila Gray.

**FINDINGS**

After hearing testimony from witnesses, your Grand Jury finds that the operation of the Leon County Boot Camp is a valuable component of the Juvenile Justice System. The Boot Camp has an education component where the juvenile offenders are given classroom instruction through a

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contract with the Leon County School system. The Boot Camp gives instruction in life skills, life management and anger management. The Boot Camp has a job placement component and alcohol-drug component. The offenders experience discipline, many, for the first time. Your Grand Jury finds that the Boot Camp operates as a deterrent to others who may be inclined to violate our criminal laws. Testimony revealed that when the Boot Camp opened in 1994, auto theft in Leon County dropped 58% the first six months of operation with other crimes following suit. It is clear that the Boot Camp is making a positive difference in public safety and the lives of the offenders.

Your Grand Jurors are concerned by the under utilization of the present Boot Camp. In recent months the offender population has declined continually and has brought into question the economic feasibility of its continued operation. By September of 1997, the offender population had reached an all time low of 13 with only one of the offenders from Leon County. A review of Leon County Juvenile Court records revealed that from January 1, 1997 through November 18, 1997, 71 juveniles were committed by the court to the Department of Juvenile Justice for a sentence that could qualify them for the Boot Camp. However, only 6 Leon County offenders were placed in the Boot Camp. Certain of these offenders were excluded because of Department of Juvenile Justice Criteria. It is shocking to this Grand Jury that these juveniles in their short criminal lives had been arrested and charged with 1,257 offenses. These arrests range from second degree misdemeanors to life category felonies.

Once the juvenile has been committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice by a judge, it is the responsibility of the Department of Juvenile Justice to determine where the juvenile will be placed. The small number of offenders placed in the Boot Camp in recent months by the Department of Juvenile Justice were, for the most part, not from Leon County. The Leon County Commission believes in, and financially supports, the Boot Camp in the amount of \$485,000

annually plus providing facilities belonging to the county. It is, however, their expectation that offenders from Leon County and the immediate surrounding counties of Gadsden, Wakulla, Liberty and Jefferson will be the primary source of inmates for the Boot Camp. This is currently not the case.

The steps in the process from arrest to disposition in Juvenile Court are as follows:

1. The suspect is arrested.
2. A Petition is filed by the State Attorney.
3. The defendant either pleads to the charge or is found guilty by the court.
4. A commitment conference is then scheduled with a representative from the State Attorney's Office, the defendant's attorney, and the Department of Juvenile Justice where a recommendation for a commitment level is established.
5. The juvenile judge hears the recommendation and imposes a sentence of commitment to a Level 2, 4, 6, 8, 10. Levels 6 and 8 are eligible for the Boot Camp.
6. The Department of Juvenile Justice then has the sole discretion for the placement of the offender.
7. In 1997 the Department of Juvenile Justice used 19 different facilities for placement of Levels 6 and 8, including facilities as far away as Pennsylvania.

Further, the Department of Juvenile Justice has authority to transfer offenders committed to Levels 2 and 4, who have failed or disrupted lower level programs, into the Boot Camp.


There has been considerable discussion in recent weeks among criminal justice officials and State Representative Marjorie Turnbull regarding the Boot Camp. Leon County Boot Camp officials have visited similar programs in Collier and Manatee Counties at the request of the Department of Juvenile Justice. Boot Camps in those counties are called Drill Academies. The full utilization of

existing beds is important and a priority to this Grand Jury regardless of what this facility is called. The under utilization of the prepaid beds is a gross waste of the \$2,000,000 of taxpayer money that funds the program.

Your Grand Jury heard testimony from officials at the Department of Juvenile Justice, including Secretary Ross, that the Department of Juvenile Justice is committed to utilizing fully the Boot Camp/Drill Academy, giving priority to Leon and surrounding county offenders.

Wherefore, your Grand Jurors recommend that the Department of Juvenile Justice, Leon County Sheriff's Department, and the Leon County Commission work together to fully utilize the Boot Camp as we believe it is a proven deterrent and is making a difference in public safety and in the lives of the offenders. Further, we request a 90 days extension until February 28, 1998 to monitor the progress of full utilization of the Boot Camp/Drill Academy and suggest that the next Grand Jury also review the utilization.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 25th day of November, 1997.

  
Foreman

Attest: *CW Godwin*  
Assistant State Attorney