



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Colonel Gary T. Settle
Superintendent

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE POLICE

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Lt. Colonel Tracy S. Russillo
Deputy Superintendent

July 26, 2021

Captain S. J. Shumate
Radford University Police Department
PO Box 6883
Radford, VA 24142

RE: Nomination for Award
Dr. Paul Ferrara – VFSAAA Crime Scene Officer
of the Year Award

Dear Captain Shumate:

The Virginia State Police, Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Appomattox Field Office would like to nominate Senior Special Agent R. Clay Overholt for the above referenced award.

In August 3, 2013, multiple local, state and federal law enforcement agencies began working on a criminal investigation involving the abduction and murder of Alexis Murphy. Senior Special Agent Overholt participated in multiple forensic examinations and was instrumental in coordinating efforts with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Nelson County Sheriff's Office and others. Evidence recovered as a result of those efforts were vital in the conviction against Randy Allen Taylor since the body of Alexis Murphy hadn't been located. In 2014, Randy Taylor was convicted of first degree murder and abduction with the intent to defile. He received two life sentences at the sentencing hearing.

Senior Special Overholt never gave up hope that Alexis Murphy's body would be found and wanted to help bring her home to her family. Over the next several years leads would filter in on where she was buried. Agent Overholt would run all leads down and conducted multiple interviews and even conducted land and water searches with no success. Agent Overholt would always be on scene in the event a forensic examination was needed.

Last fall, ongoing investigative efforts that included Agent Overholt, provided a probable search area of the remains of Alexis Murphy in Nelson County. Senior Special Agent Overholt attended numerous meetings and coordinated with the FBI to create an operation plan to search. Agent Overholt immediately took a leadership role within the state police and meticulously planned out logistics, personnel required and led the crime

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scene efforts during this event. A large multi-agency search was conducted utilizing confidential sources of information and sheer determination to find Alexis Murphy.

Initial search efforts based on intelligence received were unsuccessful. Senior Special Agent Overholt vigorously and meticulously reviewed the intelligence in comparison to the search area. This required many additional hours of listening to recordings and interviews. Directly as a result of Agent Overholt's efforts, additional searches were organized and in December 2020, the remains over Alexis Murphy were recovered. It is undisputed by all agencies involved, if not for Senior Special Agent Overholt's actions, dedication, and infectious goal driven attitude, Alexis Murphy would not have been recovered.

Senior Agent Overholt didn't stop once Alexis Murphy was found. Additional valuable intelligence was gained during this investigation. As a result of this intelligence, Senior Agent Overholt is actively assisting another Sheriff's Office with locating another missing person that is presumed deceased.

This investigation received national attention throughout the investigation and the case was brought to a logical conclusion and Senior Special Agent played a large role in bring Alexis Murphy home to her family. Senior Special Agent Overholt is most deserving to be considered for this award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. O. Cooper, II".

Captain David O. Cooper, II
Bureau of Criminal Investigation
Appomattox Field Office