

SLED probe leads solicitor not to seek charges against woman who shot officer

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Charges will not be pursued against an Orangeburg County woman who wounded a police officer in September during a search for a fugitive.

First Circuit Solicitor Joseph Mizzell said Wednesday that a review of a State Law Enforcement Division investigation convinced him that he could not prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" that Marianna Dyches of North intentionally shot Officer Tim Morris early Sept. 3.

"The incident was a mistake, and there is no way to show the officer was intentionally shot at," Mizzell said.

Officer Tim Morris and three other officers entered the woman's home to serve a bench warrant on fugitive Jerry Hendrix, who had left Lexington County the day before his trial was to begin. He had posted a \$34,000 bond.

The ABC Bonding Co. of Columbia had information that Hendrix might be staying at the home of Mrs Dyches and her husband, William. Mizzell said the information was wrong.

"We determined through our investigation that there was no connection between Mrs Dyches and Hendrix. The bonding company's information was erroneous," he said.

Mrs. Dyches said she fired random shots — one of which hit Morris in the left shoulder — with a .22-caliber weapon through a screen door because Morris and the other officers did not identify themselves and because she feared her husband was being attacked by the officers.

Jack Swerling, Mrs. Dyches' Columbia lawyer, called Mizzell's decision an "appropriate result."

"We felt from the very beginning that Mrs. Dyches was acting in response to what she thought was a threat to her husband," Swerling said. "She had no idea about Hendrix, and she did not know who the officers were."

Morris, now an officer in Travelers Rest, said he was disappointed.

"I think the solicitor should have presented the case to the Orangeburg County grand jury and let them make a decision about it," he said. "But there's nothing I can do now."