



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT  
OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

## A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Avery D. Niles, Commissioner

Jim Shuler, Director  
Office of Communications



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### COMMISSIONER FIRES AUGUSTA LIEUTENANT AFTER YDC ASSAULT

**(AUGUSTA - YDC)** Today Commissioner Avery D. Niles of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice announced what is expected to be the first of several adverse actions and personnel changes under his watch related to accountability and job performance at the Augusta Youth Development Campus. Commissioner Niles announced the dismissal of one of the YDC's top echelon corrections officers in connection with the recent assault that sent a YDC youth to the hospital.

This disciplinary action follows the December 2<sup>nd</sup> incident in a YDC residence unit where a 15-year-old juvenile in custody was assaulted by another youth. Injuries from the attack sent the 15-year-old to a local hospital that night. Later that week the youth was released from treatment and described as "recovering well from cuts and bruises."

As a result of the initial phase of that DJJ Administrative Investigation, today Commissioner Avery Niles announced the dismissal of Augusta YDC Corrections Lt. Ricky Smiley for employee negligence in connection with the December 2<sup>nd</sup> assault.

Commissioner Niles expressed appreciation to Augusta Corrections Staff on duty that night for their proper handling and rapid response during the emergency. But immediately following the incident the Commissioner instructed DJJ Investigators to focus their attention on an internal inquiry at the YDC to determine the circumstances behind the assault.

Commissioner Niles said, "During the course of our ongoing internal investigation, DJJ safety and security policy violations were uncovered involving Lt. Smiley's failure to follow-up on his supervisory responsibilities as Lieutenant. This performance failure may have hindered the ability of other key staff members to prevent the assault and subsequent injury."

**(MORE MORE MORE)**

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"There have been many personnel changes at Augusta YDC over the previous year and I can promise you, I'll be making many more," said Commissioner Niles. "With help from the GBI looking for any criminal violations, we will continue to seek out safety and security deficiencies as the DJJ investigations continue.

"We have been making progress at Augusta," said Commissioner Niles. "And we will enforce what measures are necessary to ensure the safety and security of the youth in our custody at the YDC," the Commissioner said.

Commissioner Niles has publicly announced plans to name a new full time Director for the secure facility before the end of this month.

**(END RELEASE)**