

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2.201-1/26*

IN RE: COURTHOUSE SECURITY AND SCREENING

:

Threats and acts of violence directed toward witnesses, jurors, litigants, lawyers, court personnel, judges and others demonstrate the need for appropriate security at the county courthouse and at all courthouse annexes as part of the necessary regulation of those facilities. Florida Rule of General Practice & Judicial Administration 2.215(b)(7) **grants** the chief judge **the authority**, and **imposes the responsibility**, to regulate the use of all court facilities. After consultation with and consideration of the recommendations of the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office, the following security measures are adopted by Administrative Order.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority conferred by Florida Rule of General Practice & Judicial Administration 2.215, it is **ORDERED** as follows:

A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. All persons, with the exception of those specifically enumerated in section B1 below, are prohibited from carrying or possessing firearms, weapons or destructive devices, as defined in Section 790.001, Florida Statutes (as amended), in **any** county courthouse or any courthouse annex (hereinafter collectively referred to as the "courthouse") in Palm Beach County.
2. All persons are prohibited from carrying or being in possession of any other device(s) or instrument(s) that could be used or perceived to be used as a physical threat to persons, or property, in **any** courthouse in Palm Beach County. Prohibitions may include but are not limited to pocket knives, ammunition, fireworks, electronic weapons, caustic or flammable liquids. To enforce this prohibition, the court, with the financial support of the Board of County Commissioners of Palm Beach County, hereby authorizes the establishment of a court security detail.
3. A security detail is empowered to stop all persons entering the courthouse, with the exception of those persons specifically enumerated in the section D1 and D2 below, and condition the right of entry upon the entrant's willingness to submit to a search of their person and/or personal effects to include purses, pocketbooks, briefcases, containers, packages, pagers, cellular phones, electronic devices and any other item deemed necessary for inspection by the

security detail. All persons refusing to submit to a search shall be denied access to the courthouse. Searches shall be conducted through the least intrusive means practicable. The purpose of the search is to insure the safety of the occupants of the courthouse. Nonetheless, discovery of illegal weapons, contraband as defined in section 932.701, Florida Statutes, or other violations of criminal statutes will result in the immediate notification of law enforcement so that a seizure and an arrest may be effectuated. Sworn members of the Court Security Detail/Palm Beach County Sheriff shall be responsible for performing all law enforcement functions for the 15th Judicial Circuit at each of its court facilities.

B. FIREARM PROHIBITION EXEMPTIONS

1. The following shall be exempt from the prohibition against carrying firearms into the courthouse:
 - a. sworn members of the court security detail, including court deputies, and Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office deputies assigned as back-up to the security detail;
 - b. Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office ("PBSO") deputies assigned to guard prisoners in the courthouse;
 - c. judges;
 - d. law enforcement officers responding to a call for emergency assistance in the courthouse;
 - e. PBSO warrant unit supervisors who appear at Gun Club for extradition hearings;
 - f. law enforcement officers from departments or agencies whose jurisdiction is within Palm Beach County, including PBSO officers not previously identified in this section, local police departments and investigators employed by the State Attorney's Office, who hold active certification from the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission pursuant to FS §943.1395.
2. All law enforcement identified as exempt above may enter a court facility with a firearm subject to the following conditions:
 - (a) Exempted law enforcement officers must be entering a court facility solely on official business. Under no circumstance, may a law enforcement officer enter a court facility with a firearm while visiting the court facility for any personal matter, including but not limited to, appearing at a family or domestic hearing or in a case in which the officer is a party.
 - (b) Exempted law enforcement officers must wear uniforms that meet the identification criteria of Class A, Class B or Class C uniforms as defined by PBSO General Order 550. Photographs of Class A, Class B and Class C uniforms from all law enforcement agencies shall be maintained by PBSO. PBSO shall deny entry to any law enforcement officer not wearing an appropriate uniform properly identifying the individual as a member of law enforcement.

- (c) Each exempted law enforcement officer entering a court facility must provide the PBSO deputy stationed at the entrance/screening area of the courthouse or court facility, his/her agency identification along with his/her subpoena identifying the officer, the proceedings necessitating an appearance and the date, time and location of appearance.
- (d) Exempted law enforcement must utilize a Level 3 holster.
- (e) Investigators employed by the State Attorney's office shall wear a Class C uniform approved by PBSO which must provide identifying information on the front and back of the uniform.
- (f) A daily log shall be maintained as a courthouse security record by PBSO listing the name and ID number of each deputy and his/her purpose for entering the courthouse.
- (g) The PBSO Policies and Procedures Manual will be updated to inform all deputies of the change in courthouse security procedures as well as the courthouse security protocols that would apply to the deputies at a Palm Beach County Courthouse while carrying out their official duties.
- (h) A failure to comply with any of the requirements set forth above shall result in denial of entry.

3. All Judges and Magistrates maintain the authority to either permit or prohibit firearms in their individual courtrooms by exempted law enforcement officers. This authority does not apply to sworn members of PBSO's court security detail (including back-up details), PBSO deputies assigned to guard prisoners, or law enforcement responding to an emergency call for assistance in the courthouse. PBSO shall maintain a list of Judges and Magistrates prohibiting firearms in their courtrooms. A copy of the list shall be maintained at the entrance/screening area of each courthouse or court facility. Any exempted law enforcement officer with official business in a firearm prohibited courtroom shall check and store their firearm in the locker provided by PBSO.

C. NONEXEMPT PERSONS

1. No one shall be permitted to carry a **firearm or** weapon into the courthouse unless the person is specifically exempted under section B1 above.
2. For law enforcement officers, other than those specified in paragraph B1, the long-standing policy in this county requiring law enforcement officers to check their weapons shall remain in force and effect. A gun locker shall be provided in close proximity to the front entry of the courthouse.
3. Prior to gaining entry into the courthouse, any law enforcement officer, other than those

identified in paragraph B1, carrying a legally-authorized firearm or other weapon shall surrender the **firearm or weapon** to the security detail. The **firearm or weapon** shall be held under lock and shall be returned to the owner when leaving the courthouse.

4. **Law enforcement officers exempted under section B1 does not include the State Attorney, assistant state attorneys, probation officers, process servers or bail bondsmen.**

D. ADMISSION SEARCHES

1. When entering the courthouse/annexes through designated judicial access points in the secured garage or secured parking areas, the following shall be exempt from the search requirement:
 - a. all circuit court judges of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit;
 - b. all county court judges of Palm Beach County;
 - c. the Clerk of the Court;
 - d. the Court Administrator;
 - e. Domestic and Juvenile Magistrates;
 - f. General Counsel.
2. When entering through the general public entrances to the courthouse/annexes during normal hours of operation all persons, with the exception of 15th Judicial Circuit Judges, Palm Beach County Court Judges, Domestic and Juvenile Magistrates showing valid courthouse identification, and firefighters and EMS technical and transport personnel responding to a call for emergency assistance in the courthouse, shall be subject to screening including those other individuals listed in paragraph D1.
3. Other than those persons identified in paragraphs B1 and D1, any person entering the courthouse/annexes during normal hours of operation shall enter through authorized entrances and shall pass through a magnetometer (metal detector).
4. Any person who activates the metal detector must empty his or her pockets and pass through the device a second time. If, after the second pass through, the metal detector is again activated, the person shall be subject to a security search to identify all objects which activated the metal detector.
5. Prior to passing through the metal detector, any person carrying a package, briefcase, container, purse, pocketbook, pager, **keys**, cellular phone or any other electronic device shall place such items on the X-ray conveyor belt and/or shall submit it to the security detail for visual inspection up to and including activation if applicable.
6. Should the X-ray machine disclose what may be a weapon, the container shall be subject to a manual search.

7. The examiner shall not read any written material disclosed during a search.
8. If illegal firearms, weapons, destructive devices or contraband, as defined above, are discovered during a search, the appropriate law enforcement authority shall be notified immediately so that an arrest and seizure might be effectuated.

E. PACKAGES AND LETTERS

1. All packages and letters entering the Palm Beach County Courthouse shall either pass through a metal detector or be inspected. In the case of boxes of materials and supplies delivered through the courthouse loading dock, the inspection shall be to ensure that the integrity of the carton has not been compromised. If a carton appears to have been opened and resealed, the carton shall be inspected to ensure that no firearms, weapons or destructive devices have been placed in the carton.
2. If illegal firearms, weapons, destructive devices or contraband, as defined above, are discovered during a search, the appropriate law enforcement authority shall be notified immediately so that an arrest and seizure may be effectuated.

F. NOTICE

The following notice shall be posted in a conspicuous place at all courthouse entrances:

"FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC, ALL PERSONS ENTERING THESE PREMISES MUST PASS THROUGH THE MAGNETOMETER (METAL DETECTOR). IF THE DETECTOR REGISTERS, THAT PERSON WILL BE SUBJECT TO A LIMITED SEARCH. ALL PACKAGES, BRIEFCASES, POCKETBOOKS OR OTHER ITEMS CARRIED BY A PERSON MUST BE OFFERED FOR INSPECTION IF SUCH PERSON WISHES TO ENTER THE BUILDING. ALL WEAPONS, INCLUDING LEGALLY-AUTHORIZED FIREARMS, MUST BE SURRENDERED PRIOR TO GAINING ENTRY INTO THE COURTHOUSE AND MAY BE RECLAIMED UPON LEAVING THE COURTHOUSE. ILLEGAL WEAPONS OR OTHER CONTRABAND DISCOVERED IN THE COURSE OF THESE SEARCH PROCEDURES WILL BE SEIZED."

DONE and SIGNED in Chambers at West Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, This 30th day of January, 2026.



Glenn D. Kelley, Chief Judge