

## MSCO: Rangel back on duty

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 10 March 2017 06:59

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### Two-month leave stemmed from an apparent fight

The third deputy at the McKinley County Sheriff's Office that was recently put on paid administrative leave has been reinstated, officials said.

McKinley County Sherriff Ron Silversmith said this week that Richard Rangel, 20, is now fully back to work as of March 3.

"He's back on the job as of last week," Silversmith said in a telephone conversation. "Again, he is back at work. But the investigation that we're (the county) doing still is not yet final."

Silversmith said Rangel, a Gallup High School graduate, is not patrolling, but is working "civic" duty. He said there really isn't a time line as to when Rangel would be permitted to get back in a patrol car and return to duty.

McKinley County Attorney Doug Decker said an investigation done by the New Mexico State Police is complete as of about two weeks ago. Decker did not go into detail about the contents of the report, but said a formal New Mexico Inspections of Public Records Act request would be honored by McKinley County as it pertains to viewing the report. He said a separate county investigative report is nearly done, saying disciplinary action against Rangel remains possible.

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“The county report is, for the most part, finished,” Decker said. “There remains the possibility of disciplinary action, however.”

Deputies Joey Guillen, Johnson Lee and Rangel were placed on paid administrative leave after a January party held at fellow deputy’s A.J. Noriega’s residence turned violent. A person connected to the Rangel family told *The Sun* several weeks ago that Cody Bitsilly, 23, of Gallup, was beaten up by Rangel because Bitsilly tried to move on Rangel’s girlfriend who was also at the party at Noriega’s Hill Avenue-area residence.

“(Little Richard) beat him up, that what I was told,” the source told *The Sun* on condition of anonymity. “I think everybody knows that by now.”

Guillen, a U.S. Navy veteran with more than a decade serving MCSO, and Lee, about four years with MCSO, were reinstated Jan. 23. A Gallup police officer, Clarissa Morgan, was indirectly involved in the initial incident, as she took Bitsilly to a local hospital where he was subsequently airlifted to Albuquerque for further treatment due to the extent of the injuries sustained.

Capt. Marinda Spencer, public information officer at the Gallup Police Department, said Morgan’s leave of absence after the incident was “personal leave” and not a paid administrative leave. Spencer declined further comment.

The *Sun* has made contact with at least one family member of Bitsilly, but has not gotten into lengthy conversations about the incident. The family member said the filing of a lawsuit against MCSO is not removed from the realm of reality.

Neither Decker nor Silversmith commented on the possibility of the McKinley County District Attorney’s Office filing criminal charges as per the state investigative report.

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