

HOLLOWAY: McKeithen blasts Aruban authorities' handling of case

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"She must have thought that being in that bar with a big group made her safe. She was too confident, she felt too safe, she let her guard down for a moment, and in that moment, she vanished," Holloway said Thursday night.

"In spite of the pain I feel every day, I would have to say that at least knowing (what happened to her) gives me a sense of peace; it's the not knowing that's the most unbearable, and I pray that you will never feel my pain."

In addition to Holloway's speech, the faculty members of FSU-PC's UCSI spoke about their academic program at the university and their efforts during the search for Natalee.

Using a combination of academic theory and elbow grease, the UCSI team searched several Aruba locations, both inland and offshore, including locations U.S. federal investigators could not access.

Bay County Sheriff Frank McKeithen, whose daughter, Ali, and another student, Kristen Brookins, organized the event as part of a class, also spoke



Jonas Hogg / The News Herald

Beth Holloway, right, hugs Janet Dowling after Holloway spoke at Florida State University-Panama City campus Thursday night. Holloway's daughter, Natalee, disappeared on a high school trip in May 2005 in Aruba and never has been found.

Thursday night. Among other items, McKeithen blistered Aruban law enforcement's handling of the disappearance and subsequent treatment of Beth Holloway, who said during her stay in Aruba, she was taken to drug houses and told her daughter

was likely to "show up" later.

"That type of law enforcement is just totally unacceptable to me and I would think anywhere in the United States," he said.

McKeithen also said there are similarities between the free-spirited atmosphere in Aruba and locally.

"The situations that happen to Natalee, certainly people are put into those situations in our area because it's such a big Spring Break destination," he said.

Holloway, who sat through discussions of her daughter's body and possible remains, said even after three years of dealing with the issue, she doesn't feel hardened by the experience.

"You almost have to, when you begin the search for your loved ones, especially in some very trying situations, you almost have to step back just a little bit and approach it in a very take charge sort of — just — I felt like I had to go to work for Natalee," she said.

"I guess that after all this time has transpired, it does get to where you are talking very technical and frank terms. But it's just the nature of the beast, and that's how it is."

(Source: Panama City, FL News Herald)