



SPOKANE POLICE DEPARTMENT

CRAIG N. MEIDL
CHIEF OF POLICE

Closed Case Summary

Complaint Number: C20-057 OPO Number: 20-39
Date of Complaint: 6/29/2020
Allegation: Inadequate Response
Chain of Command Finding: Multiple
Final Discipline: Not Applicable

INCIDENT SYNOPSIS

Officers were dispatched to a store located for a report of a female and male pointing guns at a shoplifter in the parking lot. Officers arrived and investigated the call. A sergeant also arrived to supervise the scene. No persons were injured, and no shots were fired. The female who was shoplifting was cited and released for theft and the couple who detained her with guns were released with no enforcement action taken. A video was released on social media of the incident by a citizen who witnessed it.

COMPLAINT

The complainant alleged that the officers on scene were derelict in their duty by not citing or arresting the armed individuals for their vigilante behavior. The official allegation was Inadequate Response.

INVESTIGATION

The Internal Affairs investigator reviewed incident reports and video of the incident. He interviewed people on scene, the involved officers, and the complainant. Officers had made the decision not to cite the armed individuals based on statements that officers took from the two individuals who drew their handguns. In the officers' interviews, both individuals stated they feared for their safety and others when the female suspect began moving inside the vehicle and accessing what they believed to be a knife (it was a multi-use bladed tool). Several other witnesses corroborated the female suspect's actions.

The investigation was re-opened to see if criminal charges should be filed against the armed individuals. A Spokane Police detective conducted a follow-up investigation and determined there was probable cause to charge the individuals with the misdemeanor crime of Aiming or Discharging Firearms/Dangerous Weapons. In his investigation, he uncovered new evidence during a follow-up interview with one of the individuals (information that had not been shared with the officers on scene). The detective tried but was unable to locate the female to ask if she wanted to pursue charges. The detective and prosecutor agreed that without the female's testimony, the case should be suspended pending her coming forward within two years.

The chain of command reviewed the investigation and determined that the accused officers responded appropriately given the information provided to them at the time of incident. Bodyworn camera showed proper conduct by two officers and appropriate conduct by the supervisor. The supervisor should have viewed a video that was offered to him, as that would be a best practice, but his actions did not elevate to a finding of “Sustained.”

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The allegations of Inadequate Response were Exonerated for the two officers and Not Sustained for the supervisor.