



February 8, 2022

Interim Chief Adrian Diaz  
Seattle Police Department  
PO Box 34986  
Seattle, WA 98124-4986

Dear Chief Diaz:

Please see the below Management Action Recommendation.

**Case Number**

- 2021OPA-0281 & 2021OPA-0287 / 2022COMP-0003

**Topic**

- Vehicle Pursuits

**Summary**

- It was alleged in two separate incidents that SPD supervisors authorized out-of-policy vehicle pursuits.

**Analysis**

- In 2021OPA-0281, officers pursued a vehicle wanted in connection to a bank robbery and burglary. The suspect was known to be armed and dangerous. Officers pursued the vehicle for six miles at high speed until the suspect vehicle crashed. The supervisor monitoring the call did not terminate the pursuit. The involved officers later told OPA they had not received formal training concerning SPD's new pursuit policy but believed they were permitted to pursue based on the circumstances.
- In 2021OPA-0287, an unmarked police vehicle observed the suspect vehicle in a drive-by shooting as it fled the scene. The unmarked unit kept pace with the suspect vehicle to observe its movements and provide direction of travel to marked patrol units. A supervisor authorized a pursuit if it was needed, though ultimately no pursuit was initiated. The supervisor later told OPA he believed there was probable cause to stop the suspect vehicle because of its involvement in a shooting with multiple victims, thus presenting a continued imminent threat to others.
- [SPD Policy 13.031-POL-4](#) states that officers in a pursuit must have "probable cause to believe that the person poses significant imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to others such that, under the circumstances, the public safety risks of failing to apprehend or identify the person are considered to be greater than inherent risk of pursuit driving."
- OPA finds the language "significant imminent threat of death or physical injury to others" to be vague. Does it mean that officers must have information indicating that the suspect is actively threatening to cause imminent death or physical injury to others or, for example, that the suspect is described as armed and dangerous and appears to have escalating behavior?

**Recommendation(s)**

- Reevaluate the language in SPD Policy 13.031-POL-4 to clarify what constitutes a "significant imminent threat of death or physical injury to others." Instruct officers on any changes to the policy and provide department-wide guidance on this matter.



Thank you for your consideration of this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

*Gráinne Perkins*

Gráinne Perkins  
Interim Director, Office of Police Accountability