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## **OPA makes sustained findings and recommends systemic changes in recently completed protest investigations**

Seattle — Today the Office of Police Accountability (OPA) released 22 more completed investigations into alleged Seattle Police Department (SPD) employee misconduct at protests following the killing of George Floyd. These investigations led OPA to make multiple sustained findings against officers and recommend four policy changes where the issues were more systemic in nature.

In three cases ([2020OPA-0333](#), [2020OPA-0335](#), and [2020OPA-0344](#)) SPD officers deployed CS gas (tear gas) canisters or blast balls overhead without being fully aware of their surroundings. Some blast balls hit people who were not posing a risk to public safety or property. OPA's investigations and [video analysis](#) found the methods used to deploy these munitions were inconsistent with policy and training and therefore recommended the allegations of improper use of force be sustained in all three cases. To address the system-wide impact of these concerns, OPA also recommended [changing policy](#) to prohibit officers from deploying blast balls overhead and/or directing blast balls at a person unless it is purposed to prevent imminent serious bodily harm.

In case [2020OPA-0419](#), OPA found that blast balls were deployed to move a crowd in accordance with training but recognized that the policy should be altered to avoid similar situations in the future. Thus, OPA recommended a not sustained finding but issued a formal [recommendation](#) that SPD officers be prohibited from rolling blast balls directly into crowds unless there is a direct and ongoing threat of harm to officers.

OPA received numerous complaints regarding SPD's decision to disperse a crowd of protesters on June 1 using blast balls, CS gas, and OC spray (pepper spray). The complaints alleged that SPD—not the protesters—escalated the situation without provocation. OPA's subsequent investigation in case [2020OPA-0334](#) found that the reasons to disperse the crowd were not proportional to the risk of injury/damage that dispersal would cause. As a result, the decision to disperse the crowd violated this policy, and OPA recommended a sustained finding.

In cases [2020OPA-0332](#) and [2020OPA-0330](#), OPA's investigation found that when officers arrested individuals for low-level crimes during protests, it led to greater disorder among the crowd than the original crime. OPA did not sustain the allegations in these two cases, as the officers' actions were within policy. However, OPA recommended that SPD [modify policy](#) to ensure that officers have discretion to balance the potential to escalate a crowd against the need to make an arrest for a minor crime.

In case [2020OPA-0425](#), it was alleged that SPD was dishonest in an official tweet. OPA's investigation found that the content of the post was inaccurate but not intentionally so; rather, the tweet was an attempt to disseminate information as quickly as possible under immense pressure. OPA recommended a not sustained finding in this case and [issued a recommendation](#) to require chain of command screening of all



official social media posts concerning high-profile matters that are reasonably expected to impact community perception of SPD and its activities.

Please visit the [Completed Protest Case](#) portion of OPA's demonstration dashboard to read summaries of the remainder of the completed investigations and policy recommendations released today.

Since May 30th, OPA has been contacted over 19,000 times about SPD's conduct at and response to various demonstrations. So far, the emails, phone calls, and other feedback have resulted in 141 investigations. OPA updates its [website dashboard](#) every three weeks to show progress into investigations.

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