

Issued Date: December 8, 2025

From: Acting Deputy Director Nelson Leese (on behalf of Director Bonnie Glenn)
Office of Police Accountability 

Case Number: 2025OPA-0244

Allegations of Misconduct & Director's Findings

Named Employee #1

- 1. Allegation #1:** 6.180 – Searches-General, 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies
Finding: Not Sustained - Unfounded (Expedited)
 - 2. Allegation #2:** 6.220 – Voluntary Contacts, Terry Stops, and Detentions, 6.220-POL-2 Conducting a Terry Stop, 1. Terry Stops are Seizures Based Upon Reasonable Suspicion
Finding: Not Sustained - Lawful and Proper (Expedited)
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This Closed Case Summary (CCS) represents the opinion of the OPA Director regarding the misconduct alleged and therefore sections may be written in the first person.

Executive Summary:

SPD officers, including Named Employee #1 (NE#1), responded to an incident involving the Complainant, who was driving a Hummer that collided with other vehicles. The Complainant alleged that NE#1 unlawfully detained him and searched his Hummer.

Administrative Note:

This case was approved for Expedited Investigation. That means OPA, with the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) agreement, believed it could issue recommended findings based solely on its intake investigation without interviewing the named employee. As such, OPA did not interview the named employee in this case.

On July 22, 2025, OIG certified OPA's investigation as thorough, timely, and objective.

Summary of the Investigation:

OPA investigated this incident by reviewing the OPA complaint, computer-aided dispatch call report, body-worn video, privately recorded video, 911 audio recording, and incident report. The Complainant did not respond to OPA's requests for an interview. Based on these records, a preponderance of the evidence showed the following:

On May 17, 2025, SPD officers, including NE#1, responded to a 911 call regarding a witness who observed a Hummer collide with a vehicle in front and behind it while the driver was trying to parallel park. The witness provided what she believed to be the Hummer's license plate number, but that plate was registered to a different vehicle.² NE#1 and the officers suspected the vehicle was stolen, as stolen vehicle suspects commonly steal license plates from other vehicles and affix them to stolen vehicles to mislead the police. They also suspected the driver was impaired based on his driving. Thus, the officers executed a high-risk vehicle stop on the Hummer and subsequently detained the Complainant, the driver, in handcuffs. Officers then ran the correct license plate for the Hummer, verified that it was not stolen, and released the Complainant.

Analysis and Conclusions:

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #1

6.180 – Searches-General, 1. Officers May Only Make Searches Pursuant to a Search Warrant, Unless a Specific Exception Applies

The Complainant alleged that NE#1 unlawfully searched his hummer.

Officers are prohibited from searching without a valid search warrant unless a specific exception applies. SPD Policy 6.180(1).

This allegation is unfounded. Neither NE#1 nor any other officer searched the Complainant's Hummer. Although they cleared the vehicle—ensuring that no one else was inside the Hummer after detaining the Complainant in handcuffs—they did not search the vehicle.

Accordingly, OPA recommends that this allegation be Not Sustained – Unfounded (Expedited).

Recommended Finding: **Not Sustained – Unfounded (Expedited)**

Named Employee #1 – Allegation #2

6.220 – Voluntary Contacts, Terry Stops, and Detentions, 6.220-POL-2 Conducting a Terry Stop, 1. Terry Stops are Seizures Based Upon Reasonable Suspicion

The Complainant alleged that NE#1 unlawfully detained him.

Terry stops are seizures of an individual and, as such, must be based on reasonable suspicion to be lawful. SPD Policy 6.220-POL-2(1). A *Terry* stop is a brief, minimally intrusive seizure of a subject based on reasonable articulable suspicion to investigate possible criminal activity. SPD Policy 6.220-POL-1. Reasonable suspicion means specific, objective, articulable facts, which, taken together with rational inferences, would create a well-founded suspicion that there is a substantial possibility that a subject has engaged, is engaging, or is about to engage in criminal conduct. *Id.* The reasonableness of a *Terry* stop is based on the totality of the circumstances, the officer's training and experience, and what the officer knew before the stop. *Id.* While information learned during the stop can lead to additional reasonable suspicion or probable cause that a crime has occurred, it cannot justify the original stop. *Id.*

NE#1 had reasonable suspicion to detain the Complainant for operating a stolen vehicle while impaired. The license plate check did not correspond with the Hummer, giving NE#1 reasonable suspicion that it might be stolen. The witness' misstatement of the license plate was unintentional yet understandable, considering the license plate's obstruction. As noted in NE#1's incident report, stolen vehicle suspects commonly steal license plates from other vehicles and affix them to stolen vehicles to mislead the police. Moreover, the Complainant's repeated collisions with two vehicles were significant enough to generate a 911 call, giving NE#1 reasonable suspicion that the driver might be impaired. Given these circumstances, NE#1 was justified in detaining the Complainant in handcuffs until further investigation could either confirm or dispel NE#1's reasonable suspicion. Following NE#1's investigation into the incident, which did not establish a stolen vehicle or impaired driving, NE#1's reasonable suspicion was dispelled, and the Complainant was subsequently released from detention.

Accordingly, OPA recommends that this allegation be Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper (Expedited).

Recommended Finding: **Not Sustained – Lawful and Proper (Expedited)**

Footnote 1. The OPA Director may designate a civilian OPA Deputy Director to “perform such duties and have such powers as the OPA Director may prescribe and delegate.” Seattle Ordinance 125315, Council Bill 118969, subchapter I, section 3.29.100(B).

Footnote 2. The witness appeared to have mistakenly provided an incorrect license plate number due to the two vehicles obstructing the Hummer's license plates, as the Hummer was tightly wedged between those vehicles.