



CITY OF CHICAGO
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

20
25

Recommendation to Reopen Chicago Police Department Disciplinary Investigation

CPD Log #2024-0003973

OIG Case #C2025-000000268

Published October 17, 2025

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October 17, 2025

Pursuant to the Municipal Code of Chicago (MCC) § 2-56-230(c)(ii), the Public Safety section of the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducts reviews of individual closed disciplinary investigations conducted by the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and the Chicago Police Department's (CPD) Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA). Based on those reviews, OIG may make a recommendation to reopen the investigation to address a deficiency materially affecting its outcome.¹

COPA investigated allegations related to a traffic stop that occurred following an altercation between several CPD members and the family of a domestic-related homicide victim. A large group of the homicide victim's family members gathered near the scene of the homicide, leading CPD to request more units for "crime scene and crowd control."

The altercation began after a group of family members did not move away from the entrance to an alley when a CPD vehicle attempted to enter the alley. The victim's sibling engaged CPD Officer Damian Alfaro, Star #11258, in a physical confrontation. Another family member shoved Officer Alfaro away from the victim's sibling and wrestled with Officer Alfaro and Officer Ryan Luzin, Star #17586, while the victim's sibling left the area and got into another relative's vehicle.

After arresting the family member who wrestled with Officers Alfaro and Luzin, CPD members searched for the victim's sibling and found them in the passenger seat of a vehicle driven by a relative. The CPD members conducted a traffic stop during which Officer Alfaro pointed their firearm at the vehicle. The CPD members arrested the victim's sibling for battery and handcuffed the driver while searching the vehicle. The driver filed a complaint alleging the CPD members conducted a traffic stop at gunpoint without justification, forcibly removed them from their vehicle without justification, handcuffed them without justification, searched their vehicle and personal items without justification, damaged the weather stripping on their vehicle, and directed profanity at them.

COPA sustained allegations regarding the vehicle search, use of handcuffs, and use of profanity. COPA unfounded the allegation that the traffic stop occurred without justification, and reached a finding of Not Sustained for Officer Alfaro's firearm pointing while conducting the traffic stop. COPA brought and sustained an additional allegation against Officer Alfaro for failing to report their firearm pointing incident to the Office of Emergency Management and Communication (OEMC), as required by CPD directives and the consent decree entered in *Illinois v. Chicago*.

During its review, OIG identified evidence that Officer Natalie Vera, Star #17307, also pointed their firearm at the vehicle, which COPA did not address during its investigation. OIG recommended that COPA reopen the investigation to consider whether Officer Vera failed to notify OEMC of their

¹ Once BIA or COPA has responded to an OIG recommendation to reopen an investigation, and once the underlying investigation has reached a final disciplinary decision, OIG's recommendation letters and the agencies' responses will be published on OIG's website. In these procedural postures, OIG's recommendations to reopen and the agencies' responses have been available and, from time to time, released pursuant to MCC § 2-56-250 and the Illinois Freedom of Information Act. These recommendations to reopen, issued pursuant to MCC § 2-56-230(c), are separate from OIG's own confidential investigative work, which is governed by the confidentiality provisions set out in MCC § 2-56-110.

firearm pointing incident and to consider whether this fact was material to Officer Vera's participation in the traffic stop.

In response to OIG's recommendations, COPA declined to reopen the investigation. In COPA's response, it stated that COPA did not believe reopening the investigation would result in material changes to its findings and recommendations, as COPA sustained other allegations against Officer Vera that led to a recommendation for suspension. COPA reported it would recommend that Officer Vera receive retraining regarding firearm pointing incidents.

OIG's letter to COPA containing its recommendations is attached in Appendix A. COPA's response is attached as Appendix B.



Deborah Witzburg | Inspector General
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Via Electronic Mail

July 8, 2025

LAKENYA WHITE
INTERIM CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
CIVILIAN OFFICE OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY
1615 WEST CHICAGO AVENUE, 4TH FLOOR
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60622

Re: Log #2024-0003973

Dear Chief Administrator White:

Pursuant to § 2-56-230(c)(ii) of the Municipal Code of Chicago (MCC), the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) Public Safety section has conducted a preliminary review of the investigation conducted by the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) in Log #2024-0003973. OIG recommends that the investigation be reopened to fully account for all available evidence and conduct an analysis of all potential violations against Chicago Police Department (CPD) member Natalia Vera, Star #17307. Log #2024-0003973 is currently in a Command Channel Review status.

Log #2024-0003973 concerns the following allegations against several CPD members related to a traffic stop in CPD's 10th District, and COPA's findings on those allegations:

Officer Natalie Vera, Star #17307

1. Conducting a traffic stop of the complainant's vehicle, without justification.
Unfounded
2. Assisting in the forcible removal of the complainant from their vehicle, without justification.
Unfounded
3. Assisting in the detention of the complainant and placing them in handcuffs, without justification.
Unfounded
4. Using profanity toward the complainant by stating words to the effect, "Get out of the car. Get out of the fucking car."
Sustained in violation of Rules 2, 3, 6, 8, and 9
5. Searching the complainant's vehicle, without justification.
Sustained; in violation of Rules 2, 3, and 6

6. Searching the complainant's purse located inside of her vehicle, without justification.
Not Sustained
7. Damaging the weatherstripping of the complainant's vehicle, without justification.
Not Sustained

Officer Damian Alfaro, Star #11258

1. Conducting a traffic stop of the complainant, without justification.
Exonerated
2. Detaining the complainant, without justification.
Exonerated
3. Conducting a traffic stop of the complainant, at gunpoint, without justification.
Not Sustained
4. Failing to notify OEMC of the gun pointing incident, as required, without justification.
Sustained, in violation of Rule 6

Officer Fernando Toledo, Star #10445

1. Forcibly removing the complainant from their vehicle, without justification.
Unfounded
2. Handcuffing the complainant, without justification.
Sustained, in violation of Rules 2 and 3
3. Detaining the complainant, without justification.
Exonerated

Officer Evelyn Ruiz, Star #11457

1. Forcibly removing the complainant from their vehicle, without justification.
Unfounded
2. Detaining the complainant, without justification.
Exonerated
3. Handcuffing the complainant, without justification.
Sustained, in violation of Rules 2 and 3

Officer Estafany Ramos, Star #14711

1. Detaining the complainant, without justification.
Exonerated
2. Searching the complainant's vehicle, without justification.
Not Sustained

Officer Yanni Melidones, Star #3188

1. Conducting a traffic stop of the complainant, without justification.
Exonerated
2. Detaining the complainant, without justification.
Exonerated

Officer Conrad Kulik, Star #8127

1. Searching the complainant's vehicle, without justification.
Sustained, in violation of Rules 2, 3, and 6

Officer Cole Fraim, Star #13098

1. Searching the complainant's vehicle, without justification.
Sustained, in violation of Rules 2, 3, and 6

The incident that led to the complainant's being stopped was an altercation between CPD members and family members of a domestic-related homicide victim. According to the Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC) event query, on May 9, 2024, a person called 911 at 8:45 p.m. to request a well-being check for the victim, who was their adult child.¹ At 9:46 p.m., the victim was found deceased in their former partner's apartment with two gunshot wounds to the head.² A large group of the homicide victim's family members gathered at the scene of the homicide, leading CPD to request more units for "crime scene and crowd control."³

At approximately 12:45 a.m., Officer Alfaro's body worn camera (BWC) video captures members of the homicide victim's family attempting to separate other family members, including the homicide victim's sibling, from CPD members while several people are shouting. Officer Alfaro tells the CPD members at the entrance to the alley to "go to the crime scene." A CPD member explains that the altercation began because the homicide victim's family would not clear the entrance to the alley so the CPD vehicle could drive through. Several elders of the family tell the CPD members they will keep the family back and ask the CPD members to leave the family members and move to the crime scene.⁴

A group of CPD members including Officer Alfaro remain in the area where the altercation occurred when the homicide victim's sibling, wearing a green sweatshirt, walks towards Officer Alfaro and engages Alfaro in a physical confrontation. As Officer Alfaro and the homicide victim's sibling shove each other, another family member in a blue sweatshirt pushes Officer Alfaro away from the homicide victim's sibling then shoves and wrestles with Officers Alfaro and Officer Ryan Luzin, Star #17586. Officer Alfaro radios to request more cars and calls a 10-1. After a physical struggle with Officers Alfaro, Melidones, Luzin, and Alberto Pimentel, Star #10324, the individual in the blue sweatshirt is apprehended, handcuffed, and arrested.⁵

¹ Attachment 18, p. 14.

² Ibid, p. 4.

³ Ibid, p. 3.

⁴ Attachment 3 at 02:09-04:14.

⁵ Ibid at 04:14-05:55.

As observed on the Police Observation Device (POD) camera video footage, the homicide victim's sibling wearing the green sweatshirt left the area with the complainant and another person while the CPD officers were engaged in a physical struggle with the individual in the blue sweatshirt.⁶ OEMC event query notes state that CPD members responding to the 10-1 call were instructed to look for a person wearing all green and a black face mask.⁷ Officer Alfaro stated in his interview with COPA that "officers on scene related that [the homicide victim's sibling] was reaching into [their] pocket, which through my knowledge and experience, indicates [they] may be carrying a firearm."⁸ The OEMC event query notes did not state that the person CPD was looking for was armed.⁹ Officer Alfaro's relay of information to a CPD sergeant and to OEMC, as captured on BWC video, does not include any statement indicating knowledge or belief that the homicide victim's sibling may be carrying a firearm.¹⁰

Officer Alfaro's BWC video captures Officer Alfaro locating the homicide victim's sibling in the passenger seat of the complainant's vehicle and pointing their firearm as they order the homicide victim's sibling out of the vehicle, as shown in the Still Image #1.¹¹ COPA sustained an allegation that Officer Alfaro failed to notify OEMC of this firearm pointing incident, as required by a CPD Department Notice.¹²

Still Image #1



⁶ Attachment 2 at timestamp 12:51am.

⁷ Attachment 18, p. 8.

⁸ Attachment 82, p. 15, lines 15-22.

⁹ Attachment 18, p. 8.

¹⁰ Attachment 3 at 08:06-09:20.

¹¹ Ibid at 09:21-09:32. Image screenshot at 09:23.

¹² CPD Department Notice D19-01 Firearm Pointing Incidents, Section II-C, effective November 1, 2019. CPD D19-01 was rescinded on April 15, 2025, and replaced by CPD Special Order S03-22 Firearm Pointing Incidents.

As observed on Officer Vera's BWC footage, Officer Vera was driving their vehicle when Officer Alfaro called the 10-1. Officer Vera and their partner arrived on the scene as the individual in the blue sweatshirt was being escorted to a CPD vehicle in handcuffs. Then as Officer Alfaro locates the homicide victim's sibling in the complainant's vehicle, Officer Vera runs towards the front of the vehicle while pointing their firearm and shouting "get out of the fucking car!"¹³ Still Image #2 from Officer Vera's BWC video shows Officer Vera pointing their firearm in the direction of the vehicle while they run towards the vehicle.¹⁴

Still Image #2



COPA unfounded the allegation that Officer Vera conducted a traffic stop without justification, stating "Officer Vera arrived on scene after officers stopped [the complainant's] vehicle, so [Officer Vera] was not involved in the initial stop," which is contrary to what is depicted on Officer Vera's BWC as explained above.¹⁵ Additionally, COPA does not address in its final summary report or its investigative file that it considered serving allegations to Officer Vera for failure to report their firearm pointing incident.

CPD Department Notice D19-01 Firearm Pointing Incidents, effective through April 15, 2025, requires CPD members to notify OEMC "whenever a Department member points a firearm at a person while in the performance of his or her duties."¹⁶ CPD D19-01, Section II-C specifies that the act of pointing a firearm at a person constitutes a "seizure (e.g., investigatory stop or arrest)."

¹³ Attachment 5 at 06:06-06:09.

¹⁴ Ibid at 06:08.

¹⁵ Attachment 90, p. 4.

¹⁶ CPD Department Notice D19-01 Firearm Pointing Incidents, Section III-A, effective November 1, 2019, through April 15, 2025.

COPA determined that Officer Alfaro violated CPD's Department Notice D19-01 Firearm Pointing Incidents when Officer Alfaro failed to notify OEMC of their firearm pointing incident; however, COPA failed to bring this allegation against Officer Vera. As captured on Officer Vera's BWC video, Officer Vera points their firearm at the vehicle and its occupants while approaching from a short distance away, at the same time as the other CPD members found by COPA to have conducted a traffic stop are approaching the vehicle.¹⁷ Officer Vera's actions as captured on the BWC footage are consistent with participating in the traffic stop according to CPD D19-01 Section III-C. Significantly, the investigative file contains no evidence that Officer Vera reported their firearm pointing incident to OEMC as required.

Based on OIG's preliminary review, and without taking any position on any other aspect of the investigation or its findings, OIG recommends that COPA reopen the investigation to consider whether Officer Vera failed to notify OEMC of their firearm pointing incident and to consider whether this fact is material to Officer Vera's participation in the traffic stop.

Please contact Chief Investigative Analyst LaDonna Candia-Flanagan at lcandia-flanagan@igchicago.org or (773) 478-5614 with any questions. Please send your response to this recommendation within the time allowed by MCC § 2-56-245. OIG will consider a failure to respond in the time permitted by ordinance to be a declination of our recommendation. OIG looks forward to COPA's response, and recommends that COPA incorporate this letter and its response into the electronic case file to provide for a complete record.

Respectfully,



Tobara Richardson
Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety
Office of Inspector General

cc: Deborah Witzburg, Inspector General, OIG
Samuel Chae, Associate General Counsel for Public Safety, OIG
LaDonna Candia-Flanagan, Chief Investigative Analyst for Public Safety, OIG
Angela Snell, Assistant General Counsel, COPA
Timothy L. Moore, Deputy Director, Bureau of Internal Affairs, CPD

¹⁷ Attachment 5 at 06:08.

Appendix B | Department Response



September 2, 2025

Tobara Richardson
Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety
City of Chicago
Office of Inspector General
231 S. LaSalle Street, 12th Floor
Chicago IL 60604

Via Electronic Mail

RE: Re-Open Recommendation Log No. 2024-0003973

Dear Deputy Inspector General Richardson:

I have received your July 8, 2025, letter recommending that COPA reopen its investigation in Log No. 2024-0003973. We understand the Office of Inspector General – Deputy Inspector General for Public Safety (PSIG) recommends re-opening this case to analyze whether Police Officer Natalia Vera¹ failed to notify OEMC of the firearm pointing incident and whether Officer Vera participated in a traffic stop.

Respectfully, COPA does not believe reopening this log at this time would result in material changes to COPA's findings and recommendations. First, because COPA recommended a penalty range for Officer Vera, COPA's recommended suspension for Officer Vera would not change if it re-opened the investigation and sustained an allegation of failing to notify OEMC of a firearm pointing incident. Second, based on the facts in this case, COPA would not sustain an allegation of participating in the traffic stop even if COPA were to determine Officer Vera participated in stopping the complainant.² Instead, COPA agrees to recommend retraining regarding firearm pointing incidents policy for Officer Vera without reopening this investigation.

Under COPA's ordinance, the Chief Administrator may, in her discretion, re-open any closed investigation upon PSIG's recommendation.³ While we respectfully decline to re-open the investigation for the reasons stated above, we appreciate your continued diligent and careful review of closed COPA investigations.

¹ Star #17307.

² As explained more fully in COPA's Final Summary Report, COPA found the traffic stop was justified based on the circumstances.

³ MCC § 2-78-120(x)(iii).



Respectfully,

LaKenya White
Interim Chief Administrator
Civilian Office of Police Accountability

cc: Deborah Witzburg (OIG)
Samuel Chae (OIG)
LaDonna Candia-Flanagan (OIG)
Timothy Moore (CPD)
Angie Snell (COPA)



LaDonna Candia-Flanagan
Chief Investigative Analyst for Public Safety

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For further information about this report, please contact the City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, 231 S. LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 60604, or visit our website at igchicago.org.

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