



Eddie T. Johnson  
Superintendent  
Chicago Police Department  
3510 S. Michigan Avenue  
Chicago, Illinois 60653

August 8, 2016

Re: Advisory Letter Regarding Use of "Box-in" Vehicle Tactic

Dear Superintendent Johnson:

Pursuant to the Municipal Code of Chicago Section 2-57-040, the Chief Administrator of the Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA) is empowered to and has a duty to make recommendations to the superintendent, the police board, and the chairman of the city council committee on public safety concerning revisions in policy and operating procedures to increase the efficiency of the department. To fulfill the mission, as outlined in Section 4.2.2 of the draft Rules of the Independent Police Review Authority (published April 15, 2016), at the conclusion of an investigation, IPRA may issue an Advisory Letter to the department if the investigation uncovered a problem that hinders the effectiveness of department operation and programs or if the investigation has identified a verifiable potential liability or risk that warrants attention by the department.

In two recently concluded officer-involved shooting investigations, IPRA found that the involved officers used a tactic whereby they attempted to block the travel of a vehicle that was the subject of a traffic stop by parking either in front of or beside the vehicle. In these investigations, we found that this tactic proved unsound because it unnecessarily placed the officers in an unsafe position when the subjects attempted to evade the traffic stop or arrest by maneuvering the vehicle around the parked department vehicles. As a result, the drivers may have had no alternative other than to direct the vehicle directly at, or dangerously close to the officers who were trying to complete the traffic stop, which, in these two cases, culminated in the officers responding by discharging their weapons at and into the subject vehicle.

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Based upon a review of available department policies and CPD academy training modules, IPRA was unable to identify a policy or directive that explicitly prohibits this tactic, which we believe is inherently unsafe.<sup>1</sup>

The General Order governing vehicle pursuits, G03-03-01, provides some guidance. Pursuant to General Order G03-03-01, similar tactics termed “boxing in” and “roadblock” are explicitly prohibited. As defined in that order, a “roadblock” is:

Any method, restriction, or obstruction used or intended for the purpose of preventing passage of a motor vehicle.

However, because the prohibition of this tactic appears within the directive governing vehicle pursuits, it is not clear to department members whether this prohibition also applies to blocking the passage of a vehicle that has already been stopped, as opposed to a vehicle that is being pursued.

General Order G03-03-01 also prohibits “Boxing in,” a tactic described as follows:

A deliberate tactic by two or more police vehicles to force a pursued vehicle in a specific direction or to force a pursued vehicle to stop or reduce speed by the maneuvering of police vehicles in front of, behind, or beside a pursued vehicle.

With this definition, it is not clear that this prohibition applies to the conduct at issue. Moreover, the specification that the prohibition only applies when two or more police vehicles are used is overly restrictive. We believe this prohibition should apply when any single vehicle is used to force a pursued vehicle in a specific direction or to force a pursued vehicle to stop or reduce speed in the manner described. As such, we recommend that the Department consider revising this directive to prohibit such tactics, even when only one police vehicle is involved.

Moreover, we urge the Department to consider revising this and any other applicable directive to explicitly prohibit unsafe tactics intended to restrict the path of or otherwise prevent a subject vehicle that is already stationary from evading a traffic stop or arrest.

We appreciate your time and consideration of these concerns and we respectfully request a response to these recommendations within 30 days. IPRA will publish this letter and the Department’s response, if any, on the IPRA website after the 30-day response time has passed.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that IPRA does not have access to all department directives and training materials. Therefore, there could be applicable policies or directives of which we are unaware.



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Thank you for your time and consideration of these issues.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, written in a cursive style. The signature is highly stylized and loops around the typed name below it. It starts with a long horizontal stroke on the left, loops up and over, and ends with a long horizontal stroke on the right that loops back under the signature.

Sharon R. Fairley  
Chief Administrator