

SUMMARY REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Date/Time/Location of Incident:	May 30, 2020, 8:00PM, at or near 16 W. Grand Ave.
Date/Time of COPA Notification:	On or about June 19, 2020, 4:00PM
Involved Officer #1:	LIDLAW, Craig, Star# 17695, Employee ID# [REDACTED] Date of Appointment: March 5, 2013, Police Officer, Unit of Assignment: 003, Date of Birth: [REDACTED], 1983, Male, White.
Involved Individual #1:	[REDACTED]
Case Type:	Excessive Force

I. ALLEGATIONS

Officer	Allegation	Finding
Officer Craig Laidlaw	It is alleged by [REDACTED] that on or about May 30, 2020, at approximately 8:00PM, at or near 16 W. Grand Ave, Chicago Police Officer Craig Laidlaw committed misconduct through the following acts or omissions in that he: 1. Discharged Oleoresin Capsicum (O.C. Spray) into the face of [REDACTED] without justification.	Exonerated

II. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE¹

In a statement with COPA dated January 24, 2022, [REDACTED] stated on the date of the incident he was covering the George Floyd protests. While acting in the capacity of the press, he witnessed numerous unidentified department members dispersing a large crowd during the protest. Police Officers ordered the crowd to back up and the crowd was complying. An officer³, Officer Laidlaw, discharged O.C. Spray at [REDACTED] stated he was wearing his press

¹COPA conducted a full and complete investigation of this matter, including the interview of all pertinent civilian and officer witnesses, and the collection and review of digital, documentary, and forensic evidence. As part of COPA’s ongoing efforts to increase case closure capacity, certain cases opened under IPRA are summarized more succinctly in a Modified Summary Report of Investigation, pursuant to COPA Guideline Modified Summary Report of Investigation Template and Approvals, effective February 13, 2019.

² Attachment 20 – Statement/Interview of [REDACTED]

³ Officer Laidlaw was identified by the Department of Law as the member that deployed the O.C. Spray at the crowd, Attachment 22.

credentials, yelled that he was the press, and held up his press pass prior to Officer Laidlaw discharging OC Spray at him. ██████████ was not injured and did not get any medical treatment.

Video footage⁴ provided by ██████████ depicts a crowd of people outside with numerous officers. The police appear to be dispersing the crowd. At 00:11, ██████████ states that there was pepper spray out, but it has not been used and the crowd was being pushed back. At 00:19, ██████████ states, “Here comes the pepper spray.” A male’s voice in the background, which may be ██████████ voice, states, “Officer don’t shoot.” At 00:24, Officer Laidlaw, who was dressed in camouflage clothing and wearing a gas mask, discharges O.C. Spray into the crowd and then towards ██████████ direction. The OC Spray gets on the recording device ██████████ was using to record the incident. A male’s voice, which appears to be ██████████ voice, states, “I’m fucking press.” At 00:39, ██████████ states, “I just got pepper sprayed by a cop. I’ve been holding my press pass up in his face...told him I was press...directly pepper sprayed me.”

In a statement with COPA dated April 5, 2022, accused Officer Laidlaw⁵ identified himself in the video provided by ██████████ Officer Laidlaw stated on the date of the incident it was a chaotic due to numerous objects being thrown at the police, which included liquor bottles. Officer Laidlaw stated that crowds were given commands to disperse but did not comply. Deputy Chief Chris Papaioannou⁶, #260, was in charge of scene and gave the command to discharge OC spray into the crowd. Officer Laidlaw stated he did not intentionally try to spray anyone specifically and was not aware of anyone wearing press credentials. Officer Laidlaw stated he was not wearing body worn camera (BWC) because SWAT was not assigned BWCs.

In a written report dated April 20, 2022, Deputy Chief Chris Papaioannou⁷ affirmed that he authorized Officer Craig Laidlaw, who was a member of the Chicago Police Department’s SWAT Team, to disperse a crowd of citizens with a chemical agent. He added based on the totality of the circumstances and in compliance of existing Department Policy, he assessed actions to be objectively reasonable, necessary, and proportional to the threat posed by the crowds engaged in noncompliant civil disobedience. Deputy Chief Papaioannou stated that he attempted to bring the situation safely under control.

III. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

COPA finds a finding of Exonerated for Allegation #1 against Officer Laidlaw that he discharged O.C. Spray into the face of ██████████ without justification be Exonerated. General Order G03-02-05 sets forth the Department’s policies regarding the use of OC Spray and other chemical agents. The General Order permits Department members to use personal OC devices against active or passive resisters who are a part of a noncompliant group or crowd, but only after receiving authorization from the Superintendent or his designee.⁸ Authorization from the Superintendent or his designee is also required when members use “special weapons that

⁴ Attachment 14 is 1:46 in duration and Attachment 15 is 2:04 in duration. Both videos are similar and show the same incident.

⁵ Attachment 18 – Officer Laidlaw’s Statement/Interview

⁶ At the time of the incident, Deputy Chief Papaioannou was a Commander.

⁷ Attachment 21 – Statement from Deputy Chief Papaioannou

⁸ General Order G03-02-05(II)(C)(3), Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Devices and Other Chemical Agent Use Incidents (effective February 29, 2020 – April 15, 2021).

