



Brandon Johnson
Mayor

Department of Police · City of Chicago
3510 S. Michigan Avenue · Chicago, Illinois 60653

Larry B. Snelling
Superintendent

August 28, 2025

Lakenya White
Interim Chief Administrator
Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA)
1615 West Chicago Avenue, 4th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60622

Re: Superintendent's Partial Non-Concurrence with Findings and with Penalty Recommendations
Complaint Log No. 2024-3973
Officer Natalie Vera, Star #17307
Officer Evelyn Ruiz, Star #11457
Officer Fernando D. Toledo, Star #10445
Officer Conrad Kulik, Star #8127
Officer Cole Fraim, Star #13098
Officer Damian A. Alfaro, Star #11258

Dear Interim Chief Administrator White:

After a careful review of the above referenced complaint log number investigation, the Chicago Police Department (Department) partially concurs with the recommended sustained findings and partially concurs with the penalty recommendations as they pertain to Officer Natalie Vera, Star #17307, Officer Evelyn Ruiz, Star #11457, Officer Fernando D. Toledo, Star #10445, Officer Conrad Kulik, Star #8127, Officer Cole Fraim, Star #13098 and Officer Damian A. Alfaro, Star #11258.

The COPA investigation recommended a penalty of a suspension of 1 to 29 days and retraining on vehicle searches for Officer Natalie Vera after concluding that she:

1. Used profanity toward [REDACTED] [REDACTED] by stating words to the effect, "Get out of the car. Get out of the fucking car;"
2. Searching [REDACTED] [REDACTED] vehicle, without justification.

The COPA investigation also recommended a penalty of a suspension of 1 to 29 days and retraining on when to use handcuffs during an investigatory stop for Officer Evelyn Ruiz after concluding that she:

1. Handcuffed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] without justification.

The COPA investigation also recommended a penalty of a Reprimand and retraining on vehicle searches for Officer Conrad Kulik after concluding that he:

1. Searched [REDACTED] [REDACTED] vehicle, without justification.

The COPA investigation also recommended a penalty of a Reprimand and retraining on vehicle searches for Officer Cole Fraim after concluding that he:

1. Searched [REDACTED] [REDACTED] vehicle, without justification.

The COPA investigation also recommended a penalty of a Reprimand and retraining on firearm pointing incidents for Officer Damian Alfaro after concluding that he:

1. Failed to notify OEMC of the gun pointing incident, as required, without justification

The COPA investigation also recommended a penalty of a suspension of 1 to 29 days and retraining on when to use handcuffs during an investigatory stop for Officer Fernando Toledo after concluding that he:

1. Handcuffed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] without justification.

Regarding Officer Vera, the Department concurs with Allegation #1 in that the use of profanity is not necessary and unprofessional. However, the Department believes that the video evidence shows that Officer Vera was in a very high-stress situation and that the profanity was not directed at the person but part of the police command being given. For Allegation #2, the Department concurs with the sustained finding to the extent that the search extended into the trunk of the vehicle. However, the Department does not agree that the search of the vehicle itself was improper. The passenger of the vehicle was an identified offender of an aggravated battery to a police officer. This passenger was immediately placed under arrest and the search of the area around him was justified as a search incident to his arrest. For the use of profanity and the search of the trunk of the vehicle, the Department recommends a penalty of a Reprimand and additional training on vehicle searches and Professionalism in the Police Environment.

Regarding Officer Evelyn Ruiz and Officer Fernando Toledo, the Department does not concur with the sustained finding and recommends an alternate finding of Exonerated. Both officers explained in their statements to COPA that they handcuffed the driver of the vehicle for safety reasons, as they only knew that her passenger was a wanted offender for the battery of another police officer. The 7th Circuit case cited by COPA in footnote 16 of the FSR specifically addressed this type of scenario and stated that that "there are situations in which concerns for the safety of the police officer or the public justify handcuffing the detainee for the brief duration of an investigatory stop." SRI at page 4, Footnote 16. The Court stated that the use of such measure like handcuffing must be reasonable in light of the circumstances that prompted the stop. ID. In this situation, the officers identified an offender of a violent crime and did not know the involvement of the driver or if there were any weapons used or available to the offender or the possible second offender. Once the involvement of the driver was determined, the handcuffs were removed and the driver was released after completion of an investigatory stop report. Finally, the Department strongly disagrees with COPA's conclusion that the application of handcuffs to the citizen in these circumstances constituted an aggravated battery on the part of the involved officers.

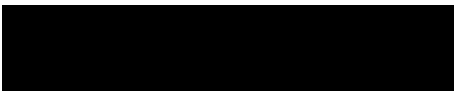
Regarding Officer Kulik and Officer Fraim, the Department concurs with the sustained finding to the extent that the search extended into the trunk of the vehicle. However, the Department does not agree that the search of the vehicle itself was improper. The passenger of the vehicle was an identified offender of an aggravated battery to a police officer. This passenger was immediately placed under arrest and the search of the area around him was justified as a search incident to his

arrest. The Department concurs with the recommended penalty of a Reprimand and retraining on vehicle searches.

Regarding Officer Alfaro, the Department concurs with the recommended finding and the penalty recommendation of a reprimand with retraining on the notification procedures.

On behalf of Superintendent Larry B. Snelling, the Department looks forward to discussing this matter with you pursuant to MCC 2-78-130(a)(iii).

Sincerely,



Lieutenant Robert A. Flores
Department Advocate
Bureau of Internal Affairs
Chicago Police Department