

**Summary of:  
Stanford University Incident Review (Performed by The Riseling Group)  
June 2023**

Background

On January 28, 2023, an [incident](#) was reported involving four members of the Stanford University Department of Public Safety (SUDPS) who stopped a Black motorist on the Stanford campus. During the vehicle stop, two of the deputies unholstered their guns and a third pointed his gun at the occupied vehicle. The incident was immediately reviewed by SUDPS and the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office (SCCSO) (which has jurisdiction over the law enforcement actions of SUDPS sworn personnel). Additionally, because of the unique circumstances surrounding this incident, the decision was jointly made by Stanford, SUDPS, the Community Board on Public Safety (CBPS), and the SCCSO to obtain an independent review of the incident.

Independent Review Process

On February 5, 2023, the decision was [announced](#) that an outside consultant would conduct the independent review. The university engaged The Riseling Group (TRG) for this purpose. TRG had previously been selected by the CBPS through an extensive Request for Proposal (RFP) process to consult with the CBPS on its [charge](#) to "reimagine public safety" on the Stanford campus. In the course of its investigation TRG was given access to information it requested including:

- Body-worn camera video
- Police car camera video
- The site of the stop
- Police reports
- Incident Logs
- Police radio recordings
- TRG also interviewed two of the 4 deputies involved in the incident (2 deputies chose not to be interviewed by TRG). TRG further requested to interview the student involved and a resident dean, but these individuals did not respond to the requests.

Independent Review Outcome and Findings

The key facts are summarized below, however the full 17-page [TRG report](#) on the incident is available on the [CBPS website](#). The basic facts related to the stop as outlined by TRG are consistent with the January 30 Stanford Report [story](#). The following additional facts are highlighted:

- During the time one of the deputies (Deputy 1) was following the vehicle in question, Deputy 1 and another deputy (Deputy 3) engaged in a brief conversation on their SUDPS issued cell phones regarding the suspicious contact. The audio of one side of that conversation was captured on one of the deputy's in-car cameras.
- When Deputy 3 reported the traffic stop, he used a radio code that is recognized as indicating additional assistance is needed. This prompted a response from Palo Alto Police Department officers in addition to the response by other SUDPS deputies, including a supervisor.
- Upon hearing the request for assistance, Palo Alto Dispatch restricted radio traffic to emergency traffic only, which further signified to responding officers that the stop was "high risk".

Based on its review of the facts and evidence, and relying on its expert experience, TRG made a number of findings. Some of the key findings are:

- The initial contact between the deputy and the occupant of the parked vehicle was in compliance with applicable training standards.

- The vehicle stop was an appropriate decision. There was reasonable suspicion for a lawful traffic pullover and detention; and probable cause to affect a lawful arrest for possession of an open container of marijuana while operating a motor vehicle.  
There were various concerns with the deputies critical thinking, judgment, and communication prior to and during the detention.,
- Based on what was known to the deputies at the time the vehicle stopped, they did not need to use the tactics commonly used for conducting a “high risk” traffic stop.
  - The reason for the stop involved a suspicion of property theft, a possible misdemeanor warrant, and a missing front license plate traffic infraction, none of which indicate the need to effect a “high-risk” traffic stop.  
There are concerns the deputies who stopped the vehicle unnecessarily escalated the incident to a “high risk” stop for what relevant standards and training would consider to be “unknown risk”.
- Because the deputies who withdrew their firearms believed the traffic stop to be a “high risk” situation, their actions were reasonable and within policy.
- There were performance concerns for some deputies related to the events leading up to the use of force, to include the driving of two of the responding officers, which unnecessarily escalated both the deputies’ and public’s risk.
- After escalating the situation by using high-risk traffic tactics, the deputies’ efforts to then de-escalate the situation were ineffective.
- Bias-based policing was not found.
  - Stanford deputies involved in the incident were not found to have considered actual or perceived personal characteristics when taking law enforcement actions.
- SUDPS appropriately trains and maintains policies and procedures ensuring its deputies are knowledgeable and trained in the law and application of their law enforcement authority, duties and responsibilities.
- Some of the deputies’ actions potentially fell outside of SUDPS core values.
- One deputy’s action potentially fell outside of performance expectations when he belittled the motorist after a period of being berated.
- All deputies were in compliance with body-worn camera policies and procedures.
- There are aspects of the incident that indicate further review and training is warranted (see below).

The issues below were identified as calling for additional training:

- Critical thinking and decision making process
- Use of force process
- Traffic stop tactics
- Communication protocols
- De-Escalation techniques
- Adherence to DPS Core values

#### Next Steps

SUDPS has committed to implementing the additional or improved training necessary to address the issues raised by TRG.

The CBPS will follow up with SUDPS to ensure that the agreed upon training takes place.