



INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

Report Concerning the Police-Involved
Death in Baltimore on
June 4, 2025

September 9, 2025

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Declination Report Concerning the Officer-Involved Deaths of Gabriel Omar Castillo and Ezequiel Eduardo Garcia-Chicas on June 4, 2025

The Independent Investigations Division of the Maryland Office of the Attorney General (the “IID”) is charged with investigating “police-involved incidents that result in the death of individuals or injuries likely to result in death.”¹ If the Attorney General determines that the investigation provides sufficient grounds for prosecution, then the IID “shall have exclusive authority to prosecute the offense.”²

I. Introduction

On Wednesday, June 4, 2025, at approximately 2:18 a.m., a Maryland Transit Authority (MDTA) Police Officer was traveling in a marked patrol cruiser on I-95N in Baltimore, Maryland, when an Infiniti sedan with two occupants drifted into the cruiser’s lane. The officer attempted a traffic stop, and within moments, the Infiniti fled from the officer at a high rate of speed. The driver of the Infiniti lost control of the vehicle, struck a guardrail and a curb, which then sent the Infiniti airborne before it collided with a support pillar beneath I-95N. The subject officer and other responding officers evaluated the occupants and attempted to provide medical aid until emergency medical services (“EMS”) arrived. Both occupants were pronounced dead on scene.

After completing its investigation and evaluating all available evidence, the Office of the Attorney General has determined that the subject officer did not commit a crime under Maryland law. Accordingly, the Attorney General has declined to prosecute the subject officer in this case.

The IID’s investigation focused exclusively on potential criminal culpability relating to the subject officer’s conduct. By statute, the IID only has jurisdiction to investigate the actions of police officers, not those of any other individuals involved in the incident. Moreover, the IID’s analysis does not consider issues of civil liability or the department’s administrative review of the officers’ conduct. Compelled statements by subject officers may be considered in civil or administrative processes but may not be considered in criminal investigations or prosecutions due to the subject officers’ Fifth Amendment rights. If any compelled statements exist in this case, they have not been considered in the IID’s investigation.

This report is composed of a factual narrative followed by a legal analysis. Every fact in the narrative is supported by the evidence obtained in this investigation, including autopsy reports, police radio transmissions, dispatch records, police and EMS reports, police body-worn camera footage, dashboard camera footage, photographs, department policies, and a crash investigation report. The subject officer did not make a statement in this case, which has no impact on the prosecutorial decision.

The legal analysis explains why the IID will not bring charges under the relevant Maryland statutes.

This investigation involved two decedents and one subject officer.

¹ Md. Code, State Gov’t § 6-602 (c)(1).

² Md. Code, State Gov’t § 6-604 (a)(1).

- A. Decedent, Gabriel Omar Castillo, was 20 years old at the time of the incident. He was a Hispanic male who lived in Hyattsville, Maryland.
- B. Decedent, Ezequiel Eduardo Garcia-Chicas, was 22 years old at the time of the incident. He was a Hispanic male who lived in Hyattsville, Maryland.
- C. Officer Jamal Cofield has been employed by MDTA Police since June 2024. He is a Black male, and at the time of the incident was 29 years old.

The IID reviewed all available departmental disciplinary records and criminal histories of these involved parties, and where they existed, determined that none were relevant to the legal analysis.

II. Factual Summary

On June 4, 2025, at approximately 2:17 a.m., MDTA Police Officer Jamal Cofield was traveling in a marked patrol cruiser on I-95N next to an Infiniti sedan occupied by Gabriel Omar Castillo, the driver, and front passenger Ezequiel Eduardo Garcia-Chicas. For approximately twenty seconds, Mr. Castillo drove next to Officer Cofield while intermittently slowing down and speeding up. As the pair approached I-95N Exit 54, Mr. Castillo drifted into Officer Cofield's lane without a signal. The Infiniti then crossed closely in front of the cruiser, which caused Officer Cofield to slow down.



Image 1: A still image from Officer Cofield's dashboard camera, showing the Infiniti as it began to enter his travel lane from the left without signaling.

Mr. Castillo then activated the Infiniti's right turn signal and accelerated at a high rate of speed. For forty seconds, Officer Cofield followed several car lengths behind as the Infiniti swerved within and between lanes with its right turn signal active before exiting the highway at Exit 55. Officer Cofield also exited the highway, then activated his emergency lights and sirens to stop the Infiniti because he suspected that the driver was intoxicated.

Mr. Castillo did not stop. Instead, he turned left onto E. McComas Street³ and accelerated, widening the distance between the Infiniti and the cruiser. Officer Cofield maintained control of his cruiser and adjusted his driving to account for the presence of a construction crew on the roadway. There was no other traffic on the road. Officer Cofield did not close the distance between his cruiser and the Infiniti, but did begin to relay the Infiniti's license plate information to dispatch.



Image 2: A still image from Officer Cofield's dashboard camera shows the distance between the Infiniti and Officer Cofield's cruiser approximately one second after the crash began.

About thirty seconds after attempting to stop the Infiniti, while Officer Cofield was still trying to relay the Infiniti's license plate information to dispatch, the Infiniti lost control near a curve on E. McComas Street. While travelling at approximately 117 m.p.h., the Infiniti struck a guardrail and curb, went airborne, and collided into a support pillar beneath I-95N. Mr. Castillo was partially ejected from the vehicle, and Mr. Garcia-Chicas was completely ejected from the Infiniti. At the same time, Officer Cofield advised dispatch to disregard his previous transmissions because the Infiniti crashed.

Approximately ten seconds after the crash, Officer Cofield arrived on scene, radioed his location, and observed Mr. Castillo and Mr. Garcia-Chicas with injuries incompatible with life. Several minutes after the crash, other MDTA officers arrived, and along with Officer Cofield, they attempted to provide medical aid. At approximately 2:31 a.m., Baltimore City Fire Department medics arrived on scene, and Mr. Castillo and Mr. Garcia-Chicas were pronounced dead.

³ E. McComas Street is a two lane, 30 m.p.h. road. During this incident, the weather was clear and dry.

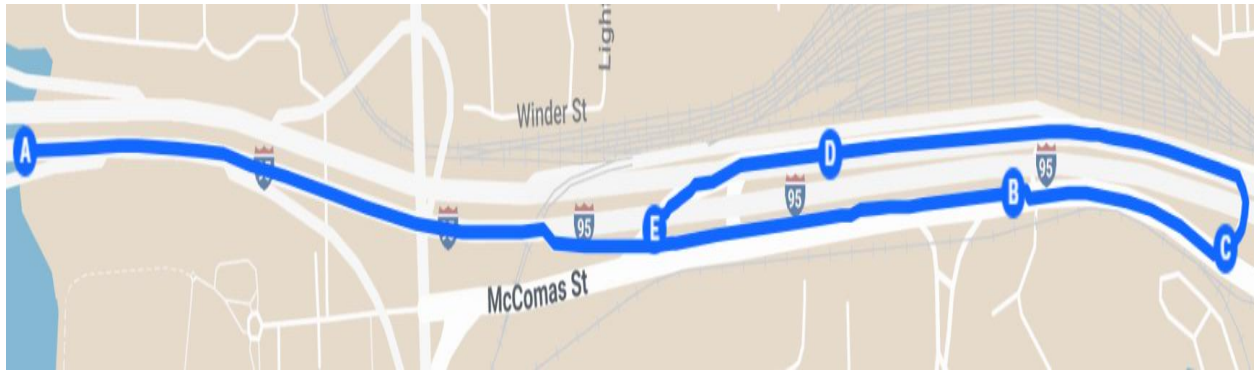


Image 3: A map of the encounter between Officer Cofield and the Infiniti. Point A represents the first location where there is evidence of the Infiniti and Officer Cofield’s cruiser traveling near each other. Point B represents the location where Officer Cofield activated his emergency lights and sirens. Point C represents the point where the Infiniti began its U-turn onto E. McComas Street. Point D represents Officer Cofield’s approximate location at the time of the crash, and Point E represents the crash site. The distance between Point B and Point D is approximately 0.6 miles, and the distance between Point B and Point E is approximately 0.7 miles.

III. Supplemental Information

A. Autopsy

On June 5, 2025, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (the “OCME”) performed autopsies on Mr. Castillo and Mr. Garcia-Chicas. The Medical Examiner determined that both men died from multiple injuries sustained as a result of a single vehicle collision. The manner of death was ruled an “Accident.”⁴

The OCME toxicology test detected marijuana in Mr. Castillo’s bloodwork. No substances were detected in Mr. Garcia-Chicas’s bloodwork.

B. Maryland State Police Crash Investigation Report

The Maryland State Police completed a detailed Crash Investigation Report. The report’s results were consistent with the above description of the crash.

C. Department Policy

MDTA Police provides officers with written policies and procedures, as well as practical training, for vehicle stops and pursuits. Under MDTA Police Directives Manual Chapter 17, officers are permitted to conduct a vehicle stop if they have reasonable suspicion that the driver of a vehicle has committed a traffic infraction or criminal offense. The policy states that officers

⁴ Manner of death is a classification used to define whether a death is from intentional causes, unintentional causes, natural causes, or undetermined causes. The Maryland Office of Chief Medical Examiner uses five categories of manner of death: natural, accident, suicide, homicide, and undetermined. “Accident” applies when injuries caused the death in question and there is little or no evidence that the injuries occurred with the intent to harm or cause death. These terms are not considered a legal determination, rather they are largely used to assist in the collection of public health statistics. “A Guide for Manner of Death Classification,” First Edition, National Association of Medical Examiners, February 2002.

should provide dispatch with the vehicle registration and/or a description of the vehicle, the number of occupants, and the location of the intended stop before attempting a stop. Further, officers should activate their emergency lights and sirens to signal the violator to stop and leave them active until the stop is completed.

Under MDTA Police Directives Manual Chapter 16, a vehicular pursuit is defined as a “deliberate attempt by an Officer in an authorized emergency vehicle to apprehend a fleeing suspect(s) who, by use of a motorized vehicle, is/are actively attempting to avoid apprehension through evasive tactics.” MDTA Police officers are authorized to engage in vehicle pursuits for felony offenses, hit and run traffic collisions resulting in death or bodily injury, or when a person suspected of driving while intoxicated, and the suspect’s driving prior to the attempted stop is so flagrantly reckless that they present a danger to others on the roadway, and failure to apprehend the violator would likely pose an imminent danger to the public. Officers involved in a pursuit must immediately activate their vehicle’s emergency lights and sirens and radio dispatch with their identity, location, speed, direction of travel, a description of the vehicle and its occupants, and the reason for the pursuit. Officers must also obtain approval for the pursuit from a Duty Officer, who is responsible for overseeing the pursuit.

IV. Legal Analysis

After a criminal investigation is complete, prosecutors must determine whether to bring criminal charges against someone. When making that determination, prosecutors have a legal and ethical duty to only charge a person with a crime when they can meet the State’s burden of proof; that is, when the available evidence can prove each element of the alleged crime beyond a reasonable doubt. Prosecutors also need to determine whether the person accused of the crime could raise an affirmative defense. In those cases, prosecutors not only need to prove the crime, but they also must determine whether the evidence could disprove the defense beyond a reasonable doubt. Ultimately, the decision to bring any charges rests on whether the available evidence is sufficient for prosecutors to meet that standard.

The relevant offense that was considered in this case is criminally negligent manslaughter by vehicle.⁵

There is insufficient evidence to prove that the subject officer committed the crime of criminally negligent manslaughter by vehicle. Accordingly, the IID will not pursue criminal charges against the subject officer. This report provides further details on why, based on the evidence, a prosecutor could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the subject officer committed a crime.

A. Criminally Negligent Manslaughter by Vehicle

To convict a defendant of criminally negligent manslaughter by vehicle, a prosecutor must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant drove a motor vehicle in a criminally negligent manner and in doing so, caused the death of another person.⁶ In Maryland, negligence is measured

⁵ Md. Code, Criminal Law § 2-210.

⁶ MPJI-Cr 4:17.10 (3d ed. 2024)

on a spectrum—with simple negligence at one end, criminal negligence in the middle, and gross negligence at the other end.⁷ Criminal negligence requires proof that the accused “should have been aware, but failed to perceive that his or her conduct created a ‘substantial and unjustifiable risk’ to human life and that the failure to perceive that risk was a ‘gross deviation’ from the standard of care that a reasonable person would exercise.”⁸ Where alleged negligence involves a law enforcement officer, the “reasonable person” perspective is replaced with a “reasonably prudent police officer” perspective, which must also account for the fact that an officer is permitted to violate some traffic laws under certain circumstances.⁹

In determining whether an officer’s actions constitute criminal negligence, the totality of the circumstances must be considered, including relevant factors such as department policy, use of warning devices, traffic conditions, speed, yielding to traffic signals, and erratic driving.¹⁰ When examining the weight given to the violation of departmental policy, the Supreme Court of Maryland has held that “a violation of police guidelines *may* be the basis for a criminal prosecution.”¹¹ The Court clarified that, “while a violation of police guidelines is not negligence *per se*, it is a factor to be considered in determining the reasonableness of police conduct.” Maryland courts have considered officers’ policy violations as evidence of negligence, recklessness, unreasonableness, and corrupt intent.¹² However, a “hyper technical” violation of policy, without more, is not sufficient to establish gross negligence.¹³

Applying these principles here, prosecutors must individually analyze the subject officer’s decision to try to stop the Infiniti and his actions while the cruiser was in motion. Regarding the decision to initiate a stop of the Infiniti, the subject officer observed the Infiniti displaying behavior consistent with an intoxicated driver. Specifically, the subject officer observed the Infiniti driving at inconsistent speeds, weaving into the subject officer’s lane of travel without signaling, driving at a high rate of speed, and weaving between lanes. After this observation, the subject officer followed the Infiniti and activated his emergency lights and sirens to signal a stop to the driver. MDTA policy permits officers to attempt to stop an individual who is suspected of driving while intoxicated. The subject officer’s decision to attempt to stop the Infiniti was in accordance with MDTA policy, within his legal authority, and consistent with the behavior of a reasonable police officer similarly situated. Accordingly, the subject officer’s decision to attempt a traffic stop did

⁷See *Beattie v. State*, 216 Md. App. 667, 683 (2014) (explaining “a gross deviation from the standard of care” by comparing it with a similar Kansas statute that used the “material deviation” standard, stating: “a ‘material deviation’ from the standard of care require[s] ‘something more than ordinary or simple negligence yet something less than gross and wanton negligence.’”).

⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the different negligence standards, see [this opinion](#) written by the Office of the Attorney General. 96 Md. Op. Atty. Gen. 128.

⁹ *Boyer v. State*, 323 Md. 558, 589 (1991).

¹⁰ See, e.g., *Boyer*, 323 Md. at 591; *Taylor v. State*, 83 Md. App. 399, 404 (Ct. Sp. App. Md. 1990).

¹¹ *State v. Pagotto*, 361 Md. 528, 557 (2000) (citing *State v. Albrecht*, 336 Md. 475, 502-03 (1994)) (emphasis in original).

¹² See, e.g., *Albrecht*, 336 Md. at 503; *Pagotto*, 361 Md. at 550-53; *Koushall v. State*, 249 Md. App. 717, 729-30 (2021), *aff’d*, No. 13, Sept. Term, 2021 (Md. Feb. 3, 2022); *Kern v. State*, No. 2443, Sept. Term 2013, 2016 WL 3670027, at *5 (Md. Ct. Spec. App. Jul. 11, 2016) (unreported); *Merkel v. State*, No. 690 Sept. Term 2018, 2019 WL 2060952, at *8 (Md. Ct. Spec. App. May 9, 2019) (unreported); *Mayor and City Council of Baltimore v. Hart*, 395 Md. 394, 398 (2006) (civil litigation).

¹³*State v. Pagotto*, 127 Md. App. 271, 304 (1999), *aff’d*, 361 Md. 528 (2000).

not create an unjustifiable risk that was a gross deviation from the reasonable standard of care and, therefore, was not criminally negligent.

Regarding the subject officer's actions while the cruiser was in motion, the subject officer activated his emergency lights and sirens, maintained control of his cruiser, and did not attempt to catch up to or otherwise pursue the Infiniti when it drove away at a high rate of speed. Given the totality of the circumstances, the subject officer's actions during the attempted traffic stop did not create an unjustifiable risk that was a gross deviation from the reasonable standard of care.¹⁴

Given the totality of the circumstances, there is no evidence to indicate that the subject officer acted in a manner that created a substantial and unjustifiable risk to human life during the attempted traffic stop. Since such a risk did not exist, the subject officer could not have failed to perceive an unjustifiable risk to human life in a manner that constituted a gross deviation from the reasonable standard of care.¹⁵ Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney will not charge the subject officer with criminally negligent manslaughter by motor vehicle in this case.

V. Conclusion

This report has presented factual findings, legal analysis, and conclusions relevant to the June 4, 2025, police-involved vehicle collision in Baltimore, Maryland, that resulted in the deaths of Gabriel Omar Castillo and Ezequiel Eduardo Garcia-Chicas. The Office of the Attorney General has declined to pursue charges in this case because, based on the evidence obtained in its investigation, the subject officers did not commit a crime.

¹⁴ Because there is insufficient evidence to establish that the subject officer acted with criminal negligence, this report does not analyze whether the subject officer caused the death of the decedents.

¹⁵ Because prosecutors could not prove that the subject officers drove in a criminally negligent manner, they could not prove the more severe charge of manslaughter by vehicle, which requires a prosecutor to prove that the defendant drove with gross negligence, a level above criminal negligence.