



INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

Report Concerning the Police-Involved Death in
Prince George's County on March 21, 2025

December 9, 2025

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Declination Report Concerning the Officer-Involved Death of Patricia Riddick on March 21, 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 March 21, 2025, at approximately 7:30 p.m., Seat Pleasant Police Department (“SPPD”) officers conducted a traffic stop on a Hyundai sedan. The driver (“Driver”)³ of the sedan eventually fled from the officers, and they immediately alerted dispatch via radio call. Several Prince George’s County Police Department (PGPD) patrol officers encountered the Hyundai at a nearby gas station. One PGPD officer activated his lights and briefly pursued the car, but Driver did not stop, and the PGPD officer turned off his lights. Shortly thereafter, Driver ran a red light and collided with an uninvolved Nissan SUV that was traveling through the intersection. Driver and a juvenile passenger in the Nissan were transported to area hospitals, where they were treated for non-life-threatening injuries. Patricia Riddick, the driver of the Nissan, was also transported to an area hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

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. Therefore, the IID’s investigation did not specifically examine any criminal culpability of Driver in this incident. Moreover, the IID’s analysis does not consider issues of civil liability or the department’s administrative review of officers’ conduct. Compelled statements by subject officers may be considered in civil or administrative proceedings 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 a crash investigation report, autopsy reports, police radio transmissions, dispatch records, police and emergency medical services reports, body-worn camera footage, dashboard camera footage, private surveillance, photographs, department policy, and interviews with law enforcement witnesses. The subject officer did not make a statement in this case, which has no impact on the prosecutorial decision.

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

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

³ Because any charging decisions with regard to the driver’s actions lie with the Prince George’s County State’s Attorney’s office, the driver’s name will be withheld, and they will be referred to as “Driver” throughout the report.

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

This investigation involved the driver of the Hyundai, the decedent, and one subject officer:

- A. Driver was 26 years old at the time of the incident. He is a Black male who lives in Washington, DC.
- B. The decedent, Patricia Riddick, was 34 years old at the time of the collision. She was a Black female who lived in Landover, Maryland.
- C. Corporal Travis Underwood has been employed by PGPD since October 2018. He is a White male who was 27 years old at the time of the incident.

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

II. Factual Summary

On March 21, 2025, at approximately 7:27 p.m., two SPPD officers stopped Driver in a black Hyundai sedan in the 6300 block of Martin Luther King, Jr., Highway in Seat Pleasant, Maryland for speeding and failing to stop at a stop sign. Initially, Driver turned over his license and registration and one of the SPPD officers returned to his cruiser with the documents. The other SPPD officer remained near the Hyundai with Driver for the next several minutes. At approximately 7:35 p.m., the officer near the Hyundai instructed Driver to stop reaching toward the backseat, then told him to step out of the car. Driver refused, and when the officer attempted to open Driver's car door, Driver fled the scene. The SPPD officers radioed dispatch that the sedan had fled, then initiated a pursuit which was terminated roughly thirty seconds after it began because the officers learned that Driver's license was valid and the sedan was properly registered. The SPPD pursuit ended at Martin Luther King Jr. Highway and Hill Road.

Several PGPD officers, including Community Action Team ("CAT") Corporal Travis Underwood, were nearby when the SPPD officers radioed that the Hyundai had fled.⁴ Some of the PGPD officers saw the Hyundai pull into a gas station parking lot at Martin Luther King Jr. Highway and Sheriff Road and notified dispatch, then allowed the Hyundai to leave the gas station. A second or two later, a CAT supervisor notified dispatch of their intent to have a team member deploy a GPS tracker onto the Hyundai and the CAT officers drove toward the gas station.

At approximately 7:37 p.m., as Driver was leaving the gas station and turning onto Martin Luther King Jr. Highway, Corporal Underwood activated his cruiser's emergency lights and began pursuing the Hyundai to deploy the GPS tracker. The distance between the Hyundai and the cruiser steadily increased and after roughly nine seconds, a PGPD supervisor ordered all units to "break

⁴ PGPD and SPPD share a channel for radio communications; because of the size and resources of SPPD, as well as for practical efficiency reasons, one unified dispatch manages communications for both jurisdictions.

it off.” Corporal Underwood turned off his emergency lights within seconds of the supervisor’s order.

Fifteen seconds later, roughly half a mile from where Corporal Underwood turned off his emergency lights, Driver ran the red light at Belle Haven Drive at Martin Luther King Jr. Highway and collided with an uninvolved Nissan SUV occupied by Patricia Riddick and a juvenile passenger. The impact of the collision forced both cars off the road at the southeast corner of Martin Luther King Jr. Highway and Belle Haven Drive. Corporal Underwood, who was still driving over the speed limit in the same direction as the Hyundai, radioed dispatch regarding the crash. Corporal Underwood arrived at the intersection roughly eight seconds after the crash occurred. In total, less than thirty seconds had passed between the activation of Corporal Underwood’s lights and the crash.

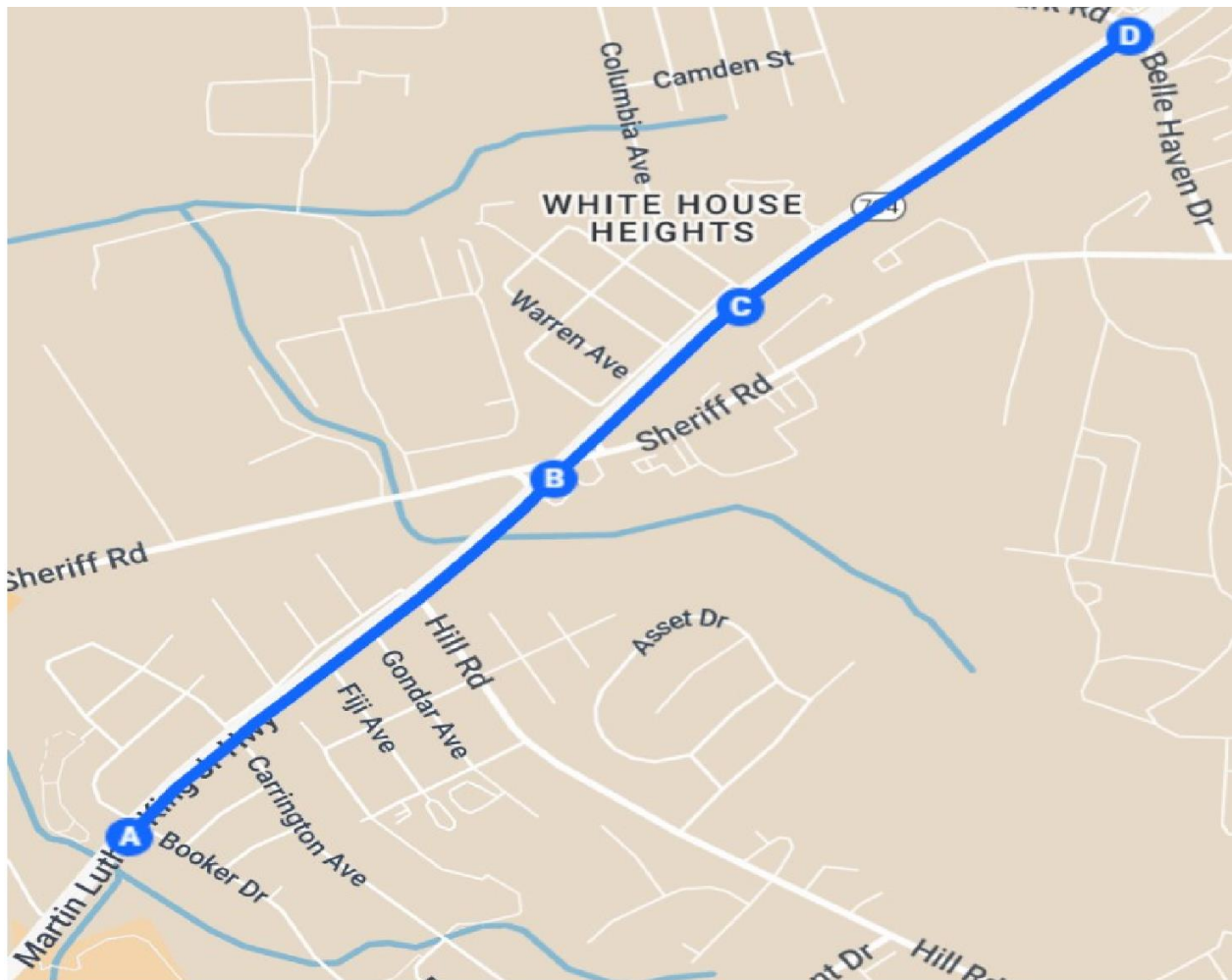


Image 1: Point A shows where officers from SPPD attempted the initial traffic stop. Point B shows the location where PGPD saw Driver at the gas station and Officer Underwood attempted a second traffic stop. Point C is the location where Officer Underwood turned off his lights; and Point D is the location of the crash.

The relevant section of Martin Luther King Jr. Highway is a four-lane highway with two lanes in both directions of travel and a posted speed limit of 40 m.p.h. The weather was clear, and the roadway was not obstructed. Both Corporal Underwood and Driver were traveling above the speed limit and weaved around traffic during the pursuit, but both remained in control of their respective vehicles. Corporal Underwood did not run any stop signs or stop lights. Additionally,

even though Corporal Underwood continuously drove over the speed limit throughout this incident, he fell increasingly further behind the Hyundai during the pursuit. Corporal Underwood began the pursuit roughly two seconds behind the Hyundai, was five seconds behind the Hyundai when he turned his emergency lights off and was eight seconds behind the Hyundai by the time it crashed.



Image 2: A Maryland State Police crash report diagram which shows the Hyundai (Vehicle 1) colliding with the Nissan (Vehicle 2).

Once at the scene, Corporal Underwood exited his cruiser and approached the sedan with another responding officer with his service weapon drawn and took Driver into custody. Other responding officers approached the Nissan and attempted to remove Ms. Riddick and the juvenile from the car but were unable to do so. At approximately 7:42 p.m. emergency medical services arrived on the scene and extracted Ms. Riddick and the juvenile. Driver and the juvenile passenger were transported to area hospitals and treated for non-life-threatening injuries. Ms. Riddick was also transported to an area hospital where she was pronounced dead.

III. Supplemental Information

A. Autopsy

On March 22, 2025, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner performed an autopsy on Ms. Riddick. The Medical Examiner determined that Ms. Riddick died from multiple injuries sustained in the crash. The manner of death was an “accident.”⁵

⁵ 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.

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

1. General Pursuit Policy

Under PGPD General Orders Volume II, Chapter 48, a vehicle pursuit is defined as “[a]n active attempt by an officer in an emergency vehicle to apprehend a motorist who is refusing to stop or exhibits a clear intention to avoid apprehension.” Officers have discretion to initiate a pursuit if there is reasonable and articulable suspicion that the individual has committed homicide, a contact shooting, armed robbery, or an armed carjacking. Even so, the policy instructs officers to consider other factors when deciding to pursue, including, the type and speed of the vehicle being pursued, performance capabilities of the pursuit vehicle, traffic conditions, amount of pedestrian traffic, weather, roadway characteristics and the officer's familiarity with the road, pursuit location, time of day, nature of the offense, circumstances that could lead to the officer losing control of the vehicle, and whether the identity of the offender is known.

Officers are required to notify dispatch of the pursuit, including the location and direction of travel, description of the vehicle, and reason for the pursuit. Shift commanders are required to either authorize or terminate the pursuit. When a supervisor terminates a pursuit, “everyone shall do so immediately and verbally acknowledge the termination via the radio.”

2. GPS Tracker Policies and Training

Some PGPD cruisers are equipped with a launchable GPS tracker. Corporal Underwood's cruiser was equipped with one of these devices, and he received specialized training to operate it. These devices have a limited range, requiring police cruisers to be within feet of a target car to deploy effectively. Equipped officers can deploy GPS trackers for any offense without supervisor approval, but they are required to verbalize their intent to use it over the radio prior to deployment, at which point a supervisor can instruct them not to.

According to the written policy, an officer is not permitted to pursue a vehicle specifically to deploy a GPS tracker. However, in training courses, officers are taught that due to the short deployment range, there is a limited window of time wherein they are allowed to try to “catch up” to a vehicle in order to deploy the tracker. Specifically, officers are instructed that if they use their emergency equipment to stop a car and it flees—for an offense that otherwise would not be authorized for pursuit—they have 10 to 15 seconds to close the distance with the fleeing vehicle and deploy the tracker. Trainers teach officers that during that limited time frame, they are still compliant with the pursuit policy. But after that short “catch up” period, officers must disengage or be considered in violation of the pursuit policy. Regardless, any GPS tracker-equipped officer must immediately abandon a pursuit if ordered to do so by a supervisor.

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 need to 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.⁶

There is insufficient evidence to prove that the subject officer drove his vehicle in a criminally negligent manner. Accordingly, the IID will not pursue criminal charges against the subject officer. This report explains below in further detail why, based on the evidence, a prosecutor could not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that any 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.⁷ In Maryland, negligence is measured on a spectrum—with simple negligence on one end, criminal negligence in the middle, and gross negligence on the other end.⁸ 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.”⁹ 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.¹⁰

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.¹¹ When examining the weight given to the violation of departmental policy, the Supreme Court of

⁶ Md. Code Ann., Criminal Law § 2-210.

⁷ MPJI-Cr 4:17.10 (3d ed. 2024)

⁸See *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.’”).

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ *Boyer v. State*, 323 Md. 558, 589 (1991).

¹¹ See, e.g. *Boyer*, 323 Md. at 591; *Taylor v. State*, 83 Md. App. 399, 404 (Ct. Sp. App. Md. 1990).

Maryland has held that, “a violation of police guidelines *may* be the basis for a criminal prosecution.”¹² 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.¹³ However, a “hyper technical” violation of policy, without more, is not sufficient to establish gross negligence.¹⁴

Applying these principles here, prosecutors must analyze Corporal Underwood’s decision to briefly pursue the Hyundai and his actions during the pursuit. Regarding the decision to engage in the pursuit, PGPD training generally does not permit officers to engage in pursuits based on fleeing and eluding traffic stops. However, PGPD does allow GPS tracker equipped officers a limited amount of time to try to catch up to a fleeing vehicle to attach a tracker. Corporal Underwood responded to the gas station in his capacity as a GPS tracker-equipped officer, as the CAT supervisor indicated to dispatch via radio. As discussed in Section III(C)(2) of this report, GPS trackers can be deployed for any offense, including fleeing and eluding, but have a limited deployment range. Additionally, the written policy does not authorize GPS-tracker equipped officers to engage in any pursuits solely for the purpose of attaching a GPS tracker to a vehicle. However, PGPD trainers teach GPS-tracker equipped officers that they are permitted to engage in a limited pursuit to try to “catch up” to fleeing vehicles to attach the tracker. This analysis recognizes that there is a tension between the written policy and the practical training that the officers are receiving, but the resolution of that tension is beyond the scope of this report.

Based on the evidence, Corporal Underwood accelerated his cruiser to get close enough to the Hyundai to deploy the tracker, then terminated his attempt to “catch up” within seconds of the supervisor’s order to “break it off.” Thus, Corporal Underwood was—consistent with PGPD training—engaging in a limited pursuit to perform his specialized function, which he abandoned when ordered to do so. Given his training, Corporal Underwood had no reason to believe that any of his actions were inappropriate or otherwise in violation of PGPD procedure. Accordingly, Corporal Underwood’s decision to engage in the brief pursuit did not create an unjustifiable risk that was a gross deviation from the reasonable standard of care, and therefore, was not criminally negligent.

Regarding Corporal Underwood’s actions while the cruiser was in motion, he did not personally provide information over the radio about his location, direction of travel, description of the vehicle, and reason for the pursuit. However, that information was provided by other PGPD officers. The road was busy, but traffic was moving normally, and Corporal Underwood did not run any stop signs or stoplights. Additionally, Corporal Underwood activated his emergency lights and maintained control of his vehicle at all times, even when weaving around other vehicles. When Corporal Underwood began falling behind Driver, he deactivated his emergency lights and the distance between the cruiser and the Hyundai increased. This demonstrates that Corporal

¹² *State v. Pagotto*, 361 Md. 528, 557 (2000) (citing *State v. Albrecht*, 336 Md. 475, 502-03 (1994)) (emphasis in original).

¹³ 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).

¹⁴ *State v. Pagotto*, 127 Md. App. 271, 304 (1999), *aff’d*, 361 Md. 528 (2000).

Underwood was not attempting to keep pace with Driver. Given the totality of the circumstances, Corporal Underwood's actions during the pursuit did not create an unjustifiable risk that was a gross deviation from the reasonable standard of care.¹⁵

Given the totality of the circumstances, there is no evidence to indicate that Corporal Underwood acted in a manner that created a substantial and unjustifiable risk to human life during the pursuit. Since such a risk did not exist, Corporal Underwood 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.¹⁶ Accordingly, the Office of the Attorney will not charge Corporal Underwood 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 March 21, 2025, police-involved fatal vehicle pursuit in Prince George's County that resulted in the death of Patricia Riddick. 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 officer did not commit a crime.

¹⁵ 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 decedent.

¹⁶ 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.