

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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18 July 2025

To: Captain Josh Haggard  
From: Colonel Brian R. Valenti  
Ref: Internal Affairs Investigation

I am directing the Internal Affairs Unit to investigate all of the events that unfolded on the Roebling Suspension Bridge on July 17, 2025, reference incident number 25-031966, to include the entirety of the responses by Covington Police Officers.

  
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COL. BRIAN R. VALENTI  
CHIEF OF POLICE

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Internal Affairs Finding of Fact

October 6, 2025

**Prepared by:** Det. Marcus Jordan, Det. G. Adkisson, Sgt. D Hoyle  
**Case Number:** 2025-00031966  
**Date of Incident:** July 17, 2025  
**Location of Incident:** Roebling Suspension Bridge  
**Internal Affairs Case #:** 229

### Introduction

On July 18, 2025, I was notified that Chief of Police Brian Valenti had directed the Internal Affairs Unit to conduct a comprehensive investigation into all events that transpired on the Roebling Suspension Bridge on July 17, 2025, under incident number 25-031966. The Chief specifically ordered a review of the entire response by Covington Police Department personnel involved in the incident (reference: IA Initiation Letter).

Pursuant to those orders, Captain Haggard assigned me (Detective Jordan), Detective Adkisson, and Sergeant Hoyle to the investigative team.

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### Investigative Process

#### A. Scope of Review

- a. In completing this review, our team examined:
- Approximately 116 Axon body-worn camera videos;
  - One (1) audio recording;
  - (2) Taser logs
  - Department reports and citations;
  - Approximately 2.07 GB of videos and photographs collected from open-source internet and media coverage; and
  - Numerous witness and officer interviews.

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### **B. Investigative Objective**

Our team received orders from Chief Brian Valenti to “investigate all of the events that unfolded on the Roebling Suspension Bridge on July 17, 2025, reference incident number 25-031966, to include the entirety of the response by the Covington Police Officers.” (Internal Investigation #229, Initiation Letter)

To comply with these orders, we conducted a comprehensive overview of the department’s response. This began with the initial contact patrol officers had with the subjects utilizing bicycles to block the entrance of the Roebling Suspension Bridge and continued through to the response by command staff on the day of the event.

With respect to the command staff’s response, our review was limited to a high-level assessment of their actions. We confirmed that command staff responded appropriately to the incident, assessed the situation, provided support and direction to active units, and briefed key city personnel as necessary. Additionally, we verified that the Public Information Officer was informed of the situation and made available to media outlets. We did not review any follow-up actions taken by the command staff after the conclusion of the initial incident on the bridge.

Regarding the active units who responded to the bridge, we reviewed all available video evidence, reports, supplemental reports, arrest citations, and use of force reports. We ensured that the written documentation accurately reflected what was observed on the officer’s body-worn camera footage as well as on publicly available video obtained from the internet and other sources.

It is important to note that, concerning the paperwork submitted by officers, our review focused solely on verifying that all relevant documentation was completed and submitted. We did not evaluate or make recommendations regarding administrative or clerical errors.

In reviewing the use of force reports, with the exception of those involving Specialist Stayton, we allowed the reports to proceed through normal review by the investigating sergeant, lieutenant, and Patrol Bureau Commander. After that initial review, we took possession of the reports and retained them until we were confident that all use of force incidents had been documented. We further verified that the narratives contained in the reports were consistent with the evidence gathered during our investigation, and that all

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reported use of force incidents complied with current legal standards, department policy, and nationally recognized best practices.

Again, we did not make any notes or recommendations regarding administrative or clerical errors in the use of force reports. The reports referenced in this analysis, and supplied in this file, are the versions provided to us following review by the Patrol Bureau Commander and may not reflect the final versions that were later edited for administrative or clerical corrections.

Once this process was complete, the majority of the use of force reports were returned to Sergeant Cook to continue through the normal chain of command.

However, we determined that two of the use of force reports submitted by Specialist Stayton required further investigation by the Internal Affairs Unit. The results of those investigations are detailed in this report. Upon completion of our findings of fact, those reports were then released to Sergeant Cook for proper storage and filing.

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## Event Overview

The event appeared to be organized and supported by a logistical team equipped with bicycles, high-visibility safety vests, handheld radios, portable Wi-Fi, and cellular range extenders (which may have incidentally interfered with law enforcement communications), loudspeakers, and designated team leaders coordinating group movements.

A forward team of cyclists positioned themselves near the Kentucky entrance of the Roebling Suspension Bridge, apparently in an effort to block vehicular access and secure the roadway for a group of approximately 100 to 200 participants. Their actions effectively restricted traffic flow between the states of Kentucky and Ohio.

During this event, a civilian motorist entering the bridge from the Ohio side contacted 911 after being surrounded by members of the group. In an interview conducted by Detective Cioca, the driver stated that the crowd encircled his vehicle, prevented him from moving forward, and struck the vehicle multiple times. He further reported that individuals



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attempted to break his rear windows and threw objects at his windshield, causing him to fear for his safety.

These facts establish that a portion of the crowd sought to seize control of a critical piece of interstate infrastructure, thereby impeding the lawful right of interstate travel.

Furthermore, the group demonstrated a willingness to use or threaten violence to achieve this objective.

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### Department Response

The Covington Police Department does not routinely encounter incidents of this scale or nature. Nonetheless, the department's overall response was measured, lawful, and consistent with federal, state, and local statutes, as well as with Covington Police Department policies and procedures.

The police response also aligned with community expectations for the protection of public safety and the restoration of lawful order.

Throughout the incident, officers issued multiple lawful orders for the crowd to disperse and move to the sidewalks, allowing participants to continue exercising their First Amendment rights in a safe and lawful manner. These orders were repeatedly ignored. Some members of the group responded with verbal threats and acts of physical aggression toward officers. Only after these escalations did officers employ reasonable and proportionate force to restore order and ensure public safety.

Command staff promptly responded on scene to monitor and ensure that all departmental actions were consistent with established standards. As is standard protocol following significant or high-profile incidents, Chief Valenti ordered an internal review to evaluate departmental performance and compliance.

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### Findings

After a comprehensive review, the professional opinion of the Internal Affairs investigative team is that the majority of the Covington Police Department's response was within policy, legally justified, and reasonable under the circumstances.

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However, three specific incidents involving Specialist Stayton were identified as concerning. The details and findings related to those incidents are addressed in the subsequent section of this report.

### Specialist Stayton

During the investigation into the department's overall response to the incident, three areas of concern, involving three separate encounters, were identified involving Specialist Stayton.

#### Encounter 1

The first involved the interaction and subsequent arrest of [REDACTED]. Specifically, this interaction may have violated Rule 141(A) Use of Force.

#### Rule 141(A) - Use of Force

*Officers shall not use more force in any situation than that which is reasonable and necessary under the circumstances. Officers shall use force in accordance with law and Agency procedures.*

#### Encounter 1 Findings: Exonerated

Our investigative review determined that Specialist Stayton had six distinct interactions with [REDACTED] during the encounter:

1. When [REDACTED] approached Specialist Warner from behind.
2. When [REDACTED] disabled the pepperball launcher and fled toward the east side of the bridge, while reaching for a bag he was wearing.
3. When [REDACTED] attempted to flee along the sidewalk.
4. When [REDACTED] grabbed the easternmost railing separating the bridge sidewalk from the river.
5. When [REDACTED] was positioned on the sidewalk holding onto the bridge superstructure.
6. When [REDACTED] released his grip and was lying on the sidewalk while attempting to prevent officers from securing his hands for handcuffing.

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Based on the available evidence, interactions one through five appeared consistent with departmental policy, established procedures, and recognized training standards. However, during the sixth interaction, Specialist Stayton delivered multiple strikes to the rear of head. These actions prompted concern regarding their compliance with departmental policy, procedural guidelines, and approved training practices.

Following a comprehensive review of the available body-worn camera footage, reports, and witness statements, investigators were unable to definitively determine whether Specialist Stayton's actions constituted a deviation from policy or training. To ensure an objective assessment, the matter was referred to Sergeant Cook for a specialized review of the incident and the use of force as a whole.

Sergeant Cook serves as the department's Training Sergeant and is responsible for overseeing all internal training programs, ensuring compliance with state and federal training standards, and reviewing departmental use-of-force reports to ensure conformity with established policies and procedures. His written findings represent a professional evaluation of whether Specialist Stayton's actions aligned with departmental expectations and training doctrine.

He concluded, "Given all the above factors, I consider Specialist Stayton's actions involving arrest to be within policy and current departmental practice" (Sgt. Cook's report). Both Sergeant Cook's report and his professional qualifications are included in the investigative record.

### **Encounter 2**

The second encounter involved the interaction and subsequent arrest of Specifically, this interaction may have violated Rule 141(A) Use of Force.

#### **Rule 141(A) - Use of Force**

*Officers shall not use more force in any situation than that which is reasonable and necessary under the circumstances. Officers shall use force in accordance with law and Agency procedures.*

**Encounter 2 Findings: Sustained**

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During our review of Specialist Stayton's interaction with [REDACTED] concerns were identified regarding statements in his use-of-force report and his actions as captured on body-worn camera footage.

In his use-of-force report, Specialist Stayton stated:

*"Due to her continued resistance and failure to comply, I delivered a closed-fist strike to the side of her head in an attempt to gain compliance." (Reference: Specialist Stayton Use of Force Report, 25-031966*

This strike is corroborated by multiple body-worn camera recordings.

At the time of this strike, [REDACTED] was lying face down on the sidewalk, and officers present—Specialist Stayton, Officer Meadows, Officer Hotaling, Specialist Appleman, and Sergeant Fain—were actively restraining her and attempting to place her hands behind her back. [REDACTED] was resisting by attempting to pull her hands away from the officers. While she was not yet handcuffed, she was effectively restrained by multiple officers, and Specialist Olvera-Vancini and Lieutenant Haubner were positioned to secure the scene and prevent interference from bystanders.

Given these circumstances, the use of a closed-fist strike to the side of the head/face solely to gain compliance from a restrained individual is excessive and constitutes a violation of Rule 141(A).

Additionally, body-worn camera footage shows Specialist Stayton grasping a fistful of [REDACTED] hair after she had been handcuffed. He is holding her hair at the top of her head and is captured on video saying, "Shut the fuck up," while appearing to push her head and face into the sidewalk. Civilian-recorded video corroborates this action. (video: Recording 2025-07-18 094632 ban assault ducks)

In his interview, Specialist Stayton stated that he pushed [REDACTED] head down because he believed she was attempting to lift herself. However, no other officers present made any comments about [REDACTED] trying to lift herself in that manner. In addition, she is handcuffed at this point. Even if she lifted her head, she was unable to stand or move in a significant manner, and pushing her head into the sidewalk was unreasonable at this point.

Thus, this action is also determined to be a violation of Rule 141(A), as it constitutes unnecessary force against a restrained individual.

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### **Encounter 3**

Finally, the third encounter of concern involves Specialist Stayton's interaction with a female on the sidewalk on the west side of the bridge. It constitutes a violation of Rule 102, Unbecoming Conduct.

### **Rule 102 - Unbecoming Conduct**

*Employees of the Police Department shall conduct themselves at all times, both on and off duty, in such a manner as to reflect most favorably on the Agency. Unbecoming conduct shall include that which brings the Agency into disrepute or reflects discredit upon the individual as an employee of the Police Department, or that which impairs the operation or efficiency of the Agency or the individual.*

### **Encounter 3 Findings:     Sustained**

During this incident, he was assisting Specialist Haubner and Specialist Olvera-Vancini in moving a group of protesters northward, back into Ohio. Specialist Haubner was positioned in front of Specialist Stayton, and Specialist Olvera-Vancini was behind him.

Specialist Stayton confronted an unidentified white female wearing all black, carrying a black bag, and wearing red shoes. She was walking beside him, with Specialist Haubner in front of her and Specialist Olvera-Vancini behind her. During the interaction, Specialist Stayton yelled and cursed at her, including repeatedly using the word "fuck" after realizing he had lost his watch. He repeatedly told her to "hurry up" and shoved her multiple times without any apparent justification.

Neither of the other officers involved directed similar language or physical force toward any other members of the group. Specialist Stayton's conduct was clearly unreasonable, reflected poorly on the department, and constitutes a violation of Rule 102.

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### Summary

It is our professional opinion that the overall departmental response to Incident 2025-00031966 was conducted in accordance with legal, policy, and ethical guidelines.

However, we identified concerns regarding three separate encounters involving Specialist Stayton with civilians. From a strictly administrative investigation perspective, we find the following:

Encounter	Alleged Violation	Finding
1	Rule 141(A) – Use of Force	Exonerated
2	Rule 141(A) – Use of Force	Sustained
3	Rule 102 – Unbecoming Conduct	Sustained

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## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

October 6, 2025

**Prepared by:** Det. Marcus Jordan, Det. G. Adkisson, Sgt. D Hoyle  
**Case Number:** 2025-00031966  
**Date of Incident:** July 17, 2025  
**Location of Incident:** Roebling Suspension Bridge  
**Internal Affairs Case #:** 229

### Scope

On July 17, 2025, at approximately 1957 hours, Covington Police Officers responded to the John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge regarding reports of subjects blocking traffic. Upon arrival, officers initially encountered four individuals standing in the roadway near the bridge entrance. After these individuals refused lawful orders to move, officers proceeded to make arrests. Subsequent investigation revealed that the subjects were in possession of two-way radios and an unidentified electronic device (initially believed to be a signal "jammer"), and they were actively scanning police frequencies.

Following these initial arrests, officers learned that a large group of protestors was advancing southbound across the bridge from the Cincinnati side. Officers responded to the mid-span of the bridge and were met by a hostile and defiant crowd estimated between 100 and 200 individuals. Despite repeated lawful orders to disperse, the group refused to comply.

The Covington Police Department's response consisted of 15 officers, including three supervisors, two off-duty officers working at other city locations, and one field trainee. The incident required approximately 15 to 20 minutes to stabilize, restore order, and ensure public safety. Due to the scale of the event, assistance was requested and received from multiple outside law enforcement agencies.

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## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

### Dispatch

Multiple calls were received by the Kenton County Emergency Communications Center, which serves as dispatch for the Covington Police:

- The first caller reported 8–10 individuals with bicycles blocking the bridge entrance and preventing vehicle passage.
- The second caller described masked subjects blocking traffic, adding that they “did not look official.”
- The third caller reported a black Jeep Cherokee attempting to drive through the group, alleging that the driver was “trying to run protestors over” as the vehicle crossed toward Kentucky.
- The fourth caller reported “police beating people and using tasers,” requesting medical assistance. Dispatch advised that ambulances were already en route.

Cincinnati Dispatch also notified Covington Police of subjects on the bridge, confirming jurisdiction on the Kentucky side. Before the call was formally dispatched, officers had already observed updates on their Mobile Data Computers (MDCs)—a common practice to maintain situational awareness.

Officer Ross Woodward self-dispatched to the scene, subsequently requesting assistance upon arrival. As the incident escalated, Kenton County Dispatch coordinated a multi-agency response, including Campbell County units, at the request of officers on scene.

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### Environment

Except for the initial arrests made at the bridge entrance, officers operated within a hazardous environment on the elevated structure of the John A. Roebling Bridge. The bridge spans approximately 1,075 feet across the Ohio River, with a deck height ranging from 80 to 100 feet above the water depending on river levels. It consists of a metal grate deck and walkways on both sides, supported by vertical and horizontal suspension cables.

During previous planned demonstrations, precautionary measures included deploying a fire/rescue boat on standby due to the inherent danger of working above open water.



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## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

However, the spontaneous nature of this event prevented such preparation, increasing operational risk for both officers and demonstrators.

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### Crowd

The crowd encountered was large, organized, and coordinated, with an estimated 100 to 200 individuals. Their actions effectively disrupted vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic along this critical interstate corridor between Kentucky and Ohio during a busy evening commute.

When Officers Ross and C. Haubner first engaged four individuals blocking the roadway, they noted that the subjects were using two-way radios and appeared to be coordinating with others. One subject wore a fluorescent vest and possessed an unidentified electronic device initially suspected to be a signal jammer. This group's actions clearly demonstrated intentional interference with bridge traffic to facilitate the larger group's objectives rather than lawful, peaceful protest.

Further investigation confirmed that a similarly equipped team was operating on the Ohio side of the bridge, reinforcing the conclusion that the event was organized with structure and leadership.

The crowd ignored multiple lawful orders to disperse. Supervisory officers' attempts to identify and communicate with any leadership representatives were unsuccessful. The group only responded when a protestor using a loudspeaker instructed, *"If you are not comfortable being arrested, get your ass on the sidewalk."* This prompted some movement toward the west walkway, but the majority of the group remained noncompliant.

Several demonstrators wore masks or face coverings and chanted phrases including, *"CPD, KKK, IDF—they're all the same!"* The group utilized a large wheeled cart carrying speakers marked with anarchy (Ⓐ) and three-arrow (Antifa/socialist) symbols—both recognized identifiers associated with anarchist and Antifa-aligned movements known to engage in violent clashes with police.

A device recovered from one of the arrested individuals was identified as a LILYGO 868/915 MHz Model LORA32 SX1262. This device can be used for off-grid communication, data

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transmission, or LoRaWAN packet sniffing. While the initial suspicion that it was a signal jammer could not be substantiated, supervisors reported intermittent cell service disruptions during the incident. See the report contained in the supplemental documentation.

Following the event, Detective R. Cioca interviewed motorist [REDACTED] who had encountered the protestors while driving a black Jeep Wagoneer across the bridge from Cincinnati. [REDACTED] stated that individuals wearing road-guard vests and masks appeared to be acting in an official capacity but were in fact blocking traffic. As he attempted to pass slowly, several protestors struck his vehicle, threw objects, and tried to break his windows, instructing him to "use one of the other bridges." [REDACTED] repeatedly described the group as "criminals."

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### Response

At the time of the incident, the Covington Police Department had thirteen patrol units on duty, with three supervisors assigned to the shift. Several units were unavailable due to other active calls.

During the initial response and arrests on the bridge span, eight patrol units were actively engaged, including one occupied with earlier arrests near the bridge entrance. As arrests began, the crowd's hostility escalated, resulting in several confrontations requiring force to gain control.

Officers deployed pepperballs, Tasers, and a police canine during the response. A total of seven subjects required the use of force to gain compliance, with some cases involving multiple officers. Additionally, pepperballs were deployed toward an aggressive section of the crowd whose members were not identified.

Several protestors attempted to interfere with ongoing arrests, physically grabbing arrestees and attempting to pull them away from officers. The environment and number of individuals present required every officer on scene to act in their basic law enforcement capacity to restore order and prevent injury.

Due to the situation's volatility, Lieutenant Haubner, the on-scene commander, ordered dispatch to broadcast an all-call for assistance from every available Kenton County unit.

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Given the threat level and limited manpower, even supervisors were required to participate in physical arrests, which is typically avoided in civil disturbance responses to maintain scene oversight.

The incident was ultimately stabilized following a massive police presence and multiple arrests, prompting the remaining crowd to disperse. Due to the volume of arrests, a transport team from the Kenton County Detention Center was requested for assistance.

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### Arrests

A total of fifteen arrests were made in connection with the incident. All charges stemmed from subjects refusing lawful orders to disperse, obstructing traffic, and engaging in conduct that disrupted public order.

Name	Charges
Ameer Alkayali	Riot 1st, Unlawful Assembly, Failure to Disperse, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Obstructing Emergency Responder Violations 1st
Kean Babcock	Riot 1st, Unlawful Assembly, Failure to Disperse, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Obstructing a Highway, Obstructing Emergency Responder Violations 1st
Dylan Bauer	Riot 1st, Unlawful Assembly, Failure to Disperse, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Obstructing Emergency Responder Violations 1st
Suzanne Bratt	Riot 1st, Resisting Arrest, Failure to Disperse
Greta Elenbaas	Riot 1st, Unlawful Assembly, Failure to Disperse, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Obstructing Emergency Responder Violations 1st
Madeline Fening	Riot 1st, Failure to Disperse, Obstructing a Highway, Obstructing Emergency Responder Violations 1st, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Unlawful Assembly

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Name	Charges
Lucas Griffith	Riot 1st, Unlawful Assembly, Failure to Disperse, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Obstructing a Highway, Obstructing Emergency Responder Violations 1st, Resisting Arrest
Brandon Hill	Riot 1st, Unlawful Assembly, Failure to Disperse, Obstructing a Highway, Disorderly Conduct, 2nd, Obstructing Emergency Responder Violations, 1st, Criminal Mischief, 1st, Menacing, Resisting Arrest
Logan Imber	Riot, 1st, Unlawful Assembly, Failure to Disperse, Resisting Arrest, Disorderly Conduct, 2nd, Obstruction/Interference with an Officer
Jonathan Kennedy	Riot 1st, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Obstructing a Highway
Taylor Marshall	Riot 1st, Resisting Arrest, Failure to Disperse
Joseph Murphy	Riot 1st, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Failure to Disperse
Noah Plake	Riot 1st, Unlawful Assembly, Failure to Disperse, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Obstructing a Highway, Obstructing Emergency Responder Violations 1st, Resisting Arrest
Claire Seid	Riot 1st, Disorderly Conduct 2nd, Resisting Arrest, Obstructing a Highway
Nicole Volpenhein	Riot, 1st, Failure to Disperse, Unlawful Assembly, Resisting Arrest

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### Injuries

Officers Zach Stayton and Ross Woodward sustained minor injuries during the incident—neither required medical leave.

and requested a medical evaluation and were transported to St. Elizabeth Hospital for treatment before being lodged at the Kenton County Detention Center. All arrested subjects were photographed and assessed for injury, regardless of medical complaint, before transport.

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### Policy

The department's response to this incident falls under Covington Police Department General Order 46.05 – Civil Disturbances, which governs police action during unlawful assemblies and disturbances of public order.

The policy defines a civil disturbance as:

"An unlawful assembly that constitutes a breach of the peace or any assembly of persons where there is imminent danger of collective violence, destruction of property, or other unlawful acts."

Officers and supervisors were unaware of any planned demonstration, placing them in a reactive posture rather than a preplanned operational response. Based on all available evidence, the event on July 17, 2025, meets the department's definition of a civil disturbance under General Order 46.05.

It is important to note that this event occurred without warning and beyond the department's ability to anticipate. Moreover, the incident was not only unexpected, but the sheer size of the crowd and the rapid escalation of criminal and violent behavior took the on-duty shift completely by surprise, far exceeding its immediate capacity to implement General Order 46.05.

This incident also meets the criteria outlined in General Order 46.01 – Unusual Occurrences. However, because the situation was stabilized within a relatively short period, the majority of assisting units from neighboring jurisdictions arrived after the arrests had been made and the scene had been secured. Given the rapid stabilization of

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the incident, full implementation of General Order 46.01 was determined to be unnecessary and not applicable under the circumstances.

### Witness and Officer Interviews

#### Lieutenant Haubner

On August 12, 2025, Lieutenant Haubner was interviewed at the Covington Police Department regarding his response to the incident on the Roebling Suspension Bridge. He stated that he responded to reports of subjects blocking the roadway. Upon arrival, he was informed that additional subjects were obstructing the bridge.

Lieutenant Haubner approached the group and asked if there was anyone in charge he could speak with, but his inquiries were ignored. He instructed officers to clear the bridge. While on scene, he observed a subject running from Officer Stayton, who was deploying a pepper ball gun. He further observed the pepper ball gun strike the ground and noted that Officer Stayton subsequently drew his firearm. Uncertain of the circumstances, Lieutenant Haubner began to monitor that subject closely.

He stated that he observed Officer Stayton go hands-on with the subject, and he then retrieved the pepper ball gun. As additional individuals began walking toward Officer Stayton, Lieutenant Haubner believed they were attempting to interfere with the arrest, prompting him to deploy pepper balls toward them. He then positioned himself between the crowd and the officers, effecting arrests. He stated that he observed Officer Stayton and the subject near the bridge railing, but turned his attention back to the advancing crowd and did not see what occurred thereafter.

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#### Officer Warner

On August 12, 2025, Officer Warner was interviewed at the Covington Police Department. He stated that while making an arrest, pepper balls impacted near his position. After securing the arrestee in a cruiser, he retrieved his K-9 partner and returned toward the crowd.

Upon hearing significant commotion on the east side of the bridge, he moved in that direction and observed several individuals already on the ground in handcuffs. He reported

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that he did not observe any officers violating departmental policy or engaging in unethical behavior. He also did not see                      approaching from behind him, but did observe subjects attempting to interfere with officers making arrests.

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### Officer Hotaling

On August 12, 2025, Officer Hotaling was interviewed at the Covington Police Department. She stated that she observed Officer Stayton attempting to arrest                      near the bridge railing.                      was actively resisting. A female approached from behind Officer Stayton, and Officer Hotaling pushed her back.

She further observed Sergeant Fain attempting to arrest                      who was gripping the bridge cables. Officer Hotaling tried to take hold of                      arm, at which time                      kicked her in the chest. Officer Hotaling deployed her Taser, which was ineffective. Officer Appleman arrived and deployed her own Taser, which was partially effective.

Officer Hotaling stated that Officer Stayton then approached and took                      to the ground by her hair. As she attempted to clear Taser wires and reholster her weapon, she observed Officer Stayton begin handcuffing                      She subsequently assisted Officer Woodward with another subject in the roadway. Officer Hotaling reported that she did not witness any officer commit an act she believed to be illegal, immoral, or in violation of departmental policy.

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### Officer Appleman

On 8/13/2025, Officer Appleman was interviewed at Covington Police Headquarters. Officer Appleman stated that she made an arrest and took the prisoner to a cruiser. She stated that she heard other officers screaming on the radio. Officer Appleman stated that she returned and observed Sgt. Fain and Officer Hotaling were struggling with a female on the sidewalk, who was holding onto the bridge cables. She stated that she observed the female kicking Officer Hotaling. Officer Appleman stated that she tased the female. She stated that Officer Stayton arrived at the same time as her, and he took the female down by her hair. Officer Appleman indicated that they were struggling to get the female

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handcuffed. Officer Appleman stated that she was on the left side of the female, and she kept pulling her left hand away from her.

Officer Appleman stated that she redeployed her Taser and continued giving verbal commands to put her hands behind her back. She stated that she, Officer Stayton, and Officer Meadows were all accidentally tased. She said that once she was in handcuffs, she went and assisted Officer Woodward, who was struggling with a female in the roadway. Officer Appleman stated that she observed a male subject "buck up" to Officer Stayton and clench his fist. She stated that Officer Stayton did not arrest this subject.

Officer Appleman was asked if she saw Officer Stayton fall forward, and she said that she didn't. Officer Appleman was asked if she saw any officer commit a crime or any policy violations, and she stated that she didn't.

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### Officer Meadows

On 8/18/2025, Officer Meadows was interviewed at the Covington Police Department. Officer Meadows stated that he assisted in arresting a subject on the bridge. He said that once he was done with that, he looked and saw Officer Stayton struggling with a male on the edge of the bridge. He stated that he knew that was dangerous and that he needed to help get them off the edge.

He stated that he grabbed [redacted] right arm and pulled him to the ground. Officer Meadows noted that they could not get [redacted] arms behind his back, and he kept tucking his arms into himself. He stated that he observed Officer Stayton strike [redacted] because he wouldn't give them his hands. He said that they were eventually able to get [redacted] arms behind his back and get him handcuffed. Officer Meadows stated that at some point during this arrest, he was approached by someone in the crowd who came up right behind him.

He stated that he then saw several officers struggling with a female [redacted] Officer Meadows stated that Officer Stayton ran over to assist, and he followed. He believed that officers already had her on the ground by the time he got there. He stated that officers were struggling to get her hands behind her back. He stated that he got a "taser bite" at some point. Officer Meadows stated that Officer Stayton struck the female, and he believes it



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was only one time. He stated that he doesn't remember if [redacted] was trying to stand up or moving around at all. Officer Meadows indicated that they were eventually able to get her handcuffed. He then went and assisted in arresting a female in the road.

He stated that he was at the hospital with [redacted] and he lunged at them while they were there. Officer Meadows said that he did not observe any officer committing a crime, violating policy, or doing anything unethical.

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### Sergeant Fain

On 9/10/2025, Sgt. Fain came in for an interview. Sgt. Fain stated that while he was watching the west side of the bridge, he observed a female [redacted] attempting to cross over to the east side. He stated that he told her to stop, and she refused. He stated that he grabbed her to prevent her from crossing the cables. Sgt. Fain stated that Officer Appleman and Officer Hotaling came to assist him. Sgt. Fain stated that Officer Stayton came and pulled [redacted] arm off the cables and took her to the ground. He stated that he took control of her legs while looking around to see if anyone else was approaching them. Sgt. Fain stated that he couldn't see what was happening with [redacted] upper body. He stated that he had his body weight on her legs, and she was unable to move her lower body. He didn't believe that she was thrashing around. He stated that they were able to place her in handcuffs. Sgt. Fain stated that he stayed with [redacted]

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### Specialist Stayton

On 9/25/2025, Officer Stayton was interviewed at the Covington Police Department. Officer Stayton stated that on the day of the incident, he was training Officer Meadows. He said that they responded to assist with disorderly subjects on the bridge. He stated that when [redacted] he arrived, he observed two subjects in handcuffs at the base of the bridge. He said that he was informed that the subjects had radios and were communicating with each other.

Officer Stayton stated that someone observed a large crowd walking across the bridge. He said that they responded to the bridge. He noted that half of the subjects were in the roadway and half of them were on the walkway. He stated that the subjects were given [redacted]

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

commands to move off the roadway. Officer Stayton noted that a large number of them did not move off the roadway.

He stated that he had a pepper ball gun and observed Officer Warner making an arrest, and he moved towards him to provide security. He noted that a subject tried to interject in the arrest, and he pushed him back. He stated that [redacted] then attempted to take the pepper ball gun from him. Officer Stayton stated that when [redacted] did that, he dislodged the hopper. Officer Stayton noted that he put the hopper back down and began shooting pepper balls at [redacted] feet. He stated that it had no effect due to the grated roadway. He said that [redacted] then put his hands up and was in a striking stance as if he was going to attack him. Officer Stayton noted that he then shot pepper balls at [redacted] legs, and they had no effect on him.

He stated that [redacted] crossed the cables and began to run away. Officer Stayton stated that he gave verbal commands to [redacted] for him to get on the ground. Officer Stayton stated that [redacted] had a satchel that was around his back. He stated that [redacted] moved the satchel from the rear of his body to the front of his body. He stated that he observed [redacted] elbow flare at 45 degrees and reach into the bag. Officer Stayton stated that he believed that [redacted] was going to retrieve a weapon. Officer Stayton stated that he pulled out his firearm and continued giving verbal commands for the individual to get on the ground. He stated that [redacted] continued to yell "fuck you, fuck you". Officer Stayton stated that [redacted] took off running. He stated that [redacted] ran south on the walkway, and he chased after him on the roadway. Officer Stayton stated that he holstered his firearm, pulled his Taser, and crossed over to the sidewalk. He stated that he put his Taser away because he didn't want to tase him and him fall into the water. Officer Stayton stated that [redacted] came running back towards him with his fist clenched. Officer Stayton stated that he didn't want to tackle [redacted] for fear that either of them might fall into the water.

He stated that he cut him off, and [redacted] grabbed onto the railing with his right hand. Officer Stayton noted that he attempted to take [redacted] down by holding the back of his head and neck area and pushing him down to control him. He stated that it did not work, so he attempted to grab [redacted] legs and pull him away from the rail. He noted that it did not work either. Officer Stayton stated that he had a fear of them falling off the bridge and knew he was running out of options, so he began to strike [redacted] in the

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

head. He stated that after an unknown number of strikes to the head, the railing, and he was able to take him to the ground.

let go of

Officer Stayton stated that once on the ground, hands were here, while demonstrating his hands being in front of his face, with his elbows tucked in.

From his interview with the Internal Affairs detectives, Officer Stayton describes the next series of events in his own words.

### 16:07 minutes into the interview

*"Previously, I knew he had a, like a satchel on him that he tried to grab. So I fear that he had some type of weapon on him, whether it be a knife or a firearm. Based on all the training I've had in the academy and the, uh, the, the DT instructor's courses that the department sent me to, it only takes a split second from somebody's hands to go from here to reach down to their waistline or even midsection. Um, I knew that the taser, that if I disengage at any point, that I would be creating space. And I didn't wanna give up the space. So I started striking him. At one point, the strikes, um, he, I look over Meadows is like pulling his arm and he can't get his arm.*

*And my strikes are not working. And then he eventually puts his hand behind his back. Or somehow he, he pulls his arms away and I'm able to hook his arm and get it behind his back. And then I was gonna put him in handcuffs, but he immediately pulls his arm back and then puts it up to his, his head again. Um, I take my left hand and I'm grabbing him trying to pull his hand away. And as I'm striking him with, um, the meaty part of my hand on the ears, and, uh, on both sides, I'm trying to gain compliance. Um, I know that if I, I, that everything up to this point did not work. The pepper ball did not work. The, uh, the maneuvers with, um, trying to get him to the ground and try to get his hands behind his back did not work.*

*So the only thing that I could do at the time was strike. At that point, I have people behind me screaming. I have a lady next to me on the other side of the rail coming up to me, me approaching me."* (Internal Affairs Interview, Investigation 229, with Officer Stayton, September 25, 2025 @ 1032 am)

Officer Stayton went on to state that he continued striking with his right hand as he tried to get control of his left arm. He also observed Sgt. Fain is holding onto a large

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



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female. He stated that due to his lack of backup, he had to get [redacted] in handcuffs. He said that he was striking him to gain pain compliance. Officer Stayton stated that [redacted] eventually gave up his hands, and he was able to get him in handcuffs.

Officer Stayton stated that he looked up and saw a female officer tasing a lady [redacted] while Sgt. Fain is holding her. He stated that he then went over and grabbed [redacted] by her hair and pulled her to the ground, and placed his knee on her back. Officer Stayton stated that he was able to get her arm behind her back. Officer Stayton stated that Officer Appleman tased [redacted]. He stated that anytime he touched [redacted] he was getting tased. Officer Stayton noted that he delivered one strike to her head to gain compliance. He stated that he was able to get her hand behind her back and place her in handcuffs. Officer Stayton stated that everyone began to get up off of [redacted] and she started to rise, so he pushed her head down.

He stated that he saw other officers fighting with the crowd, and he went to assist. He went back to the roadway and held security for other officers while watching the crowd. Officer Stayton stated that he was told to send everyone to the Cincinnati side of the bridge. He went to the sidewalk to herd everyone away. He said that he pushed a female softly who wasn't leaving. He stated that after getting everyone to leave, he checked on the injuries of himself and the suspects. He said that he noticed that his watch was missing.

Officer Stayton was shown a video of the arrest of [redacted]. The footage showed [redacted] lying face down on the ground with his hands near his head. He was asked if he was concerned that [redacted] could still get his hands underneath him while they were on top of him. Officer Stayton responded that he had recently gone to training and learned that you can still get your hands underneath yourself and to your waist. He was asked where he learned to deliver strikes to the head for compliance, and he said that he was taught that by DOCJT.

Detective Jordan presented the training manual and reviewed the section discussing strikes to the head being used for active aggression. Officer Stayton is asked where it is stated that strikes can be used for compliance. Officer Stayton stated that he doesn't know exactly where it says he can. Officer Stayton noted that he tried everything he could before delivering strikes, such as hands-on and pepper balls, and nothing worked. Officer Stayton was asked how the strikes were working. He stated that when he was striking [redacted]

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## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

he managed to get his arm to come out, but as soon as he stopped, hand back in.

pulled his

He stated that he knew he had to get the situation under control quickly because he saw Sgt. Fain was fighting with a female and Sgt. Fain is older and a week away from retirement, and both of their backup officers were female officers. Officer Stayton stated that he believed the situation to be a life-or-death situation because of the height they were at, all the people around, and it was a rapidly evolving situation.

Officer Stayton was then shown a video of the incident involving He was asked when he was taught to grab someone by the hair. He stated that he was trained at the police academy. Officer Stayton was then shown the part where is on the ground, and he pushes her head down after she is on the ground. He stated that tasing her was ineffective, multiple officers attempted to take her down, and they couldn't, so he was doing whatever he could to hold her down. He stated that he held her by the hair to keep her from getting up.

He was asked if he had been trained to grab someone by their hair to control their head. He responded by saying the situation was chaotic and rapidly evolving, they were significantly outnumbered, and they were just trying to get people in handcuffs. Officer Stayton was asked why he pushed head down. He stated that he did so because he believed that she was trying to get up. He said that he doesn't think he did anything wrong by holding her head down. He stated he does see how it could be, though, because of the texture of the ground, but he didn't think about that in the moment.

Officer Stayton was then shown the video of him pushing the female that he was escorting off the bridge. He was asked why he pushed her. He stated that he pushed her because she was given orders to walk, and she was going very slowly. He said that he was trying to get people off the bridge. Officer Stayton was asked if he was "pissed off" during this interaction. He stated that he doesn't remember how he felt at the time. He said that based on the video, he didn't look happy.

Officer Stayton was asked if he was injured. He stated he had bruising on his knuckles, and his right wrist hurt. He said that he wasn't sure how he sustained his injuries.

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## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

Officer Stayton was shown video from after [redacted] arrest, where he goes back out onto the bridge and pulls out his firearm. He stated that he doesn't remember drawing his firearm.

Officer Stayton stated that he had never been trained to handle a situation like this. He stated that he never thought he would be fighting someone on the bridge. He said that he wasn't prepared for the situation and wished that he had been trained better. He stated that at the time, he thought he did everything correctly, but looking back, he could have done things differently. He said that he didn't want to hurt anyone; he just wanted them to comply.

While at the hospital, [redacted] gets very upset with Officer Stayton and accuses him of antagonizing him and winking at him to get him upset. Officer Stayton stated that he was complaining about his watch being broken and told [redacted] that he was going to be charged with a felony. Officer Stayton noted that his face twitches a lot, and he may have perceived that as him winking at him.

After concluding Officer Stayton's interview, he requested to speak with us again. He stated that this job means everything to him, and he loves working here. Officer Stayton stated that what he said about training came off wrong, and he wasn't trying to blame anyone. He stated that he meant he wasn't expecting that situation and that it's something he's never been involved in before. He stated that he has been trained for stressful situations, but this was totally new for him. Officer Stayton stated that it was chaotic, rapidly evolving, and he was just trying to help his coworkers. He stated that he shouldn't have cussed at the female, and he said it in the heat of the moment. He stated that he probably shouldn't have pushed [redacted] head down. He stated that he should have just taken a moment and taken a few deep breaths. He stated that when he was striking [redacted] he believed he was doing everything right at the time, but he now sees how it can look bad. Officer Stayton stated that, looking back, he could have tried different techniques. He stated that at the moment, all he could think about was getting [redacted] in handcuffs. He stated that when it comes to the female, he pushed at the end; he could have given her more time instead of pushing her. He stated that he had tunnel vision from the moment [redacted] grabbed his pepper ball gun until the moment he got in his car afterwards. He stated that anything he did wrong is his fault and he takes full accountability.

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

### Detective Andrews – Digital Evidence Review

Detective Andrews conducted the follow-up investigation into cellphones seized during the incident. He submitted the following report narrative:

"I was tasked with follow-up investigations of cellphones seized in the bridge riot that occurred on 7/17/2025. I located two cellphones in evidence for this incident. One of the phones was a pink iPhone belonging to suspect [redacted]. The second phone was a black Google Phone in a blue case belonging to [redacted]. I submitted search warrants and received them back signed on 7/29/2025. I received the phones back from Examiner Ron Trenkamp. I looked through the phones for any messages and in regard to the coordination of the protest and any evidence of conversation in regards to the above events. I located one message on [redacted] phone talking about meeting and planning; however, it did not specify a particular protest or any tactics. I did not locate any other items of evidentiary value for this specific incident."

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### Detective Adkisson – Attorney Contact Attempts

Detective Adkisson attempted to contact the attorneys representing [redacted] and [redacted] for potential follow-up interviews.

- On August 12, 2025, Adkisson left a message for attorney [redacted] who returned the call the same day and stated he would confer with his client. No further contact was received despite multiple follow-up calls on September 4, 2025.

On the same day, Adkisson attempted to contact [redacted] attorney for [redacted] voicemail indicated he was on vacation until September 25, 2025, and was full.

Detective Adkisson called [redacted] on 9/4/2025 and left a voicemail. On 9/23/2025, [redacted] called back and left a voicemail for Detective Adkisson. Detective Adkisson and [redacted] left voicemails for each other on 9/23/2025 and 9/24/2025. Detective Adkisson left a voicemail for [redacted] on 9/25/2025 and has not received a call back.

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Internal Affairs Analysis of Events

### Additional Investigative Actions

- Conducted a site assessment of the Roebling Suspension Bridge.
- Reviewed all body-worn camera footage from Covington Police Department officers.
- Retrieved and reviewed body-worn camera and dash camera footage from responding agencies.
- Retrieved 911 call recordings and radio dispatch recordings.
- Retrieved and analyzed dispatch logs.
- Collected and reviewed publicly available footage of the incident from the internet, including videos submitted by bystanders and media outlets.
- Reviewed Specialist Stayton's personnel file.
- Reviewed Specialist Stayton's Guardian file, noting two entries of significance:
  - February 15, 2023: Coaching and mentoring regarding the use and positioning of empty-hand strikes.
  - June 1, 2023: Coaching and mentoring regarding maintaining control of a suspect by holding their hair.



# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Use of Force Analysis Report

**October 3, 2025**

**Prepared by:** Sergeant Jeff Cook 0232

**Case Number:** 2025-00031966

**Internal Affairs Case:** 229

**Date of Incident:** July 17, 2025

The investigators assigned to Internal Affairs investigation 229 requested that I conduct a review of Specialist Stayton's actions regarding his arrest of [redacted] during the Covington Police Department incident 2025-00031966. This review is limited to Specialist Stayton's actions in the context of current department policy and standard practices. The analysis is based on my professional training and experience as the department's training officer, and the conclusions presented should be considered my professional opinion.

Specialist Stayton's interaction with [redacted] began after [redacted] was seen approaching Specialist Warner from the rear. Specialist Warner was actively attempting to take a person into custody when [redacted] can be seen looking directly at Specialist Warner's back as he approaches him. [redacted] hands appear to be balled into fists, and he is "stutter stepping" in a fashion frequently seen by people preparing to fight or grapple ( [redacted] Stance 1).



Specialist Stayton is seen attempting to assist Specialist Warner before Recruit Meadows takes his place. It appears that this is the moment Specialist Stayton notices [redacted]. From the perspective of his BWC, Specialist Stayton travels clockwise around Specialist Warner, Recruit Meadows, and the suspect they are arresting. He first encounters an unknown subject who immediately raises his hands and begins backing up in response to Specialist Stayton's commands to "get the fuck back" and "back the fuck up." [redacted] still has his hands raised, as if preparing to throw a punch, and his feet are spread like a boxer ( [redacted] Stance 2 and 3).

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Use of Force Analysis Report



Stance 2



Stance 3

This “fighting stance” is similar to the one he assumed while approaching Specialist Warner from behind. [redacted] also appears to close the distance between him and Specialist Stayton after the unknown subject is no longer between them.

The first physical contact occurs when Stayton was carrying ( [redacted] Pepperball).



[redacted] appears to grab the Pepperball launcher Specialist

At that time, [redacted] was facing north, and Specialist Stayton was facing south. They appeared to push off one another while also turning in a clockwise fashion, so that they were both now facing in the opposite direction from where they had been. Specialist Stayton then begins deploying Pepperball rounds at the bridge deck in [redacted] direction. Specialist Stayton then transitions to launching

Pepperball rounds at [redacted] legs, apparently striking him twice. In his interview, Specialist Stayton explained that he transitioned to his legs because the Pepperball rounds had passed through the bridge deck. The hopper, which may have been dislodged when [redacted] appeared to grab the launcher, is then seen falling from the top of the Pepperball launcher, thus disabling it. Throughout the use of the Pepperball launcher, [redacted] can be seen maintaining his “fighting stance” while backing away towards the bridge walkway. Specialist Stayton is simultaneously ordering to “Get on the fucking ground,” and “Get on the ground.”

Once he is through the safety cables and standing on the walkway, [redacted] immediately grabs the strap of a sling bag or fanny pack he was wearing diagonally. The pouch had been on his back ( [redacted] Bag 1), and after grabbing the strap, he began pulling the pouch to the front of his body ( [redacted] Bag 2). This action could be interpreted as an attempt to access a weapon or other dangerous item.

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Use of Force Analysis Report

The bag is then seen in his right hand after he goes back to retrieve his hat that he dropped (Bag 3). Throughout his flight, [redacted] was repeatedly yelling, "Fuck you."



Bag 1



Bag 2



Bag 3

Specialist Stayton dropped the now inoperable Pepperball launcher and began following [redacted] while remaining on the bridge deck. He is seen drawing his duty handgun in an apparent response to [redacted] grabbing at his bag. In fact, Specialist Stayton explained in his interview that this was the specific reason he drew his duty handgun. I'm confident in this assumption due to Specialist Stayton holstering his duty handgun once [redacted] transitions the pouch of his bag to his back once again. The sling bag or fanny pack [redacted] is seen handling is frequently utilized to carry handguns. There are, in fact, multiple companies that make fanny packs with holsters built into them.

After coming back to pick up his hat, [redacted] began fleeing northbound towards Cincinnati. This continued for a very brief period before [redacted] suddenly turned and began fleeing southbound towards Covington. Specialist Stayton drew his Taser while pursuing [redacted] southbound. Immediately after drawing his Taser, Specialist Stayton climbed through the safety cables. By the time Specialist Stayton was on the walkway, [redacted] had once again changed direction and was now once again fleeing northbound. Specialist Stayton holstered his Taser as [redacted] rapidly approached him, creating a tense and rapidly evolving situation.

As soon as Specialist Stayton and [redacted] met on the walkway, Specialist Stayton can be seen attempting to take [redacted] to the ground. This was documented by Lt. Haubner's body camera as well as Officer Hotaling's. There are three other civilians near them as this is occurring. One of them is so close he appears to be within less than one arm's distance. (D Haubner 1).

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

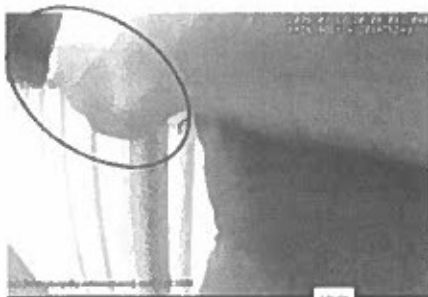


## Use of Force Analysis Report



can be seen holding on to the bridge railing, which separates the walkway from the drop-off to the river, preventing Specialist Stayton from taking him to the ground ( Railing 1). Specialist Stayton appears first to Attempt to grab at the back of his head Railing 2) while trying to catch/control several parts of the front of

This includes hooking left arm with his left arm ( Railing 3). The muscles in left forearm appear flexed, his hand clenched in a fist, and his left wrist curled inward, making it apparent he is actively resisting Specialist Stayton's attempts. Of note, has ceased yelling, "Fuck you," and is now repeatedly asking, "Why am I being detained?" "Why am I being arrested?" and "Why are you detaining me?" These questions make it apparent was aware of Specialist Stayton's intent to take him into custody.



Railing 1



Railing 2



Railing 3

Specialist Stayton is then seen attempting to take to the ground by grabbing his left leg with his right arm and pulling Railing 4). When this is unsuccessful, Specialist Stayton begins striking with his closed right fist. The strikes appear to be aimed at the rear and/or left side of head. They seem to be successful in causing to release his grip as can be seen releasing his hold on the railing just before Recruit Meadows arrives to assist Specialist Stayton Railing 5 & 6).



Railing 4



Railing 5



Railing

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## Use of Force Analysis Report

Specialist Stayton and Recruit Meadows then take \_\_\_\_\_ to the ground on the walkway. They fall next to the bridge superstructure, and \_\_\_\_\_ is seen first covering the back of his head with his left hand before then grabbing the superstructure of the bridge with that same hand. Recruit Meadows had both of his hands on \_\_\_\_\_ right arm at this time.

Directly to the left of Specialist Stayton are the safety cables and other physical parts of the bridge that impede him from moving to his left. Recruit Meadows remained directly to Specialist Stayton's right, restricting any movement in that direction. An unknown female can be seen attempting to crawl through the safety cables to get to the officers and \_\_\_\_\_. She only stopped after being ordered to do so by Officer Hotaling. She remained just on the other side of the safety cables near Specialist Stayton. Additionally, an elderly gentleman was standing within arm's length of Recruit Meadows. He was close enough that Recruit Meadows could be seen looking up to assess him while still attempting to take an actively resistant \_\_\_\_\_ into custody. The elderly gentleman was bending over, yelling, "This is a peace group!" repeatedly, while pointing his finger aggressively at the three of them on the ground. (Onlookers 1, 2 & 3). Specialist Stayton mentions these factors during his interview. He expressed his concern that one or multiple of them could attack him while he was attempting to take \_\_\_\_\_ into custody.



Onlookers 1



Onlookers 2



Onlookers 3

Specialist Stayton began his strikes again after \_\_\_\_\_ latched onto the bridge superstructure with his left hand. As soon as \_\_\_\_\_ released his left hand, Specialist Stayton ceased his strikes and hooked \_\_\_\_\_ left arm with his left arm. \_\_\_\_\_ was able to wrench his right arm from Recruit Meadows' grasp and pull it back towards the right side of his head. Specialist Stayton resumed his strikes after \_\_\_\_\_ was able to free his left arm again and pull it first towards his chest and then back to the side of his head. The strikes ceased once \_\_\_\_\_ relaxed his arms and allowed them to be pulled behind his back. Recruit Meadows and Specialist Stayton then handcuffed \_\_\_\_\_.

While the strikes against \_\_\_\_\_ may appear unsettling, given the circumstances present that day, they are a reasonable option within the policy and practice of the Covington Police Department.

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Use of Force Analysis Report

It has long been accepted practice to deliver strikes to the rear of an actively resisting subject who will not comply with directions to place their hands behind their back. This tactic is used in specific, exigent circumstances — for example, when there is a reasonable concern that the subject may be armed, when other control measures have been attempted without success, and when safer target zones cannot be accessed. As I will describe in the following paragraphs, these circumstances are all present in this situation.

Given that [redacted] was seen manipulating a bag commonly used to conceal weapons, this would likely be a factor considered by a reasonable officer. It was also noted as a concern by Specialist Stayton during his interview. Suppose an officer's attempts at controlling a suspect's arms behind the back using mechanical leverage and/or muscle are unsuccessful. In that case, they don't need to continue utilizing a technique that isn't working.

Furthermore, the factors present at the time of contact with [redacted] have to be taken into consideration. Those include the manner in which [redacted] initiated contact with the officers, his flight and rapid movement towards a possible weapon, the large and unruly crowd, and the potential interference of unknown people in proximity to Specialist Stayton and Recruit Meadows as they attempted to arrest [redacted] as well as their physical location.

As Specialist Stayton testified to in his interview, [redacted] initiated his contact with officers in an aggressive manner consistent with someone attempting to commit acts of violence against officers. He fled despite lawful commands to stop. At the same time, making rapid movements towards a bag commonly used to conceal weapons.

In addition, several unknown individuals with unknown intentions positioned themselves well within the distance officers are taught to allow people to maintain. At the same time, Specialist Stayton and Recruit Meadows attempted to place [redacted] in custody.

The fact that Specialist Stayton was physically limited in moving in any direction was also a significant factor. In addition to the physical barriers, he was being encroached upon by members of the crowd with unknown intent. Preferably, the strikes to the rear would have been back. Specialist Stayton appeared incapable of moving to a position that would permit him to target the back. His only other apparent option at that moment would have been to completely disengage himself by standing up and getting off of an actively resisting [redacted]. This avenue could have opened a whole host of potential problems that any reasonable officer would not entertain.

# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



## Use of Force Analysis Report

Finally, during the contact between Specialist Stayton and [redacted] Specialist Stayton progressed through all the established levels of the use of force continuum, starting with the lowest level of force, officer presence, and moving through closed-hand strikes. The stages before the closed hand strikes were ineffective, and thus, the progression to the next stage is considered reasonable.

Given all the above factors, I consider Specialist Stayton's actions involving [redacted] arrest to be within policy and current departmental practice.



# COVINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

## SUSPENSION ORDER

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY  
COUNTY OF KENTON  
CITY OF COVINGTON

On the day of July 17, 2025, the officer whose name appears here:

**Specialist Zachary Stayton**

committed the following act(s) in violation of the policies and procedures of the Covington Police Department:

*On July 17, 2025, Specialist Zachary Stayton was involved in an incident where he used force on an individual who refused to follow a lawful police order. Specialist Stayton failed to de-escalate once the threat of further assault or injury had been mitigated.*

*After the use of force incident, officers were clearing members of an unlawful assembly off the walkways of the Roebling Suspension Bridge. Specialist Stayton approached an unidentified female who was part of the group and shoved her two times while cursing and yelling at her to "hurry up". This behavior reflected poorly on Specialist Stayton as an individual officer, and on the Covington Police Department, which he represents.*

The above-listed action(s) by the charged officer is against the best interests of both the Department, and the citizens in which it serves, and is in violation of a policy of the Covington, KY Police Department, Rule 141(A) – Use of Force, and Rule 102 – Unbecoming Conduct, which state:





*Rule 141(A) – Use of Force*

*Officers shall not use more force in any situation than that which is reasonable and necessary under the circumstances. Officers shall use force in accordance with law and Agency procedures.*

*Rule 102 – Unbecoming Conduct*

*Employees of the Police Department shall conduct themselves at all times, both on and off duty, in such a manner as to reflect most favorably on the Agency. Unbecoming conduct shall include that which brings the Agency into disrepute or reflects discredit upon the individual as an employee of the Police Department, or that which impairs the operation or efficiency of the Agency or the individual.*

It is further acknowledged by the above-named officer that pursuant to KRS 15.520, any officer charged with misconduct which justifies dismissal or punishment has a right to have a hearing before the city legislative body for hearing within sixty (60) days after the charges has been filed. Chief Justin Wietholter, as the Department Head, has the authority to suspend said officer from duty/or pay until these charges are heard, and that pursuant to KRS 95.450(5), the above-named officer may not be reinstated to duty and/or pay until such time as these charges are heard.

By order of:

Colonel Justin Wietholter  
Chief of Police

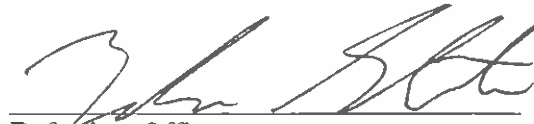
By signing this document, the above-named police officer acknowledges his/her awareness of the charges being asserted against him/her and further acknowledges that he/she has read and fully understands his/her rights under KRS 15.520, the Police Officer's Bill of Rights.



By signing this document, the above-named police officer acknowledges that he/she desires to avoid a formal hearing on the charges being asserted; and/or suspension/termination from duty and/or pay for an indefinite period of time, and voluntarily, of his/her own free will, consents to receiving discipline under the following terms: **Thirty (30) day suspension without pay.**


The above-named officer acknowledges and consents to this Suspension Order being made a part of his/her personnel file.

ACCEPTED AND ACKNOWLEDGED ON THIS 29 DAY OF October, 2025.

  
Defendant Officer

Commonwealth of Kentucky  
Kenton County

Subscribed and sworn before me, a Notary Public, by Zachary Stayton on this 29<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2025.

  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
My commission expires: 8/2/2027

THIS SECTION RESERVED FOR COMMENTS BY THE OFFICER: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_