

Tucson Police Department

FORCE REVIEW BOARD

FRB DETAILS

Case Number: P2501270106

OPS Number: 2025 F-0052

FRB Meeting Date: March 27, 2025

Incident Location: [REDACTED]

Involved Officers: Ofc. J. Voss #43601

Level of Force: Hard Empty Hand Control (Strikes)

Review Information (please mark all material provided and reviewed for the FRB):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Blue Team | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Body Worn Camera (Focus) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Case Report | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Body Worn Camera (Other) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supplement(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Third Party Video (Ex/ Cell Phone) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Investigation (Ex/ PRCIT Case) | <input type="checkbox"/> Radio Transmissions |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographs | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

FRB MEMBERS

Chairman: Mitch Kagen (IPA)

FRB Administrator: Lt. Ben Frie

Community Members		
Mr.	[REDACTED]	
Ms.	[REDACTED]	
Ms.	[REDACTED]	
Mr.	[REDACTED]	
Mr.	[REDACTED]	
Dr.	[REDACTED]	
Ms.	[REDACTED]	

Department/City Representatives	
Sgt.	[REDACTED]
Ofc.	[REDACTED]
Sgt.	[REDACTED]
Ms.	[REDACTED]
Sgt.	[REDACTED]
Ofc.	[REDACTED]
Det.	[REDACTED]
Ofc.	[REDACTED]
CSO	[REDACTED]

INCIDENT SUMMARY

Incident Summary: Suicidal Subject Armed with Edged Weapon

Location: [REDACTED]

Date: January 27, 2025 at 2:40 P.M.

Involved Units: Tucson Police Department Officers Voss (#43601), Ramos (#54070), Davis (#47230), Laughlin (#48379), DeSoto (#202080) and Sergeant Pelton (#39293)

Subject: 17-year-old female (hereinafter referred to as *the suspect*)

Overview:

Tucson Police Department officers responded to a report of a suicidal subject in an apartment at the [REDACTED]. The reporting party advised dispatch that her 17-year-old [REDACTED] - the suspect - was experiencing a mental health crisis, actively destroying property within the residence, and had access to kitchen knives. The suspect had a known history of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], along with an outstanding stop and arrest for domestic violence charges. An active welfare check had also been issued for her.

While en route, officers were advised by dispatch that the suspect had broken a glass table and retrieved a kitchen knife. The reporting party and a younger male child (approximately 3–4 years old) were inside the residence at the time. Based on the risk posed by the suspect, officers requested that the reporting party and the child exit the apartment, which they did prior to police entry.

Scene Assessment and Engagement:

Upon arrival, Officer Voss made contact with the reporting party outside the apartment. She confirmed that the suspect was barricaded in the bathroom and had previously shattered a glass table. Visual assessment of the apartment revealed visible disarray and broken glass in the living room. Officer Voss began verbal communication with the suspect through the closed bathroom door, identifying himself as a Tucson Police officer and urging her to come out for help. The suspect stated she was actively attempting suicide and had already inflicted self-harm, describing the wound as "bloody." She refused to exit the bathroom despite repeated verbal efforts by Officer Voss to deescalate the situation.

Based on the information gained up to this point Sgt. B. Pelton realized that forcing entry into the bathroom may become necessary. He returned to his patrol vehicle and retrieved an individual first aid kit (IFAK) and a set of entry tools. Prior to Sgt. Pelton's return Ofc. Voss recognized there may be an imminent threat to the suspect's safety given the severity of her injuries as described. Officer Voss determined that forced entry was necessary to render aid. The narrow hallway in front of the bathroom door limited access to one officer at a time. A small bookshelf was moved out of the way to increase the available space. Officer Voss kicked the bathroom door twice; the upper portion broke open, exposing the suspect seated on the floor directly behind a small shelf that the suspect was using to barricade the bathroom door.

Inside the bathroom, Officer Voss observed two large kitchen knives within 3–6 inches of the suspect's right side and a third knife approximately 2–3 feet away. Due to the confined space, Officer Voss was unable to enter fully but was able to reach in, grasping the suspect's right wrist with his left hand and her left wrist with his right. At one point, he also briefly held her by the hair to maintain control and prevent her from grabbing a nearby weapon. At this point Officer Voss was in an awkward position, bent over at the waist while reaching over the barricade to hold onto the suspect's hands. Despite repeated commands to stand up and exit the bathroom, the suspect remained noncompliant and braced herself in the threshold of the bathroom door using her feet, back, and bodyweight. Officer Voss assessed that releasing either of the suspect's arms would allow her access to the knives, creating a lethal threat to herself and others.

Officer Voss then engaged in calm verbal dialogue with the suspect for approximately 1 minute and 30 seconds. Officer Voss warned the suspect that he would strike her if she continued to resist. When she refused to comply, he delivered two restrained strikes (jabs) to her face with his left fist. The first was an ineffective glancing blow, but the second successfully landed. Officer Voss gave additional verbal direction to the suspect, but she did not comply and stayed seated. Ofc. Voss then gave additional verbal direction yelling at the suspect, "Stand up, or I'm gonna start busting you up!" At this point the suspect complied and stood up. Officer Voss and Ofc. Laughlin immediately pulled her over the barricade and into the hallway, where she was detained in handcuffs.

Post-Detainment:

Shortly after being detained the suspect began calling out to [REDACTED], stating she had been punched. The reporting party entered the apartment and began to ask questions and verbally express her displeasure that [REDACTED] had been struck. At this point Ofc. Voss yelled at the reporting party, "Shut up and get out right now! Right now!" The reporting party complied and exited the residence. The suspect was then escorted out of the apartment.

Officer Voss then exited the apartment and contacted the reporting party. He identified himself as the officer who delivered the strike and provided his department information, badge number, and case report number. He also referred her to his supervisor, Sergeant B. Pelton.

The suspect was escorted out of the complex to the parking lot and was evaluated by Tucson Fire Department personnel before being transported to the [REDACTED] for further [REDACTED] intervention. Photographs were taken of the scene, including images of the three knives found on the bathroom floor and the broken glass table in the living room.

Conclusion:

The officers involved, particularly Officer Voss, acted based on the immediate threat to the suspect's life and the tactical limitations presented by the environment. The use of force was a measured response to noncompliance in a high-risk situation where the subject had access to deadly weapons and had already expressed and acted on suicidal intent. The intervention ultimately resulted in the suspect being safely removed from the situation and provided with appropriate medical and psychological care.

TRAINING AND REVIEW

Was the FRB provided with additional training relevant to this formal review?

- ☐ YES
☒ NO

If YES, what training was provided?

Did the FRB members have any immediate concerns or questions prior to the formal review?

- ☐ YES
☒ NO

If YES, what question was asked, and how was the question answered or addressed?

DOCUMENTATION

Did the officer(s) document their use of force appropriately?

- ☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Overall, the Board was satisfied with the documentation by the officers and the chain of command as it pertained to the use of force and the subsequent Blue Team review. There was an issue discussed regarding de-escalation that is further fleshed out in the section on Tactics & Decision Making. That discussion does touch on documentation but was not the central theme of the Board's discussion. Please see that section for additional information.

Did the officers take photographs of the involved subject(s) as required?

- ☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Was an injured person form completed?

- ☐ YES ☒ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

The injured person report (IPR) was not completed in this incident. The failure to submit this form is not unique to this incident. The Force Analysis Section (FAS) has conducted additional research into why this is happening structurally. The Axon reporting system has added a section on injuries that many officers have

mistaken as a functional replacement for the IPR. This is not the case. Additionally, it takes time for records to scan the document into Axon. This lag leads to confusion over whether or not the form has been completed. Going forward the FAS is reaching out to Risk Management to determine if this form is still required, and if it is developing a digital replacement to the current handwritten form.

As an interim solution to this situation the FAS sent out the following clarifying email to all sworn personnel on July 8, 2025:

Good Morning,

There has been some confusion regarding whether officers need to complete an *Injured Person Report* when they have already filled out the injury/medical information in the name module of their Axon report.

After consulting with the Records Department and the TPD Reporting Technology Unit, I want to clarify that an *Injured Person Report is still required* even if the injury/medical fields are completed within the name module of the Axon report.

To assist with this:

- I have attached a screenshot of the injury/medical section in the name module for reference.
- I have also attached a blank Injured Person Report form for your use.
- Additionally, I've included the General Order outlining when this report is required.

Please also note: *Injured Person Reports are occasionally being lost or not scanned into Evidence.com.* If possible, upload these reports directly into Evidence.com upon completion. This will help ensure the documents are properly associated and not misplaced.

If you have any questions or need further clarification, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thank you,

Sergeant [REDACTED]

Tucson Police Department

Force Analysis Section

[REDACTED]@tucsonaz.gov

G.O. 2164.2 Injured Person Report (IPR)

The Injured Person Report (TPD 732) shall be completed when an arrestee, whether to be booked or field released, complains of illness or injury, or has any injury including minor cuts, bruises and abrasions that are present at the time of arrest or are sustained during or after the arrest. The (IPR) shall also be completed in all instances when direct contact between a member of the Department and any citizen results in physical injury, or compliant of physical injury. The officer who observes the injury, who is involved in the circumstances of the injury, or who is the recipient of any report of the injury or illness will be responsible for completing the form. Officers will document how the injuries occurred if this information is known.

The Injured Person Report will accompany the arrestee until he or she is no longer under the care of TPD. A copy of the report will be given to the Pima County Jail or, if the arrestee is a juvenile, to the Pima County Juvenile Court Center, and the original to Records.

When an ill or injured prisoner is booked, officers will convey to the Booking Officer any instructions or medications provided by a treatment facility.

If another injury occurs subsequent to completion of the original Injured Person Report and all copies of this report are available, the injury shall be documented in the original Injured Person Report. If all copies are not available, a second Injured Person Report shall be completed. When an original Injured Person Report is

amended by a second officer; the amending officer shall initial the added narrative and include his or her name and payroll number at the bottom of the report.

Field photos should be taken if appropriate. See also General Orders under Force regarding the requirements for the reporting of use of force.

Were there any other deficiencies in the required documentation of this incident?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Despite being on scene and taking an active role in the incident Sergeant Pelton failed to write a supplementary report in Axon as required. The use of force “Blue Team” investigation completed by the supervisor is not a substitute for writing a supplementary report. This omission is not unique to this incident. Training and guidance on this point has previously been directed to agency supervisors. This omission was later corrected, and a supplementary report was completed by Sergeant Pelton.

INVESTIGATION

Is the investigation thorough, complete, and supported by the evidence presented?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Did the Chain of Command (COC) appropriately review, and address all pertinent issues?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ Referred back to COC for feedback ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

POLICY

Did the officer(s) employ tactics consistent with policy?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Did TPD have the best policies in place for a successful outcome?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Does a TPD policy need to be amended / updated based off this incident?

☐ YES ☒ NO ☐ N/A

If YES, please explain:

The board is not recommending any changes to the Tucson Police Department’s use of force policy at this time. However, there was a substantive discussion regarding escalation and the application of the force continuum—specifically as it pertains to hard empty-hand control techniques.

Several board members raised questions about whether it might be more appropriate for officers to employ an open-handed slap, particularly when dealing with women and juveniles, as an initial compliance tactic before escalating to more forceful strikes.

Department representatives clarified that the classification of hard empty-hand control does not distinguish between an open-handed slap and a closed-fist strike. The key consideration is the officer's ability to articulate and justify the use of force based on the totality of circumstances. From a policy standpoint, the use of an open-handed slap would not be considered out of compliance, just as not all strikes must be delivered with maximum force (e.g., a "haymaker").

The board also engaged in further discussion regarding the appropriate classification and use of the PepperBall system as a less-lethal tool. Some board members expressed concern that PepperBall may be improperly grouped with other intermediate weapons and suggested that, from a subject's perspective, receiving a PepperBall impact might be preferable to being struck with a fist.

Department members explained the reasoning behind its current classification, citing both its availability and the irritant properties of the powder contained within the projectiles. While the board acknowledged these considerations, no formal recommendation for a policy change was made at this time.

TACTICS / DECISION MAKING

Did the officer(s) employ appropriate decision making during this incident?

☐ YES ☒ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

The board noted that Officer Voss received a written, non-disciplinary Personnel Performance Report (PPR) for his verbal interaction with the reporting party immediately following the use of force. The board agrees that Officer Voss's tone and word choice during the exchange was unprofessional. However, in its review the Force Review Board discussed its overall observations of the incident that led to the interaction in question.

Specifically, Officer Voss had managed most of the interaction with the suspect throughout the incident yet was also the one who engaged with the reporting party post-incident. The board observed that, given the number of other police personnel present at the scene, the reporting party's access to the immediate workspace reflected a lapse in scene management by the other personnel present.

When Sgt. Pelton left to get entry tools the reporting party entered the apartment. The reporting party only exited the apartment when Sgt. Pelton returned. There were three additional officers, and a sergeant present inside the apartment as the detention was concluded yet none of them moved to actively deny the reporting party/suspect's immediate access to the scene. This lack of scene security contributed to the dynamic and placed the burden of post-incident communication disproportionately on Officer Voss, as none of the other personnel present addressed it. In the opinion of the Board this situation should not have been allowed to develop in the first place.

Did the officer(s) employ appropriate tactics during this incident?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Did the officer(s) action(s) contribute to the need to use force??

☐ YES ☒ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Were there other tactical options the officer(s) should have used, or considered?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If YES, please explain:

The board acknowledged that the officer's tactics were justified and within department policy. However, members felt that the officer may have had an opportunity to explore alternative negotiation strategies prior to forcing entry. Specifically, the officer employed a direct and assertive communication style with the suspect. The board noted that there would have been no drawback in attempting a more empathetic or conciliatory approach to encourage voluntary compliance within a reasonable time constraint.

The board also raised questions regarding whether Officer Voss was authorized to force entry without explicit direction from Sergeant Pelton. Department representatives clarified that officers are granted discretion to use force they deem appropriate based on the situation, without requiring direct orders from a supervisor. Ultimately, the officer bears responsibility for articulating and justifying their use of force. While officers are encouraged to exercise sound judgment, it was noted that the circumstances would have been different had Sergeant Pelton explicitly instructed Officer Voss *not* to force entry. In that case, proceeding would not have been authorized. In his report on this incident Officer Voss clearly documented his justification for forcing entry to the bathroom and the use of force that followed.

The board raised additional questions regarding the appropriateness of Officer Voss's use of aggressive language during the use of force encounter. Department representatives addressed the inquiry by emphasizing the dynamic nature of escalation and de-escalation during such incidents. They noted that de-escalation does not necessarily imply a gradual process; in some situations, it can occur rapidly and be influenced by a range of verbal and physical tactics.

In this case, upon reviewing the body-worn camera footage, it appeared that compliance was not achieved through the physical strikes delivered by Officer Voss alone, but rather in combination with his aggressive verbal commands and threat of additional force that occurred after the strikes. This nuance was not accurately documented in Officer Voss's report. In his report he documented, *"I delivered 2 strikes to [the suspect's] face. The first glanced off her face. The second strike landed on the right side of her face and it had the desired effect. She immediately stood up and we were able to pull her out of the bathroom. I detained [her] in handcuffs."*

In his report Officer Voss did not document that after he delivered the two strikes he did not yet gain compliance. It was only after he verbally threatened additional force that the suspect complied.

In the subsequent Blue Team investigation Sergeant Pelton documented that, *"Officer Voss told her he was going to punch her if she continued to not comply. After several warnings, he delivered two closed-fisted strikes to her face. [The suspect] responded by standing up and she was removed from the bathroom and detained. She had no visible injury from the strikes."* Further, in the section of the Blue Team report specifically on de-escalation Sergeant Pelton did not make the distinction.

The board's examination of the reports and video was not to imply that the reporting of Officer Voss and Sergeant Pelton was insufficient. The board found that their reports were adequate. However, they did not provide the same precision as the board's examination that came with the luxury of time and multiple reviewers. The central question discussed by the board was whether it would have been preferable for Officer Voss to deliver further physical strikes or to use strong verbal commands to gain compliance without additional strikes.

The intent of the board was not to delve into a discussion on documentation. In this instance, the aggressive verbal commands given after the strikes was what carried the day and that strategy was preferable to delivering more strikes. The discussion on documentation was simply to point out that more precise documentation by Officer Voss may have avoided the Board's questions on the matter of harsh language as they would have seen it as a preferable alternative to more strikes. A more accurate summary of how the use of force played out is described in the Incident Summary at the beginning of the document.

TRAINING

Did the officer(s) employ tactics consistent with training?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Did the officer(s) operate within the scope of their provided training?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Did the officers make reasonable efforts to de-escalate prior to using force?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

Please explain:

Is there additional training that should be offered based off this incident?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If YES, please explain:

Upon approval this report should be reviewed by the personnel involved and the ODE chain of command for the purpose of performance improvement.

SUPERVISION

Was there an on-scene supervisor at the time force was utilized?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

Did the supervisor provide appropriate guidance and support during the incident?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Did the supervisor provide appropriate guidance and support after the incident?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Was there clearly defined Incident Command (IC)?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

EQUIPMENT

Was the most relevant equipment available, requested, or used during this incident?

☒ YES ☐ NO ☐ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Were less lethal tools used during this incident? If so, what tools?

☐ Taser ☐ 40mm Launcher ☐ K9
☐ Bean Bag Shotgun ☐ Pepper Ball ☐ Other:

Was the equipment used within policy/training guidelines?

☐ YES ☐ NO ☒ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Is there other equipment that could be of benefit in the future during an incident of a similar nature?

☐ YES ☐ NO ☒ N/A

If YES, please explain:

FINDINGS

Was the use of force within department policy?

The member's actions and use of force are consistent with department policy. This includes the officers use of force being necessary, reasonable, and proportional.

☒ YES ☐ NO (SEE NEXT QUESTION)

If NO, please explain:

If the use of force was **NOT** consistent with TPD's use of force policy, was the force used objectively necessary, reasonable, and proportional given the incident and documentation?

☐ YES ☐ NO ☒ N/A

If NO, please explain:

Did the FRB find other minor policy violations that were not addressed during the investigation, by the COC, or OPS?

The member's use of force in this incident is justified and within department policy; however, FRB has identified an unrelated policy violation. When an unrelated policy violation is identified not related to the use of force under review, the matter will be referred to the members investigating Chain of Command or OPS.

☒ YES ☐ NO

If YES, please explain:

Refer to the previous section on required documentation as it pertains to the Injured Person Report. This information was forwarded to the ODE chain of command on April 16, 2025. As of July 16, 2025 the IPR has not yet been completed.

Is there an opportunity for improvement regarding training or tactics?

The member's actions and use of force were within department policy, but improvements to decision making or tactics were identified. These issues can be addressed through non-disciplinary – supplemental training.

☐ YES ☒ NO

If YES, please explain:

ANALYSIS

Does the FRB have any other concerns, questions, or issues with this incident not asked or outlined above?

☐ YES ☒ NO ☐ N/A

If YES, please explain:

Is there any other information or comments the FRB wants formally documented in this report?

☐ YES ☒ NO ☐ N/A

If YES, please explain:

SIGNATURES

Monica Prieto

Deputy Chief

31/07/2025

Date

Mickey Petersen

Assistant Chief

31/07/2025

Date

mittchell kagen

FRB Chairman

31/07/2025

Date

DEPARTMENT RESPONSE TO FRB RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>RECOMMENDATION</u>	<u>ACTION PLAN / ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>TARGET DATE</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
1.	Address documentation deficiencies with ODE Chain of Command	Lt. Frie to advise ODE CoC via email.	April 16, 2025	Complete

Signature: Mitch Kagen

Mitch Kagen (Jul 31, 2025 08:26:44 PDT)

Email: mitchell.kagen@tucsonaz.gov

Signature: Mickey Petersen

Mickey Petersen (Jul 31, 2025 13:45:29 PDT)

Email: mickey.petersen@tucsonaz.gov

Signature: Monica Prieto

Monica Prieto (Jul 31, 2025 15:38:05 PDT)

Email: monica.prieto@tucsonaz.gov