



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.

Recognizing the imminent threat to the suspect's safety and the potential severity of her injuries, 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 de-escalated back to 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:**

The suspect was escorted outside and evaluated by Tucson Fire Department personnel before being transported to the [REDACTED] for further [REDACTED] intervention. During the incident, the suspect called out to her mother, stating she had been punched. The reporting party became visibly upset, at which point Officer Voss 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 (#39293). 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:

**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 was not completed. This is a violation of General Orders.

**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 Sgt. 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.

### **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:

The chain of command did appropriately review this issue in terms of the use of force. However, they failed to correct the documentation deficiencies previously noted.

## 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:

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.

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.

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, but rather through his aggressive verbal commands and threat of additional force. This nuance was not accurately captured in the officers' reports and was also misinterpreted by the reviewing chain of command.

The central question posed to 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. In this instance, the verbal tactic was ultimately more effective in resolving the encounter without the need for additional physical force.

### 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?**



**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 section on required documentation above. This will be referred to the ODE chain of command for remediation.

**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:**

The board noted that Officer Voss received a written, non-disciplinary Personnel Performance Report for his verbal interaction with the reporting party immediately following the use of force. While the board agrees that Officer Voss's tone during the exchange was unprofessional, members felt that additional contextual factors should be considered.

Specifically, Officer Voss had managed the majority 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 officers. This lack of control contributed to the dynamic and placed the burden of post-incident communication disproportionately on Officer Voss.

**SIGNATURES**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Deputy Chief**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Assistant Chief**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**FRB Chairman**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**DEPARTMENT RESPONSE TO FRB RECOMMENDATIONS**

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