

# Investigation of the Louisiana State Police



United States Department of Justice  
Civil Rights Division  
and  
United States Attorney's Offices  
Eastern, Middle, and Western Districts of Louisiana

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INVESTIGATION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
A. LSP Uses Excessive Force .....	6
1. LSP Uses Tasers in an Unreasonable and Unsafe Manner.....	7
2. LSP Uses Unreasonable Force Without Warning or an Opportunity to Comply	8
3. LSP Uses Force on People Who Are Not a Threat and Do Not Pose a Flight Risk.....	9
4. LSP Troopers Use Excessive Force When People Run, Even When They Are in Handcuffs or Suspected of Only Misdemeanor Violations .....	10
<b>CONTRIBUTING CAUSES.....</b>	<b>12</b>
A. Poor Supervision Contributes to LSP’s Use of Excessive Force .....	12
1. LSP Supervisors Do Not Conduct Meaningful Force Reviews.....	13
2. LSP’s Policy Guidance and Training for Supervisors on Reviewing Uses of Force and Intervening with Troopers Is Lacking .....	14
3. LSP Troopers Underreport Force .....	15
B. Troopers Fail to Reassess the Threats Posed by Individuals When Using Force Following Vehicle Pursuits.....	16
C. LSP’s Training and Tactics Encourage Aggressive Behavior and Escalate Encounters, Making Unnecessary Force More Likely.....	18
D. Breakdowns in LSP’s Accountability System Lead to Unchecked Misconduct.....	20
1. LSP Fails to Open Investigations When People File Complaints Alleging Misconduct.....	21
2. Internal Affairs and Troops Minimize Misconduct and Fail to Respond to Recurring Violations.....	22
3. Some Internal Affairs Investigations Start Too Late and Fail to Independently and Thoroughly Analyze Trooper Behavior.....	23
4. LSP’s Disciplinary Review Committee Can Decide to Clear Troopers of Misconduct Without Any Explanation.....	25
5. LSP Missed an Opportunity to Draw Agency-Wide Lessons from Troop F’s Misconduct Spree .....	25
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>RECOMMENDED REMEDIAL MEASURES .....</b>	<b>28</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the evening of May 10, 2019, near Monroe, Louisiana, a Louisiana State Police trooper tried to stop a 49-year-old Black man named Ronald Greene for speeding and running a red light. Mr. Greene drove away. For 14 minutes, officers pursued him until he lost control of his vehicle, crashing on the side of the road. According to a sergeant that LSP regarded as its in-house use-of-force expert, what happened in the ensuing hours, weeks, and months was a “catastrophic failure in a million different directions.”

Multiple LSP troopers and sheriff’s deputies arrived at the scene of the crash. They tased Mr. Greene repeatedly and pulled him out of his car. They punched him, dragged him by ankle shackles, and left him face down in the road. When Mr. Greene tried to roll onto his side, a trooper put his foot on Mr. Greene’s buttocks to hold him down on his stomach. That trooper later told a supervisor, “I’m trying to keep him laying down. I was going to sit him up, but I don’t want him spitting blood all over us.” Mr. Greene pleaded, “I’m scared. I’m your brother. I’m scared.”

The LSP troopers deactivated or muted their body-worn cameras. When a supervisor arrived, he casually stepped over Mr. Greene, who laid moaning on the ground, and instead asked the troopers if they were ok. None of the troopers rendered aid to Mr. Greene, who became unresponsive and died before he reached the hospital.

After Mr. Greene died, troopers filed reports attributing his death to a car accident. “We investigate crashes every day,” one trooper later told us. “No way someone died from a car crash with that damage.” One trooper who was there misdated the incident in an official report. LSP’s designated use-of-force expert at the time believed that was a deliberate attempt to cover up the incident. Another trooper miscategorized camera footage in LSP’s systems. And the supervisor who stepped over Mr. Greene’s body that night signed off on all the use-of-force reports.

Over 15 months passed before LSP opened an Internal Affairs investigation into Mr. Greene’s death. In the intervening days and months, LSP troopers—including one involved in Mr. Greene’s death—would go on to assault more drivers. It was not until September 2020, 16 months after the incident, that LSP fired one of the troopers involved. It would take until 2021 for LSP to suspend a second trooper and fire a third who was involved in both Mr. Greene’s death and an assault of a different Black man.

Mr. Greene’s death and its aftermath demonstrated serious failures at LSP—excessive force, improper supervision, ineffective training, and breakdowns in accountability. As our civil pattern or practice investigation revealed, these failures were not isolated, but part of a larger pattern or practice of law enforcement conduct that deprives people in Louisiana of their rights under the Constitution.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Federal criminal investigators examined the death of Ronald Greene for possible federal criminal charges, which require proving beyond a reasonable doubt that an officer willfully violated Mr. Greene’s rights. Given this demanding standard, an officer’s use of force may violate the Constitution even where it

Following a comprehensive investigation, the Department of Justice has reasonable cause to believe that the Louisiana State Police engage in a statewide pattern or practice of using excessive force, which violates the Fourth Amendment. Our investigation, opened in 2022, also included examining whether LSP engages in racially discriminatory policing. At this time, we make findings only as to excessive force.

Though this investigation reveals systemic problems, we recognize that most LSP troopers work hard to keep the public safe. We commend LSP troopers and staff who devote their professional lives to serving the community.

LSP began making much-needed reforms after video of Mr. Greene's death became public in 2021, two years after the incident. We believe those changes may have contributed to some recent improvements in use-of-force practices. The changes include revising LSP's use-of-force policy, creating a Force Investigation Unit to investigate serious uses of force, and updating training programs.

However, more reforms are needed to remedy the unlawful conduct we found. We describe recommended changes at the end of this report. We hope to work constructively with the State and LSP to implement these reforms.

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cannot be prosecuted as a criminal violation. The primary trooper involved in the incident died in a car crash in 2020. The Justice Department's investigation of Mr. Greene's death, which concluded on January 14, 2025, found insufficient evidence to support federal criminal charges against surviving Louisiana State Police troopers and officials involved in the incident or its aftermath.

## BACKGROUND

Spread across 64 parishes and covering more than 52,000 square miles, Louisiana is home to over 4.6 million people. Louisiana has several large cities, including New Orleans, Shreveport, Lafayette, and its capital, Baton Rouge. The state's population is approximately 56% white, 31% Black, 7% Hispanic or Latino, and 2% Asian.

### A. Louisiana State Police

Founded in 1936, LSP is responsible for highway safety and criminal enforcement throughout the state, alongside local sheriffs and city police departments. LSP also assists with disaster recovery and provides law enforcement support for major events like the NBA All-Star Game and Mardi Gras. Over 1,300 people serve in LSP, both as troopers and civilian law enforcement professionals.

LSP is headed by a superintendent, currently Robert Hodges, who is appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and confirmed by the State Senate. LSP's superintendent has the rank of colonel. An assistant superintendent serves as LSP's second-in-command. Four deputy superintendents each oversee a major area of LSP operations and report to the assistant superintendent.

The uniformed troopers that patrol Louisiana's roads are organized into ten troops that cover different parishes around the state, as shown in the map. The troops are grouped into three regions, each commanded by a major. LSP has policed New Orleans on and off through the years. In January 2024, Governor Jeff Landry announced plans to form a new troop in New Orleans, called Troop NOLA.

LSP also has several statewide units. The Criminal Investigations Division (CID) investigates crimes around the state. The Force Investigation Unit (FIU) investigates serious uses of force by LSP troopers. LSP's Internal Affairs (IA) unit is responsible for investigating potential policy violations by troopers and civilian law enforcement professionals.



LSP has ten troops that patrol different parishes around the state.

## B. Recent Events

Ronald Greene's death on May 10, 2019, is far from the only instance of LSP's excessive force that has made headlines:

- In July 2018, a trooper shot and paralyzed a white teenager—who was a passenger in a car stopped for a minor traffic violation—when he tried to run away from the car.
- In March 2019, a trooper grabbed a Black man in his early 20s by his hair and repeatedly slammed his head into the hood of a car.
- In May 2019, a trooper hit a handcuffed 45-year-old Black man 18 times with a flashlight as other troopers watched, breaking his jaw, wrist, and three ribs.
- In July 2019, troopers handcuffed a Black man, slammed him against a police car, threw him to the ground, and repeatedly punched and kneed him.
- In May 2020, at least seven troopers—including one who was involved in Ronald Greene's death—gave a 29-year-old Black man a “whoopin” that would give him “nightmares for a long time,” as the troopers later wrote in text messages. One trooper told him, “I’m going to punish you, dumb bitch.” Troopers pulled his hair, punched him, and repeatedly hit him in the head with a flashlight.

In October 2020, LSP's superintendent, Colonel Kevin Reeves, announced his retirement in the wake of public reports about excessive force and delayed accountability. At the time, media outlets reported that troopers were using racially derogatory language, including one trooper, who was never disciplined, calling a coworker a “fucking n-----.”

In the following years, Colonel Lamar Davis led LSP and implemented reforms, including revamping its use-of-force policy and updating the Training Academy's approach and curriculum. LSP also engaged outside policing experts to assess LSP's policies, procedures, practices, culture, and training. LSP issued a report on the assessment in October 2023, which identified problems with training, force, accountability, data collection and analysis, and other areas and recommended further reforms.<sup>2</sup>

Following Colonel Davis's retirement in January 2024, Colonel Robert Hodges took over as LSP's 28th superintendent.

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<sup>2</sup> The Bowman Group, *Louisiana State Police Assessment Report* at 66 (October 2023), <https://www.lsp.org/media/ycvlpag0/the-bowman-group-lsp-final-report-october-2023-1.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/QU94-GKUL>].

## INVESTIGATION

The Department of Justice opened this investigation in June 2022 to determine whether LSP is engaging in a pattern or practice of unlawful conduct that deprives people of their rights under the Constitution or federal law. We focused on the agency as a whole, rather than on any individual incident. Under the law enforcement misconduct statute, 34 U.S.C. § 12601, we are authorized to bring a lawsuit seeking court-ordered changes when we have reasonable cause to believe that LSP engages in a prohibited pattern or practice.

Our investigative team consists of career civil staff from the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Eastern, Middle, and Western Districts of Louisiana. Subject-matter experts with decades of experience assessing police tactics, training, supervision, and internal investigations and with expertise in conducting statistical analyses assisted us.

We conducted our investigation to ensure a thorough, independent, and fair assessment of LSP. We interviewed current and former LSP command staff. We visited troops across Louisiana and met with supervisors and operational staff from key headquarters divisions. We also participated in dozens of ride-alongs with troopers around the state and observed Academy training sessions.

We held community town halls in Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles, Monroe, New Orleans, and Shreveport to hear from members of the community about their experiences with LSP. We spoke with dozens of other people who have interacted with LSP, including defense attorneys, civil rights lawyers, community organizers, faith leaders, former LSP troopers, and community members.

We reviewed LSP records, including policies, trainings, internal investigations, and hundreds of files documenting enforcement activities from 2018 to 2023. We reviewed hundreds of hours of body-worn and in-car camera video. We also analyzed LSP's data on arrests and uses of force.

We thank LSP for cooperating with our investigation. We also thank the command staff, supervisors, civilian staff, and troopers who provided us with insights into the operation of LSP. We are also grateful to the many members of the public who shared their experiences with us.

## FINDINGS

We have reasonable cause to believe that LSP engages in a statewide pattern or practice of using excessive force that violates the Fourth Amendment.

### A. LSP Uses Excessive Force

The use of excessive force by an officer violates the Fourth Amendment. Whether an officer's use of force is constitutional is based on the "totality of the circumstances" and must be assessed by looking at "whether the officers' actions are 'objectively reasonable'" in light of the "facts and circumstances" particular to each case.<sup>3</sup> In making this assessment, relevant factors include (1) whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officers or others, (2) the severity of the crime at issue, and (3) whether the suspect is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight. "[T]he speed with which an officer resorts to force can factor into the reasonableness analysis" where "officers deliberately, and rapidly eschew lesser responses when such means are not only plainly available but also obviously recommended by the situation."<sup>4</sup>

Deadly force is permissible only when an officer has probable cause to believe that a suspect poses an immediate threat of serious harm to the officer or another person.<sup>5</sup> In the Fifth Circuit, analysis as to the reasonableness of a use of deadly force should be "confined to whether the officers or other persons were in danger at the moment of the threat that resulted in the officers' use of deadly force."<sup>6</sup>

From 2018 to 2023, LSP officers reported more than 1,300 uses of force. We reviewed every LSP shooting and hundreds of other randomly selected force incidents from 2018 to 2023. We closely reviewed each incident by watching body-worn and in-car camera footage and reading related reports and documents. We also reviewed LSP's policies and training curricula and observed numerous trainings. We spoke to troopers, supervisors, and commanders, as well as community members affected by LSP's uses of force.

We found that LSP troopers across the state use excessive force. Though LSP's use of unreasonable force was not limited to any one type of force, we found LSP's use of Tasers particularly concerning. We also found that troopers use excessive force to immediately control encounters, often within the first few moments of encountering a person and without giving the person a warning or an opportunity to comply. They also use force on those who, because they are restrained or otherwise unable to flee, do not pose a threat or a flight risk. Additionally, LSP uses excessive force on people who run from troopers, even when that person is only suspected of a misdemeanor. This excessive force violates the Fourth Amendment. As discussed below, we also found

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<sup>3</sup> *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386, 397 (1989).

<sup>4</sup> *Harmon v. City of Arlington, Texas*, 16 F.4th 1159, 1165 (5th Cir. 2021).

<sup>5</sup> *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1, 9 (1985).

<sup>6</sup> *Barnes v. Felix*, 91 F.4th 393 (5th Cir. 2024), *cert. granted*, — U.S. —, 2024 WL 4394125 (Oct. 4, 2024) (No. 23-1239).



that specific practices or policies escalate situations, making the use of force more likely.

### **1. LSP Uses Tasers in an Unreasonable and Unsafe Manner**

LSP troopers across the state quickly resort to Tasers when it is not reasonable to do so. A senior LSP leader explained to us that once troopers began to carry Tasers, they were more likely to escalate from verbal engagement directly to tasing a person rather than trying to control someone with lower levels of force. We saw that pattern play out in the incidents we reviewed.

LSP troopers unreasonably use Tasers without warning and against people who are restrained or who do not pose a threat. For example, an LSP trooper stunned an unarmed man in the back with a Taser while he was lying face down, surrounded by at least five officers. The trooper went to the scene to help a local sheriff's department with a traffic stop for improper lane usage. When they arrived, the driver had already pulled over and numerous local sheriff's deputies were present. Officers told the man to exit the vehicle and put his hands up. When he did not promptly get out of his car, the sheriff's deputies and the LSP trooper charged forward with their guns pointed at him. The officers opened the door and immediately pulled the man out. Even before they told him to put his hands behind his back, and before he was completely out of the vehicle, the LSP trooper demanded, "tase him, tase him." With the driver pinned face down on the ground and surrounded by officers, the LSP trooper pulled up the man's shirt and used his Taser to drive stun the man's bare back. The driver repeatedly asked what he had done and explained, "it's a rental. I didn't know how to open the door."

The trooper's use of force was excessive. The driver did not pose an immediate threat to anyone's safety, was not armed, did not actively resist arrest, and did not attempt to run. Following the incident, the driver was unable to walk and was dragged by deputies to a patrol unit. His clothes were ripped and he was bruised. But there were also longer term effects: he reported that he became depressed and angry and has frequent flashbacks. He was ultimately charged with nothing more than "improper lane usage," and the trooper explained in his use-of-force report that the stop was for changing lanes without a signal.<sup>7</sup>

We also reviewed incidents in which LSP troopers unreasonably used Tasers on people who fled from them without additional justification for using force.

The use of Tasers presents a serious risk of harm.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the pain caused by the electric shocks and probes, Tasers may cause seizures, fainting, or loss of control,

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<sup>7</sup> We discuss similar examples where LSP used Tasers without warning and on people who did not pose a threat below, at pages 8–10.

<sup>8</sup> Tasers are also linked with cognitive impairment. One study found that Taser "exposure led to significant and substantial reductions in (a) short-term auditory recall and (b) abilities to assimilate new information through auditory processes." Robert J. Kane and Michael D. White, *TASER Exposure and Cognitive Impairment: Implications for Valid Miranda Waivers and the Timing of Police Custodial Interrogations*, 15 CRIMINOLOGY & PUBLIC POLICY 1, 79–107 (Feb. 2016). The study went on to note that

which can result in injuries from falls, including bone fractures or even death.<sup>9</sup> Muscle contractions caused by Tasers can result in “hernia rupture, dislocation, tear, or other injury to soft tissue, organ, muscle, tendon, ligament, cartilage, disc, nerve, bone or joint.”<sup>10</sup> Tasers can also cause changes in blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate and rhythm.<sup>11</sup> Tasing someone repeatedly or for a prolonged period compounds these risks.

The physical effects of being tased were evident in the incidents we reviewed. In multiple incidents, including the one discussed above, the person tased by LSP troopers was unable to walk immediately after the incident. In another incident, a shirtless and shoeless teenager was tased without warning when he fled from a trooper. The teenager fell face first off a curb onto a busy street and went rigid, appearing to have a seizure. The trooper poked him, told him to “breathe,” and then handcuffed him without addressing his apparent medical distress.

## **2. LSP Uses Unreasonable Force Without Warning or an Opportunity to Comply**

LSP troopers rapidly use unreasonable force, sometimes within the first seconds of an encounter. In multiple cases, troopers issued a command two to three times in rapid succession (like “show me your ID” or “come here”) and then suddenly grabbed or tackled the person. Troopers used excessive force not to stop someone from escaping or to protect themselves or others, but because a person did not immediately follow a trooper’s command.

For example, in one case we reviewed, a trooper slammed a bar patron to the ground when he failed to provide his ID quickly enough. The man, who was accused of slapping a bar employee, was standing on the sidewalk outside the bar when the trooper arrived. The trooper asked him for his ID, but the man, who appeared inebriated, remained silent, shaking his head “no” and putting his hands out, palms up, in front of him, then crossing his arms. The man posed no immediate threat. Rather than explaining the reason for the request or trying to persuade the man to cooperate, the trooper immediately grabbed the man’s arm and forced him to the ground, injuring his nose.

In another incident, a trooper unreasonably tased an unarmed pedestrian before giving him an order to get out of a car. The trooper was looking for a stolen vehicle and stopped the man and asked him where he lived. The trooper did not explain what he was looking for or why he was questioning the man. The man ignored the trooper’s questions and instead ran away and got in the passenger seat of a parked car. The trooper followed the man with his Taser drawn, shouting “I’m about to kill your ass.” He

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the cognitive effects from being tased last up to one hour for most subjects. *Id.* at 98. This cognitive impact raises questions about the degree to which a tased individual may be able to understand and respond to a trooper’s commands.

<sup>9</sup> Axon Enterprise, Inc., TASER Handheld Energy Weapon Warnings, Instructions, and Information: Law Enforcement, 1–3 (Rev. Sept. 20, 2022), [https://axon-2.cdn.prismic.io/axon-2/ab7e9272-ead4-4271-9103-09cf10e42ad6\\_Law+Enforcement+Warnings+8\\_5x11.pdf](https://axon-2.cdn.prismic.io/axon-2/ab7e9272-ead4-4271-9103-09cf10e42ad6_Law+Enforcement+Warnings+8_5x11.pdf) [<https://perma.cc/Q6Q9-AUYP>].

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

then opened the driver's side door and tased the man, who by then had raised his hands in submission. The trooper tased the man repeatedly while shouting at him to "get out." In total, the trooper tased the man seven times in less than a minute before he removed the man from the car and put him in handcuffs.<sup>12</sup>

### **3. LSP Uses Force on People Who Are Not a Threat and Do Not Pose a Flight Risk**

LSP troopers use excessive force on people who do not present an immediate threat, including people who cannot flee because they are restrained, surrounded by officers, or otherwise trapped.

For example, in one incident, an LSP trooper tased an uncooperative driver multiple times after a serious traffic accident. When troopers responded to the site of the crash, the driver refused to come out of his overturned vehicle. Once the man was out of the car, he tensed and pulled his arms away to avoid being handcuffed by an assisting law enforcement officer. The trooper tackled him to the ground and punched him in the head, while the other officer handcuffed the man. The trooper then tased the handcuffed man again without warning when the man would not lift his legs to be hogtied in the backseat of the trooper's vehicle. He was not posing a threat to the trooper or attempting to flee at the time. Just prior, the man had fallen headfirst from the backseat of the trooper's vehicle and though he had initially kicked when the trooper attempted to place the leg restraints on him, was no longer doing so. Law enforcement organizations advise officers to avoid leaving someone restrained on their stomach as it poses serious risk of suffocation. But the trooper left the man hogtied on his stomach in the back of the vehicle for almost an hour, with his ankles and wrists handcuffed and tied together behind his back.<sup>13</sup>

In another incident, an LSP trooper working with a local police department dragged a 25-year-old woman and a young child from a car. The woman was having a mental health crisis. Officers stopped her because she was reportedly causing "disturbances." As multiple officers yelled at the woman and grabbed at her and the screaming child, an LSP trooper tased the woman to make her let go of the child. The woman fell and thrashed her legs in the air following the initial Taser use. Although she was on the ground, surrounded by at least eight officers, and unarmed, with no warning an LSP trooper tased the woman a second time in front of the crying child. Enough officers were at the scene to control the woman and take her into custody, but they used a Taser as a

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<sup>12</sup> The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) advises that "[m]ultiple applications of an [Electronic Control Weapon – i.e. Taser] cannot be justified solely on the grounds that a subject fails to comply with a command." *Electronic Control Weapons*, IACP, Sept. 2023, at 2, <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Electronic%20Control%20Weapons%20-%202023.09.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/TYF2-YE6S>].

<sup>13</sup> Since 2002, the IACP has recommended that "law enforcement agencies eliminate or seriously limit the use of the hog-tie position and similar four-point restraints." IACP, Training Key 541: The Four-Point Restraint (2002). Because positional asphyxia can occur, "when four-point restraints are absolutely essential for control of a suspect, they should be used with great care, and the condition of the suspect should be continuously monitored."

first option, rather than a last resort, and failed to attempt any de-escalation before using force.

In another incident, an LSP officer pulled a woman—who posed no threat—face down into the dirt on the side of a highway because she tried to use her phone. After the trooper stopped her for following the vehicle in front of her “too closely,” the woman pulled over and answered his questions. The trooper agreed the woman could use her cell phone to call her mom to get the vehicle’s registration. But when the woman refused to sign a form consenting to a search, the trooper apparently changed his mind about her use of the phone even though she had been using it in front of him without an objection. When the woman tried to call her mom again, the trooper reached for the woman’s phone to stop her from making the call and dragged her to the ground, twisting her arm and pushing her into the ground on the side of the busy highway so that she had dirt in her mouth.

#### **4. LSP Troopers Use Excessive Force When People Run, Even When They Are in Handcuffs or Suspected of Only Misdemeanor Violations**

As noted above, when assessing whether a use of force is reasonable, courts look at factors that include whether the person attempted to evade arrest by fleeing, as well as other factors like the severity of the suspected crime and whether the person posed a threat. “Behavior that appears evasive could, of course, have any number of innocent explanations. . . . [T]here are . . . undeniably instances in which a person runs for entirely innocent reasons.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, using force on people who flee, without additional justification, can be unreasonable. Yet, LSP troopers reflexively use force to punish people who run away with little or no additional justification for doing so.

Former LSP leadership acknowledged that there is an “old-fashioned culture” in some parts of LSP in which troopers punish anyone who runs or disrespects an officer.

For instance, in one incident, a trooper tased a 30-year-old man biking through a city at night without lights. According to the filed report, the trooper and his partner attempted to stop the cyclist to “explain to him the dangers of operating a bike at night on a dark roadway.” The troopers turned on the emergency lights, but the man continued to pedal. The trooper in the passenger seat rolled down his window and asked the cyclist to pull the bike over. The cyclist asked, “for what?” then dropped his bike and ran. The troopers ran after him. Seconds later, they tased him in the back.

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<sup>14</sup> *United States v. Hill*, 752 F.3d 1029, 1036 (5th Cir. 2014) (omitting internal citations). Similarly, in a concurring opinion in *Illinois v. Wardlow*, Justice Stevens noted:

Among some citizens, particularly minorities...there is [] the possibility that the fleeing person is entirely innocent, but, with or without justification, believes that contact with the police can itself be dangerous, apart from any criminal activity associated with the officer's sudden presence. For such a person, unprovoked flight is neither “aberrant” nor “abnormal.”

528 U.S. 119, 132 (2000).

In another incident, an LSP trooper tased an unarmed man after pulling him over for not signaling while changing lanes, not wearing a seatbelt, and having a fake vehicle inspection sticker. The man was handcuffed and shoeless at the time. After pulling up a picture of the person to whom the car was registered, the troopers became suspicious as they did not believe the driver resembled the owner of the vehicle. When asked, the driver did not produce a driver's license and hesitated when providing his date of birth. Before he could finish answering the trooper's question, troopers grabbed the man, handcuffed, and searched him. As the troopers were walking the man to a patrol car, he attempted to run. All three troopers who were on the scene chased after him. Within six seconds, a trooper tased the man. Unable to break his fall, he fell backwards onto the pavement, hitting his head and back and cutting his elbow so severely he needed stitches.



A handcuffed man with no way to break his fall slams into the pavement after being tased.

Troopers have admitted to using significant force based on flight alone, without additional evidence that the person was a threat. A trooper explained to a colleague that he did not know if the pedestrian he had just tased seven times had “anything to do with our pursuit,” but that he “took off running” when they went to talk with him.<sup>15</sup>

**“I don’t know if he’s got anything to do with our pursuit [for a stolen car]. We went to talk to him, and he took off running.”**

*Trooper, describing a man he tased seven times*

<sup>15</sup> This incident is described in detail above at pages 8–9.

## CONTRIBUTING CAUSES

### A. Poor Supervision Contributes to LSP's Use of Excessive Force

Failures of LSP's supervision directly contribute to the unreasonable force we found.

In one example, LSP's failure to identify and correct unreasonable force later proved deadly. After pulling over an 18-year-old for a switched temporary tag and speeding, the trooper approached the car with his gun drawn and ordered him out of the vehicle. The teen complied, got on his stomach when ordered, and stretched his arms out to the side as instructed. The teen was holding a cell phone but no weapons. Even though he was not threatening the trooper and only questioned some of the trooper's commands, the trooper repeatedly yelled at the teen to stop looking at him. At one point, with his gun still drawn, the trooper screamed, "Don't look at me, look away. Do it again, motherfucker, and I'm a light you up."

The trooper holstered his gun and drew his Taser. He yelled at the teen, "Do you understand that if you look at me again, I'm going to take it as a threat and I'm going to tase you?" The trooper then radioed dispatch and said, "Send me another unit; I'm fixing to tase him because he's not doing what I'm telling him to do." The teen asked if he could call his mother and brother. After not following the trooper's instructions about sliding his cell phone away several times, the teen scrambled to his feet and started to dart away. The trooper tased him from behind, striking his leg. The teen stood up with his hands in front of him after pulling out the Taser probe and said, "Man, why you do that? Sir, stop, man, stop." After directing the teenager to get on the ground, the trooper fired his Taser again, striking the teen in the torso. The teenager's body involuntarily stiffened, and he fell flat on his back on the pavement.

While the teenager screamed in pain on the ground, the trooper yelled, "Stay on the ground. Now stop resisting." The teenager responded, "I'm not resisting." Without warning, the trooper tased him a third time. The trooper then approached the teen and sprayed chemical spray directly in his face.

The teen complied with the trooper's order to put his hands behind his back. A second trooper—who muted his body-worn camera after arriving on the scene—arrived and began kneeling on the 18-year-old's neck. The first trooper handcuffed the teen, then started twisting his wrists and telling him to stop resisting. The teen said, "My neck, I can't breathe." The original trooper said, "Your neck is fine."

After the troopers pulled him to his feet, the teen asked to wipe the chemical spray from his face. The first trooper said, "we'll wash you off when we get to the jail." It would be more than 20 minutes before the trooper took the teen to the local jail. The first trooper then handed his body-worn camera to the second trooper and said, "I don't know if this thing is on mute or not." The second trooper muted the camera.

Later, when driving the 18-year-old to the local jail, the first trooper said, "I could of just run up there and beat your ass, it would have been totally justified. And I didn't. I wanted

to take the time to give you a chance to just do what you're supposed to." After the incident, the trooper told staff at the jail, "I hate to bring you one that is all frayed up like that."

The trooper's written use-of-force report is riddled with statements that are inconsistent with the camera footage from the incident. Despite numerous policy violations and the unconstitutional uses of force, there is no evidence of meaningful supervisory review of the incident.

Due to the failures of supervision evident in this incident, these same troopers were enabled to go on using excessive force, including when they encountered Ronald Greene four months later.

Systemic failures in supervision—including ineffective force reviews, deficiencies in policies and training, chronic underreporting of force, and a failure to provide appropriate supervisory tools—contribute to the pattern or practice of excessive force at LSP. The lack of timely and meaningful supervision and training to correct unconstitutional practices reinforces the misconduct we found and places the public at risk of further harm.

## **1. LSP Supervisors Do Not Conduct Meaningful Force Reviews**

Although LSP has updated its policies and improved its information systems to make force reporting more efficient, the lack of meaningful supervisory force reviews and oversight persists.

LSP's system to review use of force by troopers is ineffective because it permits supervisors to ignore and, in some cases, condone problematic behavior, including excessive force by troopers. Policy requires that troopers report all deadly and "non-deadly" force<sup>16</sup> and notify their supervisors about the facts and circumstances surrounding their use of force through written use-of-force reports. LSP supervisors must review these reports to assess the troopers' actions and adherence to policy and training. However, in almost all the incidents we reviewed where we found unreasonable force or other problematic tactics or behavior, supervisors signed off on use-of-force reports without identifying problems or indicating that they took steps to correct trooper behavior.

Rather than conduct meaningful reviews, supervisors wait for criminal and administrative investigations to run their course before taking preventive action. One former high-ranking LSP official described the video of Mr. Greene's death as "absolute disgust, embarrassment that officers spoke the way they did and the excessive force used, it was just an uneasy feeling." Yet, in response to repeated questions from various legislators, he could not recall any recommendations he made or other action taken to protect the public beyond the start of the criminal investigation. For example,

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<sup>16</sup> LSP has expanded the types of reportable force. Currently, LSP requires troopers to report discharges of firearms and Tasers, actions that result in (or allegedly result in) injury or death of a person, takedowns, rammings, and canine bites.

the troopers were not placed on administrative leave or assigned additional supervision in the field. A training supervisor involved in the force review process testified that he learned that one of the troopers had not been placed on administrative leave after Greene's death when the trooper was involved in another troubling force incident a year later.

## **2. LSP's Policy Guidance and Training for Supervisors on Reviewing Uses of Force and Intervening with Troopers Is Lacking**

Despite LSP policy requiring supervisors to review troopers' uses of force, LSP fails to ensure meaningful supervisory reviews and interventions.

Supervisors' reviews are inconsistent and often incomplete. LSP has tried to improve the supervisory review process for uses of force through various policy changes. However, this work is unfinished.

The current force policy requires supervisors to review troopers' self-reports "to ensure accuracy and completeness by the reporting officer" and charges the supervisor with reviewing "all other supporting records including any available video(s) pertinent to the incident." Although LSP has revised the force policy several times in recent years, it still does not set a timeframe for each supervisor in the troopers' chain of command to review the self-report, video recordings, and other pertinent information. This leads to significant delays and uses of force "falling through the cracks," according to a report by LSP's outside experts.

The force policy also does not prohibit a supervisor from reviewing force incidents that they participate in, order, or authorize. For instance, a lieutenant and a trooper who were involved in a vehicle pursuit pointed their firearms at the driver once the pursuit came to an end. Another trooper and a sergeant pulled the driver out of the vehicle and used a takedown technique to throw the driver to the pavement, even though the driver was not physically resisting and was attempting to remove his seatbelt. One of the troopers at the scene helped pin the driver down by kneeling on his head for approximately 20 seconds while at least three other troopers surrounded the driver to handcuff him. A trooper completed a use-of-force report describing the pointing of firearms and takedown, but omitting the kneeling on the driver's head in violation of LSP reporting requirements in place at the time. The involved lieutenant signed off on the report, noting only "corrections." Despite significant revisions to the force policy in the years since 2019, it still does not prohibit supervisors involved in force incidents from reviewing and signing off on reports, which undermines the objectivity of force reviews.

LSP provides insufficient training to its first-line supervisors on reviewing uses of force. Supervisors receive no formal training on reviewing the reasonableness of force. The courses that LSP requires for troopers to be eligible for promotion to the ranks of sergeant, lieutenant, and captain also do not address how supervisors should review uses of force. These courses, developed initially in 2013 as part of a Leadership Development Program, offer no practical guidance on evaluating the objective



reasonableness of force or how supervisors should meet the force review expectations set by LSP policy.

LSP also lacks certain supervisory tools that could assist supervisors in intervening with troopers before they use force. For instance, LSP does not have an effective early intervention system (EIS) that tracks data points about employee performance, such as complaints or multiple uses of force. Such a system could help supervisors identify employees at risk of engaging in misconduct like excessive force and intervene to provide support and help them conform to agency expectations. Despite efforts to standardize EIS, LSP does not have a consistent and integrated system for tracking relevant EIS data across LSP, instead relying on a collection of troop-specific spreadsheets. LSP does not track some relevant indicators, including poor performance evaluations, sick days, and failure to appear in court.

The value of EIS hinges on the quality of supervisory interventions when the system identifies an officer. Sometimes these interventions require a difficult conversation with the officer about professional or personal concerns. But LSP's supervisor training provides little to no guidance on how to conduct a meaningful meeting with a trooper or select and document appropriate interventions. LSP does not require captains to maintain sufficient records to evaluate the effectiveness of supervisors' interventions with subordinates or the outcome of individual corrective action. Although Internal Affairs is required to write annual reports for the LSP Superintendent on corrective measures taken, this lack of documentation calls into question the completeness and utility of those reports. Without an effective system for identifying warning signs and intervening with troopers, LSP may be missing opportunities to provide support to troopers before violations take place.

### **3. LSP Troopers Underreport Force**

Troopers do not consistently report using force, and supervisors fail to ensure the troopers under their command report force accurately and completely. Individual use-of-force reports enable supervisory review and are the source for LSP's force statistics, which LSP reviews annually to identify policy, training, or equipment needs.

LSP troopers significantly underreport both deadly and "non-deadly" force. We reviewed video from randomly selected arrests around the state that did not appear to have an associated use-of-force report. We identified a number of incidents in which troopers used force and did not report it at all or where the incidents did not appear to be included in LSP's internal force statistics or analyses. Such underreporting undermines LSP's efforts to identify trends or training opportunities.

We also found instances where, although troopers filed use-of-force reports, they did not report all the force used. For example, a trooper did not report slamming a man's head into a car window when he pulled him over for tinted windows, though he did report using force to open the man's mouth and retrieve a small plastic bag with white powder residue. According to the audit trail of the in-car video, the trooper's direct supervisors who signed off on the report did not review video of the incident. The

supervisors also did not document any concerns or questions about the force used, leaving the review section of the use-of-force report blank.

Our review uncovered a troubling undercount of intentional firearm discharges by LSP troopers as well. LSP reported 15 intentional firearm discharges from 2018 to 2022. However, we uncovered 18 additional intentional firearm discharges during the same period that were missing use-of-force reports—more than double the number LSP did report.

LSP's internal documents reflect an awareness within the agency that troopers underreport force. Around early 2021, after footage of Mr. Greene's death became public, the then-superintendent of LSP organized an internal audit team to review body-worn and in-car camera footage from some troopers in Troop F to identify legal violations and training issues. During that review, one member of the audit team analyzed LSP's uses of force by the race of the subject of the force, writing, "part of the problem, one could argue, is that our personnel underreport use of force incidents."

LSP acknowledges shortcomings in its force statistics and data analysis. In its 2022 Annual Force Report, LSP explains that its work creating and maintaining accurate data "is in its infancy, as statistics collection methods of reporting are being adjusted." To LSP's credit, the agency has recently begun to improve its data collection systems. LSP told us that it plans to create dashboards that command staff can use to quickly see policing data and understand how it relates to other data, such as demographics, stop outcomes, or frequent crash locations.

LSP's annual force reports did not detect or address the unlawful and problematic behavior we uncovered as part of our investigation. Without more engaged and assertive supervision that objectively and thoroughly reviews troopers' force reports for completeness and accuracy, LSP's force data will remain unreliable and its oversight ineffective.

## **B. Troopers Fail to Reassess the Threats Posed by Individuals When Using Force Following Vehicle Pursuits**

LSP's policy and culture encourage pursuits, and LSP's training and supervision are not robust enough to ensure that troopers reevaluate threats after a pursuit before using force. As a result, pursuits are common, and they regularly escalate otherwise minor traffic violations into much more serious incidents. These incidents include accidents and uses of force, including excessive force that violates the Fourth Amendment, as was the case when troopers pursued and used force against Ronald Greene without assessing the threat he posed after his surrender.

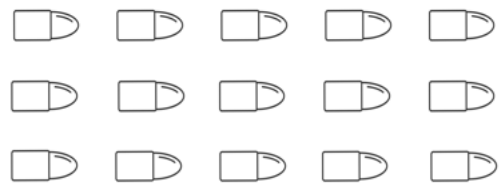
The use of force following pursuits is not uncommon. LSP troopers engaged in nearly 700 vehicle pursuits in 2022 and 2023—averaging almost one pursuit per day over the two-year period. At least 10% of those pursuits resulted in a use of force. LSP's internal reporting acknowledges that 20% of use-of-force incidents statewide in 2022 followed a vehicle pursuit. LSP policy gives troopers broad discretion to initiate, continue, and terminate a pursuit. Although policy requires supervisors to monitor pursuits and call

them off if conditions become too dangerous, one troop captain told us that historically, it was “perceived as a negative” to stop a pursuit.

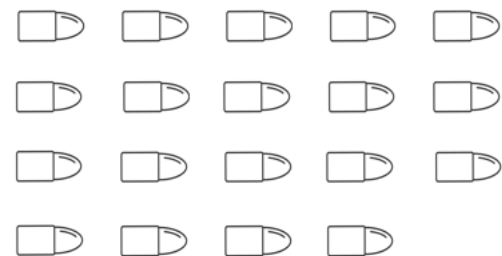
We reviewed a random sample of incidents in which LSP troopers reported using force following pursuits, in addition to the incidents we reviewed as part of our broader use-of-force sample. Our review found that LSP troopers routinely initiate and continue pursuits following minor traffic offenses, escalating minor infractions into dangerous incidents that sometimes resulted in unreasonable force. A former LSP leader told us troopers tended to be “hyped” and “aggressive” during pursuits. “Having been in those situations,” he explained, “your adrenaline kicks in, you get more of a narrow scope, you’re looking at threat from your lens . . . we need[] to find a way to de-escalate these situations as opposed to ramping them up.” But our review found that instead of de-escalating, troopers escalate situations by using force—including unreasonable force—after pursuits end, without evaluating whether the person who fled poses additional or continuing risks.

In one such incident, troopers and officers from another agency fired 61 rounds at a vehicle stuck in the mud after the driver led police on a 28-minute pursuit through two parishes. The pursuit began when an LSP trooper attempted to stop the vehicle for speeding on a highway. The driver did not stop, and other troopers and officers joined the chase. The driver continued fleeing after spike strips deployed by police impacted the vehicle’s front two tires. It was not until the driver came to the end of a dead-end dirt road and drove into a field that the vehicle stopped. Troopers and officers arrived and ordered the driver to exit the vehicle. The driver drove the vehicle backward and forward about 5 to 10 feet in either direction and became stuck in the mud. Troopers asked for permission from the LSP sergeant on scene to shoot at the vehicle. The sergeant gave the order to “take it out,” and the sergeant, together with two LSP troopers and two local officers, fired at the vehicle from about 15 to 20 feet away. After shooting at the vehicle 15 times with his handgun, one of the LSP troopers said, “He has no tires, he ain’t going nowhere,” and then continued shooting 19 more times with a rifle. About 12 minutes after the shooting, the sergeant approached the vehicle and used his baton to break out the windows to gain entry into the vehicle. The driver sustained cuts on his arm from the broken glass and was taken into custody. At the time

A trooper involved in a pursuit fired 15 bullets from his handgun at a car stuck in the mud.



The trooper said, “**he has no tires, he ain’t going nowhere,**” then fired 19 more bullets from his rifle.



Troopers and local officers fired a total of **61 bullets** at the disabled car.

troopers fired at the vehicle, the pursuit had ended, and the driver was neither fleeing nor posing a threat that warranted the use of deadly force to apprehend him.

In addition to leading to unnecessary and sometimes unreasonable uses of force, LSP's pursuit practices put the broader public at risk. In 2022 and 2023, more than 10% of LSP's vehicle pursuits ended in a crash—on average, once every ten days. These crashes can and do involve innocent bystanders.

LSP policy and culture has created an environment where pursuits are common, and yet LSP has failed to adequately train and supervise troopers to ensure that any force they use after a pursuit is constitutional. One trooper told us that “everyone’s greatest fear is . . . not being able to do pursuits” because “that’s the only fun they have.”

### **C. LSP’s Training and Tactics Encourage Aggressive Behavior and Escalate Encounters, Making Unnecessary Force More Likely**

LSP's training and tactics encourage troopers to approach interactions aggressively, which escalates encounters and makes it more likely that troopers will use force, sometimes unreasonably.

The history of LSP's Training Academy plays a part in promoting the aggressive behavior we saw throughout our review. Until around 2022, the LSP Training Academy used a military-style bootcamp approach to training new cadets. This approach was designed to “break [cadets] down and instill stress” and to establish a “warrior mindset.” But LSP leadership recognized that the training model was “not properly training cadets to help people” and the policing experts LSP hired to evaluate the agency found it “create[d] an adverse learning environment” in which troopers were primed to view everyone as a potential threat. As the former superintendent told us, “we were not properly training cadets to help people.”

To LSP's credit, with the help of outside experts hired around the time we opened our investigation, LSP began shifting to what it describes as a “guardian” culture when training recent cadet classes. Since 2022, the Training Academy has incorporated new courses into its curriculum, including a course on de-escalation and a course on how to intervene when colleagues engage in misconduct. Some troopers and LSP leadership have questioned the effectiveness of this new mindset. One regional major told us LSP's new



Although LSP's motto is “Courtesy, Loyalty, Service,” we identified many instances of troopers using profane and degrading language against citizens, including, “I will blow your fucking head off,” “[let me] see your fucking hands or I’ll shoot your fucking ass,” “back the fuck off,” and “turn the fuck over.”

approach to training is creating troopers who are showing “cowardliness,” and suggested that a trooper who backed off when someone pointed a finger at the trooper’s chest should have been disciplined. “If someone pokes you in the chest, they go to jail,” he said.

In the hundreds of hours of camera footage that we reviewed, it was apparent that some troopers perceived everyone to be a threat. We saw many incidents in which troopers used profane and unprofessional language, ordering people to “get out of the fucking car” or to show their “fucking hands.” Troopers also threatened people, saying they would “blow your fucking head off” or “shoot your fucking ass.” In one example, after reviewing an incident in which a trooper screamed at a driver that he would “shoot” his “fucking ass” and then tased him numerous times, one supervisor noted that he understood the trooper was “amped up” and then congratulated the trooper on a “good job!”

This aggressive language, while not itself unconstitutional, escalates situations and often goes hand-in-hand with unnecessary force. In the incidents we reviewed, when troopers used aggressive or profane language in conjunction with force, it was more likely that at least one use of force was unreasonable.

For example, troopers tased a man in the back while he was standing with his hands in the air and then beat him with their fists, apparently in retaliation for attempting to evade capture. Four days before the incident, a female trooper had tried to arrest the man during a traffic stop, but he fled and escaped. When troopers later went to the man’s home with an arrest warrant, he again fled in his vehicle. When the vehicle finally stopped in a residential yard, the man got out of the car and turned to face it with his hands up. An LSP trooper tased him in the back. Five troopers, including some in plain clothes, then pinned him down, tasing him and punching him more than 20 times in his head and body, even though he was restrained, unarmed, and did not appear to be resisting. One of the troopers grabbed the man’s head and slammed it into the ground. Another trooper held his head down in the dirt for approximately 20 seconds. After the many uses of force, when placing the man in a patrol car, a trooper told him, “You’re a piece of shit. You’re a first-rate piece of fucking shit . . . You want to try to run and fight a fucking girl.”



Following a pursuit, LSP tased a man in the back while he was facing a car with his hands up. Five troopers piled on him and punched him repeatedly. When placing the man in a patrol car, a trooper told him, “You’re a piece of shit. You’re a first-rate piece of fucking shit.”

Gaps in LSP's training and supervision related to key enforcement practices also lead to unnecessary and sometimes excessive force. When detaining drivers for traffic violations, officers often demand drivers get out of their cars immediately, regardless of the need for contact. This is due to LSP's unusual policy, which states that troopers should "summon the driver to exit his vehicle and stand at the front of the officer's vehicle" when conducting a traffic stop. We saw this practice in nearly every traffic incident we reviewed. The policy creates confusion amongst motorists, who may be hesitant to stand on a busy roadside. LSP's failure to train its officers to appropriately respond when motorists do not immediately comply with the trooper's command to exit their vehicle results in troopers escalating encounters unnecessarily and sometimes using unreasonable force.

In one such incident resulting in excessive force, a trooper pulled a car over for improper lane use. Moments after the trooper activated his emergency siren, the driver pulled over. About ten seconds later, the trooper got out of his car and yelled, "Driver, step out of the car." The trooper walked up to the side of the car and unholstered his gun about ten seconds after yelling at the driver to get out. The trooper walked to the driver's window, which was rolled down, placed the gun a few inches from the back of the driver's head, and said, "Hey man, you hear what I was saying?" The driver turned and saw the trooper with his gun and was startled. The trooper again ordered the driver out of the car, then opened the door, grabbed the driver's arm and dragged him out of the car, then slammed him on his back onto the pavement.

In another incident, a trooper stopped a car because it did not have a rear license plate. After the driver told troopers that he did not think it was lawful for them to order him out of the car and waited for them to approach, troopers dragged him to the ground and handcuffed him. "You're confused," one trooper later told the driver. "[Local] police department[s] may walk up to cars. We don't." We saw little indication that LSP has taken steps to ensure that this practice does not needlessly escalate encounters with the public or lead to unnecessary or unreasonable force.

#### **D. Breakdowns in LSP's Accountability System Lead to Unchecked Misconduct**

Our assessment of LSP's accountability system revealed several problems, which contributed to the pattern or practice of excessive force violations we found: First, LSP does not always open investigations when people file complaints. Second, even when Internal Affairs (IA) and the troops confront misconduct identified internally, they minimize it and do not effectively respond to repeated red flags in trooper behavior. Third, when IA does investigate serious misconduct, such as complaints about the use of excessive force, investigations can be delayed, too narrow in scope, and limited in independent analysis, making any eventual discipline less effective. Finally, LSP does not document the reasoning for its ultimate decision to discipline or not discipline a trooper and does not make its decision transparent to the public. Rather, LSP clears troopers of misconduct or reduces discipline without any written explanation. Together, these problems contribute to the legal violations we found and allow misconduct to take root and persist.

## **1. LSP Fails to Open Investigations When People File Complaints Alleging Misconduct**

Under LSP's policy, an investigation should be opened when a person files a complaint making an allegation that, if true, would require disciplinary action. In contravention of its own policy, many complaints do not make it past the "intake" stage because LSP decides not to open an investigation for improper reasons. This means LSP misses opportunities to intervene in behavior that harms the public, including possible excessive force violations.

For example, LSP disregarded domestic abuse allegations when it failed to investigate a complaint from a trooper's ex-wife. The ex-wife alleged that her former spouse was abusing his position as a law enforcement officer by intercepting her 911 calls and harassing her in other ways—conduct that, if true, would clearly warrant discipline. But IA marked the allegations "unfounded" and did not open an investigation into the complaint. The only explanation provided for this decision was that "[a]fter the review, it was determined there is insufficient evidence to initiate an[] administrative investigation." There was no record of whether LSP contacted the ex-wife, reviewed any supporting materials, or checked 911 records. Instead of opening an investigation, as required by LSP policy, IA held this woman to an impermissible standard, discounting her complaint for "insufficient evidence" before it could even gather evidence through a formal investigation.

In another case, IA failed to open an investigation after receiving allegations that a trooper showed an alarming lack of courtesy towards a severely injured driver. Following a crash that left the driver with a broken leg, pelvis, and nose, and stuck waist-deep in a ditch of water, a bystander contacted IA to complain about this trooper's response. She alleged that the trooper refused to help the stranded driver, instead ordering him to come to the shoulder of the road. Along with another person, the bystander had to help the driver out of his car. Despite the complaint, IA did not open an investigation into the trooper's failure to render aid. In 2023, another person filed a complaint against the same trooper, stating that she felt this trooper was discourteous to her during a traffic stop and treated her differently because she was not white. IA reviewed body-worn camera (BWC) footage of the stop and noted that the trooper appeared "agitated" and yelled at the driver, "get off the damn road." IA documented that the trooper told the driver, "[h]ow much more clearer you need me to be. Would you want me to tell you in Spanish, because I can tell you in Spanish?" IA did not open an investigation.

Although Internal Affairs can now receive complaints online, as of June 2024, LSP did not have a central repository for incoming complaints when a community member calls or walks into an individual troop's station. Each troop decides what to log and document in their records, leading to significant variation across LSP. If, after talking to a person, the sergeant fielding the complaint decides that the person has not alleged a policy violation, they do not document the complaint or send it up the chain of command. This informal system for sorting meritorious complaints from meritless ones undermines the troops' ability to identify allegations of potential misconduct.

## **2. Internal Affairs and Troops Minimize Misconduct and Fail to Respond to Recurring Violations**

Troops often minimize misconduct, handling serious allegations that they should instead send to IA. By the same token, IA sometimes refers cases to the troops, when it should be investigating the alleged misconduct.

These failures stem in part from LSP policy. Policy does not define or give examples of “minor” or “procedural” violations (which troops handle), does not identify who handles use-of-force allegations that did not lead to medical attention (IA handles those that do require medical attention), and does not make clear if IA should intervene and investigate when there are repeat allegations that the same trooper is violating “procedural” rules. These gaps result in a weak accountability system that is ill-equipped to detect and respond to red flags in trooper behavior.

One case we reviewed exemplified these deficiencies. When a sergeant failed to upload BWC footage for nearly six months and mislabeled many of his arrest videos as “non-events,” his captain instructed a lieutenant to conduct an investigation into the sergeant’s actions. The lieutenant ultimately found that the sergeant engaged in “unsatisfactory performance” and committed BWC policy violations, but his interview with the sergeant lasted less than ten minutes and did not probe the sergeant’s explanations for his behavior, his understanding of LSP policies, or whether he supervised and reviewed troopers’ use of BWC. The sergeant’s troop did not ask Internal Affairs to investigate him. Instead, his troop’s leadership narrowly read his misconduct as a procedural violation and accepted his explanations without taking further action to prevent future violations. This failure is all the more concerning given the front-line role that sergeants play in reviewing BWC footage for potential violations, including the use of excessive force.

In another example, both IA and the troops failed to act despite clear signs that a trooper had committed significant violations over several years. The trooper’s lieutenant discovered and documented multiple arrests where the trooper falsified evidence. For instance, the trooper arrested a driver for DWI and possession of a firearm in the presence of a controlled substance based on a breath test that showed a 0.00% blood-alcohol content and a glass bottle that the trooper said contained “meth oil.” The bottle, which turned out to be empty, came back negative for traces of methamphetamine. The lieutenant observed that the trooper’s “incidents have grown much more serious” and that the trooper’s “actions . . . call the department’s reputation, training and credibility into question in the courts.” Troop leadership ultimately referred these incidents and others to IA, but we found no evidence that IA ever investigated them.

A few years later, this same trooper was disciplined for four more violations, including mishandling a DWI arrest, tampering with property at a gym while on duty, and making inappropriate social media posts, including one that mocked a Black colleague’s promotion. But because LSP never investigated the trooper for the previous incidents of falsifying evidence, none of these later decisions to discipline him made reference to his record of questionable integrity. He continued to violate LSP policies. His supervisors



wrote him up for five additional violations, including not calling out stops while on patrol and failing to file a use-of-force report in time. But his troop did not formally open its own investigation or refer these violations to IA. Instead, the troop simply prohibited him from working overtime assignments.

The persistence of the trooper's misconduct, despite occasional discipline, shows how gaps in LSP's accountability system result in it ignoring clear red flags. Although LSP has started using "progressive discipline"—taking into account prior, sustained violations when disciplining a trooper—this reform cannot reach troopers whom the agency fails to formally investigate in the first place.

Even where LSP policy is clear and requires IA to investigate certain misconduct, such as racial bias allegations, we found that IA sometimes improperly sends those complaints to the troops or otherwise fails to meaningfully respond.

In one such case, a Black passenger of a car contacted IA wanting to file a complaint against a trooper, who he believed had racially profiled everyone in the car when the trooper pulled them over for not having a visible license plate. An Internal Affairs investigator contacted the driver of the vehicle, who told them he did not want to file a complaint but agreed with the passenger that they were racially profiled. The driver told IA he wanted the trooper to receive training that would prevent a situation like this in the future. Rather than opening an investigation to gather more facts from the passenger who wished to file a complaint, reviewing BWC footage, and interviewing the trooper, as required by LSP policy, IA instead referred the passenger's complaint to the trooper's captain and then closed the case. We found no evidence of the troop opening its own investigation into this allegation.

Other times, the agency failed to meaningfully impose discipline in the face of instances of explicit racial bias. In September 2020, it came to light that a trooper used a racial slur in 2017 in reference to a Black colleague. LSP's superintendent at the time issued a written reprimand and responded that he believed it "to be an isolated incident." However, the following month, an Associated Press review of LSP records uncovered at least a dozen more instances over a three-year period of employees using racist terminology in emails.<sup>17</sup> This included a white trooper reportedly referring to a Black colleague looking like a "monkey" in his uniform, and another Black trooper complaining that his white colleagues repeatedly called him "Django."

### **3. Some Internal Affairs Investigations Start Too Late and Fail to Independently and Thoroughly Analyze Trooper Behavior**

Internal Affairs' response to deadly force incidents and other serious allegations of misconduct also falls short in significant ways: These investigations start too late, sometimes months or years after the incident. In some cases, the investigations do not

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<sup>17</sup> Jim Mustian, *AP: Use of slurs not 'isolated' at Louisiana State Police*, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, October 30, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-louisiana-baton-rouge-racial-injustice-d7f77f196571892d71bd010ce4109677> [<https://perma.cc/6AWY-QBQG>].

make independent judgements about the behavior at issue, or they fail to thoroughly analyze the trooper's behavior.

By policy, LSP generally prevents IA from investigating an incident where there is the possibility of potential criminal charges until the Force Investigation Unit (FIU) or the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) have finished reviewing the incident. That means that when a trooper is accused of not only violating policy but also the law, such as for certain types of excessive force, IA must wait to begin its administrative investigation until after other parts of the agency make conclusions about potential criminal violations. This can add significant delays to the accountability process. For example, a trooper shot and paralyzed an unarmed 19-year-old who was running away from her, and then called out "Taser" on her radio instead of calling for immediate aid. CID began its investigation of this incident the same day, but IA did not begin its investigation until 27 months after the shooting, and only after the trooper was indicted. In the intervening months leading up to her indictment, this trooper remained on active duty.

In another deadly force incident, an LSP trooper fired several shots at an armed man who appeared to be in a mental health crisis. Again, CID's investigation began promptly, but IA's investigation only began two years after the shooting.

Due to failures in force reporting and supervision, IA has also missed critical moments to promptly intervene in other excessive force incidents. For example, after a trooper repeatedly struck a Black man in the head with a flashlight, the trooper mislabeled the BWC footage as a "citizen encounter" without reporting the use of force. Later, when the incident came to light, the trooper lied to CID by saying he only struck the driver's hands and not his head. IA investigated this incident nearly a year and a half after the assault—and only after the driver filed a lawsuit against LSP. In the intervening months, the same trooper assaulted two other Black men.

Deadly and other serious force incidents we reviewed also had very little independent analysis by IA about the violations at issue. Instead, if there was a conclusion from the criminal investigation, IA often adopted that analysis in their own report or simply issued a boilerplate memorandum. This approach undermines the purpose of IA investigations, which is not to determine criminal liability but to assess violations of policy, which cover more than criminal conduct, and allow an agency to proactively address causes of troubling behavior and consider shortcomings in training or guidance given to troopers.

For example, a trooper engaged in a dangerous, high-speed chase of a car that was reported stolen, running multiple red lights in a busy downtown area, ramming into the car to make it stop, and then shooting one of the passengers who was trying to escape through a window. The trooper claimed the passenger had pointed a gun at him, and CID cleared him for any criminal liability related to the shooting. When IA reviewed the incident, it failed to identify obvious policy violations in the trooper's risky vehicle pursuit tactics, such as running red lights on a crowded street, and his decision to ram the vehicle with his patrol car. Instead, IA wrote a two-page memorandum summarizing and accepting CID's findings.

#### **4. LSP's Disciplinary Review Committee Can Decide to Clear Troopers of Misconduct Without Any Explanation**

Even if IA or a troop finds that a trooper violated policy, LSP's Disciplinary Review Committee (DRC) can reverse course without explanation, contributing to an overall lack of transparency in LSP's accountability system. The DRC's voting members include the superintendent, LSP's chief of staff, any or all of LSP's deputy superintendents, and the major and captain in the trooper's chain of command.

By policy, DRC meetings are "privileged and confidential" and the meetings are not recorded or transcribed. When reversing a decision to impose discipline, the DRC does not issue a written decision explaining why it disagrees with an investigation's findings.

In one example, the DRC exonerated an LSP sergeant who IA investigated and found had violated LSP policy by pulling down the pants of an arrested teenager, exposing him to the public in broad daylight, after local police officers had already searched him for weapons. The trooper did not dispute that he violated policy. The DRC exonerated the trooper, and the trooper's IA file was updated reflecting that finding, but without explanation either as to mitigating facts the DRC relied upon to make its decision or facts disproving IA's finding.

#### **5. LSP Missed an Opportunity to Draw Agency-Wide Lessons from Troop F's Misconduct Spree**

By 2021, Internal Affairs had opened investigations into nine people from Troop F, including a captain and two lieutenants, who engaged in an extraordinary range of misconduct: assaulting drivers and then not reporting force, mislabeling videos to prevent their discovery, failing to turn over videos showing troopers using excessive force, joking about assaults after the fact, signing off on force reports without reviewing video, and more. Some of these investigations began long after the violations, some ended abruptly because the troopers resigned or retired, and some led to termination.

LSP formed a confidential "audit team" to review body-worn camera footage of some Troop F officers to look for additional policy violations, criminal conduct, or training issues. Although well-intentioned, this project was poorly designed and executed. LSP did not empower the audit team to do a more systematic review of Troop F or other troops to detect ongoing misconduct. The team produced no written reports describing their efforts or the root causes of trooper misconduct. LSP did not seek community input on the harm caused by troopers or to identify other incidents.

LSP command abruptly disbanded the audit team and ordered an investigation into its members when media reported on an incident the team had uncovered. Although the agency later hired an outside consultant to make policy recommendations, LSP missed an opportunity to draw lessons from the fundamental collapse of supervision and accountability that took place in Troop F.

Indeed, troopers told us repeatedly that they believe Ronald Greene's death exposed a problem within Troop F, but those problems do not pervade the rest of the agency. One

trooper succinctly summarized what we heard over and over: “the thing up north . . . would never happen here.” To be clear, our investigation found problems in every corner of the state. But even if the problems had been contained within Troop F, the fact that troopers at one troop were able to use egregious force in numerous incidents spanning years illustrates the deficiencies in LSP’s organization and oversight of troopers.

Without continued reforms to its force practices and tactics, stronger supervision, training, and accountability, and proper oversight by LSP leadership, similar violations may happen elsewhere. We hope to work with the State and LSP to implement the additional remedial measures needed to ensure constitutional, effective policing across Louisiana.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Department of Justice has reasonable cause to believe that LSP engages in a pattern or practice of using excessive force that deprives people of their rights under the Constitution.

## RECOMMENDED REMEDIAL MEASURES

LSP has the challenging mandate of providing law enforcement services statewide—from urban areas to rural communities, from heavily trafficked interstates to country roads. We recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach to managing the patrol troops is neither desirable nor workable in a state as large and diverse as Louisiana. However, headquarters must still provide sufficient oversight of and guidance to the troops to prevent uneven expectations for troopers throughout the state. We commend LSP for beginning the hard work necessary to make improvements, which may have contributed to some recent improvements in use-of-force practices. The remedial measures we recommend below provide a foundation for continued changes that LSP must make to improve public safety, build the trust of the Louisiana community, and comply with the Constitution.

### Use of Force

1. **Improve Use-of-Force Policies, Reporting, and Review Procedures to Minimize the Use of Force.** Revise force policies to define key terms, specify when force is justified or prohibited, and delineate what constitutes reportable force. Ensure troopers report force timely and accurately. Emphasize de-escalation and avoiding force and require troopers to consider less intrusive alternatives before employing force.
2. **Improve Use-of-Force Training.** Provide clear guidance to troopers about when it is appropriate to use different force options, including scenario-based training and testing that reinforces these concepts. Emphasize that troopers should not reflexively resort to force without considering other options. Continue to reinforce the shift away from training troopers to rely on an enemy mindset when interacting with members of the public.
3. **Enhance Force-Related Accountability Mechanisms.** Ensure that supervisors conduct meaningful, prompt, and well-documented reviews of incidents involving the use of force to timely identify violations of policy, law, or tactical issues. Ensure that supervisors promptly refer evidence indicating misconduct or criminal conduct to the appropriate investigative unit or agency. Take fair, consistent, and appropriate corrective action when troopers violate force policies.
4. **Improve Data Collection, Classification, and Assessment of Force.** Assess data to identify trends and develop policies, training, and recommendations to reduce the use of force. Develop a classification process for categorizing each use of force based on severity and specifying the appropriate agency response. Ensure that supervisors and command staff can effectively review force data. Implement checks to ensure force is reported.

### Highway Enforcement

5. **Revise Highway Enforcement Policy.** Revise LSP's highway enforcement policy to minimize citizen confusion during stops and ensure people have the opportunity to comply with trooper instructions.

6. **Develop Statewide and Regional Enforcement Plans.** To ensure more consistency in its highway enforcement around the state, LSP should develop statewide and regional enforcement plans to guide priorities and resource allocations. These plans should allow troops flexibility to implement measures appropriate to their troop region but should incorporate principles of impartial policing.
7. **Improve Vehicle Pursuit Policy, Training, Reporting, and Review Procedures.** Revise vehicle pursuit policy to authorize pursuits only where the pursued suspect is wanted for a violent crime and failure to apprehend the suspect immediately presents an imminent risk to the trooper or the community. Train troopers to consider the initiation or continuation of a pursuit as a potential use of deadly force. Implement reporting and review systems to ensure that officers thoroughly report, and supervisors closely scrutinize, all vehicle pursuits.

### Accountability

8. **Improve the Citizen Complaint Process.** Document every incoming citizen complaint at the troop level in a central database, create clear intake criteria, and train troops and Internal Affairs in how to properly assess complaints.
9. **Revise Internal Affairs Policies.** Revise accountability policies to more clearly define categories of misconduct, clarify whether the troop or Internal Affairs should investigate it, and require that repeat low-level misconduct be referred to IA. Change policy to authorize concurrent IA and FIU or criminal investigations of particular incidents. Require documentation of timelines.
10. **Strengthen Investigations.** Provide specialized training to troop and IA investigators in how to conduct thorough, unbiased interviews, how to assess witness statements and make credibility determinations, how to identify underlying causes of trooper behavior and opportunities for further training, policy changes, or other corrective action.
11. **Improve documentation at each stage of disciplinary process.** Revise policy to require the Disciplinary Review Committee to issue a written decision explaining why it is imposing discipline or exonerating an officer. Revise policy to require a written statement by the troop or IA investigator reviewing a complaint explaining why a complaint will not be opened for investigation.

### Supervision

12. **Implement a Formal Training Program for Supervisors.** Institute formal training for supervisors, including identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities that are required for carrying out supervisory duties and evaluating the effectiveness of training.
13. **Require close, effective, and consistent supervision.** Ensure supervisors are held responsible for promoting a respectful and professional atmosphere that upholds the agency's values and does not reinforce negative behaviors.

- 14. Improve data collection and analysis for EIS.** Integrate EIS with LSP's record management system to automate the collection of EIS data and centralize management of thresholds and alerts. Ensure that EIS uses appropriate criteria, that supervisors are adequately trained on how to use EIS, and that appropriate resources are dedicated to ensuring oversight of the EIS system.
- 15. Enhance Oversight and Coordination Between Headquarters and the Troops.** Review policies and practices related to oversight from and priority-setting by headquarters to ensure consistency in LSP's practices and expectations statewide.

### **Data Systems**

- 16. Conduct Meaningful Analyses of Data Collected.** LSP has invested significant resources and made commendable progress in enhancing its data collection and management systems. The agency must ensure that the data collected is meaningfully analyzed to identify patterns and trends, enhance training and supervision on effective data use, and pinpoint areas and issues that require policy changes.
- 17. Expand Public Access to LSP's Data and Statistics.** To enhance community trust, LSP should make its data on enforcement activities, uses of force, complaints, and discipline publicly available, to the extent possible.