



OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
MILLER COUNTY, MISSOURI
2001 Hwy. 52, P.O. Box 12, Tuscumbia, MO 65082
573-369-1940 Fax 573-369-1949



Matthew F. Howard
Prosecuting Attorney

Jeffrey L. Smith
Chief Deputy Pros. Atty.

July 9, 2025

Sheriff Chris Edgar
Camden County Sheriff's Department
1 Court Circle, Ste. 13
Camdenton, MO 65020

Re: Deputy Bryce Easley, MSHP Incident Report #240574412

Dear Sheriff Edgar:

I am writing to confirm our recent conversation regarding my review of a special investigation report brought to my office by the Missouri State Highway Patrol, DDCC, regarding an arrest made by Camden County Deputies Bryce Easley and Dylan Rice, which occurred on October 21, 2024, in the Menard's store parking lot at 1015 Barred Owl Lane, in Lake Ozark, a location in Miller County, Missouri.

The report from the Highway Patrol contains copies of the Deputies' report from that evening, multiple body and dash cam videos capturing those events and interviews and statements from involved parties. To the extent that any potential criminal charge might have been suggested to be preferred against any law enforcement officer arising from this incident, specifically including Deputy Easley, I have determined that based upon the available facts and evidence that no basis exists to believe any crime was committed. Therefore, in my sole discretion and as the final authority having jurisdiction over this matter on behalf of the State of Missouri, this letter may be deemed as notice of my final decision that no criminal charges will be pursued against Deputy Easley.

I would briefly note for further explanation, that in this instance, the suspect's arrest was in fact lawful, with pursuit having been initiated by Deputy Easley within his territorial jurisdiction thereby authorizing continued pursuit of the suspect into Miller County. The suspect's willful, continuing failure to stop, the highly unusual path of travel off the highway leading the pursuing officer to an abandoned parking lot at night, the suspect's prior history of criminality and dangerous behaviors, his demeanor and actions, the active and continuing resistance of the physical arrest in preventing the officer from being able to gain control or restrain the movements of the suspect until the arrival of a second officer and canine unit and the superficial nature of the abrasions and contusions suffered by the suspect, have all been considered by me in this determination.

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Under Missouri law police officers are expected to be the aggressor in any given situation. A police officer making a lawful arrest is authorized to utilize such force as reasonably appears immediately necessary to effect that arrest or prevent escape, without any requirement to retreat or desist from those efforts if met with resistance. Accordingly, in Missouri, in event of a criminal prosecution of a police officer alleged to have committed an assault during the course of an arrest, there typically becomes included an additional element requiring proof of a negative, i.e. a finding that the officer was not entitled to use such force.

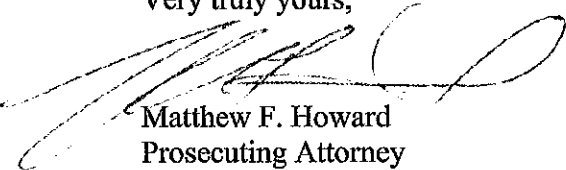
In determining the reasonableness or entitlement to the use of force in the instant case, it is sufficient to conclude that during a lawful effort to arrest the suspect that Deputy Easley found himself in a most unenviable and dangerous position of being astride a considerably larger, more powerful, unrestrained and highly agitated subject who continued to aggressively and actively resist the officer. In such an instance, the single overriding rule governing a police officer's conduct requires that the officer must absolutely prevail in that struggle. Notwithstanding any departmental policy, training standards or other consideration, any force utilized by the officer in this situation, not resulting in any significant physical injury simply cannot be considered unreasonable, as contemplated under the Missouri criminal code.

Scrutiny by this prosecutor's office is properly limited to consideration of whether a crime could be established, which could reasonably be expected to be successfully prosecuted yielding a conviction. In this case there is clearly no sufficient evidence remotely supporting such a proposition. To the extent that errors in judgment or analysis of threat assessment and approach of the suspect were made leading up to the need for the officer's use of force, those matters are outside our consideration and are presumably properly within the sole purview of the command structure of the Camden County Sheriff's Office.

I am circulating a copy of this letter to Deputy Easley's counsel, and also to the Missouri State Highway Patrol, DDCC office to notify them of this office's action, tantamount to entry of nolle prosequi or dismissal, requiring the reports and media generated in their investigation to be deemed "closed records" pursuant to Section 610.105 RSMo.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you should have any questions.

Very truly yours,



Matthew F. Howard
Prosecuting Attorney

cc Atty. Donald Weaver
DDCC, Troop F