



Angleton Police Department

Protecting with Purpose, and Serving with Pride



Aaron Ausmus
Chief of Police

Press Release – For Immediate Release

Type of Incident: Interference with Public Duties Arrest

Date and Time: 1/21/2021 11:30 PM

Location: 100 N. Morgan St.

Case Number: 2021-000136

Suspects: John Gray

Charges: Interference with Public Duties

Narrative

On or about 11:30 PM on January 21, 2021, a patrol officer with the Angleton Police Department (APD) was conducting a traffic encounter. A man later identified as John Gray, a known independent journalist, committed the offense of interference with public duties (Texas Penal Code 38.15) and was arrested. The interference offense occurred when Mr. Gray's actions exceeded the protected actions of free speech and filming. This gave the officers probable cause to arrest for the offense. We are not at liberty to offer more detail at this time due to it being an active case that is pending prosecution.

John Gray and a very small group of other 1st amendment activists have routinely been active in monitoring police activity since before I assumed the role of Chief of Police in September of 2018. They typically follow police vehicles, assert themselves as bystanders on active scenes, speak to victims, witnesses, suspects, and the officers; as well as, film our policing activities. I have given strict instructions to our officers to avoid unnecessary contact with those not clearly violating the law, and have reinforced that simple speech and filming do not warrant police action in most cases. We have issued directives and best practices on this matter to our officers to resource them to respond appropriately. Our officers have been trained on tactics to avoid engagement with 1st amendment activists, and to de-escalate the situation if engagement does occur. The only exception to that rule is if there is a clear violation of law or danger to life or property. There had been no notable legal escalations or altercations over the last 2 years until this incident occurred with Mr. Gray last night.

After a thorough review of the facts in this incident, I support my officers actions because they are compliant with departmental policy and within the statutory elements of the case. I am more assured of its constitutional propriety by the fact that a magistrate has affirmed that probable cause did exist to arrest and proceed with prosecution in this case.

Please know that the APD is honored and humbled to have the support and trust of its citizens and guests demonstrated in word and deed on a daily basis. We appreciate it dearly, and work diligently to keep earning it. I would like to reinforce that we will always diligently, eagerly, and earnestly respect the constitutional rights of all citizens and guests in our jurisdiction. We have no malice or contempt for those that wish to hold





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government entities and agents accountable. In fact, we appreciate the notion of all Americans to protect civil liberties within the boundaries of the law. We simply wish to preserve the ability to do our sworn duty safely, efficiently and effectively for the sake of the public and our officers.

As a Police Chief my highest priority is the safety of our citizens and staff. We invite all citizens and guests of our city to partner with us in accomplishing that mission. Also, know that I am completely resolved to holding the thin (and sometimes blurred line) between lawfulness and lawlessness, peace and violence, safety and danger whenever and wherever it occurs in our jurisdiction as is our sworn duty. To those that have indicated today that they seek to do my staff and I harm because of this incident, please know that my officers and I are undeterred in our resolve to do our duty. We will continue to preserve, protect, and defend both the rights of the people and that of government to govern in accordance with the constitution and statutory laws of the land. I call for peace, harmony, and healing for all, moreover, I believe in our ability to attain it if we are all diligently seeking them in a true spirit of resolution.

Respectfully,

Aaron Ausmus M.S., CPM
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