



JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR

KEVIN W. REEVES, COLONEL
DEPUTY SECRETARY

State of Louisiana
Department of Public Safety and Corrections
Public Safety Services

MAY 22, 2019
4750/0501/MMG/19-22380
HQ2-1700-19

LT. JOSEPH MONDELLO
LOUISIANA STATE POLICE - TROOP G

IA 19-003; OLA 062353
VIA PERSONAL DELIVERY

RE: 320 HOUR SUSPENSION
WITHOUT PAY

Dear Lt. Mondello:

In accordance with State Police Commission Rules 12.1, 12.2, and the authority delegated to me by Colonel Kevin Reeves, you are hereby notified that you are suspended from duty for 320 working hours without pay and allowances. Your suspension will be imposed over four pay periods (80 hours each) as follows:

Your suspension will begin at 0600 hours on June 3, 2019 and will end at 1400 hours on June 13, 2019 (pay period 13), and you will then return to your regular duty schedule.

Your suspension will begin at 0600 hours on July 1, 2019 and will end at 1400 hours on July 11, 2019 (pay period 15), and you will then return to your regular duty schedule.

Your suspension will begin at 0600 hours on July 29, 2019 and will end at 1400 hours on August 8, 2019 (pay period 17), and you will then return to your regular duty schedule.

Your suspension will begin at 0600 hours on August 26, 2019 and will end at 1400 hours on September 5, 2019 (pay period 19), and you will then return to your regular duty schedule.

You are suspended for the following reasons:

On Sunday, January 13, 2019, Lt. Kevin Baxter was the Troop G on-duty night shift Lieutenant. At approximately 2:20 a.m., Lt. Baxter drove northbound on LA 3, toward Tpr. Michael Martinez's location at assist him with a DWI arrest. Lt. Baxter

COURTESY • LOYALTY • SERVICE
"An Equal Opportunity Employer"

P.O. BOX 66614, BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70896

noticed an SUV approaching his patrol unit from the rear at a high rate of speed. As the SUV passed him in the inside lane, Lt. Baxter observed the front seat passenger's head hanging outside of the passenger side window as though he was "passed out." Lt. Baxter was concerned for the passenger's well-being and decided to stop the vehicle to check on the passenger. Lt. Baxter activated his emergency blue lights and siren to stop the SUV. As the SUV disregarded his lights and sirens and continued traveling, Lt. Baxter radioed Region III dispatch and advised the SUV was not stopping. The Region III Dispatcher, Atiana Dixon, announced the net was "10-33" (Hold all non-emergency traffic), for this pursuit. M/T William Green and Bossier Parish Sheriff's Deputy Billy Williams, who were assisting Trooper. Michael Martinez with his DWI arrest, heard Lt. Baxter's radio traffic. Trooper Green left Trooper Martinez's location and traveled in excess of 100 miles per hour to get to Lt. Baxter to assist him with ending the pursuit. The SUV continued to travel at approximately 60 M.P.H. Once M/T Green and Dy. Williams joined the pursuit, the SUV pulled onto the shoulder of LA 3 near Courtney Lane and came to a stop. Lt. Baxter pulled his unit directly behind the SUV, M/T Green positioned his patrol unit in the travel lane of LA3 to the left of Lt. Baxter's unit, and Dy. Williams parked behind Lt. Baxter's unit¹.

M/T Green exited his unit and conducted a felony traffic stop, by drawing his firearm and pointing it at the SUV while giving the driver loud verbal commands of "Driver step out," and "Keep your hands where I can see them. Step out. Step to the rear of the vehicle." A female exited the driver's door of the SUV, at which time Lt. Baxter recognized the driver as Mrs. Kami Mondello, your wife, and he exclaimed, "Oh my God? What an idiot!" M/T Green advised Mrs. Mondello to step to the rear of the vehicle, at which time your wife stated, "He said he called you." Lt. Baxter asked her if she was by herself, and she repeated, "He said he called you."

As M/T Green moved his vehicle from the road, Lt. Baxter and Dy. Williams then walked to the front right side of the SUV and saw you seated the front passenger's seat. When Lt. Baxter advised you that he had called in a pursuit, you responded, "Really?" Lt. Baxter responded "Yes," and you advised him that you had texted him. You stated, "You gotta be kidding right? I texted you man. We were right beside you following you." Mrs. Mondello stated, "I was doing what he told me to do." When M/T Green

¹ Lt. Baxter and M/T Green were equipped with an Axon 2 Body Worn Camera which captured video of the pursuit and events at the scene of the stop.

Lt. Mondello
May 22, 2019
Page 3

approached the SUV, he recognized you were the passenger and asked what was going on. Lt. Baxter advised him that you told Mrs. Mondello not to stop, to which M/T Green replied, "That wasn't real smart."

Mrs. Mondello stated, "I mean I'm just doing what he told me to do. He was like that's Kevin. Let's just keep going. I'm like okay. I'm gonna keep doing what he told me to do." You laughed and told Lt. Baxter that you thought he was kidding with the lights, and Lt. Baxter replied, "No I wasn't kidding. I don't know who you are." As Mrs. Mondello explained that you called Lt. Baxter, Lt. Baxter replied, "Well I, okay. I got my siren on and I'm running code. How am I gonna hear your phone call?" You told Lt. Baxter, "I was just kidding man. I didn't know." Mrs. Mondello stated, "I was like he's got two or three cops behind us and he was like well I guess pull over then." Lt. Baxter responded, "Absolutely you better pull over. We're about to spike your vehicle."

Lt. Baxter walked back to his unit and advised Dy. Williams and BPSO Lt. Eric Wikstrom, who had arrived on the scene, that they were not needed, at which time they left the scene. Mrs. Mondello asked if she could leave and M/T Green told her no. M/T Green then asked Mrs. Mondello if she had been drinking at all and she stated, "No. I'm just trying to get home." M/T Green asked her if she was sure and not to lie. He instructed her to come to the rear of the vehicle and reminded her that you were just a passenger. When M/T Green asked Mrs. Mondello again if she had been drinking at all, she admitted to having a glass of wine earlier. Lt. Baxter advised M/T Green to "take a look at her eyes and make sure she's okay." As M/T Green administered the Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus test (HGN), he immediately noticed distinct nystagmus at maximum deviation and discontinued the test. M/T Green advised Lt. Baxter of his observations. After a brief conversation, Lt. Baxter advised M/T Green that he would handle the stop and M/T Green could leave the scene. Lt. Baxter allowed your wife to call a friend to pick her up from the scene, he parked your vehicle in a nearby church lot, and drove you to your house. Lt. Baxter advised Internal Affairs investigators that when you were in his unit, there was a strong odor of alcohol and he assumed you had drank quite a bit.

During the investigation of this matter, you advised Internal Affairs investigators² that when you and your wife approached Lt. Baxter's patrol unit on LA 3, you recognized it was Lt. Baxter and "jokingly" sent him (Lt. Baxter) a text saying he (Lt. Baxter) was speeding. As you passed Lt. Baxter, you rolled your window down and acted like you were intoxicated. When Lt. Baxter activated his emergency lights, you thought Lt. Baxter had recognized you and was "messing" with you. You admitted that you told your wife not to stop because you thought Lt. Baxter was going to turn his lights off. Once you realized other units were approaching with their emergency lights on, you told Mrs. Mondello to pull over. As soon as you heard someone say, "Driver, step out the vehicle," you knew you "screwed up." You admitted you drank alcohol that night and felt you were over the legal limit, but didn't think you were drunk. You denied that your level of intoxication played a role in your decision to "joke with Lt. Baxter."

As the passenger in a vehicle being followed by a Louisiana State Police unit with its emergency lights and sirens activated in an attempt to stop the vehicle, you advised the driver, your wife, to not stop the vehicle. Based upon your instructions, your wife continued to drive the vehicle, which resulted in a pursuit being called over the radio.

M/T Green left another trooper on a DWI traffic stop and traveled in excess of 100 miles per hour to assist Lt. Baxter in the pursuit. Additionally, deputies with the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office responded to assist with the pursuit. Your actions caused your wife to have a firearm pointed at her when she finally stopped the vehicle and exited. Lt. Baxter advised you and your wife that your vehicle was about to be spiked in an attempt to stop it. Your poor decision and bad "joke", whether or not influenced by your consumption of alcohol while off duty, placed not only yourself and your wife in danger, but also placed your fellow law enforcement officers, and the public in general, in danger.

Additionally, you were a passenger in a vehicle that was involved in a pursuit by Louisiana State Police troopers and other law enforcement agencies because you told the driver, your wife, not to stop. In spite of this, you did not inform the Troop G Commander, Captain Cordell Williams, of this incident. In fact, Captain Williams was not advised of the incident until January 16, 2019. It was the Troop G Executive Officer

² You participated in a recorded interview on February 13, 2019 conducted by Master Trooper Kevin Ducote and Trooper Dean Coates.

Lt. Michael Mayeaux, who advised Captain Williams of the incident that had been reported to him by Trooper Andrew Phillips. Trooper Phillips, who is on a different shift from Lt. Baxter, heard of the incident from another trooper on Lt. Baxter's shift, and determined the incident needed to be reported, so he notified Lt. Mayeaux.

As a Lieutenant with over 23 years of service with Louisiana State Police, your above described actions and inaction are extremely disappointing and not reflective of the standards for your position and experience. You are expected to conduct yourself both on and off duty to reflect favorably upon you as a member of the Department. You showed a lack of respect for all law enforcement officers by telling your wife to keep driving when Lt. Baxter had his lights and siren engaged in an attempt to stop your vehicle. You failed to act as a leader in the manner expected of supervisors and set a poor example for those troopers you are expected to lead by example. Your above described conduct violated Louisiana State Police Policy and Procedure Order No. 901 – Code of Conduct and Ethics, Section 4 – Conduct Unbecoming an Officer, which states in pertinent part:

- i) A commissioned officer shall conduct himself at all times, both on and off-duty, in such a manner as to reflect most favorably on himself and the Department.
- ii) Unbecoming conduct is defined as conduct which:
 - a) Brings the Department or any of its subdivisions into disrepute.
 - b) Reflects discredit upon the officer as a member of the Department.
 - c) Impairs the operations or efficiency of the Department, the officer, or state service.
 - d) Detrimentially affects the morale of the Department's personnel.
 - e) May reasonably be expected to destroy public respect for State Police Officers and/or confidence in the Office of State Police.

This is not the first time that you have been disciplined for exercising poor judgment and not reporting information. By letter dated November 28, 2007, you were suspended for 16 hours for failing to notify your chain of command that you counseled a trooper who allowed a female friend to accompany him in his unit while on patrol.

Lt. Mondello
May 22, 2019
Page 6

Any future violations of this or any nature may result in more severe discipline, up to and including termination.

You have the right to appeal this action to the Louisiana State Police Commission. The time limits and procedure for appealing are contained in Chapter 13 of the State Police Commission Rules. A copy of Chapter 13 can be obtained from the State Police Commission. Their current mailing address is P.O. Box 66555, Baton Rouge, LA 70896-6555. Their current telephone number is (225) 925-7057 and their fax number is (225) 925-7058.

Your attention is directed to Louisiana State Police Policy and Procedure Order No. 201.5.iv, which states:

iv) No officer shall work escorts, paid off-duty details, or overtime in any pay period wherein he has taken leave without pay, been suspended without pay, placed on forced or administrative leave, or worked at a reduction in pay as a result of a disciplinary action unless authorized by the appointing authority.

Sincerely,



Lt. Col. Mike Noel
Assistant Superintendent/Chief of Staff
Louisiana State Police

c: Lt. Col. Jay D. Oliphant
Major Wayne Vidrine
Captain Cordell Williams
Internal Affairs
Office of Legal Affairs
Human Resources Management