1	IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
2	x
3	OFFICER VAN PLUMHOFF, :
4	ET AL., :
5	Petitioner, : No. 12-1117
6	v. :
7	WHITNE RICKARD, A MINOR :
8	CHILD, INDIVIDUALLY, AND AS :
9	SURVIVING DAUGHTER OF :
10	DONALD RICKARD, DECEASED, :
11	BY AND THROUGH HER :
12	MOTHER SAMANTHA :
13	RICKARD AS PARENT AND :
14	NEXT FRIEND. :
15	x
16	Washington, D.C.
17	Tuesday, March 4, 2014
18	
19	The above-entitled matter came on for oral
20	argument before the Supreme Court of the United States
21	at 10:14 a.m.
22	APPEARANCES:
23	MICHAEL MOSLEY, ESQ., North Little Rock, Arkansas; on
24	behalf of Petitioners.
25	JOHN F. BASH, ESQ., Assistant to the Solicitor General

1	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; for United
2	States, as amicus curiae, supporting Petitioners.
3	GARY K. SMITH, ESQ., Memphis, Tennessee; on behalf of
4	Respondent.
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19	
20	
21	
22	
23	
24	
25	

1	CONTENTS	
2	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	PAGE
3	MICHAEL MOSLEY, ESQ.	
4	On behalf of the Petitioners	4
5	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
6	JOHN F. BASH, ESQ.	
7	On behalf of United States, as amicus curiae,	17
8	supporting Petitioners	
9	ORAL ARGUMENT OF	
10	GARY K. SMITH, ESQ.	
11	On behalf of the Respondent	27
12	REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF	
13	MICHAEL MOSLEY, ESQ.	
14	On behalf of the Petitioners	56
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1	PROCEEDINGS
2	(10:14 a.m.)
3	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument
4	this morning in Case 12-1117, Plumhoff v. Rickard.
5	Mr. Mosley.
6	ORAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL MOSLEY
7	ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
8	MR. MOSLEY: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
9	please the Court:
10	The Sixth Circuit completely failed to
11	analyze the second prong of a qualified immunity defense
12	in this case, and that is whether the law was clearly
13	established at the time of the incident in question,
14	such that every reasonable officer would know whether or
15	not the action was constitutional or not. Therefore,
16	the petitioners were not given fair warning that the use
17	of force in this case, if it was prohibited, was
18	prohibited, and they retain immunity, and the Sixth
19	Circuit must be reversed.
20	This is the argument we we wish to
21	emphasize today relating to the second prong, what was
22	traditionally the second prong before Saucier, of
23	course, the rigid order of battle was changed.
24	Had the Sixth Circuit reviewed its own cases
25	as of 2004, it should have concluded that Petitioners

- 1 were entitled to qualified immunity.
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: I thought it said -- did it
- 3 not say in its opinion that there was room for
- 4 disagreement or whether this was reasonable or not? Did
- 5 they have some such statement?
- 6 MR. MOSLEY: They could not conclude that it
- 7 was reasonable as a matter of law is the statement I
- 8 recall, Justice Scalia. And -- and in that regard,
- 9 that's a legal question. It had to answer that
- 10 question, but it didn't do so with reference to prior
- 11 case law of 2004. If anything, it looked at Scott v.
- 12 Harris from 2007 and said that there was a factual
- 13 distinction between Scott, and the devil was in the
- 14 details; and, therefore, it affirmed the district court,
- 15 which, I submit, made the same mistake because the
- 16 district court was looking at Smith v. Cupp from the
- 17 Sixth Circuit, which was a 2005 opinion, to determine
- 18 whether or not the officers violated clearly established
- 19 law.
- 20 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Would the court, in your
- 21 view, ever have an occasion to decide whether conduct of
- 22 this nature violates the Fourth Amendment? If you --
- 23 you were right about clearly -- clearly established,
- then could this -- could the underlying constitutional
- 25 question ever be, what would be the posture of the case

- 1 in which it could be decided?
- MR. MOSLEY: Well, I mean, we've argued, of
- 3 course, in our briefs, Justice Ginsburg, that it should
- 4 be decided in this case, although today we're
- 5 emphasizing the second prong. But what would be the
- 6 posture of such a case? The United States has suggested
- 7 that there's factual complexities in this case that make
- 8 it difficult for the Court to rule whether or not, on
- 9 the merits, there was a constitutional violation.
- 10 And I'm not -- of course, we -- we differ
- 11 with that to the extent that we've argued there was not
- 12 a constitutional violation. But as in Pearson where the
- issue of whether the law was clearly established can be
- 14 resolved relatively easily, I submit that -- that in
- 15 this case, that is the case, and the Court should rule
- 16 that Petitioners were entitled to qualified immunity.
- 17 JUSTICE ALITO: Isn't it the case that the
- 18 court has discretion to reach the second prong if it
- 19 wants to? The court could say it wasn't reasonably --
- 20 it wasn't clearly established, but it was an
- 21 unreasonable seizure. It could do that, couldn't it?
- MR. MOSLEY: The way I read Pearson, Justice
- 23 Alito, no. The way I read Pearson, they -- Pearson's
- 24 dictate is that they must proceed to the second prong if
- 25 they conclude there was sufficient facts to conclude

- 1 that there was a constitutional violation. They still
- 2 have to decide -- one is a question of --
- 3 JUSTICE ALITO: No, that wasn't my question.
- 4 The -- the court has to, ruling on qualified immunity,
- 5 it has to decide whether there -- whether the law was
- 6 reasonably -- the rule that's being applied was
- 7 reasonably -- was clearly established. But having done
- 8 that, even if it says it was and, therefore, the
- 9 defendant is entitled to qualified immunity, doesn't
- 10 Pearson say that the court has discretion about whether
- 11 to go on to the second prong?
- 12 MR. MOSLEY: Oh. This is in relation to
- 13 Justice Ginsburg's question. I think so, yes. The
- 14 court certainly has the power to -- to make a ruling on
- 15 the merits question. And in this case, if the court
- 16 found it wise to do so, we've argued that on the merits
- 17 this was a constitutional use of force under the Fourth
- 18 Amendment, because it was dangerous. The -- the chase
- 19 exceeded speeds of 100 miles an hour. There was weaving
- 20 in and out of traffic. There was a time when a
- 21 particular person pulling a boat was -- was cut off.
- 22 Even in the parking lot, the Respondents' decedent never
- 23 threw his hands up, never indicated surrender,
- 24 maneuvered his car in such a manner that a reasonable
- officer could conclude that he was in a threat of

- 1 serious harm to himself.
- In any event, every reasonable officer could
- 3 not -- it is not correct that every reasonable officer
- 4 would not conclude that it was unconstitutional.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is there -- is there
- 6 any situation in which the application of lethal force
- 7 during a high-speed case in your view would not be
- 8 justified?
- 9 MR. MOSLEY: Yes, Your Honor.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Give me an example?
- 11 Talking about a high-speed chase, not unlike this one.
- 12 Is there -- is there any situation in which it would --
- 13 would violate clearly established constitutional law for
- 14 the police to use lethal force?
- 15 MR. MOSLEY: Well, I'll give you one
- 16 circumstance. If -- if this Court had a case where it
- 17 ruled where there was a prior ruling, of course, that
- 18 given conduct violated the Constitution. But as far as
- 19 me coming up with a -- a particular event, I suspect
- 20 that somebody fleeing at the speed limit, not
- 21 endangering other drivers. I hate to use television as
- 22 an example, but perhaps the way the white Ford Bronco
- 23 fled in the early '90s that everybody saw on TV. That
- 24 seemed to be relatively non-dangerous or at least not a
- 25 danger of serious physical injury.

- 1 In this case, however, there was a danger of
- 2 serious physical injury, given the undisputed events in
- 3 this case. In fact, the Respondents below argued that
- 4 the speed exceeded 100 miles an hour. They argued this
- 5 was a dangerous chase On page 16 of their memorandum in
- 6 response to our motion for summary judgment.
- 7 So, you know, of course, there's a
- 8 jurisdictional issue here that I'd like to briefly talk
- 9 about.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, I'd like you to talk
- 11 about that.
- MR. MOSLEY: Well, the -- below in the Sixth
- 13 Circuit, the Petitioners were willing to concede any
- 14 alleged factual disputes, not legal dispute, but factual
- 15 dispute, in the light most favorable to the Respondent.
- 16 We're still willing to do that. For purposes of
- 17 argument's sake, any alleged disputes should be
- 18 construed, which is proper under Scott v. Harris, to
- 19 determine the -- the historical facts in the light most
- 20 favorable --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: And is that -- is that how
- 22 you think the jurisdictional question should be
- 23 resolved, that whenever -- as you know, there's --
- there's a disagreement in the courts of appeals as to
- 25 what you do when there are claims that there are factual

- 1 disputes. Some courts -- well, we've held that where
- 2 the only issue raised is a factual dispute, there's no
- 3 jurisdiction. Some courts say that so long as you
- 4 assert a claim to qualified immunity, there is
- 5 jurisdiction, okay.
- 6 Let's assume that that's the rule. What do
- 7 we do with factual disputes? Is it your position that
- 8 you -- you simply assume them to be in the -- in the
- 9 Respondents's favor?
- 10 MR. MOSLEY: Only to the extent supportable
- 11 by the record, as Your Honor held -- as this Court held,
- 12 rather, in Footnote A of Scott v. Harris. So yes, I do
- 13 think that there are cases where --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, you would say genuine
- 15 factual disputes. I mean, if -- if there's something
- 16 that is not at all frivolous. I mean, it's not
- 17 supported by the record, I wouldn't call that a genuine
- 18 factual dispute.
- 19 MR. MOSLEY: I think it wastes judicial
- 20 resources if there is not true genuineness with respect
- 21 to a particular fact, if there is no support for it in
- 22 the record and clearly established, the argument has
- 23 been raised for the court not to go ahead, assume
- 24 jurisdiction and assume the facts in the light most
- 25 favorable to the extent supportable by the record, Your

- 1 Honor.
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: And -- and how does that
- 3 work out here?
- 4 MR. MOSLEY: In this case, I --
- 5 respectfully, I don't think it's very important. I
- 6 think that there are maybe a couple of alleged factual
- 7 disputes that, even if you assume them in the light most
- 8 favorable to the Respondent, they do not affect this
- 9 Court's analysis under the second prong of qualified
- 10 immunity because this was indisputably a dangerous car
- 11 chase and indisputably the Respondent never gave up
- 12 before force was used.
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: You would say that it
- doesn't really matter whether he bumped the police
- 15 cruisers when he was finally cornered, whether he tried
- 16 to back up into one of the officers, that all of that is
- 17 just excrescences, that it was enough to justify the
- 18 shooting that he was driving at 100 miles an hour,
- 19 swerving around the road, endangering human life and
- 20 would likely continue that if they let him to get away?
- 21 MR. MOSLEY: Two responses, Your Honor.
- 22 First of all, I do not concede that those facts are in
- 23 dispute. Rather, if you look at the second volume of
- 24 the Joint Appendix towards the end, the Respondent had
- 25 admitted those in the Supreme Court -- in the summary

- 1 judgment record below, that there was some
- 2 qualifications that these are legal disputes.
- 3 JUSTICE SCALIA: Had admitted what?
- 4 MR. MOSLEY: Had admitted that Officer
- 5 Gardner's car was, in fact, bumped by Respondent
- 6 decedent's car, that the cars were rocking back and
- 7 forth, that the front wheels were spinning. That
- 8 occurred. That was indisputably occurred. That
- 9 indisputably shows on Unit 286, which is Galtelli's
- 10 video. And then, it is indisputable that Officer Ellis
- 11 had to step out of the way when Mr. Rickard backed up.
- 12 Those things were not in dispute.
- So, you know, as that goes, I wouldn't say
- 14 that those things have to be assumed in the
- 15 Respondents's favor because those things happened and
- 16 the Respondent doesn't take issue with those things.
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, he does in his -- in
- 18 his briefing here.
- 19 MR. MOSLEY: He -- he takes issue with
- 20 characterizations. And what I -- I submit is that we've
- 21 characterized facts in this case, no doubt. They've
- 22 characterized facts in this case. Just as in Scott v.
- 23 Harris, the videos in many ways speaks for itself. The
- 24 video in many ways -- in every way, in my opinion, shows
- 25 that this was dangerous. It continued to be dangerous

- 1 and Mr. Rickard never relented and never gave up.
- 2 And one important fact that is also
- 3 undisputed is that at the time that that contact,
- 4 however you characterize it, was made between the
- 5 Galtelli car and Mr. Rickard's car, Officer -- I mean,
- 6 Gardner's car and Rickard's car, Officer Gardner was
- 7 exiting his patrol car. So there was much made about
- 8 the fact that Officer Plumhoff was to the side, the
- 9 front side of the car. Well, Officer Gardner was not to
- 10 the front side of the car. Officer Gardner was exiting
- 11 the car that was being contacted and approaching in
- 12 front. That is a danger -- at least a reasonable
- officer on the scene without the benefit of hindsight,
- 14 without -- out of the quiet of the courtroom could
- 15 conclude that he was in danger of serious injury.
- 16 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Assuming -- assuming that
- 17 at some point in this case, either now or on remand,
- 18 it's appropriate and necessary for us to state -- set
- 19 forth what the rule ought to be, what effect, if any, do
- 20 you give to the fact that there was a passenger in the
- 21 car, a passenger who apparently was not involved in any
- 22 illegal activity?
- 23 MR. MOSLEY: The passenger did not make
- 24 Mr. Rickard less dangerous. However, I know of no legal
- 25 framework as of 2004 -- I do understand your question is

- 1 about the merits.
- 2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But it makes the police
- 3 reaction more dangerous.
- 4 MR. MOSLEY: It does. But we still look at
- 5 the relative culpability of the driver. We look at
- 6 the -- I do think under the totality of the
- 7 circumstances, you consider the fact that there is a
- 8 passenger, but you also consider the -- the rights of
- 9 the innocent public. And it did not make Mr. Rickard
- 10 less dangerous. I agree with you.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: I could see how the
- 12 passenger could complain, but -- but I can't see how
- 13 the -- how the -- the criminal fleeing felon who put the
- 14 passenger in danger can say, you shouldn't have shot
- 15 because you -- oh, you hurt my passenger. Isn't there
- 16 some problem of his standing to complain about that
- 17 problem.
- 18 MR. MOSLEY: Precisely. And -- and we've,
- 19 of course, argued that it -- it defies logic to me for
- 20 Mr. Rickard to have put Miss Allen in danger and then
- 21 invoke her safety as a reason why he -- he should be
- free from the use of force when he is endangering the
- 23 innocent public.
- 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Did Allen bring a suit?
- MR. MOSLEY: Yes, Your Honor.

- 1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And was that settled out
- 2 of court or something?
- 3 MR. MOSLEY: No, Your Honor. That remains
- 4 in the Western District of Tennessee.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Oh, it remains.
- 6 MR. MOSLEY: And the issue there, of course,
- 7 is under the Fourth Amendment, the "shocks the
- 8 conscience" standard.
- 9 But as of 2004 in the Sixth Circuit -- go
- 10 back to what I'm emphasizing here today in the second
- 11 prong -- there wasn't a -- a case that suggested that
- 12 the driver could invoke the passenger's safety as some
- 13 means to suggest that the force was excessive.
- 14 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Yes. I understand that.
- 15 Although we're going beyond the necessities of the case,
- 16 is the rule that the passenger can have a "shock of the
- 17 conscience" test and it's not limited to the Fourth
- 18 Amendment, even if the driver is? Is that the way it
- 19 works?
- 20 MR. MOSLEY: Well, it's interesting. The
- 21 circuits go various ways. The Sixth Circuit has
- 22 vacillated on the issue of whether there's a Fourth
- 23 Amendment claim of an un -- of an unintentional
- 24 unreasonable seizure, which to me defies logic. But
- 25 there is clearly a "shocks the conscience" standard

- 1 in -- under Lewis v. Sacramento the "intent to harm"
- 2 standard under the Fourteenth Amendment.
- 3 We were granted summary judgment -- the
- 4 Petitioners were granted summary judgment as to
- 5 Miss Allen's claim, estate's claim, in that regard, but
- 6 the court is now reconsidering in the Western District
- 7 of Arkansas the Fourth Amendment -- of Tennessee, the --
- 8 the Fourth Amendment claim.
- 9 The Respondent -- for the Respondents' part,
- 10 they haven't shown clearly established law violated in
- 11 this case by Petitioners' actions. And it's important
- 12 that, if not stopped in this case, I think reasonable
- 13 officers could conclude that Rickard would continue to
- 14 pose a risk.
- Now, what's important about the prior case
- 16 law to 2004 in -- in the Sixth Circuit is that those
- 17 cases -- Smith v. Freland, Scott v. Clay County, in the
- 18 Eighth Circuit the case of Cole v. Bone -- those
- 19 officers at that time didn't shoot when somebody was
- 20 about to run over someone else. There was not an
- 21 immediate threat that somebody was -- just like in Scott
- 22 v. Harris. Officers often wait for a time to take
- 23 action when they don't see civilians around. And to
- 24 suggest that, you know, somebody has to almost be run
- over before deadly force can be used in a situation

- 1 where serious harm or injury has been threatened would
- 2 throw law enforcement into chaos and I respectfully
- 3 submit it would probably weaken law enforcement in this
- 4 country.
- 5 I'd like to reserve the remainder of my
- 6 time.
- 7 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 8 Mr. Mosley.
- 9 Mr. Bash.
- 10 ORAL ARGUMENT OF JOHN F. BASH
- 11 ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES
- 12 AS AMICUS CURIAE, SUPPORTING PETITIONERS
- MR. BASH: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 14 please the Court:
- 15 I think the correct disposition of this case
- 16 follows from two propositions: One, there is some level
- 17 of reckless driving in response to a police pursuit that
- 18 authorizes the use of deadly force, some level, at a --
- in a high-speed chase. Second, it was not beyond debate
- 20 in 2004 in the relevant circuits here that the driving
- 21 that the undisputed facts show in this case would have
- 22 authorized deadly force. It might have been wrong as a
- 23 matter of the Fourth Amendment, but it was not clearly
- 24 established. Respondents have not pointed to a single
- 25 circuit case that would have given officers clear notice

- 1 that the undisputed conduct here would not authorize the
- 2 use of deadly force.
- 3 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Bash, could I go back to
- 4 Justice Ginsburg's question, because this is an area in
- 5 which there's no alternative way really to develop legal
- 6 standards other than by doing it in these kinds of
- 7 cases. So if we only focus on the clearly established
- 8 upon case after case after case, we don't make much
- 9 progress in actually telling police officers where the
- 10 line is. So how do we do that? Why shouldn't we do it
- 11 here? When should we do it?
- 12 MR. BASH: I think the general point is
- 13 correct, and as we say in our brief, it would hinder the
- 14 development of constitutional law if courts never
- 15 reached the merits question. And as the Department of
- 16 Justice, we have an interest in that, because we
- 17 prosecute State officials for civil rights violations
- 18 and there's a similar standard of "clearly established"
- 19 in the criminal context.
- 20 Our only point here is not that courts
- 21 should never reach the merits in these cases; it's that
- 22 this is a particularly bad vehicle, particularly for
- 23 this Court, which even in -- in nonqualified immunity
- 24 cases often lets difficult constitutional issues
- 25 percolate among lower courts. One, the lower courts and

- 1 really the parties didn't distinguish between the
- 2 different officers here. Three officers didn't fire
- 3 their weapons. Maybe they're the easy case. But two
- 4 officers, although it might be disputed whether assaults
- 5 occurred, heard over the radio that assaults occurred.
- 6 That's what they say in their affidavits. That's at 213
- 7 through 225 of the JA. And you can here on the Galtelli
- 8 video, which is 286, that he heard the report of the
- 9 assaults.
- 10 That's a wrinkle in the constitutional
- 11 analysis that really hasn't been explored by the lower
- 12 court opinions in this case and by the briefs in this
- 13 case.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Mr. Bash, that
- 15 question about the development of the underlying law,
- 16 that's an issue that we faced and decided when we
- 17 overturned the prior rule that there was a particular
- 18 order of battle and you had to decide the Constitutional
- 19 issue first, isn't it?
- 20 MR. BASH: That's true, Mr. Chief Justice.
- 21 But what Pearson said is that, as Justice Alito said
- 22 earlier, it's discretionary. And one of the factors
- 23 Pearson urged lower courts to consider in deciding
- 24 whether to reach the merits question was whether this is
- 25 the sort of issue that doesn't often arise in a context

- 1 other than where qualified immunity is available, and I
- 2 think that's what Justice Kagan's question was getting
- 3 at. It can arise in some other contexts. For example,
- 4 if there's a policy, a municipal policy that authorizes
- 5 the use of force, you can oftentimes sue the
- 6 municipality and they're not entitled to qualified
- 7 immunity.
- 8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: They -- they have in
- 9 fact sued the municipality in this case, haven't they?
- 10 MR. BASH: They -- they have. I believe
- 11 that -- well, they sued the chief of police. I think
- 12 they sued the municipality, too. But I don't think this
- 13 was pursuant to an explicit policy. In fact, some of
- 14 the policies at issue here -- they're in the JA at 398
- 15 through 412 -- I think might have been violated. So I
- 16 don't know this is going to be the case where they can
- 17 reach the merits because of municipal liability.
- One other point on this question of the
- 19 development of the law. I mean, Justice Kennedy noted
- 20 in his dissent in Camreta v. Greene, even clearly
- 21 established cases sometimes can -- can sort of more
- 22 incrementally develop the law because certain principles
- 23 are discussed in the cases --
- 24 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could I ask -- could I
- 25 go back to a question the Chief asked earlier, which is,

- 1 is the use of deadly force always permitted in a
- 2 high-speed chase?
- 3 MR. BASH: We don't --
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Let's assume a set of
- 5 facts that's different from here, that they had
- 6 surrounded the car and it had not moved. Could they
- 7 have done what the police officer did here, fire into
- 8 the car to get the guy to open up the door?
- 9 MR. BASH: Well, the use of deadly force is
- 10 justified to protect injury to the public or to the
- 11 officers. And if the circumstances of the case show
- 12 that he has, the suspect, has no means of escaping and
- 13 getting back on the road based on where the cars are at
- 14 the time of the stop --
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Could have been in a
- 16 ditch or something?
- 17 MR. BASH: -- and there's no argument that
- 18 the officers were in danger -- or maybe the vehicle is
- 19 disabled -- no. It's not punishment for having engaged
- 20 in a high-speed pursuit. It's to protect people on the
- 21 road.
- 22 This case, it's pretty -- it's very clear on
- 23 the video that he was aiming to get back on the road.
- 24 The district court found that. It's undisputed. And he
- 25 could have kept driving if the officers hadn't fired

- 1 shots. Now, maybe, even taking all that into account,
- 2 maybe it violated the Fourth Amendment here. Maybe his
- 3 conduct just wasn't dangerous enough. But I don't think
- 4 it would have been beyond debate that it violated the
- 5 Fourth Amendment in 2004 in these circuits.
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Bash, what's the
- 7 government's position on the jurisdictional question?
- 8 MR. BASH: We think there is subject matter
- 9 jurisdiction in this case. And let me explain both how
- 10 I see the Johnson framework generally and then how I
- 11 think it applies here. Johnson said that on an
- 12 interlocutory appeal in a qualified immunity case,
- 13 appellate courts do not have jurisdiction to review
- 14 questions of evidentiary sufficiency. In other words,
- does the summary judgment record permit a jury to find a
- 16 certain fact?
- 17 I think there's two qualifications or -- or
- 18 caveats to that. One, in Scott v. Harris, although the
- 19 Court didn't review Johnson, it said if the facts found
- 20 to be disputed by the district court to be genuinely
- 21 disputed is blatantly contradicted by the record, in
- 22 particular, their video evidence like we have here, the
- 23 court doesn't have to credit that.
- 24 Second, I think there are certain sorts of
- 25 issues that are in this context understood to be legal

- 1 issues, not factual issues. So the factual issues are
- 2 the historical facts, how fast was he driving, what was
- 3 he doing, that kind of thing. But the question of what
- 4 level threat he posed to the public or to officers I
- 5 don't think --
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes. I understand that.
- 7 But what -- what about a dispute as to the purely
- 8 factual issues, if there is a dispute about that? Does
- 9 that mean the court can't -- can't take the case?
- 10 MR. BASH: As I understood Johnson v.
- 11 Jones, it said that. Now, Johnson v. Jones was based on
- 12 practical considerations about conserving judicial
- 13 resources and the nature of the question at issue. I
- 14 think as you'll see -- as you see in this case and as
- 15 the State amicus brief in this case makes clear, lower
- 16 courts have struggled with that issue and it --
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: I know that. How would you
- 18 resolve this struggle is what I'm asking you.
- 19 MR. BASH: Well, like you said in Johnson v.
- 20 Jones, we think that Johnson adopted the incorrect
- 21 position, and if it was properly presented in a case, we
- 22 would ask that the Court reconsider the precedent. But
- 23 that hasn't -- that hasn't been raised here, but
- obviously, it's within the Court's power to do so.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Is your point that if

- 1 Johnson -- is your point that if Johnson remains on the
- 2 book, there's no jurisdiction?
- 3 MR. BASH: No, there is jurisdiction in this
- 4 case, because on the undisputed facts it was not clearly
- 5 established in 2004 in the relevant circuits that these
- 6 officers could not use deadly force. It's not necessary
- 7 to reconsider Johnson to decide this case. The
- 8 undisputed facts, and I'm happy to go through them, make
- 9 clear that it was not clearly established in 2004 in
- 10 this case. I took Justice Scalia to be asking a broader
- 11 question about how Johnson has worked in practice in the
- 12 lower courts.
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes, but Johnson involved
- 14 only disputed facts. They asked this Court to resolve
- 15 the factual question, period. I understood Johnson to
- 16 say of course you can't take that. But we have here a
- 17 case where, although there may be disputed facts, the
- 18 other side would say -- or your side would say that they
- 19 are irrelevant.
- 20 MR. BASH: If the Court were to hold that on
- 21 a core sort of qualified immunity appeal that actually
- 22 raises the question about clearly established, that
- 23 appellate courts have jurisdiction to consider
- 24 subsidiary factual questions of the sort that I think
- 25 you're referring to, we would agree with that position.

- 1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. And you would agree
- 2 that we should resolve them in the Respondent's favor to
- 3 the extent that the record supports that?
- 4 MR. BASH: Correct. It would be the normal
- 5 summary judgment standard. We don't -- we don't think
- 6 there are facts resolved in the Respondent's favor here
- 7 that are necessary for the outcome in the context of
- 8 this case.
- 9 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Bash, could I ask you a
- 10 question? Putting aside the "clearly-established" prong
- 11 and if you were just looking at the reasonableness of
- 12 this conduct straight, the Fourth Amendment violation,
- 13 two factors, and tell me how the government thinks they
- 14 both play. One is the degree of force involved, the
- 15 fact that 15 point-blank shots were fired, and the other
- 16 is what Justice Kennedy referred to before, the
- 17 passenger in the car. So how do those two factors play
- in the Fourth Amendment question?
- 19 MR. BASH: Let me start with the latter. I
- 20 think that the -- you can see arguments both ways on how
- 21 the passenger fits in. On the one hand, Scott talked
- 22 about the number of lives at risk and the relatively
- 23 culpability of people being put at risk. And so you can
- 24 see how the officer's actions are putting an innocent
- 25 person at risk. Maybe that plays in. But on the other

- 1 hand, as Justice Scalia said, it's a little bit weird as
- 2 a constitutional rule to say that the suspect put
- 3 somebody else's life in danger and gets a greater
- 4 immunity from suit.
- 5 JUSTICE KAGAN: It is a little bit weird.
- 6 But as I understand the way the lower courts have done
- 7 this is to say that the passenger actually doesn't have
- 8 a Fourth Amendment claim, so there is a "shock the
- 9 conscience" test, which is, of course, a very high
- 10 standard.
- 11 MR. BASH: That's true. And it's only the
- 12 district court so far that has ruled on the passenger's
- 13 Fourth Amendment claim here, and she may have an
- 14 argument on appeal under Brenlan v. California that she
- 15 was seized. Brenlan says if you pull over -- you know,
- 16 not through the use of force, through just an ordinary
- 17 stop, pull over everybody in the car, if the passengers
- 18 feel like they are not free to leave, they are seized as
- 19 well constitutionally.
- We haven't evaluated it on the facts of this
- 21 case and how that applies to the sort of force used
- 22 here, but she may have a Fourth Amendment claim, and it
- 23 may make sense to filter those sorts of concerns about
- the innocent passenger through her claim rather than
- 25 giving the suspect who actually put her in danger a

- 1 greater immunity from the use of force.
- 2 And I think the other question you asked me
- 3 about was --
- 4 JUSTICE KAGAN: The degree of force.
- 5 MR. BASH: -- the degree of force. And I
- 6 think that's part of the reasonableness analysis in the
- 7 sense that officers generally should use only as much
- 8 force as is necessary to end the threat, and sometimes a
- 9 lesser degree of force will be sufficient. But in this
- 10 case, at least as a matter of what the law was -- in
- 11 this case, the suspect probably would have gotten away
- 12 before the police could use less force.
- 13 I'll end there.
- 14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Bash.
- 15 Mr. Smith.
- 16 ORAL ARGUMENT OF GARY K. SMITH
- 17 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENT
- 18 MR. SMITH: Chief Justice Roberts, may it
- 19 please the Court:
- This case is a classic jury question. There
- 21 are, contrary to the Petitioners' and amicus position,
- 22 several genuine material issues of fact that are
- 23 absolutely in dispute, and I would like to recite a few
- 24 of those to set the preface to respond to some of the
- 25 questions that have already been raised.

- 1 We start with the fact that there was no
- 2 chase at the time that these shots were fired. The
- 3 chase had stopped. This situation was a controlled
- 4 environment, not perfectly controlled,
- 5 but --
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry. I did see
- 7 the film, and most of the -- there were the three
- 8 initial shots and then the shots after the car was
- 9 moving away from the police officers. How could you say
- 10 most of those 15 shots were in a stopped, controlled
- 11 position?
- MR. SMITH: The last 12.
- 13 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The last 12. Let's --
- MR. SMITH: The first --
- 15 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- divide it --
- 16 MR. SMITH: -- the first three were.
- 17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- between 3 and 12.
- 18 MR. SMITH: And that's one of the points I
- 19 would like to make, Justice Sotomayor, is that we have
- 20 to separate the shooting sequences in this case.
- 21 Officer Plumhoff fired the initial three shots while the
- 22 car is stopped and is blocked on three sides.
- 23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why do we have all
- these other officers in here? They didn't fire any
- 25 shots, Forthman, Ellis, and Evans.

- 1 MR. SMITH: And that issue has not been
- 2 asked at the district court. It has never been raised
- 3 by the Petitioners in this case that they should be
- 4 treated separately. The Sixth Circuit -- the Sixth
- 5 Circuit recognized that in the footnote. And that is an
- 6 issue that should be presented to the district court, I
- 7 would submit. But if we separate --
- 8 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Go back to -- let's take
- 9 the sequences. What was wrong with the 12 shots fired
- 10 at the car as it was driving away?
- 11 MR. SMITH: Okay. That's the first point of
- 12 what was wrong, is that there was no danger at that
- 13 point to the officers, and the only, the only excuse or
- 14 justification that the officers could utilize at that
- 15 time, because they were shot as the car was driving away
- 16 and going down the street, the danger at that point that
- is being created by shooting is to the general public.
- 18 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, what do you think the
- 19 officers should have done at that point? What should a
- 20 reasonable officer do when there has been a high-speed
- 21 chase and the car spins out of control? And forget
- 22 about whether there was any attempt to ram anybody or to
- 23 hit to anybody with the car. The car spins out of
- 24 control. It's eventually surrounded by officers with
- 25 guns pointed at the driver demanding that he get out,

- 1 that he put up his hands, stop driving. They are
- 2 pounding on the -- on the windows of the car. And the
- 3 driver then begins to drive away.
- What does a -- what do reasonable officers
- 5 do? Maybe they -- what they should do is to continue
- 6 the chase indefinitely. I don't know. What do you
- 7 think?
- 8 MR. SMITH: The first part of your question
- 9 brings in the first sequence when Officer Plumhoff
- 10 shoots the first three shots, and you reference, Justice
- 11 Alito, the statement that he is trying to get him to get
- 12 out of the car, show his hands, etcetera. The video
- 13 shows that that could not have happened. Officer
- 14 Plumhoff gets out of his car drawing his weapon and goes
- 15 to the car and immediately shoots. No delay, period.
- 16 He immediately begins to shoot.
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: The car is still trying to
- 18 escape. The car is not stopped and, you know, the
- 19 driver with his hands up. The car is still trying to
- 20 get out of this encirclement by the other police cars,
- 21 right?
- MR. SMITH: That --
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is he trying to get away at
- 24 that point or not?
- 25 MR. SMITH: You can't tell because he is up

- 1 -- he is bumper to bumper with the Gardner car. It is
- 2 true that the wheels spin forward.
- 3 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What do you mean? He is
- 4 going to the police station?
- 5 MR. SMITH: Well, we don't know. He wasn't
- 6 given the opportunity. What we do know is this: There
- 7 is evidence in this record from which a reasonable jury
- 8 could conclude that he may have been trying to give up,
- 9 because Officer Forthman, who was the one that struck
- 10 him and spun him out, says that once he turned onto
- 11 Jackson Avenue he hit his brakes hard. Now, he didn't
- 12 hit his brakes hard in order to get away from him. And
- 13 at that point, Officer Forthman says that caused him to
- 14 hit him and spin him out. And at that point, the
- 15 momentum of his car caused the light contact between he
- 16 and Plumhoff, who was moving toward him, as well.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: He had just -- he
- 18 had just exited the interstate.
- 19 MR. SMITH: Yes.
- 20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And so isn't that a
- 21 good reason for putting your brakes on? He is not going
- 22 to be going 100 miles an hour down the side street, is
- 23 he?
- 24 MR. SMITH: No, no, no. He is well off the
- 25 interstate. He has made at least four and maybe five

- 1 turns since he left the interstate, and he is turning
- from north Danny Thomas to northeast on Jackson Avenue,
- 3 which sort of borders into it. He has already made the
- 4 turn before those brakes come on, according to Officer
- 5 Forthman. Now --
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Smith, I was -- I was
- 7 surprised to read what you said in your -- in your brief
- 8 on page 25: At a minimum, reasonable minds could differ
- 9 on the issue of the Petitioners' objective
- 10 reasonableness. And that -- isn't that enough to decide
- 11 this case?
- 12 MR. SMITH: I respectfully submit no,
- 13 Justice Scalia.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: You say that, even though
- 15 what they did was arguably reasonable, right --
- 16 MR. SMITH: That is --
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- immunity does not apply?
- 18 MR. SMITH: That statement, not prefaced
- 19 correctly and perhaps inartfully, is simply saying this:
- 20 That if you use the Rule 56 standard to view the facts
- 21 in the light most favorable and thus you creat a jury
- 22 question, reasonable minds can differ with the jury.
- 23 They could find for us, they could find against us. But
- 24 it is not to say --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: We don't it to the jury

- 1 about whether, you know, whether the police officers
- 2 violated the Fourth Amendment or not. The rule is if --
- 3 if indeed there is no clear violation on their part, if
- 4 they had no reason to know that what they were doing
- 5 violated the Fourth Amendment, they are entitled to the
- 6 immunity. And here you have that statement at a
- 7 minimum, reasonable minds could differ on the issue of
- 8 their objective reasonableness. Do you still believe
- 9 that, that reasonable minds could differ on the issue of
- 10 their objective reasonableness?
- 11 MR. SMITH: It says at a minimum. And
- 12 I --
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: At a minimum. At a
- 14 minimum. I mean it could be even worse.
- 15 MR. SMITH: That's addressing the
- 16 constitutional issue, not the clearly established issue.
- 17 JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't care what it's
- 18 addressing. It's addressing a state of facts, that
- 19 reasonable minds could differ on the issue of
- 20 Petitioners' -- do you want to take that back?
- 21 MR. SMITH: And it -- no. Because any --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I think you ought to take
- 23 it back.
- 24 MR. SMITH: -- any time there is an issue,
- 25 any time that there is a genuine issue of material fact,

- 1 it can be resolved either way.
- 2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, objective
- 3 reasonableness is a -- is at least a mixed issue of law
- 4 and fact, and it seems to me Justice Scalia is correct.
- 5 You -- you have the burden to show that this was a
- 6 clearly established standard, and you say that at a
- 7 minimum, reasonable minds could differ on the issue of
- 8 reasonableness.
- 9 MR. SMITH: That's not what that was
- 10 intended to convey. It's clearly not what that was
- intended to convey as you can see from the entirety of
- 12 the brief. If I can get back now to -- to the material
- 13 genuine issues of fact that are in dispute, keep in
- 14 mind, Officer Plumhoff, who shot those first three
- 15 shots, did not do it to prevent the car from leaving
- 16 again. He said the only reason that he fired those
- 17 three shots was because he was standing directly in
- 18 front of the path of that car and he thought he was
- 19 going to be killed; and the video 100 percent shows that
- 20 that is not true.
- 21 JUSTICE ALITO: But I thought the
- 22 reasonableness of a Fourth Amendment seizure was an
- 23 objective question, not a subjective question.
- 24 MR. SMITH: It is an objective question.
- 25 JUSTICE ALITO: So why does it matter what

- 1 reason he subjectively had?
- 2 MR. SMITH: He has to have some
- 3 justification of danger under objective reasonableness
- 4 to make the decision to use deadly force. And he says
- 5 that it was because he was standing in the path of the
- 6 car. He wasn't. That car was bumper to bumper against
- 7 the Gardner car.
- 8 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I know. But if he --
- 9 he says I did it because I thought he was going to run
- 10 me over. But an objective officer looking at the
- 11 situation would say that the use of deadly force is
- 12 necessary here to prevent this chase from continuing on
- 13 the interstate and endangering other motorists and their
- 14 passengers. So if that were the situation, wouldn't
- 15 that mean that was a reasonable seizure?
- 16 MR. SMITH: I believe it would not be.
- 17 JUSTICE ALITO: Initiated by the fact by the
- 18 officer who used the force had a different motive?
- 19 MR. SMITH: No. I'd respectfully submit,
- 20 Justice Alito, that it would not because if that's all
- 21 there was, there were other alternate methods to stop
- 22 that car from leaving. It wasn't the reason that he did
- 23 it; but if you assume that you can analyze it on that
- 24 basis, there were several alternate ways to prevent that
- 25 car from leaving.

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Such as? What? 2 MR. SMITH: You're standing right there 3 beside the car, you can -- you can disable the car with the gun. You can shoot the tires. You have --4 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Are officers -- are 6 officers trained to use their weapons to shoot tires? 7 They're trained to -- they are MR. SMITH: trained to use weapons and they are trained to use --8 9 these officers trained to use all safer alternatives 10 before using deadly force. CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, are they 11 12 trained -- are they trained to use their weapons to 13 shoot out the tires of fleeing cars? My understanding 14 is that that's not appropriate police behavior. 15 MR. SMITH: It is more appropriate, I would 16 submit, than -- than shooting the person. But they also have other alternatives here. He's blocked on three 17 sides. The only thing he can do is back up. There are 18 four cars to his left -- I mean, excuse me, to his 19 20 right. They have the ability to block him from the 21 rear. There were -- there were alternative means. They 22 could have done --2.3 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Smith --JUSTICE SCALIA: They didn't block him. He 24 25 got away. How can you say they had the ability to block

- 1 him? He got away, didn't he --
- 2 MR. SMITH: But they -- my point is they
- 3 could have. The other thing they could have done is
- 4 they could have done Scott V. Harris -- at low speed,
- 5 you've got four cars to his right, two of them occupied;
- 6 simply move into the car and hit it. There were other
- 7 ways to stop --
- 8 JUSTICE BREYER: I mean, when I look at the
- 9 film, I thought well, sure, he's going back to the
- 10 highway. You say we want to show that the policeman
- 11 knew he wasn't -- knew he wasn't. I didn't see any
- 12 evidence showing that preferred or otherwise. Though
- 13 what you said is there; it doesn't show he knew that the
- 14 guy wasn't going back to the car.
- 15 Your second question you raised, which I
- 16 think is a very good question, why didn't they shoot the
- 17 tires out? And my answer to that is I don't know. I
- 18 don't know.
- 19 I've heard the same thing that Chief Justice
- 20 has heard, and we've also seen the thing, and I -- of
- 21 course, it raises just the question you say. But since
- 22 I don't know the answer, and since there's no evidence
- 23 in the answer, and since there are no cases dealing with
- 24 the answer, I begin to think I don't see how, you know,
- 25 you can say it was clearly established that they had to

- 1 shoot the tires out. It's a question I don't know the
- 2 answer to. What am I supposed to do?
- 3 MR. SMITH: Well, it is clearly established
- 4 that the danger itself has to be the justification for
- 5 the deadly force. That implies alternative --
- 6 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's too general a rule,
- 7 and our cases hold that you cannot appeal to a very
- 8 general rule to say the law is clear. You have to show
- 9 that the law as applied to these circumstances was
- 10 clear. And there's nothing about shooting out tires
- 11 that I know of.
- MR. SMITH: Well, shooting out fires,
- 13 blocking, PIT maneuver as was discussed in Scott v.
- 14 Harris, police are trained in alternative methods.
- 15 JUSTICE BREYER: Is there -- what is there
- 16 in the record? When I saw the film, I saw your point.
- 17 You have a point. But what I can't quite see is how it
- 18 was a clearly established one. Maybe this is the case
- 19 where you ought to go, and if you're suing somebody else
- 20 and introduce a lot of evidence that shows that they
- 21 should shoot the tires out; and then there could be a
- 22 decision on that. It comes up every so often. But am I
- 23 right in thinking so far, there just hasn't been a case
- 24 on it? There hasn't been an effort to do that. There
- 25 hasn't -- so I'm left in this uncertainty, which

- 1 unfortunately for you means it wasn't clearly
- 2 established.
- 3 MR. SMITH: Well, the issue still -- the
- 4 threshold issue is the choice of using deadly force
- 5 based on the danger. In the first sequence, the danger
- 6 is not established with that officer because he is
- 7 standing beside that car. And remember this: Before
- 8 Officer Plumhoff gets to that car, Officer Evans is
- 9 already there. He didn't see the danger. He's got his
- 10 gun pulled; he has hit it against the windshield; and he
- 11 didn't see the need to shoot and he had an opportunity
- 12 before Officer Plumhoff did, and he never shot.
- 13 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Let's say there's
- 14 only one police officer chasing this fellow. The same
- 15 thing happens. You know, he turns off the interstate
- 16 after the 100-mile-an-hour chase on the highway and
- 17 stops; the officer gets out of the car; he starts taking
- 18 away again. Would it be appropriate for that officer to
- 19 apply lethal force to prevent the vehicle from resuming
- 20 the high-speed chase?
- 21 MR. SMITH: It is going to depend, as this
- 22 Court has said and other courts have said many times, on
- 23 the factual context at that time and --
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I've given you all
- 25 the facts. I've given you all the pertinent facts. Is

- 1 it appropriate for that officer to apply lethal force?
- 2 MR. SMITH: The one fact that we haven't
- 3 talked about is where he is at the time. Are we on an
- 4 isolated country road? Are we at a dead end where he's
- 5 got him surrounded?
- 6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We're at the --
- 7 let's start with the same place that he was at in this
- 8 case.
- 9 MR. SMITH: And -- and the scenario is, as I
- 10 understand it, we've had the same chase --
- 11 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Everything is the
- 12 same except there's one police officer and he goes off
- 13 the interstate at that point; the same thing happens,
- 14 but there's only one. And either -- the officer gets
- out of the car and at that point, the fellow takes off
- 16 again resuming the chase, endangering the -- the public
- 17 by -- by doing so. Is -- at that point, can the officer
- 18 apply lethal force?
- 19 MR. SMITH: And since we've got two
- 20 sequences here, I'm assuming we're talking about the
- 21 second sequence, and the answer would clearly be no,
- 22 because --
- 23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Not two sequences
- 24 whatever. Just as I explained. Both cars are stopped;
- 25 the officer gets out of the car; at that point, the

- 1 driver that led the chase takes off again. That's all
- 2 the facts you need to know.
- 3 MR. SMITH: In this case, the first three
- 4 shots occurred --
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No, no. Not this
- 6 case. The case that I have hypothesized.
- 7 MR. SMITH: But in the -- in the
- 8 hypothetical case, if you assume that he takes off, the
- 9 answer would still be no --
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No.
- 11 MR. SMITH: -- because in order to shoot
- 12 him, you are shooting at a heavily populated residential
- 13 area, at oncoming traffic and you're endangering way
- 14 more people by the ballistics of 15 shots and the
- 15 potential for killing the driver who can do damage with
- 16 the vehicle.
- 17 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Is there any
- 18 circumstance in which lethal force is appropriate once
- 19 the officer has stopped the car?
- 20 MR. SMITH: Certainly.
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, when?
- MR. SMITH: Well, if the person is armed.
- 23 If they've brandished a --
- 24 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: No. Doesn't
- 25 know --

- 1 MR. SMITH: If they drive straight at the
- 2 officer. There's any number of circumstances where
- 3 clearly, lethal force would be appropriate. No question
- 4 about that.
- 5 JUSTICE ALITO: What if the situation is
- 6 that the officer has -- has this choice. After a
- 7 high-speed chase, after attempting to persuade the
- 8 driver to get out of the car, the officer has one -- has
- 9 these choices: Allow the chase to continue or use
- 10 lethal force.
- 11 MR. SMITH: It's going --
- 12 JUSTICE ALITO: Your answer is they have to
- 13 let the -- they -- they can use lethal force? They have
- 14 to allow the chase to continue? What? Which?
- 15 MR. SMITH: Depends on the context of the
- 16 circumstances and whether the danger is sufficient to
- 17 justify the use of deadly force.
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: The danger is he is going
- 19 to be going 100 miles an hour, okay, that the chase up
- 20 to now has been the way your client's chase was, in
- 21 which he endangered a lot of other people, forced cars
- 22 off the road, and so forth. That's -- that's the --
- 23 that's the hypothetical. Okay. That person is about to
- 24 drive away and continue that kind of public-endangering
- 25 behavior. Can the policeman shoot or not.

- 1 MR. SMITH: You could not as he is driving
- 2 away because now you're endangering -- you're actually
- 3 endangering the people that you say you're trying to
- 4 protect.
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: No, no. There's nobody
- 6 around, just -- just him.
- 7 MR. SMITH: If there is nobody around --
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: There is nobody around.
- 9 Can -- can they shoot at him to stop him from
- 10 endangering the public again?
- 11 MR. SMITH: Under Scott v. Harris, I would
- 12 say that -- that -- that you could because in Scott they
- 13 had the road clear, blocked --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Of course, we -- you
- 15 know --
- 16 MR. SMITH: -- and they weren't going to
- 17 endanger anyone else.
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: You're just not willing to
- 19 give answers.
- 20 But we've been discussing this as though
- 21 that's the question, what should the policeman do? But
- 22 that's not the question. The question is, was there
- 23 clearly established law that made it apparent that this
- 24 was improper police conduct? That's the question. Not
- 25 what is proper police conduct, but was there clearly

- 1 established law that this was not proper police conduct?
- 2 What's your best case for that?
- 3 MR. SMITH: Smith v. Cupp, McKaslin v.
- 4 Wilkins, going back to Garner, and all of the case --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: So some of --
- 6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: How do you distinguish
- 7 Brosseau?
- 8 MR. SMITH: In several ways. In Brosseau,
- 9 which held, by the way --
- 10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: This is the single --
- 11 MR. SMITH: And -- and --
- 12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: This is a single police
- officer trying to stop a fleeing suspect whose only
- 14 activity was a reported fight in a residential
- 15 neighborhood.
- 16 MR. SMITH: Yes. And it's distinguishable
- in several ways, and it emphasizes the need for an
- 18 imminent threat of harm to other people who were in the
- 19 path, which happened to be four people in two cars that
- 20 the officers placed there and other officers also in the
- 21 path of the egress.
- 22 Also that officer had tried alternate means.
- 23 She tried to get the keys. She tried to arrest him.
- 24 She actually hit the guy with a gun before she shot --
- 25 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But that goes back --

- 1 MR. SMITH: -- and there was no passenger.
- 2 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: That goes back to my
- 3 12-shot sequence, which I still have a problem with.
- 4 In answering Justice Alito's question, he
- 5 has already gone 100 miles an hour when he -- the car
- 6 moved away, even though that part of the street was
- 7 deserted. Why would a reasonable officer not be
- 8 suspicious that more reckless driving is going to
- 9 occur --
- 10 MR. SMITH: Well, he --
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- to escape them when
- they finally get back into their cars?
- 13 MR. SMITH: It -- it may be more suspicious,
- 14 but the decision at that point is going to endanger the
- 15 life of the passenger, and those bullets did not
- 16 discriminate. Those shots with the passenger in the car
- 17 have to be viewed in terms of the officer's judgment,
- 18 not Mr. Rickard being able to take advantage of the fact
- 19 that they occurred.
- 20 But when you see that video, those 12 shots
- 21 are fired, one, after he has been shot three times, but
- 22 also they were fired where the ballistic circumstance
- 23 could bring the bullets to civilians, residents. That's
- 24 a heavily populated area and a heavily traveled street.
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: Was she trying to get out

- of the car when -- when he was trapped there and, you
- 2 know, surrounded by the police car?
- 3 MR. SMITH: No indication of that.
- 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: She didn't try to get out
- 5 of the car.
- I mean, for all the police knew, she --
- 7 he -- she was a -- a cohort of his. He fled. Why was
- 8 he fleeing, by the way? He just didn't want to --
- 9 didn't want to get a ticket for the broken headlight?
- 10 MR. SMITH: Yeah, there is no record about
- 11 that.
- 12 JUSTICE SCALIA: No -- I thought that there
- 13 was some indication that he had drugs.
- 14 MR. SMITH: There was contraband in the car.
- 15 There was contraband in the car.
- 16 JUSTICE SCALIA: Yes. So that's probably
- 17 why he was fleeing.
- 18 MR. SMITH: Well --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: And she might have been a
- 20 cohort of that. Do -- do -- are the police supposed to
- 21 know that? She made no effort to get out of the car.
- 22 MR. SMITH: I don't know that she had in the
- 23 four seconds' time to get out of the car before the
- 24 shooting began, but --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, I'd think you'd think

- 1 pretty quick in a situation like that, where this quy
- 2 has been driving you on the highway at 100 miles an
- 3 hour, swerving into and away from police cars. Boy, I
- 4 would get out of that car so fast.
- 5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What -- what is the
- 6 legal significance of the number of shots? Is -- is
- 7 this case any different because 15 shots were fired as
- 8 opposed to one or two?
- 9 MR. SMITH: I think primarily only because
- on that second sequence, you're shooting at the public
- just as much as you're shooting at the driver of that
- 12 car.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: But I'm not clear how that
- 14 works either. Suppose the police are very good shots,
- 15 it doesn't hit the public, it just hits the assailant.
- 16 Is it still unreasonable because it wasn't a public
- 17 place? And does that mean that the fleeing felon is
- 18 much better off if he goes to a public place?
- 19 MR. SMITH: I think all --
- 20 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I -- I don't understand
- 21 how -- how this bears on -- on the -- on the question of
- 22 whether or not -- as to the reasonableness as to the
- 23 driver.
- 24 MR. SMITH: The cases that have sustained
- 25 qualified immunity have done so in part, and in many

- 1 cases large part, because of the propriety of the
- 2 decision based on the protection of innocent people.
- 3 But the converse of that has to be true as
- 4 well, that you can't make a judgment to shoot just to
- 5 stop someone fleeing when you may be endangering the
- 6 lives of the innocents who, in this case, could be
- 7 injured or killed, not only by the bullets, but also by
- 8 the car.
- 9 If you --
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: But even -- well,
- 11 again, what standing does the driver have to complain
- 12 about the threat to civilians who are in the area?
- 13 MR. SMITH: It -- it -- the question is
- 14 different than that, Chief Justice Roberts. The
- 15 question is, when the officers know that there is a,
- 16 quote, "innocent" or another person in the car, that
- 17 should affect their judgment. That should be a factor
- 18 in the determination of whether or not to start pulling
- 19 that trigger.
- 20 It's not -- it's not that Mr. Rickard gets
- 21 the advantage of it. It's that it should affect the
- 22 officer's judgment.
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: Of course it's a factor,
- 24 but is it a factor that your clients can take advantage
- of? That's the issue.

- I mean, maybe you -- you can demote the
- 2 policeman who did that. Maybe even a lawsuit by --
- 3 by -- by the colleague in the car would be successful.
- 4 But the issue is whether your client has any
- 5 reason to complain about that, your client who caused
- 6 the whole thing, who caused the shooting in the last
- 7 analysis.
- 8 MR. SMITH: There is no question that
- 9 Mr. Rickard's conduct was unreasonable and he has
- 10 culpability, but the issue is not him taking advantage
- 11 of it. But the threshold issue is should they have used
- 12 deadly force in that circumstance. And that passenger
- 13 is there. We can't take away the fact that that
- 14 passenger is there. And it should have been a factor in
- 15 the reasonable officer's judgment about whether or not
- 16 to initiate deadly force.
- 17 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What do you say clearly
- 18 establishes that? You -- you say the passenger is
- 19 there. What case tells a police officer when there is a
- 20 passenger no lethal weapon?
- 21 MR. SMITH: There is no case that says
- 22 specifically if there is a passenger there don't use a
- 23 weapon. But virtually every case talks about the -- the
- 24 impact of using lethal force to do it or not to do it
- 25 when relative to innocents, third parties.

- 1 It is just -- that is an obvious part of the
- 2 judgment that should be made, is that you don't endanger
- 3 those other than the suspect, and you don't shoot or use
- 4 deadly force on the suspect if it is going to endanger
- 5 others.
- 6 JUSTICE ALITO: As to the number of shots,
- 7 even with all the shots that were fired, Mr. Rickard
- 8 still was able to drive away for a short distance.
- 9 MR. SMITH: Yes.
- 10 JUSTICE ALITO: Isn't that right?
- 11 MR. SMITH: Correct.
- 12 JUSTICE ALITO: So what does that do to the
- 13 argument that too many shots were fired?
- 14 MR. SMITH: It's not so much that it was too
- 15 many. It is that second phase of shots that are -- if
- 16 they do what they are intended to do, and by the way
- 17 they did, then you would have created a moving missile
- 18 by the car because you're going to have the dead driver
- 19 that can endanger other people, and you're shooting in
- 20 the direction of other people. Both those factors
- 21 should have militated against the second phase of shots.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: There are two ways
- 23 in which the public is endangered. You're -- the point
- 24 you're making is that if the police are firing somebody
- 25 in the public might get hit fired by a bullet. The

- 1 point the officers make, that if you allow him to escape
- 2 and -- and continue a high-speed chase, there are other
- 3 people, innocent people, who might get injured or killed
- 4 by the car.
- Now, how were the officers supposed to
- 6 decide on the spot whether there is a greater danger
- 7 that people are going to get hit by a stray bullet or
- 8 there is a greater danger that people are going to get
- 9 hit by the car?
- 10 MR. SMITH: Or, Chief Justice Roberts, a
- 11 greater danger by a car driving down the road with a
- 12 dead driver behind the wheel, totally out of control,
- 13 and that almost happened in this case, as you see in the
- 14 video. There was an oncoming car just before he veered
- 15 off to the left and hit that house.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So you're saying
- 17 they can't apply lethal force because they may not be
- 18 successful in -- in killing the driver?
- 19 MR. SMITH: Using it on a moving car in a
- 20 circumstance like that is --
- 21 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: I thought the car
- 22 wasn't moving when the shots were first fired?
- 23 MR. SMITH: On the second -- in the second
- 24 sequence, the car is moving.
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. This -- this is a

- 1 new principle. You think it is clearly established law,
- 2 clearly established law, that you cannot shoot to kill a
- 3 driver whose -- whose car is moving? Is that it?
- 4 MR. SMITH: If --
- 5 JUSTICE SCALIA: Is that the principle you
- 6 say is clearly established?
- 7 MR. SMITH: If doing so --
- 8 JUSTICE SCALIA: My goodness, they do it all
- 9 the time. You watch the movies about bank robberies,
- 10 you know, it happens all the time. Are these movies
- 11 unrealistic? You cannot shoot to kill somebody in a
- 12 moving car.
- 13 MR. SMITH: In a --
- 14 JUSTICE SCALIA: And that is -- that is not
- 15 just your view. It is, you say, clearly established
- 16 law.
- 17 MR. SMITH: That was even referenced from --
- 18 in the Scott case. A distinction between using the type
- 19 of force used in Scott, to ram the vehicle to take it
- 20 off the road versus shooting somebody --
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: And that's what Scott
- 22 holds, that you can --
- 23 MR. SMITH: It doesn't hold that, but it
- 24 references that distinction in Vaughan v. Cox.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: What does hold it?

- 1 Sir, you are arguing that the law is clearly
- 2 established. That's the case you have to make. You
- 3 can't just get up here and say you shouldn't shoot at
- 4 somebody in a moving car to kill. Maybe you shouldn't.
- 5 What is the clearly established law that -- that
- 6 policemen should have known?
- 7 MR. SMITH: Vaughan v. Cox talks about not
- 8 shooting someone in a moving car and that is re --
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Talks about it?
- 10 MR. SMITH: And Scott.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Talks about it?
- 12 MR. SMITH: And that's -- which brings up a
- 13 good point. I mean, the -- the cases have uniformly
- 14 held that the officers are not held to the standard of
- 15 reading constitutional law, which invites the inquiry
- 16 well, how are they going to know what's clearly
- 17 established law? That has to be from training; and in
- 18 this case, the policy and procedures, which are in the
- 19 Joint Appendix, which closely tracks Graham. Closely
- 20 tracks Garner. Closely tracks any number of other
- 21 cases, including from their own circuit, McCaslin, which
- 22 held that qualified immunity did not apply in a
- 23 situation where the officer felt they why justified in
- 24 shooting to avoid another escape.
- 25 And those are the policies and procedures

- 1 that are applicable of the state of knowledge of these
- 2 officers when we look at clearly established law and all
- 3 of those authorities which support the fact that
- 4 qualified immunity should not attach in this case under
- 5 these circumstances.
- 6 JUSTICE GINSBURG: What about the statement
- 7 that there was a police manual that says once you
- 8 authorize to shoot, you can continue shooting until the
- 9 job is done?
- 10 MR. SMITH: I don't quarrel with that except
- 11 to the extent, in this case, in that second sequence,
- 12 you're endangering other people other than the person
- 13 that you're trying to stop. That's -- that's the
- 14 distinction.
- Before my time is through, I do want to go
- 16 back to the jurisdictional question, because in the end
- 17 in this case, the interlocutory was taking nothing more
- 18 than a challenge to the evidentiary sufficiency, the
- 19 facts necessary to consider both prongs. The
- 20 constitutional prong and the clearly established prong
- 21 are the same facts. There is a blending, though the
- 22 consideration may have to be different.
- 23 JUSTICE SCALIA: What facts do you contest
- 24 and we'll just subtract them from the facts that we
- 25 consider. Which facts do you contest? That he was

- 1 driving 100 miles an hour, swerving on the road, swerved
- 2 towards police cars, almost cause another car to go --
- 3 that's -- you don't contest that.
- 4 MR. SMITH: We challenge that the car was a
- 5 danger at the time the shooting stopped. We challenge
- 6 that there is any danger --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: That's not a fact.
- 8 That's -- that's a conclusion. Whether the car was a --
- 9 was a danger is a legal conclusion, not a fact. What
- 10 facts do you -- do you say are contested?
- 11 MR. SMITH: If we talk first about the chase
- 12 part before the stop --
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: Right.
- 14 MR. SMITH: -- then there is contested facts
- 15 about whether or not there were assaults because the
- 16 video does not confirm that, and the officer's own
- 17 testimony was --
- 18 JUSTICE SCALIA: Okay. We'll assume no
- 19 assaults. What else?
- 20 MR. SMITH: Then when we get to the stop,
- 21 they say that he rammed the cars three times. We
- 22 clearly contest that.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: All right. We'll eliminate
- 24 the ramming. What else?
- 25 MR. SMITH: They -- they contend that

- 1 Officer Ellis was in danger and that that was a
- 2 justification for the shooting. Officer Ellis --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Let's assume -- we'll
- 4 assume he was not in danger. Okay.
- 5 MR. SMITH: Officer -- we contest that
- 6 Officer --
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: But we -- we are still left
- 8 with a very dangerous man careening down the road, who
- 9 is surrounded by police cars and still tries to get away
- 10 to continue his careening. You can eliminate all those
- 11 minor facts that you're contesting and it's still a very
- 12 dangerous situation.
- MR. SMITH: And he didn't? He did not make
- 14 the move to get away until after he'd been shot three
- 15 times.
- 16 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, Counsel.
- 17 Mr. Mosley, you have four minutes remaining.
- 18 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF MICHAEL MOSLEY
- 19 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONERS
- 20 MR. MOSLEY: Very briefly.
- 21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Just to clarify one
- 22 thing, Mr. Mosley. When were the three shots fired?
- 23 When he had moved backwards?
- 24 MR. MOSLEY: The three shots were fired, if
- 25 you look at dash-cam Unit 286, at 12:17:42 is where the

- 1 strikes of the car begin and the the shot begins -- the
- 2 first shot of the three begins at 12:17:45, three
- 3 seconds after the first contact was made.
- 4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I'm sorry. I don't know
- 5 that you answered my question.
- 6 MR. MOSLEY: I'd like to.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: We don't care about the
- 8 seconds.
- 9 MR. MOSLEY: Okay.
- 10 JUSTICE SCALIA: Place it in the context.
- 11 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes. I don't care about
- 12 the seconds. I just asked the car -- I thought the
- 13 shots were fired after he had moved backwards away from
- 14 where the officers had initially stopped him.
- 15 MR. MOSLEY: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 16 And then he moved backwards. He was next to the
- 17 building. He goes forward briefly three times. You can
- 18 characterize it however you want to. Unit 286 shows it
- 19 very clearly. Then shots are fired after the beginning
- 20 of that and then he backs out and more shots are fired
- 21 as he backs out and drives away.
- JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Got it.
- 23 MR. MOSLEY: The Petitioners did raise in
- 24 their brief in support below that Officers Forthman,
- 25 Officers Ellis and Officers Evans did not use deadly

- 1 force. We clearly raised it in our brief in support and
- 2 it was not addressed and it was not addressed at the
- 3 Sixth Circuit either, and it's fantastical to suggest
- 4 otherwise.
- 5 Cole v. Bone, Justice Breyer, does show that
- 6 shooting tires doesn't work. It only creates more
- 7 dangerous -- a more dangerous situation. In that case,
- 8 they did shoot out the tires, in the Eighth Circuit, and
- 9 the -- the vehicle kept careening on. It can create
- 10 a -- a ricochet. Now, that's not in the record, but
- 11 Cole v. Bone is certainly cited in our brief.
- 12 Otherwise, unless there's any further
- 13 questions --
- 14 JUSTICE KAGAN: Mr. Mosley, just out of
- 15 curiosity, does -- does this police department actually
- 16 have rules for what a police officer is supposed to do
- 17 when there's a fleeing vehicle? Were they -- were they
- 18 acting in accordance or not in accordance with certain
- 19 rules that the police department had?
- 20 MR. MOSLEY: Justice Kagan, at Volume II of
- 21 the -- the Joint Appendix, there are such rules. I
- 22 submit to you that they were acting substantially in
- 23 compliance with those rules.
- 24 JUSTICE KAGAN: What were they? I mean, I
- 25 don't know, and I --

1	MR. MOSLEY: Well, they're fairly fairly
2	lengthy. But there's very specific rules on engaging in
3	high-speed pursuits, very specific rules in using in
4	the use of deadly force. And I submit that given the
5	rapidly-evolving circumstance in this case, these
6	officers did the best they could and were compliant with
7	those rules, although those rules do not set a
8	constitutional standard. This Court does.
9	If there's no further questions, I'd like to
LO	rest.
L1	CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
L2	Counsel, the case is submitted.
L3	(Whereupon, at 11:16 a.m., the case in the
L 4	above-entitled matter was submitted.)
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24	
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	45.22	2.5 0 12 4 2 6 20	LL - 57-20 21	1 47.2
A	amendment 5:22	3:5,9,12 4:3,6,20	backs 57:20,21	boy 47:3
ability 36:20,25	7:18 15:7,18,23	10:22 17:10 21:17	backwards 56:23	brakes 31:11,12,21
able 45:18 50:8	16:2,7,8 17:23	26:14 27:16 50:13	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	32:4
aboveentitled 1:19	22:2,5 25:12,18	56:18	bad 18:22	brandished 41:23
59:14	26:8,13,22 33:2,5	arguments 9:17	ballistic 45:22	brenlan 26:14,15
absolutely 27:23	34:22	25:20	ballistics 41:14	breyer 37:8 38:15
account 22:1	amicus 2:2 3:7	arkansas 1:23 16:7	bank 52:9	58:5
acting 58:18,22	17:12 23:15 27:21	armed 41:22	based 21:13 23:11	brief 18:13 23:15
action 4:15 16:23	analysis 11:9 19:11	arrest 44:23	39:5 48:2	32:7 34:12 57:24
actions 16:11 25:24	27:6 49:7	aside 25:10	bash 1:25 3:6 17:9	58:1,11
activity 13:22	analyze 4:11 35:23	asked 20:25 24:14	17:10,13 18:3,12	briefing 12:18
44:14	answer 5:9 37:17	27:2 29:2 57:12	19:14,20 20:10	briefly 9:8 56:20
addressed 58:2,2	37:22,23,24 38:2	asking 23:18 24:10	21:3,9,17 22:6,8	57:17
addressing 33:15	40:21 41:9 42:12	assailant 47:15	23:10,19 24:3,20	briefs 6:3 19:12
33:18,18	answered 57:5	assaults 19:4,5,9	25:4,9,19 26:11	bring 14:24 45:23
admitted 11:25	answering 45:4	55:15,19	27:5,14	brings 30:9 53:12
12:3,4	answers 43:19	assert 10:4	basis 35:24	broader 24:10
adopted 23:20	anybody 29:22,23	assistant 1:25	battle 4:23 19:18	broken 46:9
advantage 45:18	apparent 43:23	assume 10:6,8,23	bears 47:21	bronco 8:22
48:21,24 49:10	apparently 13:21	10:24 11:7 21:4	began 46:24	brosseau 44:7,8
affect 11:8 48:17	appeal 22:12 24:21	35:23 41:8 55:18	beginning 57:19	building 57:17
48:21	26:14 38:7	56:3,4	begins 30:3,16 57:1	bullet 50:25 51:7
affidavits 19:6	appeals 9:24	assumed 12:14	57:2	bullets 45:15,23
affirmed 5:14	appearances 1:22	assuming 13:16,16	behalf 1:24 2:3 3:4	48:7
agree 14:10 24:25	appellate 22:13	40:20	3:7,11,14 4:7	bumped 11:14 12:5
25:1	24:23	attach 54:4	17:11 27:17 56:19	bumper 31:1,1
ahead 10:23	appendix 11:24	attempt 29:22	behavior 36:14	35:6,6
aiming 21:23	53:19 58:21	attempting 42:7	42:25	burden 34:5
al 1:4	applicable 54:1	authorities 54:3	believe 20:10 33:8	
alito 6:17,23 7:3	application 8:6	authorize 18:1 54:8	35:16	<u> </u>
19:21 29:18 30:11	applied 7:6 38:9	authorized 17:22	benefit 13:13	c 1:16 2:1 3:1 4:1
34:21,25 35:8,17	applies 22:11 26:21	authorizes 17:18	best 44:2 59:6	california 26:14
35:20 42:5,12	apply 32:17 39:19	20:4	better 47:18	call 10:17
50:6,10,12	40:1,18 51:17	available 20:1	beyond 15:15 17:19	camreta 20:20
alitos 45:4	53:22	avenue 31:11 32:2	22:4	cant 14:12 23:9,9
alleged 9:14,17	approaching 13:11	avoid 53:24	bit 26:1,5	24:16 30:25 38:17
11:6	appropriate 13:18		blatantly 22:21	48:4 49:13 51:17
allen 14:20,24	36:14,15 39:18	<u>B</u>	blending 54:21	53:3
allens 16:5	40:1 41:18 42:3	back 11:16 12:6	block 36:20,24,25	car 7:24 11:10 12:5
allow 42:9,14 51:1	area 18:4 41:13	15:10 18:3 20:25	blocked 28:22	12:6 13:5,5,6,6,7
alternate 35:21,24	45:24 48:12	21:13,23 29:8	36:17 43:13	13:9,10,11,21
44:22	arguably 32:15	33:20,23 34:12	blocking 38:13	21:6,8 25:17
alternative 18:5	argued 6:2,11 7:16	36:18 37:9,14	boat 7:21	26:17 28:8,22
36:21 38:5,14	9:3,4 14:19	44:4,25 45:2,12	bone 16:18 58:5,11	29:10,15,21,23,23
alternatives 36:9	arguing 53:1	54:16	book 24:2	30:2,12,14,15,17
36:17	argument 1:20 3:2	backed 12:11	borders 32:3	30:18,19 31:1,15

	1	1	1	1
34:15,18 35:6,6,7	cause 55:2	17:20 22:5 24:5	complain 14:12,16	context 18:19 19:25
35:22,25 36:3,3	caused 31:13,15	circumstance 8:16	48:11 49:5	22:25 25:7 39:23
37:6,14 39:7,8,17	49:5,6	41:18 45:22 49:12	completely 4:10	42:15 57:10
40:15,25 41:19	caveats 22:18	51:20 59:5	complexities 6:7	contexts 20:3
42:8 45:5,16 46:1	certain 20:22 22:16	circumstances 14:7	compliance 58:23	continue 11:20
46:2,5,14,15,21	22:24 58:18	21:11 38:9 42:2	compliant 59:6	16:13 30:5 42:9
46:23 47:4,12	certainly 7:14	42:16 54:5	concede 9:13 11:22	42:14,24 51:2
48:8,16 49:3	41:20 58:11	cited 58:11	concerns 26:23	54:8 56:10
50:18 51:4,9,11	challenge 54:18	civil 18:17	conclude 5:6 6:25	continued 12:25
51:14,19,21,24	55:4,5	civilians 16:23	6:25 7:25 8:4	continuing 35:12
52:3,12 53:4,8	changed 4:23	45:23 48:12	13:15 16:13 31:8	contraband 46:14
55:2,4,8 57:1,12	chaos 17:2	claim 10:4 15:23	concluded 4:25	46:15
care 33:17 57:7,11	characterizations	16:5,5,8 26:8,13	conclusion 55:8,9	contradicted 22:21
careening 56:8,10	12:20	26:22,24	conduct 5:21 8:18	contrary 27:21
58:9	characterize 13:4	claims 9:25	18:1 22:3 25:12	control 29:21,24
cars 12:6 21:13	57:18	clarify 56:21	43:24,25 44:1	51:12
30:20 36:13,19	characterized	classic 27:20	49:9	controlled 28:3,4
37:5 40:24 42:21	12:21,22	clay 16:17	confirm 55:16	28:10
44:19 45:12 47:3	chase 7:18 8:11 9:5	clear 17:25 21:22	conscience 15:8,17	converse 48:3
55:2,21 56:9	11:11 17:19 21:2	23:15 24:9 33:3	15:25 26:9	convey 34:10,11
case 4:4,12,17 5:11	28:2,3 29:21 30:6	38:8,10 43:13	conserving 23:12	core 24:21
5:25 6:4,6,7,15,15	35:12 39:16,20	47:13	consider 14:7,8	cornered 11:15
6:17 7:15 8:7,16	40:10,16 41:1	clearly 4:12 5:18	19:23 24:23 54:19	correct 8:3 17:15
9:1,3 11:4 12:21	42:7,9,14,19,20	5:23,23 6:13,20	54:25	18:13 25:4 34:4
12:22 13:17 15:11	51:2 55:11	7:7 8:13 10:22	consideration	50:11 57:15
15:15 16:11,12,15	chasing 39:14	15:25 16:10 17:23	54:22	correctly 32:19
16:18 17:15,21,25	chief 4:3,8 8:5,10	18:7,18 20:20	considerations	couldnt 6:21
18:8,8,8 19:3,12	17:7,13 19:14,20	24:4,9,22 33:16	23:12	counsel 56:16
19:13 20:9,16	20:8,11,25 27:14	34:6,10 37:25	constitution 8:18	59:11,12
21:11,22 22:9,12	27:18 31:17,20	38:3,18 39:1	constitutional 4:15	country 17:4 40:4
23:9,14,15,21	36:5,11 37:19	40:21 42:3 43:23	5:24 6:9,12 7:1,17	county 16:17
24:4,7,10,17 25:8	39:13,24 40:6,11	43:25 49:17 52:1	8:13 18:14,24	couple 11:6
26:21 27:10,11,20	40:23 41:5,10,17	52:2,6,15 53:1,5	19:10,18 26:2	course 4:23 6:3,10
28:20 29:3 32:11	41:21,24 47:5	53:16 54:2,20	33:16 53:15 54:20	8:17 9:7 14:19
38:18,23 40:8	48:10,14 50:22	55:22 57:19 58:1	59:8	15:6 24:16 26:9
41:3,6,6,8 44:2,4	51:10,16,21 56:16	clearlyestablished	constitutionally	37:21 43:14 48:23
47:7 48:6 49:19	59:11	25:10	26:19	court 1:1,20 4:9
49:21,23 51:13	child 1:8	client 49:4,5	construed 9:18	5:14,16,20 6:8,15
52:18 53:2,18	choice 39:4 42:6	clients 42:20 48:24	contact 13:3 31:15	6:18,19 7:4,10,14
54:4,11,17 58:7	choices 42:9	closely 53:19,19,20	57:3	7:15 8:16 10:11 10:23 11:25 15:2
59:5,12,13	circuit 4:10,19,24	cohort 46:7,20	contacted 13:11	
cases 4:24 10:13	5:17 9:13 15:9,21 16:16,18 17:25	cole 16:18 58:5,11	contend 55:25	16:6 17:14 18:23 19:12 21:24 22:19
16:17 18:7,21,24	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	colleague 49:3 come 32:4	contest 54:23,25	
20:21,23 37:23 38:7 47:24 48:1	29:4,5 53:21 58:3 58:8	come 32:4 comes 38:22	55:3,22 56:5 contested 55:10,14	22:20,23 23:9,22 24:14,20 26:12
53:13,21	circuits 15:21	coming 8:19	contesting 56:11	27:19 29:2,6
33.13,41	CIT CUITS 13.21	Coming 6.19	Contesting 50.11	41.17 47.4,0
	l	<u> </u>	l	I

39:22 59:8	deadly 16:25 17:18	56:13	12:16 19:25 22:23	40:14 47:14 58:3
courtroom 13:14	17:22 18:2 21:1,9	differ 6:10 32:8,22	26:7 37:13 41:24	eliminate 55:23
courts 9:24 10:1,3	24:6 35:4,11	33:7,9,19 34:7	47:15 52:23 58:6	56:10
11:9 18:14,20,25	36:10 38:5 39:4	different 19:2 21:5	doing 18:6 23:3	ellis 12:10 28:25
18:25 19:23 22:13	42:17 49:12,16	35:18 47:7 48:14	33:4 40:17 52:7	56:1,2 57:25
23:16,24 24:12,23	50:4 57:25 59:4	54:22	donald 1:10	elses 26:3
26:6 39:22	dealing 37:23	difficult 6:8 18:24	dont 11:5 16:23	emphasize 4:21
cox 52:24 53:7	debate 17:19 22:4	direction 50:20	18:8 20:12,16	emphasizes 44:17
creat 32:21	deceased 1:10	directly 34:17	21:3 22:3 23:5	emphasizing 6:5
create 58:9	decedent 7:22	disable 36:3	25:5,5 30:6 31:5	15:10
created 29:17	decedents 12:6	disabled 21:19	32:25 33:17 37:17	encirclement 30:20
50:17	decide 5:21 7:2,5	disagreement 5:4	37:18,22,24 38:1	endanger 43:17
creates 58:6	19:18 24:7 32:10	9:24	46:22 47:20 49:22	45:14 50:2,4,19
credit 22:23	51:6	discretion 6:18	50:2,3 54:10 55:3	endangered 42:21
criminal 14:13	decided 6:1,4 19:16	7:10	57:4,7,11 58:25	50:23
18:19	deciding 19:23	discretionary	door 21:8	endangering 8:21
cruisers 11:15	decision 35:4 38:22	19:22	doubt 12:21	11:19 14:22 35:13
culpability 14:5	45:14 48:2	discriminate 45:16	drawing 30:14	40:16 41:13 43:2
25:23 49:10	defendant 7:9	discussed 20:23	drive 30:3 42:1,24	43:3,10 48:5
cupp 5:16 44:3	defense 4:11	38:13	50:8	54:12
curiae 2:2 3:7	defies 14:19 15:24	discussing 43:20	driver 14:5 15:12	enforcement 17:2,3
17:12	degree 25:14 27:4,5	disposition 17:15	15:18 29:25 30:3	engaged 21:19
curiosity 58:15	27:9	dispute 9:14,15	30:19 41:1,15	engaging 59:2
cut 7:21	delay 30:15	10:2,18 11:23	42:8 47:11,23	entirety 34:11
	demanding 29:25	12:12 23:7,8	48:11 50:18 51:12	entitled 5:1 6:16
<u>D</u>	demote 49:1	27:23 34:13	51:18 52:3	7:9 20:6 33:5
d 1:16 2:1 4:1	department 2:1	disputed 19:4	drivers 8:21	environment 28:4
damage 41:15	18:15 58:15,19	22:20,21 24:14,17	drives 57:21	escape 30:18 45:11
danger 8:25 9:1	depend 39:21	disputes 9:14,17	driving 11:18 17:17	51:1 53:24
13:12,15 14:14,20	depends 42:15	10:1,7,15 11:7	17:20 21:25 23:2	escaping 21:12
21:18 26:3,25	deserted 45:7	12:2	29:10,15 30:1	esq 1:23,25 2:3 3:3
29:12,16 35:3	details 5:14	dissent 20:20	43:1 45:8 47:2	3:6,10,13
38:4 39:5,5,9	determination	distance 50:8	51:11 55:1	established 4:13
42:16,18 51:6,8 51:11 55:5,6,9	48:18	distinction 5:13	drugs 46:13	5:18,23 6:13,20
56:1,4	determine 5:17	52:18,24 54:14		7:7 8:13 10:22
dangerous 7:18 9:5	9:19	distinguish 19:1	e 3:1 4:1,1	16:10 17:24 18:7
11:10 12:25,25	develop 18:5 20:22	44:6	earlier 19:22 20:25	18:18 20:21 24:5
13:24 14:3,10	development 18:14	distinguishable	early 8:23	24:9,22 33:16
22:3 56:8,12 58:7	19:15 20:19	44:16	easily 6:14	34:6 37:25 38:3
58:7	devil 5:13	district 5:14,16	easy 19:3	38:18 39:2,6
danny 32:2	dictate 6:24	15:4 16:6 21:24	effect 13:19	43:23 44:1 52:1,2
dashcam 56:25	didnt 5:10 16:19	22:20 26:12 29:2	effort 38:24 46:21	52:6,15 53:2,5,17
daughter 1:9	19:1,2 22:19	29:6	egress 44:21	54:2,20
dead 40:4 50:18	28:24 31:11 36:24	ditch 21:16	eighth 16:18 58:8	establishes 49:18
51:12	37:1,11,16 39:9	divide 28:15	either 13:17 34:1	estates 16:5
31.12	39:11 46:4,8,9	doesnt 7:9 11:14	JUNE 13.1/ 37.1	et 1:4
	l	l	l	<u> </u>

22:19 23:2 24:4,8 First 23:1 First 31:2 First 31:					<u> </u>
evans 28:25 39:8 57:25 26:20 32:20 33:18 39:25,25 41:2 39:25,25 41:2 54:19,21,23,24,25 36:13 44:13 46:8 59:14 145:81 54:18 23:17 37:12,22 38:20 evidence 22:22 31:7 37:12,22 38:20 evidentiary 22:14 54:18 fairly 59:1,1 fairls 18:3 fairly 59:1,1 fairls 18:3 fairly 59:1,1 fairls 18:3 fairly 59:1,1 fairls 18:3	etcetera 30:12	22:19 23:2 24:4,8	fits 25:21	free 14:22 26:18	37:14 39:21 42:11
event 8:2.19 event 9:2 every body 8:23					
events 9:2 55:10/14 56:11 46:17 47:17 48:5 13:12 34:18 good 31:21 37:16 everybody 8:23 20:17 10:15,18 11:6 58:17 10:15,18 11:6 70:15,18 11:6 60tous 18:7 60llows 17:16 47:14 53:13 good ass 52:8 goodness 52:8 goodne		,	S		,
evertually 29:24 everybody 8:23 factual 5:12 6:7 58:17 further 58:12 59:9 47:14 53:13 goodness 52:8 goodnes		, , , ,		,	
everybody 8:23 26:17 10:15,18 11:6 23:11,18 24:15,24 39:23 38:20 failed 4:10 fairly 59:1,1 54:18 54:18 fairly 59:1,1 17:22 18:2 20:5 20:3 exceeded 7:19 9:4 excessive 15:13 fast 28:2 47:4 52:2,6 41:18 42:3,10,13 example 8:10,22 6xceseded 7:19 9:4 excessive 15:13 fast 28:2 47:4 52:2,6 41:18 42:3,10,13 example 8:10,22 fantastical 58:3 fast 28:2 47:4 52:2,6 41:18 42:3,10,13 excessive 15:13 fast 28:2 47:4 52:2,6 41:18 42:3,10,13 exiting 13:7,10 exiting 13:7,10 explain 22:9 explain 22:9 explain 22:9 explain 6:19:11 explain 22:9 explain 6:19:11 explain 22:9 falled 4:14 film 28:7 37:9 explain 6:19:16 fairly 59:1.1 fast 28:2 23:2 47:4 forced 42:21 forth 12:7 13:19 fast 28:2 23:2 47:4 forced 42:21 forth 12:7 13:19 fast 28:2 3:2 3:3 5:3 4:11 extent 6:11 10:10 film 28:7 37:9 fast 28:2 23:2 3:3 5:3 4:13 fast 28:2 24:2 47: 50:7,13,12 2 forth 12:7 13:19 fast 28:3 5:4:41 film 28:7 37:9 fast 28:3 5:3 4:41 fired 21:25 5:15: 27:22 8:1 33:25 3:4:41 47:7 50:7,13,25 50:17 forced 42:24 fired 21:25 5:15 57:22 finally 11:15 45:12 fired 21:25 5:15 57:22 fired 21:25 5:15 57:13,19,20 fast 65:25 9:19 10:24 11:22 11:					O
26:17 evidence 22:22				further 58:12 59:9	
evidence 22:22 33:1,1,8 24:15,24 5 6 force 4:17 7:17 8:6 38:20		, , ,			O
31:7 37:12,22 38:20 evidentiary 22:14 54:18 example 8:10,22 20:3 exceeded 7:19 9.4 excessive 15:13 excressences 11:17 excressive 15:13 exited 31:18 exiting 13:7,10 explaine 29:9 explaine 40:24 explaine 40:25 explaine 40:25 explaine 40:26 explaine 40:27 explaine 40:28 explaine 40:29 explaine 40:29 explaine 40:20:13 explaine 40:20:13 explaine 40:24 explaine 40:24 explaine 40:24 explaine 40:25 explaine 40:25 explaine 40:26 explaine 40:27 explaine 40:28 explaine 40:29 explaine 40:29 explaine 40:20:13 explaine 40:20:13 explaine 40:20:13 explaine 40:20:13 explaine 40:24 explaine 40:25 explaine 40:24 expla		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			S
38:20 evidentiary 22:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:18 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:18 54:19 54:26 55:14 54:19 54:26 55:14 55:16 55:15 55:26 56:17 56:18 56:18 56:18 56:17 56:18 56:1				0	0
evidentiary 22:14 54:18 example 8:10,22 20:3 exceeded 7:19 9:4 excessive 15:13 excessive 15:13 excessive 29:13 36:19 exiting 13:7,10 exiting 13:7,10 explain 22:9 explained 40:24 explaine 29:11 extent 6:11 10:10 10:25 25:3 54:11 10:25 25:3 54:14	-			S	O
54:18 example 8:10,22 fairly 59:1,1 fantastical 58:3 dexceeded 7:19 9:4 exceeded 7:19 9:4 exceeded 7:19 9:4 excessive 15:13 excressores 11:17 excuse 29:13 36:19 exited 31:18 exiting 13:7,10 explain 22:9 feel 26:18 are 29:13 36:19 explain 22:9 feel 26:18 are 29:13 36:19 explain 22:9 feel 26:18 explain 22:9 feel 26:18 forced 19:11 extent 6:11 10:10 10:25 25:3 54:11 film 28:7 37:9 38:6 31:1 35:7 gardners 12:5 13:6 garner 44:4 53:20 garv 2:3 3:10 27:16 guns 36:4 39:10 44:24 47:1 excessive 15:13 favorable 9:15,20 42:17 49:12,16,24 29:17 38:6,8 guns 29:25 guny 2:3 3:10 27:16 guns 6:4 39:10 44:24 47:1 excent 6:11 10:10 10:25 11:8 32:21 forced 42:21 genuine 10:14,17 27:22 33:25 34:13 fight 44:14 forced 49:12 ford 8:22 forget 29:21 genuine excessive 15:13 find 22:15 32:23,23 finally 11:15 45:12 find 22:15 32:23,23 fine 19:2 21:7 28:24 fired 21:25 25:15 20:9,13 22:16 25:15 27:22 28:1 33:25 34:413 35:7,9 factor 48:17,23,24 49:14 factors 19:22 25:13 25:17 50:20 factor 48:17,23,24 49:14 factors 19:22 25:13 25:17 50:20 factor 48:17,23,24 49:14 factors 19:22 25:13 25:17 50:20 28:14 factors 19:22 25:13 25:17 50:20 30:8,9,10 34:14 39:5 41:3 51:22 framework 13:25 7:27 going 15:15 20:16 29:12 30:8,9,10 34:14 39:5 41:3 51:22 framework 13:25 7:27 going 15:15 20:16 29:16 31:4,21,22 headlight 46:9 31:1 35:7 gardners 12:5 13:6 garner 44:4 53:20 garve 2:3 31:0 27:16 guns 6:4:25 13:6 garve 2:3 3:0 27:16 32:0 garve 2:3 3:0 27:16 guns 6:4:3 9:10 44:24 47:1 genuine 10:25 18:12 29:17 38:6,8 guns 29:25 guns 6:4:3 9:10 44:24 47:1 27:17 58:18 32:21 50:4 58:19 40:14,14 40:15 58:15 9:4 genuine 10:24,17 7 27:22 33:25 34:13 genuine 10:14,17 27:22 33:25 34:13 genuine				O	O
example 8:10,22					9
20:3 exceeded 7:19 9:4 excessive 15:13 excessive 15:13 excessecences 11:17 excuse 29:13 36:19 exited 31:18 exiting 13:7,10 exited 31:18 exiting 13:7,10 explaine 24:9 explained 40:24 explained 40:24 explained 40:24 explained 40:24 exploired 19:11 extent 6:11 10:10 10:25 25:3 54:11					O
exceeded 7:19 9:4 excessive 15:13	_		_	_	
excessive 15:13 fast 23:2 47:4 35:18 36:10 38:5 general 1:25 18:12 44:24 guns 29:25				0	0
excrescences 11:17 favor 10:9 12:15 39:4,19 40:1,18 29:17 38:6,8 guns 29:25 guns 29:25 <td></td> <td></td> <td>2 2 2</td> <td></td> <td>0</td>			2 2 2		0
excuse 29:13 36:19 exited 31:18 exited 31:18 exiting 13:7,10 explain 22:9 explain 22:9 explain 22:9 explain 22:9 explicit 20:13 explored 19:11 extent 6:11 10:10 10:25 25:3 54:11 41:18 42:3,10,13 described 2:19 forced 42:21 genuine 10:14,17 described 2:25 forced 42:21 genuinely 22:20 genuinely				S	
exited 31:18 favorable 9:15,20 42:17 49:12,16,24 27:7 44:24 47:1 explain 22:9 feel 26:18 50:4 51:17 52:19 58:1 59:4 50:4 51:17 52:19 58:1 59:4 57:22 33:25 34:13 44:24 47:1 Hadnt 21:25 explain 22:9 fell on 14:13 47:17 fell 53:23 forced 42:21 genuine 10:14,17 44:24 47:1 Hadnt 21:25 explored 19:11 felt 53:23 ford 8:22 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:2			, , ,		0
exiting 13:7,10 explain 22:9 explained 40:24 explicit 20:13 explored 19:11 extent 6:11 10:10 10:25 25:3 54:11 F f1:25 3:6 17:10 faced 19:16 filter 26:23 finally 11:15 45:12 13:2,8,20 14:7 20:9,13 22:16 20:9,13 22:16 25:15 27:22 28:1 33:25 34:4,13 35:17 40:2 45:18 49:13 54:3 55:7,9 factor 48:17,23,24 49:14 factors 19:22 25:13 25:17 50:20 faces 6:25 9:19 10:24 11:22 12:21 feel 26:18 58:1 59:4 forced 42:21 ford 8:22 ford 8:22 forget 29:21 forth 12:7 13:19 42:22 forth 12:7 13:19 forthman 28:25 forthman 28:25 forthman 28:25 forward 31:2 57:17 found 7:16 21:24 genuine 10:14,17 27:22 33:25 34:13 genuine 10:14,17 27:22 33:25 34:13 genuinely 22:20 genuineness 10:20 getting 20:2 21:13 day-17 54:6 ginsburgs 7:13 18:4 give 8:10,15 13:20 day-17 54:6 pind 22:15 32:23,23 forward 31:2 57:17 found 7:16 21:24 given 4:16 8:18 9:2 17:25 31:6 39:24 day:14 fires 38:12 fired 2:25 25:15 go 7:11 10:23 15:9 fires 38:23 fires 42:21 fires 38:22 fires 42:21 fires 38:25 forth 12:7 13:19 genuinel 10:14,17 27:22 33:25:3 detting 20:20 fires 30:13 fires 42:22 fires 30:13 forth 12:7 13:19 fires 42:22 fires 42:21 forward 31:2 57:17 found 7:16 21:24 given 4:16 8:18 9:2 fires 38:19 fires 38:1		,		· ·	
explain 22:9 feel 26:18 58:1 59:4 27:22 33:25 34:13 H hadnt 21:25 hadnt 21:25 <th< td=""><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>44:24 47:1</td></th<>					44:24 47:1
explained 40:24 explicit 20:13 fellow 39:14 40:15 ford 8:22 genuineness 10:20 fenuinely 22:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 fenuinely 22:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 fenuinely 22:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 fenuinely 22:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 genuineness 10:20 fenuinely 22:20 genuineness 10:20 genuin	,			· ·	П
explicit 20:13 felon 14:13 47:17 ford 8:22 genuineness 10:20 hand 25:21 26:1 explored 19:11 felt 53:23 forth 12:7 13:19 getting 20:2 21:13 hands 7:23 30:1,12 30:125 25:3 54:11 Film 28:7 37:9 42:22 forth 12:7 13:19 desting 20:2 21:13 hands 7:23 30:1,12 42:22 filter 26:23 filter 26:23 finally 11:15 45:12 forthman 28:25 ginsburgs 7:13 happened 12:15 faced 19:16 find 22:15 32:23,23 fire 19:2 21:7 28:24 forward 31:2 57:17 give 8:10,15 13:20 happens 39:15 faced 9:16 fire 19:2 21:7 28:24 forward 31:2 57:17 found 7:16 21:24 give 8:10,15 13:20 happens 39:15 13:2,8,20 14:7 20:9,13 22:16 28:2,21 29:9 37:5 44:19 46:23 39:25 59:4 harm 8:1 16:1 17:1 25:15 27:22 28:1 33:25 34:4,13 47:7 50:7,13,25 56:17 go 7:11 10:23 15:9 harris 5:12 9:18 49:13 54:3 55:7,9 fires 38:12 fires 38:12 fires 38:12 fires 38:12 fires 38:12 fires 38:12 fires 11:22 19:19 26:22 33:2,5 40:12 44:25 45:2 hates 8:21 hav	_				-
explored 19:11 felt 53:23 forget 29:21 getting 20:2 21:13 hands 7:23 30:1,12 10:25 25:3 54:11 10:25 25:3 54:11 film 28:7 37:9 38:16 forth 12:7 13:19 49:17 54:6 30:19 happened 12:15 30:19 happened 12:15 30:19 happened 12:15 30:13 44:19 51:13 happened 12:15 18:4 pive 8:10,15 13:20 31:8 43:19 happened 12:15 40:13 52:10 happened 12:15 18:4 pive 8:10,15 13:20 40:13 52:10 happened 12:15 18:4 pive 8:10,15 13:20 31:8 43:19 happened 12:15 18:4 pive 8:10,15 13:20 31:8 43:19 pive 8:10,15 13:20 17:25 31:6 39:24 hard 31:11,12 40:13 52:10 hard 31:11,12 17:25 31:6 39:24	_				
extent 6:11 10:10 fight 44:14 forth 12:7 13:19 ginsburg 5:20 6:3 30:19 happened 12:15 F filter 26:23 finally 11:15 45:12 forthman 28:25 31:9,13 32:5 give 8:10,15 13:20 happened 12:15 30:13 44:19 51:13 happened 12:15 40:13 52:10 happened 12:15 40:				10	
Total Control of State Total Control of St	-		<u> </u>	0	*
Simple S					
F filter 26:23 filter 26:23 finally 11:15 45:12 firward 31:2 57:17 found 7:16 21:24 give 8:10,15 13:20 happens 39:15 40:13 52:10 happens	10:25 25:3 54:11				
f1:25 3:6 17:10 finally 11:15 45:12 fire 19:2 21:7 28:24 forward 31:2 57:17 give 8:10,15 13:20 31:8 43:19 happy 24:8 hard 31:11,12 hard 31:11,12 hard 31:11,12 harm 8:1 16:1 17:1	F			0	
faced 19:16 find 22:15 32:23,23 forward 31:2 57:17 31:8 43:19 happy 24:8 fact 9:3 10:21 12:5 fire 19:2 21:7 28:24 forward 31:2 57:17 given 4:16 8:18 9:2 hard 31:11,12 13:2,8,20 14:7 20:9,13 22:16 28:2,21 29:9 34:16 45:21,22 39:25 59:4 39:25 59:4 25:15 27:22 28:1 34:16 45:21,22 37:5 44:19 46:23 39:25 59:4 harm 8:1 16:1 17:1 33:25 34:4,13 35:17 40:2 45:18 49:13 54:3 55:7,9 51:22 56:22,24 fourteenth 16:2 57:13,19,20 fourth 5:22 7:17 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 24:8 29:8 38:19 10:12 12:23 16:22 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 hasnt 19:11 23:23 23:23 38:23,24,25 23:23 38:23,24,25 hate 8:21			•		
fact 9:3 10:21 12:5 fire 19:2 21:7 28:24 found 7:16 21:24 given 4:16 8:18 9:2 hard 31:11,12 13:2,8,20 14:7 20:9,13 22:16 28:2,21 29:9 34:16 45:21,22 39:25 59:4 44:18 25:15 27:22 28:1 33:25 34:4,13 37:5 44:19 46:23 giving 26:25 hard 31:11,12 35:17 40:2 45:18 49:13 54:3 55:7,9 51:22 56:22,24 57:13,19,20 fourteenth 16:2 57:13,19,20 15:21 18:3 20:25 22:18 37:4 38:14 49:14 fires 38:12 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 54:15 55:2 goes 12:13 30:14 hasnt 19:11 23:23 46:15 59:19 28:14,16 29:11 26:22 33:2,5 40:12 44:25 45:2 havent 16:10 20:9 40:12 41:22 12:21 39:5 41:3 51:22 54:3 51:22 56:20 40:2		•		,	
13:2,8,20 14:7 fired 21:25 25:15 22:19 17:25 31:6 39:24 harm 8:1 16:1 17:1 20:9,13 22:16 28:2,21 29:9 34:16 45:21,22 37:5 44:19 46:23 39:25 59:4 44:18 33:25 34:4,13 47:7 50:7,13,25 56:17 50:11 10:23 15:9 10:12 12:23 16:22 35:17 40:2 45:18 51:22 56:22,24 57:13,19,20 57:13,19,20 15:21 18:3 20:25 22:18 37:4 38:14 49:14 fires 38:12 57:13,19,20 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 54:15 55:2 16urth 5:22 7:17 54:15 55:2 16urth 5:22 7:17 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 17:23 22:2,5 16urth 5:22 7:17 25:12,18 26:8,13 23:23 38:23,24,25 16urth 5:22 7:17 16urth 5:22 7:17 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 17:23 22:2,5 16urth 5:22 7:17 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 17:23 22:2,5 16urth 5:22 7:17 16urth 5:22 7:17 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 17:23 22:2,5 16urth 5:22 7:17 16urth 5:22 7:17 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 17:23 22:2,5 16urth 5:22 7:17 17:18 57:17 10:12 12:23 38:23,24,25 10:12 12:23 38:23,24,25 10:12 12:23 38:23,24,25 10:12 12:23 38:					
20:9,13 22:16 25:15 27:22 28:1 33:25 34:4,13 35:17 40:2 45:18 49:13 54:3 55:7,9 factor 48:17,23,24 49:14 fires 38:12 firing 50:24 factors 19:22 25:13 25:17 50:20 facts 6:25 9:19 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 28:2,21 29:9 34:16 45:21,22 34:16 45:21,22 37:5 44:19 46:23 56:17 four 31:25 36:19 39:25 59:4 giving 26:25 go 7:11 10:23 15:9 15:21 18:3 20:25 22:18 37:4 38:14 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 17:23 22:2,5 25:12,18 26:8,13 26:22 33:2,5 34:22 framework 13:25 28:2,21 29:9 39:25 59:4 giving 26:25 go 7:11 10:23 15:9 15:21 18:3 20:25 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 hasnt 19:11 23:23 23:23 38:23,24,25 hate 8:21 havent 16:10 20:9 26:20 40:2 framework 13:25 framework 13:25 framework 13:25				O	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
25:15 27:22 28:1 33:25 34:4,13 35:17 40:2 45:18 49:13 54:3 55:7,9 factor 48:17,23,24 49:14 fires 38:12 factors 19:22 25:13 25:17 50:20 facts 6:25 9:19 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 20:37:5 44:19 46:23 37:5 44:19 46:23 56:17 fourteenth 16:2 fourteenth 16:2 fourteenth 16:2 15:21 18:3 20:25 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 10:12 12:23 16:22 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 10:12 12:23 16:22 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 10:12 12:23 16:22 47:18 55:12 10:12 12:23 16:22 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 10:12 12:23 16:22 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 10:12 12:23 16:22 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 10:12 12:23 16:22 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 10:12 12:23 16:22 22:18 37:4 38:14 43:11 43:12 43:13 40:12 44:25 45:2 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57:17 47:18 57	, ,				
33:25 34:4,13	,	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			
35:17 40:2 45:18 49:13 54:3 55:7,9 factor 48:17,23,24 49:14 51:22 56:22,24 57:13,19,20 fires 38:12 firing 50:24 fourteenth 16:2 fourth 5:22 7:17 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 17:23 22:2,5 15:21 18:3 20:25 24:8 29:8 38:19 54:15 55:2 goes 12:13 30:14 40:12 44:25 45:2 40:12 44:25 45:2 47:18 57:17 going 15:15 20:16 10:24 11:22 12:21 10:24 11:22 12:21 30:8,9,10 34:14 39:5 41:3 51:22 15:21 18:3 20:25 24:8 29:8 38:19 54:15 55:2 goes 12:13 30:14 40:12 44:25 45:2 47:18 57:17 going 15:15 20:16 29:16 31:4,21,22 hate 8:21 havent 16:10 20:9 26:20 40:2 headlight 46:9		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		0 0	
49:13 54:3 55:7,9 57:13,19,20 fourth 5:22 7:17 24:8 29:8 38:19 43:11 factor 48:17,23,24 fires 38:12 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 54:15 55:2 hasnt 19:11 23:23 factors 19:22 25:13 25:17 50:20 28:14,16 29:11 26:22 33:2,5 40:12 44:25 45:2 hate 8:21 facts 6:25 9:19 30:8,9,10 34:14 30:8,9,10 34:14 39:5 41:3 51:22 39:5 41:3 51:22 29:16 31:4,21,22 headlight 46:9	•			S	
factor 48:17,23,24 fires 38:12 15:7,17,22 16:7,8 54:15 55:2 hasnt 19:11 23:23 49:14 firing 50:24 17:23 22:2,5 goes 12:13 30:14 23:23 38:23,24,25 factors 19:22 25:13 28:14,16 29:11 26:22 33:2,5 47:18 57:17 havent 16:10 20:9 facts 6:25 9:19 30:8,9,10 34:14 30:8,9,10 34:14 39:5 41:3 51:22 39:5 41:3 51:22 29:16 31:4,21,22 headlight 46:9		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			
49:14		, ,			
factors 19:22 25:13 first 11:22 19:19 25:12,18 26:8,13 40:12 44:25 45:2 hate 8:21 25:17 50:20 28:14,16 29:11 26:22 33:2,5 30:8,9,10 34:14 30:8,9,10 34:14 30:8,9,10 34:14 26:20 33:2,5 29:16 31:4,21,22 26:20 40:2 10:24 11:22 12:21 39:5 41:3 51:22 framework 13:25 29:16 31:4,21,22 headlight 46:9					
25:17 50:20		U	-	S	
facts 6:25 9:19 30:8,9,10 34:14 34:22 going 15:15 20:16 26:20 40:2 10:24 11:22 12:21 39:5 41:3 51:22 framework 13:25 29:16 31:4,21,22 headlight 46:9			-		
10:24 11:22 12:21 39:5 41:3 51:22 framework 13:25 29:16 31:4,21,22 headlight 46:9		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		
10.00.17.01.01.5					
12.22 17.21 21.3 55:11 57:2,3 22:10 54.19 55.9 57.9 Iteal 4.5					U
	12.22 17.21 21.3	33:11 37:2,3	22:10	JT.17 JJ.7 J1.7	iicai T.J
				<u> </u>	l

heard 19:5,8 37:19	im 6:10 15:10	intended 34:10,11	16:3,4 22:15 25:5	51:16,21,25 52:5
37:20	23:18 24:8 28:6	50:16	45:17 48:4,17,22	52:8,14,21,25
heavily 41:12 45:24	38:25 40:20 47:13	intent 16:1	49:15 50:2	53:9,11 54:6,23
45:24	57:4	interest 18:16	judicial 10:19	55:7,13,18,23
hed 56:14	immediate 16:21		23:12	
		interesting 15:20		56:3,7,16,21 57:4
held 10:1,11,11	immediately 30:15 30:16	interlocutory 22:12 54:17	jurisdiction 10:3,5	57:7,10,11,22
44:9 53:14,14,22 hes 36:17 37:9 39:9	imminent 44:18		10:24 22:9,13	58:5,14,20,24 59:11
		interstate 31:18,25 32:1 35:13 39:15	24:2,3,23	• /
40:4 high 26:9	immunity 4:11,18	40:13	jurisdictional 9:8 9:22 22:7 54:16	justification 29:14 35:3 38:4 56:2
0	5:1 6:16 7:4,9 10:4 11:10 18:23			
highspeed 8:7,11		introduce 38:20	jury 22:15 27:20 31:7 32:21,22,25	justified 8:8 21:10 53:23
17:19 21:2,20	20:1,7 22:12 24:21 26:4 27:1	invites 53:15		
29:20 39:20 42:7 51:2 59:3	32:17 33:6 47:25	invoke 14:21 15:12 involved 13:21	justice 2:1 4:3,8 5:2	justify 11:17 42:17
highway 37:10	53:22 54:4	24:13 25:14	5:8,20 6:3,17,22 7:3,13 8:5,10 9:10	K
39:16 47:2	impact 49:24	irrelevant 24:19	9:21 10:14 11:2	k 2:3 3:10 27:16
hinder 18:13	implies 38:5	isnt 6:17 14:15	11:13 12:3,17	kagan 18:3 25:9
	important 11:5	19:19 31:20 32:10	13:16 14:2,11,24	26:5 27:4 36:23
hindsight 13:13 historical 9:19 23:2	13:2 16:11,15	50:10	15:1,5,14 17:7,13	58:14,20,24
hit 29:23 31:11,12	improper 43:24	isolated 40:4	18:3,4,16 19:14	kagans 20:2
31:14 37:6 39:10	inartfully 32:19	issue 6:13 9:8 10:2	19:20,21 20:2,8	keep 34:13
44:24 47:15 50:25	incident 4:13		20:19,24 21:4,15	kennedy 13:16 14:2
		12:16,19 15:6,22		14:24 15:1,5,14
51:7,9,15	including 53:21 incorrect 23:20	19:16,19,25 20:14	22:6 23:6,17,25	20:19 23:25 25:16
hits 47:15		23:13,16 29:1,6	24:10,13 25:1,9	31:3 34:2 47:13
hold 24:20 38:7 52:23,25	incrementally 20:22	32:9 33:7,9,16,16	25:16 26:1,5 27:4 27:14,18 28:6,13	47:20
holds 52:22		33:19,24,25 34:3 34:7 39:3,4 48:25	28:15,17,19,23	kept 21:25 58:9
honor 8:9 10:11	indefinitely 30:6 indicated 7:23	49:4,10,11	29:8,18 30:10,17	keys 44:23
11:1,21 14:25	indication 46:3,13	issues 18:24 22:25	30:23 31:3,17,20	kill 52:2,11 53:4
15:3 57:15	indisputable 12:10	23:1,1,1,8 27:22	32:6,13,14,17,25	killed 34:19 48:7
hour 7:19 9:4 11:18	indisputably 11:10	34:13	33:13,17,22 34:2	51:3
31:22 42:19 45:5	11:11 12:8,9	ive 37:19 39:24,25	34:4,21,25 35:8	killing 41:15 51:18
47:3 55:1	individually 1:8	106 37.19 39.24,23	35:17,20 36:1,5	kind 23:3 42:24
house 51:15	initial 28:8,21	J	36:11,23,24 37:8	kinds 18:6
human 11:19	initially 57:14	ja 19:7 20:14	37:19 38:6,15	knew 37:11,11,13
hurt 14:15	initiate 49:16	jackson 31:11 32:2	39:13,24 40:6,11	46:6
hypothesized 41:6	initiated 35:17	job 54:9	40:23 41:5,10,17	know 4:14 9:7,23
hypothesized 41:8	injured 48:7 51:3	john 1:25 3:6 17:10	41:21,24 42:5,12	12:13 13:24 16:24
42:23	injury 8:25 9:2	johnson 22:10,11	42:18 43:5,8,14	20:16 23:17 26:15
42.23	13:15 17:1 21:10	22:19 23:10,11,19	43:18 44:5,6,10	30:6,18 31:5,6
I	innocent 14:9,23	23:20 24:1,1,7,11	44:12,25 45:2,4	33:1,4 35:8 37:17
id 9:8,10 17:5 35:19	25:24 26:24 48:2	24:13,15	45:11,25 46:4,12	37:18,22,24 38:1
46:25 57:6 59:9	48:16 51:3	joint 11:24 53:19	46:16,19,25 47:5	38:11 39:15 41:2
ii 58:20	innocents 48:6	58:21	47:13,20 48:10,14	41:25 43:15 46:2
ill 8:15 27:13	49:25	jones 23:11,11,20	48:23 49:17 50:6	46:21,22 48:15
illegal 13:22	inquiry 53:15	judgment 9:6 12:1	50:10,12,22 51:10	52:10 53:16 57:4
	inquiry 55.15	J	30.10,12,22 31.10	
	I	I	I	I

58:25	looked 5:11	militated 50:21	need 39:11 41:2	18:9 19:2,2,4
knowledge 54:1	looking 5:16 25:11	mind 34:14	44:17	21:11,18,25 23:4
known 53:6	35:10	minds 32:8,22 33:7	neighborhood	24:6 25:24 27:7
	lot 7:22 38:20	33:9,19 34:7	44:15	28:9,24 29:13,14
<u>L</u>	42:21	minimum 32:8	never 7:22,23	29:19,24 30:4
large 48:1	low 37:4	33:7,11,13,14	11:11 13:1,1	33:1 36:5,6,9
law 4:12 5:7,11,19	lower 18:25,25	34:7	18:14,21 29:2	44:20,20 45:17
6:13 7:5 8:13	19:11,23 23:15	minor 1:7 56:11	39:12	48:15,22 49:15
16:10,16 17:2,3	24:12 26:6	minutes 56:17	new 52:1	51:1,5 53:14 54:2
18:14 19:15 20:19		missile 50:17	nondangerous 8:24	55:16 57:14,24,25
20:22 27:10 34:3	<u>M</u>	mistake 5:15	nonqualified 18:23	57:25 59:6
38:8,9 43:23 44:1	m 1:21 4:2 59:13	mixed 34:3	normal 25:4	officials 18:17
52:1,2,16 53:1,5	making 50:24	momentum 31:15	north 1:23 32:2	oftentimes 20:5
53:15,17 54:2	man 56:8	morning 4:4	northeast 32:2	oh 7:12 14:15 15:5
lawsuit 49:2	maneuver 38:13	mosley 1:23 3:3,13	noted 20:19	okay 10:5 25:1
leave 26:18	maneuvered 7:24	4:5,6,8 5:6 6:2,22	notice 17:25	29:11 42:19,23
leaving 34:15 35:22	manner 7:24	7:12 8:9,15 9:12	number 25:22 42:2	51:25 55:18 56:4
35:25	manual 54:7	10:10,19 11:4,21	47:6 50:6 53:20	57:9
led 41:1	march 1:17	12:4,19 13:23		once 31:10 41:18
left 32:1 36:19	material 27:22	14:4,18,25 15:3,6	0	54:7
38:25 51:15 56:7	33:25 34:12	15:20 17:8 56:17	o 3:1 4:1	oncoming 41:13
legal 5:9 9:14 12:2	matter 1:19 5:7	56:18,20,22,24	objective 32:9 33:8	51:14
13:24 18:5 22:25	11:14 17:23 22:8	57:6,9,15,23	33:10 34:2,23,24	open 21:8
47:6 55:9	27:10 34:25 59:14	58:14,20 59:1	35:3,10	opinion 5:3,17
lengthy 59:2	mccaslin 53:21	mother 1:12	obvious 50:1	12:24
lesser 27:9	mckaslin 44:3	motion 9:6	obviously 23:24	opinions 19:12
lethal 8:6,14 39:19	mean 6:2 10:15,16	motive 35:18	occasion 5:21	opportunity 31:6
40:1,18 41:18	13:5 20:19 23:9	motorists 35:13	occupied 37:5	39:11
42:3,10,13 49:20	31:3 33:14 35:15	move 37:6 56:14	occur 45:9	opposed 47:8
49:24 51:17	36:19 37:8 46:6	moved 21:6 45:6	occurred 12:8,8	oral 1:19 3:2,5,9
level 17:16,18 23:4	47:17 49:1 53:13	56:23 57:13,16	19:5,5 41:4 45:19	4:6 17:10 27:16
lewis 16:1	58:24	movies 52:9,10	officer 1:3 4:14	order 4:23 19:18
liability 20:17	means 15:13 21:12	moving 28:9 31:16	7:25 8:2,3 12:4,10	31:12 41:11
life 11:19 26:3	36:21 39:1 44:22	50:17 51:19,22,24	13:5,6,8,9,10,13	ordinary 26:16
45:15	memorandum 9:5	52:3,12 53:4,8	21:7 28:21 29:20	ought 13:19 33:22
light 9:15,19 10:24	memphis 2:3	municipal 20:4,17	30:9,13 31:9,13	38:19
11:7 31:15 32:21	merits 6:9 7:15,16	municipality 20:6,9	32:4 34:14 35:10	outcome 25:7
limit 8:20	14:1 18:15,21	20:12	35:18 39:6,8,8,12	overturned 19:17
limited 15:17	19:24 20:17		39:14,17,18 40:1	
line 18:10	methods 35:21	N	40:12,14,17,25	<u> </u>
little 1:23 26:1,5	38:14	n 3:1,1 4:1	41:19 42:2,6,8	p 4:1
lives 25:22 48:6	michael 1:23 3:3,13	nature 5:22 23:13	44:13,22 45:7	page 3:2 9:5 32:8
logic 14:19 15:24	4:6 56:18	necessary 13:18	49:19 53:23 56:1	parent 1:13
long 10:3	miles 7:19 9:4	24:6 25:7 27:8	56:2,5,6 58:16	parking 7:22
look 11:23 14:4,5	11:18 31:22 42:19	35:12 54:19	officers 5:18 11:16	part 16:9 27:6 30:8
37:8 54:2 56:25	45:5 47:2 55:1	necessities 15:15	16:13,19,22 17:25	33:3 45:6 47:25

	ı	1	ı	ı
48:1 50:1 55:12	pit 38:13	position 10:7 22:7	protection 48:2	24:24 27:25 58:13
particular 7:21	place 40:7 47:17,18	23:21 24:25 27:21	public 14:9,23	59:9
8:19 10:21 19:17	57:10	28:11	21:10 23:4 29:17	quick 47:1
22:22	placed 44:20	posture 5:25 6:6	40:16 43:10 47:10	quiet 13:14
particularly 18:22	play 25:14,17	potential 41:15	47:15,16,18 50:23	quite 38:17
18:22	plays 25:25	pounding 30:2	50:25	quote 48:16
parties 19:1 49:25	please 4:9 17:14	power 7:14 23:24	publicendangering	
passenger 13:20,21	27:19	practical 23:12	42:24	R
13:23 14:8,12,14	plumhoff 1:3 4:4	practice 24:11	pull 26:15,17	r 4:1
14:15 15:16 25:17	13:8 28:21 30:9	precedent 23:22	pulled 39:10	radio 19:5
25:21 26:7,24	30:14 31:16 34:14	precisely 14:18	pulling 7:21 48:18	raise 57:23
45:1,15,16 49:12	39:8,12	preface 27:24	punishment 21:19	raised 10:2,23
49:14,18,20,22	point 13:17 18:12	prefaced 32:18	purely 23:7	23:23 27:25 29:2
passengers 15:12	18:20 20:18 23:25	preferred 37:12	purposes 9:16	37:15 58:1
26:12,17 35:14	24:1 29:11,13,16	presented 23:21	pursuant 20:13	raises 24:22 37:21
path 34:18 35:5	29:19 30:24 31:13	29:6	pursuit 17:17 21:20	ram 29:22 52:19
44:19,21	31:14 37:2 38:16	pretty 21:22 47:1	pursuits 59:3	rammed 55:21
patrol 13:7	38:17 40:13,15,17	prevent 34:15	put 14:13,20 25:23	ramming 55:24
pearson 6:12,22,23	40:25 45:14 50:23	35:12,24 39:19	26:2,25 30:1	rapidlyevolving
7:10 19:21,23	51:1 53:13	primarily 47:9	putting 25:10,24	59:5
pearsons 6:23	pointblank 25:15	principle 52:1,5	31:21	reach 6:18 18:21
people 21:20 25:23	pointed 17:24	principles 20:22		19:24 20:17
41:14 42:21 43:3	29:25	prior 5:10 8:17	Q	reached 18:15
44:18,19 48:2	points 28:18	16:15 19:17	qualifications 12:2	reaction 14:3
50:19,20 51:3,3,7	police 8:14 11:14	probably 17:3	22:17	read 6:22,23 32:7
51:8 54:12	14:2 17:17 18:9	27:11 46:16	qualified 4:11 5:1	reading 53:15
percent 34:19	20:11 21:7 27:12	problem 14:16,17	6:16 7:4,9 10:4	really 11:14 18:5
percolate 18:25	28:9 30:20 31:4	45:3	11:9 20:1,6 22:12 24:21 47:25 53:22	19:1,11 rear 36:21
perfectly 28:4	33:1 36:14 38:14	procedures 53:18	54:4	rear 30:21 reason 14:21 31:21
period 24:15 30:15	39:14 40:12 43:24	53:25	quarrel 54:10	33:4 34:16 35:1
permit 22:15	43:25 44:1,12	proceed 6:24	quarrer 34.10 question 4:13 5:9	35:22 49:5
permitted 21:1	46:2,6,20 47:3,14	progress 18:9	5:10,25 7:2,3,13	reasonable 4:14 5:4
person 7:21 25:25	49:19 50:24 54:7	prohibited 4:17,18	7:15 9:22 13:25	5:7 7:24 8:2,3
36:16 41:22 42:23	55:2 56:9 58:15	prong 4:11,21,22	18:4,15 19:15,24	13:12 16:12 29:20
48:16 54:12	58:16,19	6:5,18,24 7:11	20:2,18,25 22:7	30:4 31:7 32:8,15
persuade 42:7	policeman 37:10	11:9 15:11 25:10	23:3,13 24:11,15	32:22 33:7,9,19
pertinent 39:25	42:25 43:21 49:2	54:20,20	24:22 25:10,18	34:7 35:15 45:7
petitioner 1:5	policemen 53:6	prongs 54:19	27:2,20 30:8	49:15
petitioners 1:24 2:2 3:4,8,14 4:7,16,25	policies 20:14 53:25	proper 9:18 43:25 44:1	32:22 34:23,23,24	reasonableness
6:16 9:13 16:4,11	policy 20:4,4,13	properly 23:21	37:15,16,21 38:1	25:11 27:6 32:10
17:12 27:21 29:3	53:18	property 23.21 propositions 17:16	42:3 43:21,22,22	33:8,10 34:3,8,22
32:9 33:20 56:19	populated 41:12	propositions 17.16 propriety 48:1	43:24 45:4 47:21	35:3 47:22
57:23	45:24	propriety 48.1 prosecute 18:17	48:13,15 49:8	reasonably 6:19
phase 50:15,21	pose 16:14	prosecute 18.17 protect 21:10,20	54:16 57:5	7:6,7
physical 8:25 9:2	posed 23:4	43:4	questions 22:14	rebuttal 3:12 56:18
physical 0.23 9.2	poscu 23.4	7,5,7	1	
	1	I	1	I

recall 5:8	respond 27:24	50:22 51:10,16,21	scene 13:13	53:3 54:8 58:8
recite 27:23	respondent 2:4	56:16 59:11	scott 5:11,13 9:18	shooting 11:18
reckless 17:17 45:8	3:11 9:15 11:8,11	rock 1:23	10:12 12:22 16:17	28:20 29:17 36:16
recognized 29:5	11:24 12:5,16	rocking 12:6	16:21 22:18 25:21	38:10,12 41:12
reconsider 23:22	16:9 27:17	room 5:3	37:4 38:13 43:11	46:24 47:10,11
24:7	respondents 7:22	rule 6:8,15 7:6 10:6	43:12 52:18,19,21	49:6 50:19 52:20
reconsidering 16:6	9:3 16:9 17:24	13:19 15:16 19:17	53:10	53:8,24 54:8 55:5
record 10:11,17,22	25:2,6	26:2 32:20 33:2	second 4:11,21,22	56:2 58:6
10:25 12:1 22:15	respondentss 10:9	38:6,8	6:5,18,24 7:11	shoots 30:10,15
22:21 25:3 31:7	12:15	ruled 8:17 26:12	11:9,23 15:10	short 50:8
38:16 46:10 58:10	response 9:6 17:17	rules 58:16,19,21	17:19 22:24 37:15	shot 14:14 29:15
reference 5:10	responses 11:21	58:23 59:2,3,7,7	40:21 47:10 50:15	34:14 39:12 44:24
30:10	rest 59:10	ruling 7:4,14 8:17	50:21 51:23,23	45:21 56:14 57:1
referenced 52:17	resuming 39:19	run 16:20,24 35:9	54:11	57:2
references 52:24	40:16		seconds 46:23 57:3	shots 22:1 25:15
referred 25:16	retain 4:18	<u> </u>	57:8,12	28:2,8,8,10,21,25
referring 24:25	reversed 4:19	s 3:1 4:1	see 14:11,12 16:23	29:9 30:10 34:15
regard 5:8 16:5	review 22:13,19	sacramento 16:1	22:10 23:14,14	34:17 41:4,14
relating 4:21	reviewed 4:24	safer 36:9	25:20,24 28:6	45:16,20 47:6,7
relation 7:12	rickard 1:7,10,13	safety 14:21 15:12	34:11 37:11,24	47:14 50:6,7,13
relative 14:5 49:25	4:4 12:11 13:1,24	sake 9:17	38:17 39:9,11	50:15,21 51:22
relatively 6:14 8:24	14:9,20 16:13	samantha 1:12	45:20 51:13	56:22,24 57:13,19
25:22	45:18 48:20 50:7	saucier 4:22	seen 37:20	57:20
relented 13:1	rickards 13:5,6	saw 8:23 38:16,16	seized 26:15,18	shouldnt 14:14
relevant 17:20 24:5	49:9	saying 32:19 51:16	seizure 6:21 15:24	18:10 53:3,4
remainder 17:5	ricochet 58:10	says 7:8 26:15	34:22 35:15	show 17:21 21:11
remaining 56:17	right 5:23 30:21	31:10,13 33:11	sense 26:23 27:7	30:12 34:5 37:10
remains 15:3,5	32:15 36:2,20	35:4,9 49:21 54:7	separate 28:20 29:7	37:13 38:8 58:5
24:1	37:5 38:23 50:10	scalia 5:2,8 9:10,21	separately 29:4	showing 37:12
remand 13:17	55:13,23	10:14 11:2,13	sequence 30:9 39:5	shown 16:10
remember 39:7	rights 14:8 18:17	12:3,17 14:11	40:21 45:3 47:10	shows 12:9,24
report 19:8	rigid 4:23	22:6 23:6,17	51:24 54:11	30:13 34:19 38:20
reported 44:14	risk 16:14 25:22,23	24:10,13 25:1	sequences 28:20	57:18
reserve 17:5	25:25	26:1 30:17,23	29:9 40:20,23	side 13:8,9,10
residential 41:12	road 11:19 21:13	32:6,13,14,17,25 33:13,17,22 34:4	serious 8:1,25 9:2	24:18,18 31:22
44:14	21:21,23 40:4	, ,	13:15 17:1	sides 28:22 36:18
residents 45:23	42:22 43:13 51:11	36:1,24 38:6	set 13:18 21:4	significance 47:6
resolve 23:18 24:14	52:20 55:1 56:8	42:18 43:5,8,14	27:24 59:7	similar 18:18
25:2	robberies 52:9	43:18 44:5 45:25	settled 15:1	simply 10:8 32:19
resolved 6:14 9:23	roberts 4:3 8:5,10	46:4,12,16,19,25	shock 15:16 26:8	37:6
25:6 34:1	17:7 19:14 20:8	48:23 51:25 52:5 52:8,14,21,25	shocks 15:7,25	single 17:24 44:10
resources 10:20	27:14,18 31:17,20	53:9,11 54:23	shoot 16:19 30:16	44:12
23:13	36:5,11 39:13,24	55:7,13,18,23	36:4,6,13 37:16	sir 53:1
respect 10:20	40:6,11,23 41:5	56:3,7 57:7,10	38:1,21 39:11	situation 8:6,12
respectfully 11:5	41:10,17,21,24	scenario 40:9	41:11 42:25 43:9	16:25 28:3 35:11
17:2 32:12 35:19	47:5 48:10,14	SCCIIAI IU 40.7	48:4 50:3 52:2,11	35:14 42:5 47:1
	l	<u> </u>	l	l

53:23 56:12 58:7	specific 59:2,3	subject 22:8	suspect 9:10 21:12	10:2,15 15:22
sixth 4:10,18,24	specifically 49:22	subject 22.8 subjective 34:23	suspect 8:19 21:12 26:2,25 27:11	18:5,18 20:4
	speed 8:20 9:4 37:4	1 3	,	21:17 22:17 24:2
5:17 9:12 15:9,21		subjectively 35:1	44:13 50:3,4	
16:16 29:4,4 58:3	speeds 7:19	submit 5:15 6:14	suspicious 45:8,13	37:22 38:10 39:13
smith 2:3 3:10 5:16	spin 31:2,14	12:20 17:3 29:7	sustained 47:24	40:12,14 42:2
16:17 27:15,16,18	spinning 12:7	32:12 35:19 36:16	swerved 55:1	43:5 58:12,17
28:12,14,16,18	spins 29:21,23	58:22 59:4	swerving 11:19	59:2,9
29:1,11 30:8,22	spot 51:6	submitted 59:12,14	47:3 55:1	theyre 19:3 20:6,14
30:25 31:5,19,24	spun 31:10	subsidiary 24:24		36:7 59:1
32:6,12,16,18	standard 15:8,25	substantially 58:22		theyve 12:21 41:23
33:11,15,21,24	16:2 18:18 25:5	subtract 54:24	t3:1,1	thing 23:3 36:18
34:9,24 35:2,16	26:10 32:20 34:6	successful 49:3	take 12:16 16:22	37:3,19,20 39:15
35:19 36:2,7,15	53:14 59:8	51:18	23:9 24:16 29:8	40:13 49:6 56:22
36:23 37:2 38:3	standards 18:6	sue 20:5	33:20,22 45:18	things 12:12,14,15
38:12 39:3,21	standing 14:16	sued 20:9,11,12	48:24 49:13 52:19	12:16
40:2,9,19 41:3,7	34:17 35:5 36:2	sufficiency 22:14	takes 12:19 40:15	think 7:13 9:22
41:11,20,22 42:1	39:7 48:11	54:18	41:1,8	10:13,19 11:5,6
42:11,15 43:1,7	start 25:19 28:1	sufficient 6:25 27:9	talk 9:8,10 55:11	14:6 16:12 17:15
43:11,16 44:3,3,8	40:7 48:18	42:16	talked 25:21 40:3	18:12 20:2,11,12
44:11,16 45:1,10	starts 39:17	suggest 15:13 16:24	talking 8:11 40:20	20:15 22:3,8,11
45:13 46:3,10,14	state 13:18 18:17	58:3	talks 49:23 53:7,9	22:17,24 23:5,14
46:18,22 47:9,19	23:15 33:18 54:1	suggested 6:6 15:11	53:11	23:20 24:24 25:5
47:24 48:13 49:8	statement 5:5,7	suing 38:19	television 8:21	25:20 27:2,6
49:21 50:9,11,14	30:11 32:18 33:6	suit 14:24 26:4	tell 25:13 30:25	29:18 30:7 33:22
51:10,19,23 52:4	54:6	summary 9:6 11:25	telling 18:9	37:16,24 46:25,25
52:7,13,17,23	states 1:1,20 2:2	16:3,4 22:15 25:5	tells 49:19	47:9,19 52:1
53:7,10,12 54:10	3:7 6:6 17:11	support 10:21 54:3	tennessee 2:3 15:4	thinking 38:23
55:4,11,14,20,25	station 31:4	57:24 58:1	16:7	thinks 25:13
56:5,13	step 12:11	supportable 10:10	terms 45:17	third 49:25
solicitor 1:25	stop 21:14 26:17	10:25	test 15:17 26:9	thomas 32:2
somebody 8:20	30:1 35:21 37:7	supported 10:17	testimony 55:17	thought 5:2 34:18
16:19,21,24 26:3	43:9 44:13 48:5	supporting 2:2 3:8	thank 17:7 27:14	34:21 35:9 37:9
38:19 50:24 52:11	54:13 55:12,20	17:12	56:16 59:11	46:12 51:21 57:12
52:20 53:4	stopped 16:12 28:3	supports 25:3	thats 5:9 7:6 10:6	threat 7:25 16:21
sorry 28:6 57:4	28:10,22 30:18	suppose 47:14	19:6,6,10,16,20	23:4 27:8 44:18
sort 19:25 20:21	40:24 41:19 55:5	supposed 38:2	20:2 21:5 26:11	48:12
24:21,24 26:21	57:14	46:20 51:5 58:16	27:6 28:18 29:11	threatened 17:1
32:3	stops 39:17	supreme 1:1,20	33:15 34:9 35:20	three 19:2 28:7,16
sorts 22:24 26:23	straight 25:12 42:1	11:25	36:14 38:6 41:1	28:21,22 30:10
sotomayor 20:24	stray 51:7	sure 37:9	42:22,22,23 43:21	34:14,17 36:17
21:4,15 28:6,13	street 29:16 31:22	surprised 32:7	43:22,24 45:23	41:3 45:21 55:21
28:15,17,19,23	45:6,24	surrender 7:23	46:16 48:25 52:21	56:14,22,24 57:2
29:8 44:6,10,12	strikes 57:1	surrounded 21:6	53:2,12 54:13,13	57:2,17
44:25 45:2,11	struck 31:9	29:24 40:5 46:2	55:3,7,8,8 57:15	threshold 39:4
56:21 57:4,11,22	struggle 23:18	56:9	58:10	49:11
speaks 12:23	struggled 23:16	surviving 1:9	theres 6:7 9:7,23,24	threw 7:23
-F		~		
	1		1	1

throw 17:2	40:23 44:19 47:8	9:18 10:12 12:22	15:11 22:3 31:5	12:13 35:14
ticket 46:9	50:22	16:1,17,17,18,22	35:6,22 37:11,11	wrinkle 19:10
time 4:13 7:20 13:3	type 52:18	20:20 22:18 23:10	37:14 39:1 47:16	wrong 17:22 29:9
16:19,22 17:6		23:11,19 26:14	51:22	29:12
21:14 28:2 29:15	U	37:4 38:13 43:11	wastes 10:19	
33:24,25 39:23	un 15:23	44:3,3 52:24 53:7	watch 52:9	X
40:3 46:23 52:9	uncertainty 38:25	58:5,11	way 6:22,23 8:22	x 1:2,15
52:10 54:15 55:5	unconstitutional	vacillated 15:22	12:11,24 15:18	
times 39:22 45:21	8:4	van 1:3	18:5 26:6 34:1	Y
55:21 56:15 57:17	underlying 5:24	various 15:21	41:13 42:20 44:9	yeah 46:10
tires 36:4,6,13	19:15	vaughan 52:24	46:8 50:16	youd 46:25
37:17 38:1,10,21	understand 13:25	53:7	ways 12:23,24	youll 23:14
58:6,8	15:14 23:6 26:6	veered 51:14	15:21 25:20 35:24	youre 24:25 36:2
today 4:21 6:4	40:10 47:20	vehicle 18:22 21:18	37:7 44:8,17	38:19 41:13 43:2
15:10	understanding	39:19 41:16 52:19	50:22	43:2,3,18 47:10
totality 14:6	36:13	58:9,17	weaken 17:3	47:11 50:18,19,23
totally 51:12	understood 22:25	versus 52:20	weapon 30:14	50:24 51:16 54:12
tracks 53:19,20,20	23:10 24:15	video 12:10,24 19:8	49:20,23	54:13 56:11
traditionally 4:22	undisputed 9:2	21:23 22:22 30:12	weapons 19:3 36:6	youve 37:5
traffic 7:20 41:13	13:3 17:21 18:1	34:19 45:20 51:14	36:8,12	
trained 36:6,7,8,8,9	21:24 24:4,8	55:16	weaving 7:19	
36:12,12 38:14	unfortunately 39:1	videos 12:23	weird 26:1,5	0
training 53:17	uniformly 53:13	view 5:21 8:7 32:20	western 15:4 16:6	
trapped 46:1	unintentional	52:15	weve 6:2,11 7:16	1
traveled 45:24	15:23	viewed 45:17	10:1 12:20 14:18	10 1:21 4:2
treated 29:4	unit 12:9 56:25	violate 8:13	37:20 40:10,19	100 7:19 9:4 11:18
tried 11:15 44:22	57:18	violated 5:18 8:18	43:20	31:22 34:19 42:19
44:23,23	united 1:1,20 2:1	16:10 20:15 22:2	whats 16:15 22:6	45:5 47:2 55:1
tries 56:9	3:7 6:6 17:11	22:4 33:2,5	44:2 53:16	100mileanhour
trigger 48:19	unrealistic 52:11	violates 5:22	wheel 51:12	39:16
true 10:20 19:20	unreasonable 6:21	violation 6:9,12 7:1	wheels 12:7 31:2	11 59:13
26:11 31:2 34:20	15:24 47:16 49:9	25:12 33:3	white 8:22	12 28:12,13,17 29:9
48:3	urged 19:23	violations 18:17	whitne 1:7	45:20 56:25 57:2
try 46:4	use 4:16 7:17 8:14	virtually 49:23	wilkins 44:4	121117 1:5 4:4
trying 30:11,17,19	8:21 14:22 17:18	volume 11:23 58:20	willing 9:13,16	12shot 45:3
30:23 31:8 43:3	18:2 20:5 21:1,9		43:18	14 1:21 4:2
44:13 45:25 54:13	24:6 26:16 27:1,7	W	windows 30:2	15 25:15 28:10
tuesday 1:17	27:12 32:20 35:4	wait 16:22	windshield 39:10	41:14 47:7
turn 32:4	35:11 36:6,8,8,9	want 33:20 37:10	wise 7:16	16 9:5 59:13
turned 31:10	36:12 42:9,13,17	46:8,9 54:15	wish 4:20	17 3:7 56:25 57:2
turning 32:1	49:22 50:3 57:25	57:18	words 22:14	
turns 32:1 39:15	59:4	wants 6:19	work 11:3 58:6	2
tv 8:23	utilize 29:14	warning 4:16	worked 24:11	2004 4:25 5:11
two 11:21 17:16	V	washington 1:16	works 15:19 47:14	13:25 15:9 16:16
19:3 22:17 25:13		2:1	worse 33:14	17:20 22:5 24:5,9
25:17 37:5 40:19	v 1:6 4:4 5:11,16	wasnt 6:19,20 7:3	wouldnt 10:17	2005 5:17

Page 70

		Page 70
2007 5:12 2014 1:17 213 19:6 225 19:7 25 32:8 27 3:11 286 12:9 19:8 56:25		
57:18 3 3 28:17 398 20:14 4 4 1:17 3:4		
412 20:15 42 56:25 45 57:2 5 56 3:14 32:20 6		
7 8 9 90s 8:23		