

FINAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION

The Santa Paula Police Department contracted with Four Star Investigations to conduct a personnel investigation to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding a complaint generated by the Ventura County District Attorney's Office alleging that Det. Shawn Virani made false statements to Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber.

Bryan J. Lentz was assigned to conduct the investigation. During the course of the investigation, interviews were conducted, documents and other items of evidence were gathered, reviewed and assessed.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

On June 19th, 2023, a kidnapping and █ crime was reported to the Santa Paula Police Department in which the kidnapping allegedly occurred to the front of Ventura High School. Det. Shawn Virani worked on the case and coordinated with Ventura County Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber. During their communications regarding Det. Virani's attempts to retrieve the surveillance video from Ventura High School, DDA Reber alleged that on July 7th, 2023, Det. Virani told her, via a text message, that he had obtained the video from the high school. However, on July 21st, DDA Reber discovered that Det. Virani had not actually obtained the video as he communicated to her. In addition, DDA Reber obtained information that the camera angle of the front of the school would have showed the area of the alleged crime, but Det. Virani told DDA Reber during a phone call, and wrote in his subsequent police report, that the camera angle of the front of the school would not have captured the area of the crime. DDA Reber alleged that Det. Virani gave her two false statements.

It was subsequently determined by the Santa Paula Police Department that there should be an outside, independent investigation conducted, with limited scope, to determine the facts and circumstances of the alleged false statements by Det. Shawn Virani. Four Star Investigations was retained to conduct an independent investigation and I, Bryan Lentz, was assigned to investigate this matter.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. It was alleged by Ventura County Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber that on July 7th, 2023, Det. Shawn Virani, while on duty, made a false statement to her when he communicated that he obtained the surveillance video footage from Ventura High School when he had not actually obtained it.

This allegation was found to be sustained.

It was alleged by Ventura County Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber that on July 21st, 2023, Det. Shawn Virani, while on duty, made a false statement to her during a phone call, as well as in his police report, when he stated the camera angle of the front of the school would not have shown the area of the kidnapping crime.

METHODOLOGY

The investigation began with communications with Private Investigator Bob Kelly who provided me with investigative materials about this case on Oct. 23, 2023. PI Kelly had previously worked on this case, but on that date, I assumed responsibility of the case. Interviews of all percipient witnesses were then conducted. Documents and additional information were obtained, and applicable Santa Paula Police Department policies were researched and reviewed.

Witness interviews were recorded and summarized in writing. All statements and evidence were investigated and analyzed, and this report of findings and conclusions was prepared. All relevant evidentiary items and documents were catalogued and are included in the Appendix to this report.

RELEVANT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following policies and procedures may be applicable to this investigation and were taken from the Santa Paula Police Department Policy Manual:

319.5 CAUSES FOR DISCIPLINE

The following are illustrative of causes for disciplinary action. This list is not intended to cover every possible type of misconduct and does not preclude the recommendation of disciplinary action for violation of other rules, standards, ethics and specific action or inaction that is detrimental to efficient department service:

EFFICIENCY 319.5.3

(b) Unsatisfactory work performance including but not limited to failure, incompetence, inefficiency, or delay in performing and/or carrying out proper orders, work assignments, or the instructions of supervisors without a reasonable and bona fide excuse.

319.5.6 PERFORMANCE

(a) Failure to disclose or misrepresenting material facts, or making any false or misleading statement on any application, examination form, or other official document, report or form, or during the course of any workrelated investigation.

(b) The falsification of any work-related records, making misleading entries or statements with the intent to deceive or the willful and unauthorized removal,

alteration, destruction and/or mutilation of any department record, public record, book, paper or document.

- (c) Failure to participate in, or giving false or misleading statements, or misrepresenting or omitting material information to a supervisor or other person in a position of authority, in connection with any investigation or in the reporting of any department related business.
- (d) Being untruthful or knowingly making false, misleading or malicious statements that are reasonably calculated to harm the reputation, authority or official standing of this department or its members.

ALLEGATIONS AND FINDINGS

ALLEGATION #1

It was alleged by Ventura County Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber that on July 7th, 2023, Det. Shawn Virani, while on duty, made a false statement to her when he communicated that he obtained the surveillance video footage from Ventura High School when he had not actually obtained it.

The finding for this allegation is **sustained**.

DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE - ALLEGATION #1

Statement of complainant – DDA Emily Reber (Ventura County):
Deputy District Attorney Reber stated that on June 23rd, she monitored the victim interview and discovered the area of the kidnapping crime, which was to the front of the Ventura High School. She coordinated with Detective Jorge Rodriguez, of the Ventura Police Department, who gave her the Assistant Principal's contact information and told her to also contact the school resource officer. Reber then coordinated with Det. Virani to retrieve the surveillance video from Ventura High School.

Sometime after the victim interview, Virani told her (via a phone call) that the camera system was down at the school, but he was going to continue his efforts of retrieving the video from the school. On June 29th, Virani informed her (via a text message) that the school camera system was working, and that copies were being made for him to pick up the following Wednesday. On July 7th, Reber enquired with Virani again, and Virani texted her, "Morning, I'm off today, but I have video from the school saved and will be combing through it on Monday. As far as the motel thing, only what we have of [REDACTED]" Reber took this text communication as Virani telling her that he possessed a copy of the school video.

Reber spoke to Virani on July 13th to set up a meeting to discuss the kidnapping/[REDACTED] case and the evidence that had been collected, but Virani said he was busy with a recent homicide, so they set a July 21st meeting date. Reber believed she told Virani to bring the video from the high school to the meeting, along with other evidence.

¹ For screenshots of this text, see Appendix #6, page 5 of 6. And see Appendix #8, page 2 of 4.

At the July 21st meeting with Virani,² they discussed the overall case and what needed to be done next. When Reber asked about the high school video, Virani said that he was going to the high school to get it after the meeting as well as the video from Ralphs and McDonald's. When Virani asked her about the exact date and time of the kidnapping so he could search the correct timeframe at the high school, that caused Reber some confusion because she believed that Virani already had the video.

Shortly thereafter, Virani texted Reber that the video retention period was only 30-days, but he was checking with the school district's IT department to see if the video was still stored on their servers. Virani ultimately told Reber that the video was not retained. Reber then told Virani to provide a supplemental report explaining why he did not retrieve the high school surveillance video.

Statement of witness – D.A. Investigator Tenilli Chacon (Ventura County):
DAI Chacon attended the July 21st Meeting with Det. Virani and DDA Reber. At the meeting, Virani said he did not have the high school video at that time. After the meeting, Reber told Chacon that she believed Virani had lied to her because Reber said Virani told her that he already had the surveillance video. Reber showed Chacon some text correspondence between them in which Virani alluded to the fact that he already picked up the video.

Statement of witness – Principal Marissa Rodriguez:
Rodriguez stated that on June 27th Det. Virani came to Ventura High School with another detective to retrieve surveillance video from the school. She logged into the system to find that all camera views were blank, the video system was not working. She apologized and alerted the District's IT department so they could fix the system. On Thursday, June 29th, Rodriguez received word that the system was working and told Virani via text message.³ Virani told her he would be there the following Monday (July 2nd) and asked if the system retained the video for "some time." Rodriguez told him that it did.⁴

On July 10th, Virani texted her that he would go to the school on Thursday (July 13th) to look at the footage. On July 12th, she texted Virani that her Assistant Principal would be helping him if she was unavailable. She did not have any further texts with Virani until July 21st when Virani texted her the date and time of when the crime possibly occurred and asked if there was a camera view near the statue. Virani asked if the Assistant Principal could pull up that date and time on the cameras and he would be over to the school to review it after his meeting at the D.A.'s office.

Rodriguez continued to have text communications with Virani on July 21st and told him to meet with Assistant Principal Bertha Villa regarding the camera system, since she (Rodriguez) was off work that day. Later, on July 21st, the District IT Department

²This meeting also included DA Investigator Tenilli Chacon.

³All text communications between Principal Rodriguez and Det. Virani are contained in Appendix #3.
⁴Rodriguez stated that at the time of this incident, she did not know that the system only held video data for 30-days. It was only later, on July 21st that Rodriguez was informed of the 30-day retention period.

1 confirmed that the system only retained videos for 30 days and forwarded that
2 information to Virani. Virani ended their text conversation with, "My fault, I should have
3 been on it sooner."

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5 **Statement of witness – Assistant Principal Bertha Villa:**
6 Villa stated she emailed the District Technology Department on July 21st, and stated the
7 school was working with some detectives looking at surveillance video from June 18th,
8 2023. She requested that their department assist with getting the video. That same day,
9 the Technology Department replied to her stating that the system only retained video for
10 30 days. Villa could not recall why she sent this email. She could not recall anyone from
11 Santa Paula PD enquiring about their surveillance camera system. Villa did not
12 remember anything about this incident whatsoever, other than what was in her July 21st
13 email.⁵

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15 **Statement of witness – Officer Tony Gomez (Ventura PD):**
16 Gomez did not recall anyone from Santa Paula Police Department coming to Ventura
17 High School to retrieve video from their surveillance system.

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19 **Statement of witness – Det. Hector Ramirez:**

20 Ramirez stated that he went to the high school with Virani and assisted him in getting
21 the surveillance video. They met with the female principal of the school who pulled up
22 the video system and found it was not working, so they could not see any of the camera
23 angles. The principal said she was going to coordinate with their IT department to
24 retrieve the video from the day that they were looking for. Ramirez did not recall if the
25 principal mentioned anything about a 30-day retention period for the video system or
26 not.

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28 Ramirez was not informed when the high school camera system was fixed and back
29 online. Ramirez did not know if Virani went back to the high school at any time later for
30 the video. Virani did not update Ramirez on any of his communications with DDA Reber
31 concerning the high school surveillance video. Ramirez had no knowledge of any text
32 message that Virani might have sent to DDA Reber indicating that he had obtained the
33 video from the school. Ramirez only knew that Virani was going to be in communication
34 with the school administrator regarding the video. Ramirez did not know if Virani
35 obtained the video or not.

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37 Ramirez said that he and Virani were both busy with a homicide that had occurred on
38 July 8th, 2023.

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40 **Statement of subject employee – Det. Shawn Virani:**

41 Virani stated that he went with Det. Ramirez to Ventura High School to retrieve some
42 surveillance video on June 27th, but the system was down. No camera angles could be
43 seen, and the video retention period was not discussed with Principal Rodriguez at that
44 time. Then on June 29th, Principal Rodriguez informed him that the system was working
45 again and confirmed that the video was retained on the system "for some time." Virani
claimed he was extremely busy with his other cases at the time, in addition to a

⁵ See Appendix #5

homicide that had just occurred, therefore, he did not get a chance to get back to the high school for the surveillance video.

Later, on June 29th, Reber asked him about the video and Virani responded by texting her, "Yes. They have the cameras up and working. They are making copies and I'm going Wednesday to pick it up." Virani stated he had made plans with Principal Rodriguez to go to the school on that Wednesday to view the video and asked if someone could have the video ready for him to review. He admitted he did not actually have someone from the school make a physical copy of the surveillance video for him, but he only wanted the video system prepared so he could view it.

On July 7th, DDA Reber texted Virani again and asked if he obtained the video and Virani answered, "Morning, I'm off today, but I have video from the school saved and will be combing through it on Monday. As far as the motel thing, only what we have of [REDACTED]" Virani stated that he did not have a physical copy of the video when he sent that text. When Virani was asked why he sent that text to DDA Reber, Virani said, "It was a bad text. I should not have sent it. I meant the video was at the school. The principal and the school had it and had the copy. I had not obtained it physically at all."⁶ He meant that the video was saved on the school's computer system, but no one had actually pulled the video and saved in on any media (flash drive, CD disc, etc...).

Virani described that statement to Reber as being "misworded." Virani said that he made sure the video was available, he made plans to collect the video, but had just not performed that duty yet. Virani said he sent Reber that text to "appease" her, with every intention of performing that duty in the near future. Virani confirmed that he should have texted Reber with a message like, "I confirmed it was saved," instead of, "I have it saved."

On July 14th, Reber had a text conversation with Virani in which she asked if she requested a copy of the video, could the court liaison bring the request over. Virani answered her with, "Not a problem." When asked why he sent her the response, "not a problem," if he did not have the video, Virani said that he misunderstood Reber's text and thought she was asking if someone from her office could pick up the video from the school. Virani stated he did not comprehend Reber's question correctly.

On July 21st, Virani met with DDA Reber and DA Investigator Tenille Chacon at the D.A.'s Office in a conference room. In that meeting, he discussed getting the videos from the high school, the Ralphs market, and the McDonald's in Camarillo. Virani did not specifically recall a discussion about the high school video, but they talked about all the search warrants they conducted, the photos that were taken at the different scenes, and Reber's desire for more photos from different angles. Then Reber spoke about the need for Virani to get the video from the Ralphs, because the victim and suspect went there. During the meeting, Virani did not know about the high school's 30-day video retention period.

1 After the July 21st meeting, he went to the Ralphs for their video, but he did not go to the
2 high school because he had a text conversation with Rodriguez who told him about the
3 30-day retention period of the camera system. Virani gave Rodriguez the date and time
4 of the incident, and she informed him the system did not retain the video from that date.
5 Based on the information he received from Principal Rodriguez, Virani informed Reber
6 that the video was not retained in the school's system due to the 30-day retention
7 period.

8 As Virani was in the parking lot of the Ralphs after he texted Reber that the video did
9 not retain, he received a phone call from Reber. Reber told him, "You told me you had
10 the video," and he proceeded to tell her that he did not have the video, but that the
11 school had the video. I confirmed with Virani that during that call with DDA Reber, on
12 July 21st, that when she told him that she thought he said he had the video, he knew
13 that Reber got that notion from his July 7th text message, "I have the school video
14 saved."

15 Virani stated that he did not try to "maliciously" mislead Reber when he texted her that
16 he had the video saved. He was just trying to "appease" her and give himself "a little
17 space" to work because he was so busy that he did not have enough time to do
18 everything that he needed to do with all his cases. However, Virani saw that the wording
19 of his text to DDA Reber could have misled her into thinking that he had a copy of the
20 video and admitted that it was a miscommunication on his part.

21 **Document/Video/Audio Review:**

22 The text messages between Virani and Principal Rodriguez (Appendix #3 and #7) make
23 it clear that Virani was attempting to schedule a good time for him to go to the school to
24 review their camera system.

25 The text communications between Virani and DDA Reber are contained in Appendix #6
26 (from Virani phone to DDA Reber) and in Appendix #8 (from DDA Reber's phone to Det.
27 Virani). The text message from Virani to Reber that is at the heart of this allegation was
28 on July 7th, found in Appendix #6, page 4 of 6 (also in Appendix #8, page 2 of 4), which
29 reads:

30 Morning I'm off today, but I have video from the school saved and will be combing
31 through it on Monday. As far as the motel thing. Only what we have of [REDACTED]

32 Another important text to note was when Virani told Reber that the school's video
33 system only went back to 6/21 and that he was at the high school looking at their
34 storage server to see if the video was retained. Then Reber asked Virani, "You said you
35 had it saved?" "Where was it saved" (found in Appendix #8, page 3 of 4). This showed
36 that Reber understood Virani's July 7th text message to mean that he had already
37 obtained the surveillance video from the school.

38 **INVESTIGATIVE FINDING:**

39 By all accounts, DDA Reber coordinated with Det. Virani to procure a surveillance video
40 from Ventura High School in order to substantiate or refute the victim's claim that a
41 kidnapping actually occurred. All witness statements showed that Virani and Det.
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1 Ramirez went to the high school and spoke to Principal Rodriguez about the video, but
2 the system was not working at the time. According to Principal Rodriguez's statement,
3 and as seen in her texts to Virani (Appendix #3), she alerted him that the system was up
4 and running on June 29th. Through their continued text communications, it was evident
5 that Virani was attempting to schedule a time to go to the school and view the footage to
6 get the evidence he and Reber needed for the criminal case. However, according to
7 Virani, he was just too busy with other cases, and a recent homicide case, that he did
8 not go to the high school and get it.

9 However, on July 7th, Reber questioned Virani about him getting the video like he
10 purported to have been attempting to do, and Virani sent her the one text that is at the
11 heart of this allegation:

12 Morning I'm off today, but I have video from the school saved and will be combing
13 through it on Monday. As far as the motel thing, only what we have of [REDACTED]

14 This evidence is quite explicit. According to all witness statements obtained in this case,
15 including Virani's, Virani did not have possession of the video, nor did he ever have it.
16 The phrase "I have video from the school saved" is very clear. The meaning of this
17 phrase is that he, personally, had a copy of the video in question saved to some form of
18 media. In addition, the phrase, "...and will be combing through it on Monday," implies
19 that he had affirmative access to the video copy to review the video.

20 The question is, was this communication at all warranted, excusable, or justified in any
21 way. Virani stated in his administrative interview that he was very busy with his other
22 cases, that he was overwhelmed, and that he should have asked his administration for
23 help with all his duties so that he could complete the tasks that he needed to complete.
24 Virani continued to explain that he wanted to get a little "breathing room," or time to
25 work so that he could collect all the evidence he needed to for all the cases he was
26 working on. It should be noted that when this text occurred (on July 7th), the homicide
27 case that took him away from this kidnapping [REDACTED] case had not occurred yet, it occurred the
28 following day, on July 8th according to Det. Ramirez. In addition, Virani mentioned that
29 he made sure that the school had the video saved for at least "some time," but admitted
30 he did not clarify with Principal Rodriguez the exact retention period for the video
31 system. He also said that he had all the intentions in the world of getting the video,
32 which was somewhat confirmed with his text communications with Principal Rodriguez
33 when he was constantly making plans to go to the school and rescheduling with her
34 when he was not able to make it to the school.

35 Virani's argument that he was just so busy and wanted to "appease" Reber and "get her
36 off his back" is not a valid excuse for such a communication. Virani even admitted in his
37 interview that he knew the wording of his text message made Reber believe that he had
38 already retrieved the video. He also said that he should have texted her, "The school
39 has it save" or something to that effect, instead of "I have the video from the school
40 saved."

41 Even though Virani stated that he did not intend to "maliciously" mislead Reber, the fact
42 still remained that his text communication with Reber regarding his acquisition of the
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1 school's surveillance video was an untrue statement, and that there was no valid reason
2 for it. Therefore, this investigation has shown the finding for his allegation should be
3 listed as sustained.

The finding for this allegation is **sustained**.

4 **ALLEGATION #2**

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9 It was alleged by Ventura County Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber that on July 21st,
10 2023, Det. Shawn Virani, while on duty, made a false statement to her during a phone
11 call, as well as in his police report, when he stated the camera angle of the front of the
12 school would not have shown the area of the kidnapping crime.

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17 The finding for this allegation is **unfounded**.

18 **DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE - ALLEGATION #2**

19 **Statement of complainant – DDA Emily Reber (Ventura County):**
20 Reber stated that on July 21st, when she had a phone conversation with Virani about the
21 fact that the high school surveillance video did not save, they also discussed the clarity
22 of the video and that the cameras might not have depicted the occurrence of the crime.
23 According to the DA complaint letter (Appendix #1), Reber wrote that Det. Jorge
24 Rodriguez communicated with the School Resource Officer at Ventura High School who
25 reported that there were cameras in the front of the school and therefore, the crime
26 should be on video at the school. However, Virani told her on the phone (On July 21st)
27 that the camera angle was very poor and that they would not be able to see much.

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29 **Statement of witness – D.A. Investigator Tenilli Chacon (Ventura County):**
30 DAI Chacon attended the July 21st meeting with Reber and Virani. After the meeting,
31 Reber told Chacon that Virani lied to her because he previously told her that he had the
32 video, but Reber showed her some of Virani's texts eluding as much. This was in
33 contradiction to the meeting when Virani said he did not have the video.

34
35 Chacon contacted the school resource officer, Officer Gomez, who told her that there
36 were cameras in the front of the school and that they covered the area by the front
37 statue where the victim said the crime occurred. Gomez also told Chacon that the video
38 quality was quite good.

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40 **Statement of witness – Principal Marissa Rodriguez:**
41 Since Rodriguez was out of town on July 21st when Virani was coming to the high
42 school to view the view system, Rodriguez had Assistant Principal Villa pull up a
43 camera view of the front of the school. It turned out that the northwest camera captured
44 the auditorium and the corner of the front office. Villa texted her the screenshot of the
45 camera angle and Rodriguez, in turn, texted it to Virani. Virani asked if there were any
46 other camera angles that covered the statue or the benches. She checked with Villa and
47 there were no other views of the front of the school.

Statement of witness – Assistant Principal Bertha Villa:
Villa could not independently recall any details about this incident whatsoever, other than the information contained in her email to the District IT department.⁷

Statement of witness – Officer Tony Gomez (Ventura PD):

Gomez remembered a Deputy District Attorney calling him saying that Santa Paula PD was investigating a █ case and wanted to know if the high school cameras covered the front of the school where the crime occurred. Gomez told her he did not know but would enquire. About 1 or 2 days later,⁸ he went to the Vice Principal of the school, Bertha Villa, because she was the administrator of the school cameras. He asked Villa if the camera system covered the front of the school. Villa told him that some detectives from that department were supposed to come to the school to review the video, but they never showed up.

Gomez remembered asking Villa if he could pull something up on the cameras to check. Villa told him that it was too late because the system only kept video for 30 days. Gomez called the Deputy D.A. back and relayed that information.

Gomez believed that there was a camera that covered the front of the school and the statue, but the camera quality was "a bit grainy" and hard to make out images at night. Gomez thought the camera could pan around the area, but he was not totally sure. Gomez did not know Det. Virani and had never dealt with him.

Statement of witness – Det. Hector Ramirez:

When Ramirez assisted Virani at the high school on June 27th, Ramirez did not recall if anyone told him if there was a camera angle that showed, or did not show, the area of the crime. He knew there were cameras in that general area of the school, but he did not hear if any of them showed where the crime occurred.

Statement of subject employee – Det. Shawn Virani:

After the July 21st meeting, Virani went to the Ralphs for their video, but he did not go to the high school because he had a text conversation with Rodriguez about the video. They discussed the camera angles that the video captured, and he discovered that no camera captured where the victim said the crime occurred. Rodriguez texted him a screenshot of the closest camera, and it did not show the area of the crime. Rodriguez also told him about the 30-day retention period for the camera system. He gave her the date and time of the crime, and she informed him the system did not retain the video from that date. Based on the information he received from Principal Rodriguez, Virani informed Reber that the video was not retained in the school's system due to the 30-day retention period. He also told Reber that the camera angle did not capture the area of the crime as described by the victim. This was all based on the information he received from Rodriguez. Virani confirmed he did not go to the school and to ascertain this information for himself.

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⁷ See Appendix #5.

⁸ This timeframe matched DAI Chacon's statement that she called Officer Gomez on July 21st to enquire about the camera system, then Gomez called her back on July 23rd to report what he learned from the Vice Principal.

1 Virani said he did not make a misleading statement to DDA Reber and was just relaying
2 the information that Principal Rodriguez gave him.

3 **Document/Video/Audio Review:**

4 In the crime report, Virani's Supplemental 26 (Appendix #2) states, "Additionally, the
5 camera angle she [Principal Rodriguez] showed me would not have captured the area
6 the victim was at."

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8 Appendix #3 contains the texts between Det. Virani and Principal Rodriguez. On July
9 21st at 9:43 am, Virani gave Rodriguez the date and time of the crime and asked if the
10 assistant Principal could pull up the video from that date because he was heading to the
11 school to view the footage.

12
13 According to the text communications between Principal Rodriguez and AP Villa (See
14 Appendix #4), Principal Rodriguez was coordinated with AP Villa concerning the video
15 system. On July 21st and 9:46 am, Rodriguez gave Villa the date and time of the crime,
16 but Villa confirmed that the video system did not go back that far. Rodriguez was also
17 trying to see if the camera that was located to the front of the school captured the front
18 statue at all, but Villa said it was pointed towards the auditorium. Villa even took a photo
19 of what the camera angle showed and sent it to Rodriguez. This photo was apparently
20 immediately forwarded from Rodriguez to Virani (Appendix #3 and #7).

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22 The phone call between Virani and DDA Reber on July 21st, when Virani told Reber that
23 the camera probably did not capture the area of the crime, occurred at 10:24 am
24 according to the complaint letter (Appendix #1, page 6 of 7). This call was after the
25 photo of the school's camera angle was texted to Virani.

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27 This investigator coordinated with AP Bertha Villa and found that the camera angles
28 from the two cameras mounted on the front main building were obtained (See Appendix
29 #9). The northwest camera faced the auditorium, and the southwest camera faced the
30 corner where the bus stop bench was located. There was another camera on a row of
31 classrooms east of the intersection and showed the parking lot on the south side of the
32 school with the corner and bus stop bench in the background. There was no camera
33 angle that showed the front statue or the school benches to the front of the school.

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36 **INVESTIGATIVE FINDING:**

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38 This allegation came about because DDA Reber stated that she received word that the
39 school's surveillance system should have captured the area where the crime occurred.
40 According to Reber, this came from Det. Jorge Rodriguez of the Ventura Police
41 Department, who in turn spoke to School Resource Officer Gomez. Apparently, Officer
42 Gomez said the school cameras covered that area. However, Gomez stated that he
43 recalled a Deputy D.A. calling him and he told her there are cameras to front of the
44 school. Gomez admitted that he only believed there were cameras to the front of the
45 school, but he had never actually viewed the camera system and saw where the
46 camera angles were pointing and what areas were covered.

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When Virani enquired about the camera angles, he was in text communication with Principal Rodriguez, who was in turn in contact with Assistant Principal Villa who was logged into the system at the time, on July 21st. Virani relied on Rodriguez to tell him what the cameras showed. Villa reported to Rodriguez that the camera Virani was interested in, the one mounted on the northwest corner of the front building, was pointed at the auditorium and did not show the front statue or the front benches. Virani was even forwarded a photo of what Villa was seeing on her computer screen.

Even though Virani did not physically respond to the school once the camera system was operational, he relied on the information he was given at the time by school administrators. In addition, this investigator corresponded with AP Villa and received screenshots of what the cameras showed, which confirmed that they did not cover the benches by the statue to the front of the school (See Appendix #9).⁹ Therefore, the information Det. Virani told DDA Reber, and wrote in his police report, that the surveillance camera did not cover the area of the crime as described by the victim, was in fact true. This investigation has shown the allegation that Virani gave a false statement in this regard did not occur. The finding for this allegation should be listed as unfounded.

The finding for this allegation is unfounded.

CREDIBILITY OF THE WITNESSES:

One obvious credibility issue was with Assistant Principal Bertha Villa. She did not recall anything, other than what was written in an email from her to the IT Department looking for assistance.¹⁰ Villa said she did not recall any fact pattern, whatsoever, regarding Santa Paula PD looking for surveillance video from June 18th, 2023. Villa was very quick to say she did not have ANY text messages regarding this issue to refresh her recollection. However, Principal Rodriguez stated she had text messages with Villa requesting she coordinate with IT to help Virani. Villa only testified to that which had her name on it and could not be denied: the email. Villa could not even recall the reason that gave rise to her starting that email with the IT Department. It was apparent that Villa did not want to get involved in this case and did not want to give any information other than what was in her email.

There were no other apparent witness credibility issues noted with the other witnesses interviewed. That is not to say that all statements were truthful and accurate, but there were no clear inconsistencies or conflicts that called credibility into question..

⁹ Also see Investigator Note #2.

¹⁰ See Appendix #5.

CONCLUSION:

This investigation has shown that Det. Virani had text communications with Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber concerning the acquisition of the surveillance video from the high school. One of these texts communicated to Reber that he had procured the needed video evidence from the high school by saying, "I have video from the school saved," however, Virani had not actually obtained the video at that time. Virani stated that he had all the intentions of getting the video soon, but he just needed some "breathing room" so he could get other work done on other cases, or in other words, "Get Reber off his back." Virani admitted that he should not have written his text to Reber in such a manner. He also admitted that he knew the message made her believe that he had already gotten the video. There was no viable excuse for such a communication with Reber, so the allegation of making a false statement to Reber in this regard was sustained.

On the other hand, Reber's second allegation regarding Virani giving her false information about the camera angle not capturing the area of the crime was proven to not have occurred. Reber's belief was based on faulty information which came from the School Resource Officer who did not have a working knowledge of the camera system. SRO Gomez mistakenly gave the information that there were cameras that covered the area in question. By contrast, Virani's communication to Reber regarding the camera angle was based on information he received from Principal Rodriguez who was in direct contact with Assistant Principal Villa, who was the administrator of the surveillance system. That information was also verified to be true; the cameras really did not cover the area of the crime. Therefore, Reber's second allegation against Det. Virani of making false statements was deemed to be unfounded.

Santa Paula Police Department
CONFIDENTIAL PERSONNEL INVESTIGATION
In Re: Detective Shawn Virani – July 2023

Submittal:

This final investigative report was sent to Commander Eric Starna of the Santa Paula Police Department on the date of signature below by me, the author of said report.

Bryan J. Lentz
Private Investigator
Lic. #188252

This report was submitted via UPS shipment in paper form. This report was accompanied by one USB memory stick containing this report in digital form, all digital audio recordings taken during the investigation, and digital copies of all client supplied investigative materials and documents. A copy of this report has been retained by the undersigned.

Investigator signature:  Date: 1-2-24