

## 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 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, a kidnapping and [REDACTED] 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 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Det. Virani told her, via a text message, that he had obtained the video from the high school. However, on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 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 7<sup>th</sup>, 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.**

2. It was alleged by Ventura County Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber that on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 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.

**This allegation was found to be unfounded.**

## **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:

#### **319.5.3 EFFICIENCY**

(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 7<sup>th</sup>, 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 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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 29<sup>th</sup>, 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 7<sup>th</sup>, 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]"<sup>1</sup> Reber took this text communication as Virani telling her that he possessed a copy of the school video.

Reber spoke to Virani on July 13<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> meeting date. Reber believed she told Virani to bring the video from the high school to the meeting, along with other evidence.

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

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100  
101  
102  
103  
104  
105  
106  
107  
108  
109  
110  
111  
112  
113  
114  
115  
116  
117  
118  
119  
120  
121  
122  
123  
124  
125  
126  
127  
128  
129  
130  
131  
132  
133  
134  
135  
136  
137  
138  
139  
140  
141  
142  
143  
144  
145  
146  
147  
148  
149  
150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157  
158  
159  
160  
161  
162  
163  
164  
165  
166  
167  
168  
169  
170  
171  
172  
173  
174  
175  
176  
177  
178  
179  
180  
181  
182  
183  
184  
185  
186  
187  
188  
189  
190  
191  
192  
193  
194  
195  
196  
197  
198  
199  
200  
201  
202  
203  
204  
205  
206  
207  
208  
209  
210  
211  
212  
213  
214  
215  
216  
217  
218  
219  
220  
221  
222  
223  
224  
225  
226  
227  
228  
229  
230  
231  
232  
233  
234  
235  
236  
237  
238  
239  
240  
241  
242  
243  
244  
245  
246  
247  
248  
249  
250  
251  
252  
253  
254  
255  
256  
257  
258  
259  
260  
261  
262  
263  
264  
265  
266  
267  
268  
269  
270  
271  
272  
273  
274  
275  
276  
277  
278  
279  
280  
281  
282  
283  
284  
285  
286  
287  
288  
289  
290  
291  
292  
293  
294  
295  
296  
297  
298  
299  
300  
301  
302  
303  
304  
305  
306  
307  
308  
309  
310  
311  
312  
313  
314  
315  
316  
317  
318  
319  
320  
321  
322  
323  
324  
325  
326  
327  
328  
329  
330  
331  
332  
333  
334  
335  
336  
337  
338  
339  
340  
341  
342  
343  
344  
345  
346  
347  
348  
349  
350  
351  
352  
353  
354  
355  
356  
357  
358  
359  
360  
361  
362  
363  
364  
365  
366  
367  
368  
369  
370  
371  
372  
373  
374  
375  
376  
377  
378  
379  
380  
381  
382  
383  
384  
385  
386  
387  
388  
389  
390  
391  
392  
393  
394  
395  
396  
397  
398  
399  
400  
401  
402  
403  
404  
405  
406  
407  
408  
409  
410  
411  
412  
413  
414  
415  
416  
417  
418  
419  
420  
421  
422  
423  
424  
425  
426  
427  
428  
429  
430  
431  
432  
433  
434  
435  
436  
437  
438  
439  
440  
441  
442  
443  
444  
445  
446  
447  
448  
449  
450  
451  
452  
453  
454  
455  
456  
457  
458  
459  
460  
461  
462  
463  
464  
465  
466  
467  
468  
469  
470  
471  
472  
473  
474  
475  
476  
477  
478  
479  
480  
481  
482  
483  
484  
485  
486  
487  
488  
489  
490  
491  
492  
493  
494  
495  
496  
497  
498  
499  
500  
501  
502  
503  
504  
505  
506  
507  
508  
509  
510  
511  
512  
513  
514  
515  
516  
517  
518  
519  
520  
521  
522  
523  
524  
525  
526  
527  
528  
529  
530  
531  
532  
533  
534  
535  
536  
537  
538  
539  
540  
541  
542  
543  
544  
545  
546  
547  
548  
549  
550  
551  
552  
553  
554  
555  
556  
557  
558  
559  
560  
561  
562  
563  
564  
565  
566  
567  
568  
569  
570  
571  
572  
573  
574  
575  
576  
577  
578  
579  
580  
581  
582  
583  
584  
585  
586  
587  
588  
589  
590  
591  
592  
593  
594  
595  
596  
597  
598  
599  
600  
601  
602  
603  
604  
605  
606  
607  
608  
609  
610  
611  
612  
613  
614  
615  
616  
617  
618  
619  
620  
621  
622  
623  
624  
625  
626  
627  
628  
629  
630  
631  
632  
633  
634  
635  
636  
637  
638  
639  
640  
641  
642  
643  
644  
645  
646  
647  
648  
649  
650  
651  
652  
653  
654  
655  
656  
657  
658  
659  
660  
661  
662  
663  
664  
665  
666  
667  
668  
669  
670  
671  
672  
673  
674  
675  
676  
677  
678  
679  
680  
681  
682  
683  
684  
685  
686  
687  
688  
689  
690  
691  
692  
693  
694  
695  
696  
697  
698  
699  
700  
701  
702  
703  
704  
705  
706  
707  
708  
709  
710  
711  
712  
713  
714  
715  
716  
717  
718  
719  
720  
721  
722  
723  
724  
725  
726  
727  
728  
729  
730  
731  
732  
733  
734  
735  
736  
737  
738  
739  
740  
741  
742  
743  
744  
745  
746  
747  
748  
749  
750  
751  
752  
753  
754  
755  
756  
757  
758  
759  
760  
761  
762  
763  
764  
765  
766  
767  
768  
769  
770  
771  
772  
773  
774  
775  
776  
777  
778  
779  
780  
781  
782  
783  
784  
785  
786  
787  
788  
789  
790  
791  
792  
793  
794  
795  
796  
797  
798  
799  
800  
801  
802  
803  
804  
805  
806  
807  
808  
809  
810  
811  
812  
813  
814  
815  
816  
817  
818  
819  
820  
821  
822  
823  
824  
825  
826  
827  
828  
829  
830  
831  
832  
833  
834  
835  
836  
837  
838  
839  
840  
841  
842  
843  
844  
845  
846  
847  
848  
849  
850  
851  
852  
853  
854  
855  
856  
857  
858  
859  
860  
861  
862  
863  
864  
865  
866  
867  
868  
869  
870  
871  
872  
873  
874  
875  
876  
877  
878  
879  
880  
881  
882  
883  
884  
885  
886  
887  
888  
889  
890  
891  
892  
893  
894  
895  
896  
897  
898  
899  
900  
901  
902  
903  
904  
905  
906  
907  
908  
909  
910  
911  
912  
913  
914  
915  
916  
917  
918  
919  
920  
921  
922  
923  
924  
925  
926  
927  
928  
929  
930  
931  
932  
933  
934  
935  
936  
937  
938  
939  
940  
941  
942  
943  
944  
945  
946  
947  
948  
949  
950  
951  
952  
953  
954  
955  
956  
957  
958  
959  
960  
961  
962  
963  
964  
965  
966  
967  
968  
969  
970  
971  
972  
973  
974  
975  
976  
977  
978  
979  
980  
981  
982  
983  
984  
985  
986  
987  
988  
989  
990  
991  
992  
993  
994  
995  
996  
997  
998  
999  
1000

At the July 21<sup>st</sup> meeting with Virani,<sup>2</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup> 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 29<sup>th</sup>, Rodriguez received word that the system was working and told Virani via text message.<sup>3</sup> Virani told her he would be there the following Monday (July 2<sup>nd</sup>) and asked if the system retained the video for "some time." Rodriguez told him that it did.<sup>4</sup>

On July 10<sup>th</sup>, Virani texted her that he would go to the school on Thursday (July 13<sup>th</sup>) to look at the footage. On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup>, the District IT Department

<sup>2</sup> This meeting also included DA Investigator Tenilli Chacon.

<sup>3</sup> All text communications between Principal Rodriguez and Det. Virani are contained in Appendix #3.

<sup>4</sup> Rodriguez 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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."  
4

**Statement of witness – Assistant Principal Bertha Villa:**

5 Villa stated she emailed the District Technology Department on July 21<sup>st</sup>, and stated the  
6 school was working with some detectives looking at surveillance video from June 18<sup>th</sup>,  
7 2023. She requested that their department assist with getting the video. That same day,  
8 the Technology Department replied to her stating that the system only retained video for  
9 30 days. Villa could not recall why she sent this email. She could not recall anyone from  
10 Santa Paula PD enquiring about their surveillance camera system. Villa did not  
11 remember anything about this incident whatsoever, other than what was in her July 21<sup>st</sup>  
12 email.<sup>5</sup>  
13  
14

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

15 Gomez did not recall anyone from Santa Paula Police Department coming to Ventura  
16 High School to retrieve video from their surveillance system.  
17  
18

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

19 Ramirez stated that he went to the high school with Virani and assisted him in getting  
20 the surveillance video. They met with the female principal of the school who pulled up  
21 the video system and found it was not working, so they could not see any of the camera  
22 angles. The principal said she was going to coordinate with their IT department to  
23 retrieve the video from the day that they were looking for. Ramirez did not recall if the  
24 principal mentioned anything about a 30-day retention period for the video system or  
25 not.  
26  
27

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.  
36

37 Ramirez said that he and Virani were both busy with a homicide that had occurred on  
38 July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
39

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

40 Virani stated that he went with Det. Ramirez to Ventura High School to retrieve some  
41 surveillance video on June 27<sup>th</sup>, but the system was down. No camera angles could be  
42 seen, and the video retention period was not discussed with Principal Rodriguez at that  
43 time. Then on June 29<sup>th</sup>, Principal Rodriguez informed him that the system was working  
44 again and confirmed that the video was retained on the system "for some time." Virani  
45 claimed he was extremely busy with his other cases at the time, in addition to a  
46

---

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix #5

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

3  
4 Later, on June 29<sup>th</sup>, Reber asked him about the video and Virani responded by texting  
5 her, "Yes. They have the cameras up and working. They are making copies and I'm  
6 going Wednesday to pick it up." Virani stated he had made plans with Principal  
7 Rodriguez to go to the school on that Wednesday to view the video and asked if  
8 someone could have the video ready for him to review. He admitted he did not actually  
9 have someone from the school make a physical copy of the surveillance video for him,  
10 but he only wanted the video system prepared so he could view it.

11  
12 On July 7<sup>th</sup>, DDA Reber texted Virani again and asked if he obtained the video and  
13 Virani answered, "Morning, I'm off today, but I have video from the school saved and will  
14 be combing through it on Monday. As far as the motel thing, only what we have of  
15 [REDACTED] Virani stated that he did not have a physical copy of the video when he sent  
16 that text. When Virani was asked why he sent that text to DDA Reber, Virani said, "It  
17 was a bad text. I should not have sent it. I meant the video was at the school. The  
18 principal and the school had it and had the copy. I had not obtained it physically at all."  
19 He meant that the video was saved on the school's computer system, but no one had  
20 actually pulled the video and saved in on any media (flash drive, CD disc, etc...).

21  
22 Virani described that statement to Reber as being "misworded." Virani said that he  
23 made sure the video was available, he made plans to collect the video, but had just not  
24 performed that duty yet. Virani said he sent Reber that text to "appease" her, with every  
25 intention of performing that duty in the near future. Virani confirmed that he should have  
26 texted Reber with a message like, "I confirmed it was saved," instead of, "I have it  
27 saved."

28  
29 On July 14<sup>th</sup>, Reber had a text conversation with Virani in which she asked if she  
30 requested a copy of the video, could the court liaison bring the request over. Virani  
31 answered her with, "Not a problem." When asked why he sent her the response, "not a  
32 problem," if he did not have the video, Virani said that he misunderstood Reber's text  
33 and thought she was asking if someone from her office could pick up the video from the  
34 school. Virani stated he did not comprehend Reber's question correctly.

35  
36 On July 21<sup>st</sup>, Virani met with DDA Reber and DA Investigator Tenille Chacon at the  
37 D.A.'s Office in a conference room. In that meeting, he discussed getting the videos  
38 from the high school, the Ralphs market, and the McDonald's in Camarillo. Virani did  
39 not specifically recall a discussion about the high school video, but they talked about all  
40 the search warrants they conducted, the photos that were taken at the different scenes,  
41 and Reber's desire for more photos from different angles. Then Reber spoke about the  
42 need for Virani to get the video from the Ralphs, because the victim and suspect went  
43 there. During the meeting, Virani did not know about the high school's 30-day video  
44 retention period.  
45

<sup>6</sup> Recording time 23:45 of Virani's interview.

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

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

#### 23 Document/Video/Audio Review:

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

27  
28 The text communications between Virani and DDA Reber are contained in Appendix #6  
29 (from Virani phone to DDA Reber) and in Appendix #8 (from DDA Reber's phone to Det.  
30 Virani). The text message from Virani to Reber that is at the heart of this allegation was  
31 on July 7<sup>th</sup>, found in Appendix #6, page 4 of 6 (also in Appendix #8, page 2 of 4), which  
32 reads:  
33

34  
35 Morning I'm off today, but I have video from the school saved and will be combing.  
36 through it on Monday. As far as the motel thing. Only what we have of [REDACTED]

37  
38 Another important text to note was when Virani told Reber that the school's video  
39 system only went back to 6/21 and that he was at the high school looking at their  
40 storage server to see if the video was retained. Then Reber asked Virani, "You said you  
41 had it saved?" "Where was it saved" (found in Appendix #8, page 3 of 4). This showed  
42 that Reber understood Virani's July 7<sup>th</sup> text message to mean that he had already  
43 obtained the surveillance video from the school.  
44

#### 45 INVESTIGATIVE FINDING:

46 By all accounts, DDA Reber coordinated with Det. Virani to procure a surveillance video  
47 from Ventura High School in order to substantiate or refute the victim's claim that a  
48 kidnapping actually occurred. All witness statements showed that Virani and Det.



Ramirez went to the high school and spoke to Principal Rodriguez about the video, but the system was not working at the time. According to Principal Rodriguez's statement, and as seen in her texts to Virani (Appendix #3), she alerted him that the system was up and running on June 29th. Through their continued text communications, it was evident that Virani was attempting to schedule a time to go to the school and view the footage to get the evidence he and Reber needed for the criminal case. However, according to Virani, he was just too busy with other cases, and a recent homicide case, that he did not go to the high school and get it.

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

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]

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

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

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

Even though Virani stated that he did not intend to "maliciously" mislead Reber, the fact still remained that his text communication with Reber regarding his acquisition of the



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.

4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

The finding for this allegation is sustained.

#### ALLEGATION #2

It was alleged by Ventura County Deputy District Attorney Emily Reber that on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 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.

The finding for this allegation is unfounded.

#### DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE - ALLEGATION #2

##### **Statement of complainant – DDA Emily Reber (Ventura County):**

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

##### **Statement of witness – D.A. Investigator Tenilli Chacon (Ventura County):**

DAI Chacon attended the July 21<sup>st</sup> meeting with Reber and Virani. After the meeting, Reber told Chacon that Virani lied to her because he previously told her that he had the video, but Reber showed her some of Virani's texts eluding as much. This was in contradiction to the meeting when Virani said he did not have the video.

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

##### **Statement of witness – Principal Marissa Rodriguez:**

Since Rodriguez was out of town on July 21<sup>st</sup> when Virani was coming to the high school to view the view system, Rodriguez had Assistant Principal Villa pull up a camera view of the front of the school. It turned out that the northwest camera captured the auditorium and the corner of the front office. Villa texted her the screenshot of the camera angle and Rodriguez, in turn, texted it to Virani. Virani asked if there were any other camera angles that covered the statue or the benches. She checked with Villa and 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.<sup>7</sup>

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

Gomez remembered a Deputy District Attorney calling him saying that Santa Paula PD was investigating a [REDACTED] 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,<sup>8</sup> 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 27<sup>th</sup>, 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix #5.

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

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

**Document/Video/Audio Review:**

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

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

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

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

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

**INVESTIGATIVE FINDING:**

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

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

8  
9 Even though Virani did not physically respond to the school once the camera system  
10 was operational, he relied on the information he was given at the time by school  
11 administrators. In addition, this investigator corresponded with AP Villa and received  
12 screenshots of what the cameras showed, which confirmed that they did not cover the  
13 benches by the statue to the front of the school (See Appendix #9).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the  
14 information Det. Virani told DDA Reber, and wrote in his police report, that the  
15 surveillance camera did not cover the area of the crime as described by the victim, was  
16 in fact true. This investigation has shown the allegation that Virani gave a false  
17 statement in this regard did not occur. The finding for this allegation should be listed as  
18 unfounded.  
19  
20  
21  
22

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

#### **CREDIBILITY OF THE WITNESSES:**

23  
24  
25 One obvious credibility issue was with Assistant Principal Bertha Villa. She did not recall  
26 anything, other than what was written in an email from her to the IT Department looking  
27 for assistance.<sup>10</sup> Villa said she did not recall any fact pattern, whatsoever, regarding  
28 Santa Paula PD looking for surveillance video from June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Villa was very quick  
29 to say she did not have ANY text messages regarding this issue to refresh her  
30 recollection. However, Principal Rodriguez stated she had text messages with Villa  
31 requesting she coordinate with IT to help Virani. Villa only testified to that which had her  
32 name on it and could not be denied: the email. Villa could not even recall the reason  
33 that gave rise to her starting that email with the IT Department. It was apparent that Villa  
34 did not want to get involved in this case and did not want to give any information other  
35 than what was in her email.  
36  
37

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

<sup>9</sup> Also see Investigator Note #2.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix #5.

**CONCLUSION:**

1 This investigation has shown that Det. Virani had text communications with Deputy  
2 District Attorney Emily Reber concerning the acquisition of the surveillance video from  
3 the high school. One of these texts communicated to Reber that he had procured the  
4 needed video evidence from the high school by saying, "I have video from the school  
5 saved," however, Virani had not actually obtained the video at that time. Virani stated  
6 that he had all the intentions of getting the video soon, but he just needed some  
7 "breathing room" so he could get other work done on other cases, or in other words,  
8 "Get Reber off his back." Virani admitted that he should not have written his text to  
9 Reber in such a manner. He also admitted that he knew the message made her believe  
10 that he had already gotten the video. There was no viable excuse for such a  
11 communication with Reber, so the allegation of making a false statement to Reber in  
12 this regard was sustained.  
13  
14  
15

16 On the other hand, Reber's second allegation regarding Virani giving her false  
17 information about the camera angle not capturing the area of the crime was proven to  
18 not have occurred. Reber's belief was based on faulty information which came from the  
19 School Resource Officer who did not have a working knowledge of the camera system.  
20 SRO Gomez mistakenly gave the information that there were cameras that covered the  
21 area in question. By contrast, Virani's communication to Reber regarding the camera  
22 angle was based on information he received from Principal Rodriguez who was in direct  
23 contact with Assistant Principal Villa, who was the administrator of the surveillance  
24 system. That information was also verified to be true; the cameras really did not cover  
25 the area of the crime. Therefore, Reber's second allegation against Det. Virani of  
26 making false statements was deemed to be unfounded.  
27

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  
Bryan J. Lentz