

Trooper Arrest Under Investigation After Viral Video Post

Thursday, 02 May 2013

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

A video recording that went viral earlier this week has prompted an internal investigation by the Alaska Department of Public Safety. The 11-minute video was posted on YouTube Monday afternoon in Kodiak and shows a woman thrown to the ground by an Alaska State Trooper before being arrested.

Alaska State Trooper Brian Mitchell is one of the two troopers involved in the arrest and the individual seen throwing 20-year-old Skyler Waite to the ground in the video. Mitchell filed an affidavit on the incident where he detailed his account of the arrest.

According to the document, Mitchell was dispatched to a home in Kodiak for a medical emergency. It was determined that no one was in need of medical care, but Mitchell reported marijuana was in plain view and began asking Waite about the substance.

The film, which has attracted tens of thousands of views, shows the discussion between Waite and Mitchell. In the affidavit, Mitchell wrote that Waite pressed her hand against his arm, as if to usher him away, which he interpreted as an attempt to "instigate confrontation." Then, as Mitchell was preparing to leave, he wrote that Waite attempted to move behind him and came into what he called "virtual body-to-body contact." Mitchell said he saw Waite reaching her arm toward him, which he considered a "prelude to a physical assault." Out of concern for his safety, Mitchell wrote that he shoved her away. He told Waite she was under arrest and he and the other trooper, Boyd Branch, forced her to the ground in order to handcuff her.

In the video, Waite is heard asking why she is being arrested and saying she was simply reaching for the door when she was thrown down.

-- (Trooper Investigation 1 :18 "I was trying to close the door. Stay right there. What am I under arrest for? What am I under arrest for? What am I under arrest for? Tell me now. Tell me now. Tell me now or let me go. I haven't done anything wrong.")

She continues to ask why she is being arrested and struggles with the officers before ultimately being forced into the troopers' vehicle.

On Tuesday, Waite was arraigned in Kodiak district court and now faces charges of fourth-degree fear of injury assault, fourth-degree reckless injury assault, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct. She was released on bail that same day.

KMXT was unable to reach Waite, but she told the Kodiak Daily Mirror that she received injuries during the arrest, but would not detail what those injuries were. She declined to comment on the case and said she wants to settle it before considering further action.

Keith Mallard is a Colonel with the Alaska State Troopers and said the case is being investigated by the Alaska Office of Professional Standards, the unit that investigates all allegations against any Department of Public Safety employee.

-- (Trooper Investigation 2 :24 “You know just like in any investigation, they are fact gatherers. They're going to interview witnesses, they are going to interview the troopers, and they are going to interview the individual that was arrested. And so at the same time what they do is they compare the facts that they learn against the department's policy and procedures along with the detachment that they work for and they determine if there was any violations to those rules and regulations.”)

He said any action taken from there will depend on the degree of the violations, if there are any. For now, he said the goal is to collect all the facts.

-- (Trooper Investigation 3 :19 “And then once we get all the facts we kind of take into balance everything that has happened, the individual's career, awards they have received, all that stuff. And we take that into consideration as we move forward. And also how egregious the act is, if there is a policy violation, how egregious it is to determine what level of corrective action needs to be taken.”)

Mallard said it's hard to speculate how long the investigation will take, but typically he said they will try to have it completed within 30 days. He said Mallard and Branch remain in normal work rotation and have not been put on administrative leave.

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