



The Honorable Harmeet K. Dhillon  
Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights  
Civil Rights Division  
US Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington DC 20530

RE: Civil Rights Criminal Referral re: American Fork Police Department

Dear Assistant Attorney General Dhillon:

I write to urge a criminal civil-rights investigation into potential federal civil-rights violations by officers of the American Fork Police Department arising out of the March 9, 2026 stop, detention, K9 search, and continued seizure of Benjamin "Reckless Ben" Schneider and Tyler Shaw in American Fork, Utah. See 18 USC § 241, conspiracy against rights; 18 USC § 242, deprivation of rights under color of law. The evidence is clear: officers acting under color of law detained American citizens after any lawful investigative purpose had expired, openly discussed that they wanted to "scare them," searched for a way to manufacture harassment charges against Schneider, pivoted without reasonable suspicion into DUI and drug theories, used a K9 to justify a vehicle search, found no contraband, and then continued detaining the men anyway. This is exactly the sort of official misconduct the Civil Rights Division exists to investigate.

Specifically, I request that the criminal investigation focus on Officer Hawkins, the officer identified in the footage as Officer Austin if that is a separate officer, the K9 officer involved in the dog sniff and vehicle search, any officer identified as Colton or otherwise tasked with trying to develop a DUI or drug basis, any supervisor who approved or ratified the detention, and any American Fork official who directed, approved, or participated in muting, redacting, or withholding relevant bodycam footage. The investigation should also determine whether any officers coordinated with Joshua Johnson, Bricks and Minifigs, or other private parties to intimidate Schneider, Shaw, or their associates because they were investigating, litigating, serving process, raising money for an alleged victim, or publicly criticizing powerful private actors.

The attached analysis by Texas civil-rights attorney Brandon Grable identifies a clear Fourth Amendment violation. Grable explains that even if the initial contact could be treated as a lawful Terry detention, the lawful purpose of that stop quickly ended. The officers' stated purpose was to investigate the relationship between Christian Morgan and Schneider after Morgan allegedly went to Johnson's home and was later seen walking toward the Hyundai. But Morgan was gone. Officers had identified Schneider and Shaw, collected their IDs, and had no continuing lawful basis to detain them. At that point, one officer asked whether they should simply send the men on their way, while another said he was going to "scare them a little bit and let them go." That is not a lawful investigative detention. It is an unconstitutional seizure for intimidation purposes.

The bodycam footage also reflects that officers were not merely investigating a crime that had already occurred. They were trying to create one. One officer stated that he wanted to link Schneider to Morgan's conduct so that if Schneider admitted he sent Morgan over, the officer would have harassment charges against him. Grable correctly notes that being annoying, evasive, or "sneaky" is not a crime and cannot be used to prolong a stop. A detention cannot be extended so officers can fish for statements that might help them invent a charge. That is a deprivation of Fourth Amendment rights under color of law.

The officers then shifted into a DUI or drug investigation without reasonable suspicion. The alleged alcohol smell was supposedly connected to Christian Morgan, not Tyler Shaw, who was driving. The officer who interacted with Shaw admitted he saw no clear indication of alcohol use. Nevertheless, officers speculated that maybe the group had been drinking together. They then treated ordinary conduct, including chewing gum and vague comments about Shaw's eyes, as suspicious. Grable rightly identifies this as speculation, not reasonable suspicion. Police cannot extend a stop because they are frustrated, because the citizens are young, because the officers dislike their behavior, or because they hope something illegal turns up.

The K9 search does not cure the constitutional problem. Grable notes that the stop had already been unlawfully prolonged before the K9 sniff occurred. He also raises serious questions that warrant discovery, including the dog's training, the number of passes before the alert, whether the handler signaled the dog, and how often this dog's alerts actually led to contraband. Those questions matter because the K9 alert was used to justify a search that produced nothing. Once the vehicle search found no contraband, any probable cause from the dog alert disappeared. At that point, officers had a duty to release Schneider and Shaw immediately.

They did not. Instead, officers continued to detain Shaw and Schneider after the search produced no evidence of drugs, alcohol, or any other crime. Shaw was still

being told where to stand, officers continued discussing what to do, and bodycams were muted. Grable identifies this continued detention as an unlawful seizure. The facts are especially troubling because the officers had already discussed that they lacked a proper harassment charge, lacked evidence of impairment, and had found nothing in the car. Yet they kept the men under police control anyway.

The muted and redacted bodycam footage also demands federal scrutiny. Grable does not treat the muting itself as a standalone constitutional violation in this transcript, but he correctly identifies it as an evidentiary red flag. The public deserves to know why officers muted their cameras during critical discussions, what was said during those muted segments, who approved those omissions or redactions, and whether the muted footage reflects consciousness of wrongdoing. DOJ should obtain the complete, unredacted bodycam and dashcam footage, dispatch logs, CAD records, K9 deployment records, officer reports, supervisor communications, and all calls or messages between American Fork officers, Joshua Johnson, and any Bricks and Minifigs representative.

Several profoundly troubling questions require answers. Why did officers continue detaining Schneider and Shaw after the purpose of the initial stop had ended? Why did an officer admit he wanted to "scare them" before releasing them? Why were officers trying to elicit statements that could be used to manufacture harassment charges? What specific facts supported the shift into a DUI or drug investigation? Why did officers rely on chewing gum, vague eye observations, and speculation instead of articulable facts? Why were Schneider and Shaw still detained after the K9 search found nothing? Why were cameras muted or audio redacted during key moments? Did any private party use the American Fork Police Department as a weapon to suppress criticism, block lawful service of process, or retaliate against citizens exercising protected rights?

Only a criminal civil-rights investigation can answer these questions. Civil litigation may be met with qualified-immunity defenses, but qualified immunity does not and cannot immunize officers from federal criminal liability. Section 242 exists precisely because state and local officials sometimes use the badge to deprive citizens of constitutional rights. Section 241 likewise reaches conspiracies to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate citizens in the exercise of federally protected rights. If officers prolonged a seizure to intimidate Schneider and Shaw, to manufacture charges, or to assist a private party in suppressing lawful criticism and litigation, that is not merely bad policing. It is potential criminal civil-rights misconduct.

This case is extraordinary because the officers' own words appear to supply the evidence of willfulness. They discussed that the men were annoying. They discussed that the harassment code did not fit. They discussed scaring them.

They discussed trying to get Schneider to say something that would create charges. They had no clear DUI evidence. They found no drugs. They still kept the men detained. A Texas civil-rights lawyer who reviewed the footage concluded that the Fourth Amendment violation was clear-cut. That conclusion warrants immediate DOJ review.

No American should be seized, searched, threatened, or intimidated by local police because he embarrassed a business owner, criticized a corporation, attempted to pursue a civil claim, or helped expose alleged wrongdoing. The bodycam footage makes this a straightforward case for federal intervention. I respectfully request that the Civil Rights Division open a criminal investigation into the American Fork Police Department and any other potential coconspirators involved in the deprivation of Schneider's and Shaw's constitutional rights.

Thank you for your attention to this matter of great importance to civil rights, the rule of law, and equal justice for ordinary Americans.

Sincerely,  
Alexander Muse  
Publisher  
amuseXpress aka amuse on x