Statement Regarding the Use of Force Lawsuit from Lauren Gotthelf

We have factual disagreements with the allegations within the lawsuit filed against the Boulder County Sheriff’s Office regarding the use of force against Ms. Lauren Gotthelf, who was booked into the Boulder County Jail on November 25, 2017.

When Ms. Gotthelf arrived at the Boulder County Jail, she was disruptive and was placed in a holding cell. Staff tried to de-escalate her behavior, but Ms. Gotthelf was argumentative and unrelenting. She refused to comply with repeated commands from two separate deputies. When deputies attempted to take her arm to escort her to a cell, she sat down and refused to move. When the order was repeated she got up, walked about 10 feet from the holding cell and stopped. She planted her feet and braced her legs to prevent movement. She was wearing socks and deputies had to slide her across the linoleum floor into the cell because of her resistance and refusal to move.

Ms. Gotthelf continually made negative, vulgar, and racist comments to deputies. She continued to yell insults for forty-five minutes. As the video depicts, Ms. Gotthelf continued to be resistant and disruptive, and Jail personnel determined she would be placed in the restraint chair, which was necessary for her safety.

Due to her resistive behavior the restraints on the chair could not be secured. She was given several verbal commands to sit in the chair and stop resisting but continued to buck her body and be physically resistant. A sergeant touch tased her once with the “drive-stun” setting in the left thigh for pain compliance. To secure her head, a deputy applied a hypoglossal hold. Even after these techniques, Ms. Gotthelf continued to be uncooperative, but deputies were finally able to properly apply all of the restraints. Medical staff checked the restraints in accordance with policy.

In short, the deputies did not use excessive force against Ms. Gotthelf. They used a deliberate and calculated amount of the minimal amount of force required to reduce violence and ensure safety, in accordance to our Use of Force policy and our Conductive Energy Devices policy. The facts of this situation demonstrate, and the video supports, that the officers’ use of force was reasonable and in good faith.

We first learned of the complaint in early 2019 through a law firm. No complaint was ever filed with our office against the deputies or their use of force in 2017 or 2018.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why would you use a Taser when attempting to restrain a person?

A. If a person is uncooperative and fails to comply with verbal instructions given by deputies, we may use a conductive energy device (e.g. Taser) to gain compliance, with the goal being to use the least amount of force possible to reduce the risk of violence, or the need to get into a physical altercation.
Tasers are a pain compliance tool that, when used, can cause neuro-muscular lock-up, which causes less pain risk of injury for the individual than pain compliance gained through physical force.

**Q. What would cause someone to be put on suicide protocol?**

A. If a person, being booked in the Boulder County Jail made any statement indicating that they may wish to harm themselves, our procedure indicates that they then must be put into suicide protocol which means they are put in a suicide smock (a tear-resistant single-piece outer garment used to prevent an individual from forming a noose with the garment to commit suicide), and receive an increased number of visual checks from staff, and are evaluated by health and mental health staff. When a person says they want to kill themselves, we take it very seriously and will take all necessary actions to prevent that from occurring.