

'I'm not turning my camera off': Oklahoma City police release bodycam of captain's arrest

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Capt. James French with the Oklahoma City Police Department was arrested for driving under the influence over the weekend.

OKLAHOMA CITY (KOKH) — Oklahoma City police released body camera footage on Thursday showing one of their own getting arrested for driving under the influence over the weekend.

According to a police report, Capt. James "Matt" French was pulled over early Sunday morning after officers saw him swerving and speeding along South May Avenue in an unmarked, city-owned SUV.

An officer was able to catch up to French's vehicle after it pulled into a private driveway on SW Grand Blvd. In the bodycam footage released Thursday, French said he and his mother stay at the house.

The bodycam footage shows an officer speaking to French while he's sitting inside his car.

When the officer asked French if he had been drinking, French responded with "I'm a captain on the police department" prior to clarifying that he's with Oklahoma City Police Department, specifically the Investigations Bureau.



Capt. James French with the Oklahoma City Police Department was arrested for driving under the influence over the weekend.

When asked again if he had been drinking, French hesitated and leaned back in his seat. The officer asked French how much he's had to drink and French motioned to his chest and asked the officer to turn his camera off while using a whispering tone of voice.

The officer declined.

"I'm not turning my camera off," the officer could be heard saying. "You got to be kidding me."

Once he stepped out of his car, French can be heard telling the officer that he was at a poker game and had three or four beers. He said had his last beer around midnight, a little short of two hours before being pulled over.

When the officer asked French if he thought he should be driving, French can be heard saying, "No, but I came from four blocks."

French was later put through various field sobriety tests and after stumbling on the first attempt, again asked the officer to turn his camera off.

"Sir, can can you turn that off," French could be heard asking the officer.

"I can not sir," the officer responded.

"Please," French pleaded.

"I know you are aware of our bodycam policy," the officer told French. "You know I cannot turn off this bodycam."



thumb_157724.png Bodycam footage released by Oklahoma City police shows the arrest of Capt. James French.

"I, I do, but I'd like to talk to you" French said to the officer.

"I can't do that, sir," the officer told French.

"Please," French said. "Please. I'd like to talk to you."

"Are you going to do the tests or not?" the officer asked French.

"Will you please talk to me?" French asked again. "You can turn it off and turn it on," French said in regard to the officer's bodycam.

"I can turn it off once I'm done with my investigation," the officer told French.

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"Okay. I'm asking you. I'm a captain with the police department," French continued to plead.

"I understand that sir," the officer told French. "I'm a sergeant [in this police department] and I've taken an oath to uphold the law. I don't show favoritism to anyone regardless. I don't care if you're a gang banger or the President of the United States."

"Sir, I'm not asking for that," French said.

"If I were to treat you differently than I was to treat like some south side loco or some pedo how's that look on me?" the officer responded.

The officer again asked French if he would do the tests, and French said he would do "whatever you ask."

The officer told French again that he'll turn off his camera once he was done with his investigation.

French continued to visibly struggle with the field sobriety tests and continued to unsuccessfully beg the officer to turn his camera off.

French was ultimately taken into custody and booked into the Oklahoma County Detention Center. He has since bonded out.

OKCPD Chief Wade Gourley praised the responding officer for following protocols of his body-worn camera.

"The officer did exactly as he should have, and handled it very professionally in my opinion. As far as how the officer responded, he did exactly as he should have," Gourley said. "Our policies of our body camera, there's certain types of calls that the body cameras are required to be on, and traffic stops are one of those. So the officer told him, you know, "I can't turn the camera off." As to why Captain French was saying that, I can only make assumptions, but the officer did exactly as he should have by not turning the camera off."

Gourley said French has been placed on administrative leave with pay pending the outcome of the investigation.

"As soon as we were notified of the incident, he was placed on administrative leave with pay," Gourley said. "We do have a process that when criminal charges are filed, per our FOP contract, we do what is called a pre-determination hearing to then put that person on leave without pay, because again it's a criminal matter. So we can put him on leave without pay, but there's a process we have to go through to do that."

French has been with the department for 32 years.

According to the police department, the investigation into the incident remains ongoing at this time.

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