

Vancouver officer charged with assault after threatening Taser on man's groin



By **Troy Brynelson** (OPB)

July 27, 2023 7:43 p.m.

The Clark County Prosecutor's Office charged Officer Andrea Mendoza with fourth-degree assault on Tuesday. Mendoza remains on paid leave.

While scuffling with a suspected shoplifter in late May, Vancouver Police Department Officer Andrea Mendoza allegedly pulled a man's pants down and threatened to charge a Taser onto his exposed penis.



Vancouver officer Andrea Mendoza, right, is seen on body camera footage pinning a man's legs to the ground. Prosecutors filed fourth-degree assault charges against Mendoza on Tuesday after footage caught her threatening to use a Taser on the man's exposed groin.

Courtesy of the Vancouver Police Department



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The man had already said he was “done” resisting by that point, body camera footage shows. But she threatened him again and held the Taser against his skin for 24 seconds.

The incident has landed Mendoza in court.

On Tuesday, the Clark County Prosecutor’s Office filed fourth-degree assault charges against the officer. The charge is a gross misdemeanor, placing it on the level of a DUI or a reckless driving charge in Washington state.

Gross misdemeanors are punishable by up to a \$5,000 fine and less than a year in prison.

Vancouver Police Chief Jeff Mori on Thursday described Mendoza’s actions as “disturbing.” Mori also ordered the agency to release video footage of the incident captured by body cameras worn by Mendoza and Officer Gabriel Patterson.

In the 11-minute video, Mendoza and Patterson are shown fighting with a man in a dark parking lot. The two had responded on May 21 to a 911 call of shoplifters at a Walmart in east Vancouver. A female suspect had reportedly run away.

The two officers, according to court records, pinned the man to the ground. Footage shows Patterson using sheers to cut off the man’s backpack. Mendoza, meanwhile, pinned the man’s legs to the ground. At one point the man asks, “Did you punch me in the balls?”

The footage shows the man wrestling free as officers attempt to roll him over. After a short chase, Patterson grapples with the man and attempts to pull him to the ground. Mendoza then pulls out a Taser and discharges it onto the man’s exposed back.

The man then said “I’m done, I’m done,” according to an affidavit written by Clark County Detective Jared Stevens. Mendoza threatened to use the Taser on the man’s genitals. The two officers then rolled him onto his back.

“As he rolled onto his back, Officer Mendoza pulled down the front of (the man’s) pants and underwear, exposing his penis, and then appears to press the Taser contacts against his exposed penis,” Stevens wrote.

Mendoza reportedly pressed the Taser there without activating it for 24 seconds, Stevens wrote.

The man then reportedly asked twice for officers to pull his pants back up. Stevens noted in his report that it took nearly two minutes before Mendoza did so.

“I want to emphasize to the community that my expectation is that at all times our personnel serve the public with professionalism, compassion and respect,” Mori said in a statement.

According to spokesperson Kim Kapp, a supervisor forwarded the body-worn camera footage to Mori for review.

Three days after the incident, Mori placed Mendoza on administrative leave. She remains on leave, Kapp said.

Clark County Prosecutor Tony Golik declined to comment, saying he won't comment on an open case.

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