

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

June 26, 2026



UNREDACTED REPORT ON THE NOVEMBER 4, 2025,
NONFATAL OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING BY
VENTURA POLICE DEPARTMENT
OFFICER ZANE ALSTON

The Ventura County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the November 4, 2025, non-fatal shooting by Officer Zane Alston that resulted in injury to Officer Aric Almaguer, Nathan Bonds, and Bonds' dog, Scout. We have determined that criminal charges are not warranted in connection with this incident. For the reasons set forth below, this office declines to initiate criminal proceedings.

The District Attorney's Office was notified of the shooting on the morning of November 4, 2025. Senior Deputy District Attorney Thomas Dunlevy, District Attorney Investigator Dan Horan, and District Attorney Investigator Anthony Reginato responded to the scene. District Attorney personnel were given a briefing and walk-through of the scene by Ventura Police Department (VPD) detectives. District Attorney Investigator Dan Horan conducted an interview with witness Jessica Johnson.

The following analysis is based on investigative reports, recordings of witness interviews, photographs, body-worn camera (BWC), and surveillance video. Officer Alston did not provide a voluntary statement. No compelled statements were reviewed or considered in this analysis.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On November 4, 2025, VPD Officers Zane Alston and Aric Almaguer were working uniform patrol in Ventura. They were assigned to the VPD Patrol Task Force, which deals with vagrancy and quality of life issues.

At approximately 7:51 a.m., Officers Alston and Almaguer were patrolling the Target parking lot located at 4200 East Main Street. Officer Alston was driving a marked patrol vehicle and Officer Almaguer was in the front passenger seat. The officers were aware that Target had an active trespassing authority letter on file with VPD dated September

30, 2025. The letter authorized VPD officers to enter the property at any time, day or night, to enforce any and all law violations, including trespassing and illegal lodging. While driving through the east parking lot, Officers Alston and Almaguer observed a white 1998 Ford Pathfinder motorhome occupying four marked stalls. To investigate the unlawful parking and potential illegal lodging, the officers exited the vehicle and approached the motorhome at approximately 7:52 a.m.

Officer Almaguer walked ahead of Officer Alston as they approached the passenger side of the motorhome. There were drapes on the windows of the motorhome, obscuring visibility into the vehicle. Inside the motorhome at the time were Nathan Bonds, his fiancé Jessica Johnson, and their two dogs, a large two-year-old pitbull terrier mix named Scout, who weighed 73.6 pounds, and a younger pitbull terrier mix, Scout's daughter Nova. The couple and the two dogs were living in the motorhome at the time.

Officer Almaguer knocked on the motorhome entry door, which was the entrance to the cabin of the motorhome. Officer Almaguer announced, "Ventura Police." When he did not receive a response, Officer Almaguer continued forward to the front passenger door while Officer Alston positioned himself near the rear passenger side tire. Officer Almaguer could hear the loud and aggressive dog barks. A windshield cover was wrapped around the exterior of the motorhome from the front passenger side window, across the front windshield, and around the driver's side window. Officer Almaguer lifted the cover on the front passenger window but did not see anyone in the front of the vehicle.

At 7:53 a.m., the entry door to the motorhome opened partially and Nathan Bonds appeared in the doorway. Bonds said, "Hi, sir." A large dog, later identified as Scout, pushed past Bonds' right leg and leaped out of the motorhome. Scout continued to bark as he jumped out of the motorhome. Bonds immediately reached down with his right

hand and tried to grab Scout but was unsuccessful. Scout began charging quickly toward Officer Alston. Bonds made another unsuccessful attempt to grab Scout but Scout rapidly advanced upon Officer Alston, running low to the ground with a stiff posture in what appeared to be an aggressive manner.

Officer Alston began to move rapidly backwards but Scout continued advancing toward Officer Alston. When Scout was approximately 5.8 feet from Officer Alston, Officer Alston fired two shots from his department-issued firearm at the dog in rapid succession. As he was firing, Officer Alston lost his footing and fell to the ground, landing on his right side. Approximately two seconds passed from the moment Scout exited the vehicle to the moment Officer Alston fired the two shots. As Officer Alston fell to the ground, Scout veered left and ran through the Target parking lot. At the same time, Nova exited the vehicle and moved toward Officer Alston but not as rapidly or aggressively as Scout. Officer Alston called to Bonds, "Get your dog." Bonds complied by picking up Nova and securing her in the motorhome.

Based on a subsequent analysis of a FARO scan of the crime scene, Detective David Curtis determined that the first round fired missed Scout just behind his right back leg, striking the asphalt and fragmenting. The second round also struck the asphalt and fragmented. Shrapnel from one of the bullets appeared to have struck Scout on the bottom of his chest and on his rear left leg, causing lacerations. Bonds and Officer Almaguer were also struck by shrapnel. A bullet fragment struck Bonds just above his left knee, causing a laceration and bleeding. A bullet fragment struck Officer Almaguer in his left calf area, penetrating his uniform and causing a laceration. Officer Almaguer picked a piece of metal from his wound.

Scout was subsequently struck by a vehicle while crossing Highway 126. VPD officers located Scout in the backyard of a nearby residence. Officers secured Scout and

transported him for treatment. Scout survived his injuries and was later returned to his owners.

Officer Almaguer and Bonds were both transported to the Ventura County Medical Center and treated for their injuries. Neither sustained any serious or life-threatening injuries. Medical staff cleaned Officer Almaguer's wound and cleared him for discharge with no further treatment.

Bonds and Johnson were both interviewed at the scene. Bonds reported that he was inside his motor home getting ready to go to work when he saw police knocking on his door. He said he opened his door slightly and tried pushing Scout back but Scout was able to get past him. Scout ran toward the officer and the officer started firing. Bonds witnessed Officer Alston fall backwards as he fired two rounds at Scout. The BWC footage corroborates Bonds' account that he was trying to open the door just wide enough to speak to officers while attempting to contain Scout but that Scout was able to push past his right leg and get out of the vehicle.

Johnson reported that she was inside the motorhome and witnessed a portion of the incident through a window of the motorhome. She recalled hearing Bonds say something to Officer Alston to the effect of, "He's not dangerous, he's hyperactive," referring to Scout, prior to shots being fired. It should be noted that the BWC footage of Officer Alston and Officer Almaguer did not record Bonds making this statement.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

In terms of potential criminal charges that might apply to Officer Alston's actions in this incident, it would appear the two charges warranting analysis are: 1) Penal Code § 246.3, willfully discharging a firearm in a grossly negligent manner; and 2) Penal Code § 597(a), animal cruelty.

A violation of Penal Code § 246.3 requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt that a defendant intentionally shot a firearm, that he did so with gross negligence, that the shooting could have resulted in the injury or death of a person, and that he did not act in self-defense. (*Calcrim No. 970, Judicial Council of California Criminal Jury Instructions* (2025).) The law defines “gross negligence” as “acting in a reckless way that creates a high risk of death or great bodily injury.” (*Id.*)

The use of deadly force in self-defense is legally justified when a defendant reasonably believes that he is in imminent danger of being killed or suffering great bodily injury, reasonably believes that the immediate use of deadly force is necessary to defend against the danger, and uses no more force that is reasonably necessary to defend against the danger. (*Calcrim No. 505.*) Courts have recognized that the right to self-defense applies in the context of a prosecution for grossly negligent discharge of a firearm where the perceived threat comes not from another person but from an animal. (*People v. Lee* (2005) 131 Cal.App.4th 1413; prejudicial error not to instruct on self-defense where a retired deputy sheriff fired a gun to scare away unleashed dogs out of fear they would attack her.)

Under the circumstances in the present matter, a reasonable person in Officer Alston’s position could have concluded that he was in imminent danger of suffering great bodily injury. The officers heard loud barking coming from inside the motorhome before the door opened. Scout aggressively jumped out of the vehicle while barking and advanced on Officer Alston. Scout presented as a large pitbull mixed breed dog weighing 73.6 pounds. In a 2021 review of 19 retrospective dog bite studies from United States Level I pediatric trauma centers, pit bulls were found to inflict a higher prevalence and severity of injuries compared with other breeds. (Reuter Muñoz, K. D.; Powell, L. E.; Andersen, E. S.; Nye, A. D.; Powers, J. M.; Rhodes, J.; Pozez, A. L. (2021). "Analysis of Pediatric Dog Bite Injuries at a Level 1 Trauma Center over 10 Years." *Annals of Plastic*

Surgery. 86 (6S Suppl 5): S510–S516.) Given that a large pitbull mixed breed dog leapt from the vehicle while barking loudly and charged rapidly and directly at Officer Alston while running low to the ground with his body tense, a reasonable person in Officer Alston’s position could have concluded that he was in imminent danger of being mauled and seriously injured by the animal. The fact that Bonds tried and failed to gain control of the animal is another factor weighing in favor of a reasonable belief that Scout presented a heightened danger at that moment, as is the fact that Officer Alston lost his balance while stepping quickly backwards, making him more vulnerable to attack. Officer Alston had only two seconds to assess and respond to the perceived threat. Under the circumstances, a reasonable person could have concluded that Scout presented an imminent threat of serious injury. As such, the evidence would not disprove a claim of self-defense beyond a reasonable doubt.

Self-defense contains both a subjective and objective component in that the person must actually believe that there is an imminent threat of death or great bodily injury and that belief must be reasonable given the totality of the circumstances. Without any information regarding Officer Alston’s personal knowledge and experience with pitbulls, and without information regarding his personal assessment of the threat this animal posed to him in the moment, there is insufficient information to fully evaluate the subjective component of self-defense. However, as to the objective component, the evidence supports that a reasonable person could find the use of force justified in self-defense. Therefore, a violation of Penal Code § 246.3 is not established by the evidence.

A violation of Penal Code § 597(a), animal cruelty, requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt that a defendant maimed, wounded, or killed a living animal and that the defendant acted maliciously. (*Calcrim No. 2953*.) Someone acts maliciously when he intentionally does a wrongful act or when he acts with the unlawful intent to disturb, annoy, or injure an animal. (*Id.*) As noted above, the courts have recognized the doctrine of self-defense

applies in the context of shooting at an animal to prevent an attack. (*People v. Lee* (2005) 131 Cal.App.4th 1413.) For all the reasons listed above, a reasonable person in Officer Alston's position could have determined that he was in imminent danger of suffering great bodily injury, thereby justifying the use of force under the circumstances. Moreover, a person acting to defend himself does not act with the malicious intent required to establish a violation of Penal Code § 597(a).

Although Bonds and Officer Almaguer were struck by bullet fragments that ricocheted off the asphalt, it is clear from the BWC footage and witness statements that Officer Alston fired at the dog and not at either Bonds or Officer Almaguer. Since Officer Alston's use of force was not directed at a person, a violation of Penal Code § 245(a)(2), assault with a firearm, would not apply to his conduct. Similarly, since his use of force was upon an animal not upon another person, Penal Code § 835a, which governs the use of force by peace officers upon other persons, is not directly applicable. However, to the extent that it provides constructive guidance, Penal Code § 835a(c) states that an officer is justified in using deadly force when the officer reasonably believes that such force is necessary to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or someone else. The use of force by a peace officer per § 835a(4), "shall be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable officer in the same situation, based on the totality of circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time, rather than with the benefit of hindsight, and that the totality of circumstances shall account for occasions when officers may be forced to make quick judgments about using force." Here, Officer Alston was faced with a rapidly evolving situation and had only two seconds to assess the threat and decide whether to use force while backpedaling as the dog advanced quickly and aggressively toward him. A reasonable officer in the same situation could have concluded that discharging a firearm was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of serious bodily injury.

CONCLUSION

The evidence examined in this investigation demonstrated that no criminal charges are warranted against Officer Alston for his use of force against Scout nor for the resulting injuries to Bonds and Officer Almaguer. The totality of the circumstances indicate that Scout's actions could have placed a reasonable person in fear for his safety, justifying the decision to discharge the firearm in self-defense.