

1 Altheimer told investigators that while working his route in the early morning hours of
2 January 27, 2021, in the City of Tacoma and within Pierce County, he was in his car on Vista
3 View Drive when he noticed a white SUV appeared to be following him. Police reports and
4 body camera video later showed that the driver of the SUV was EDWARD TROYER (hereafter
5 “TROYER”). TROYER is the Sheriff of Pierce County and a longtime law enforcement officer.
6

7 Altheimer did not state what time he noticed the SUV following him. However, his
8 account and description of the following events indicate it was shortly before 2:00 AM on
9 January 27, 2021.

10 After observing the white SUV following him on Vista View Drive, Altheimer drove to
11 North 23rd Street and Harmon Street to deliver newspapers to homes in the neighborhood.
12 Altheimer saw the white SUV a second time when he returned to Vista View Drive. Altheimer
13 pulled into a driveway on Vista View Drive and stepped out to drop a newspaper at the house.
14 The SUV came to a stop on a street nearby.

15 Altheimer continued his route on Vista View Drive and Narrows Drive, then stopped at
16 another house to deliver a newspaper. Altheimer recalled stopping for a delivery at 2819
17 Narrows Drive when he noticed the white SUV stop nearby a third time. Altheimer pulled into
18 the driveway and got out of his car with a newspaper in his hand. His car headlights were turned
19 on. After placing a newspaper inside the plastic tube near the front door, Altheimer decided to
20 approach the white SUV to find out why he was being followed. The SUV was parked across
21 the street from the house where Altheimer had just delivered the newspaper.

22 Altheimer said he walked up the driver’s side door of the SUV. He said he had nothing
23 in his hand when he approached TROYER’S vehicle. Nor did he touch the SUV. The window
24 was rolled down. TROYER was sitting in the driver’s seat. Altheimer did not immediately
25 recognize TROYER or realize he is the Pierce County Sheriff.

26 Altheimer, who is Black, asked TROYER why he was following him, and “Is it because
I’m Black?” TROYER told him, “My wife is Black.” Altheimer responded, “Congratulations.”

1 Altheimer asked TROYER if he was a cop. TROYER did not answer the question. Nor
2 did he identify himself as the sheriff or a law enforcement officer. Altheimer described it as a
3 casual conversation. He said TROYER seemed relaxed and was holding a cell phone in his
4 hand.

5 TROYER had questions for Altheimer: "What are you doing out there? Do you know
6 where you are?" TROYER accused Altheimer of being a thief, telling him, "You're a porch
7 pirate." Altheimer did not answer TROYER'S questions. Instead, he turned and walked away
8 from TROYER. Altheimer said that when he walked away, TROYER moved his SUV and
9 adjusted the car's position, which Altheimer took to mean, "Like he's not done with me."
10 TROYER called after him, loud enough for Altheimer to hear, "Hey, don't walk away ... I
11 have four cops coming." Altheimer responded, "Good."

12 After he got back into his car, Altheimer said he "hit the gas" and drove away.
13 TROYER made a U-turn and followed Altheimer on his newspaper route. Altheimer said he felt
14 TROYER was "being aggressive," so he sped up to try and get away from him. Altheimer drove
15 toward Deidra Circle, a cul-de-sac located a few blocks from TROYER's house. Altheimer
16 described this part of the event as, "He's following me. I'm speeding to Deidra Circle. He's got
17 a bigger car. He's on me."

18 Rather than continue driving, Altheimer turned around. He stopped his car in the middle
19 of North 27th Street, facing eastbound and towards the front end of TROYER'S approaching
20 SUV. TROYER pulled to a stop in the middle of the street, facing westbound and the front of
21 Altheimer's car. Their vehicles were situated about 50 feet apart. Altheimer took out his cell
22 phone and, from the driver's seat of his car, began taking pictures of TROYER'S SUV.

23 **II. TROYER CALLS 911 DISPATCHER**

24 At approximately 2:05 a.m., TROYER called the "officer line" at the Pierce County 911
25 Communications Building in Tacoma, WA. The "officer line" bypasses the 911 telephone lines
26

1 and rings directly to the 911 dispatch desk. Officers typically use this back channel phone line
2 to make routine requests or seek information.

3 Dispatcher Conrad Shadel was on duty and answered TROYER'S phone call. He is
4 employed by South Sound 911, a public agency that provides emergency communication
5 services for law enforcement throughout the South Puget Sound region.

6 "Hey this is TROYER," the sheriff said at the beginning of the call. Shadel recognized
7 TROYER'S voice. "What can I do for you?" Shadel asked. TROYER'S call to the 911
8 dispatcher lasted approximately 4 minutes and 50 seconds. TROYER'S report to the dispatcher
9 continued as follows:

10 TROYER: I'm at 27th and Deidra, in Tacoma, North End, about
11 two blocks from my house and I caught someone in my driveway
12 who ***just threatened to kill me*** and I blocked him in. And he's
here right now.

13 SHADEL: Okay. Go again with your address.

14 TROYER: But, well, my address is ----- I'm at 27th and Deidra.

15 SHADEL: Okay.

16 TROYER: And he's in some sort of gray car and he was in my
17 driveway. In my neighbor's driveway. And ***he knows who I am***
18 ***and he threatened to kill me***. I got him blocked in at 27th and
Deidra.

19 (emphasis added).

20 TROYER'S call lasted just under five minutes, during which TROYER stated four
21 times that someone had threatened to kill him. Troyer also stated during the call that the person
22 "blocked me in" with his vehicle.

23 Based on the information TROYER provided, Shadel said he believed "the Sheriff is
24 going through an active confrontation with someone trying to kill him." Consequently, he
25 decided to handle the call with the highest priority, as an "officer needs help" call.

26 Shadel electronically communicated information provided by TROYER to dispatcher
Leah Heiberg, who sent the call to all law enforcement agencies in Pierce County at the highest

1 priority level. According to Heiberg, this priority level is reserved for “officer needs help” calls
2 and if “the mountain explodes,” an apparent reference to Mount Rainier.

3 **III. EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

4 Moments after receiving information that had come from TROYER, over 40 law
5 enforcement officers from multiple agencies rushed toward TROYER’S location, 27th and
6 Deidra Circle in Tacoma, WA.

7 At 2:05:12, the CAD entry to officers read: 27TH/DIEDRA, MAKING THREATS TO
8 KILL (sic). Seconds later, officers were told that TROYER had called in and reported that a
9 male subject was making threats to kill him, no weapons were seen, and that the male was
10 possibly homeless.

11 While officers were en route, Shadel stayed on the line with TROYER trying to gather
12 more details about the other driver (Altheimer), who was now being identified as a “suspect.”
13 Shadel told TROYER he had “units headed your way.” TROYER said he tried to back up and
14 let the other driver go, “but he blocked me in.” TROYER said he tried to be polite, but “he just
15 says I’m a racist. He wants to kill me so ... ”

16 TROYER initially told Shadel two times that he had the other driver blocked in. Then,
17 TROYER said, “Hang on, he’s not going to let me leave.” TROYER also told the dispatcher,
18 “He’s pushing against my car.” This information was transmitted to officers over the radio and
19 through the dispatch log.

20 Toward the end of the call, TROYER told Shadel he had been at home and saw a car
21 entering driveways. He said he thought the driver was “kind of a thief that has a garage door
22 opener,” so he got in his personal vehicle, a Chevy Tahoe, to follow the car. After he followed
23 the driver, TROYER said, the driver “blocked me off and accosted me and said you’re a cop
24 and started threatening me.”
25
26

1 Shadel told AGO investigators he handled the call as a high priority because he felt
2 TROYER was in danger after being told the other driver “was making threats to kill him.” He
3 worried the Sheriff might have been targeted.

4 Heiberg also cited TROYER’s statements about “threats to kill” and that the driver
5 knew TROYER was an off-duty officer as the basis for dispatching units at the highest priority
6 level. Based on the details from Shadel, who was transmitting information from TROYER,
7 Heiberg thought, “Someone was trying to kill the Pierce County Sheriff. He was possibly
8 being hit with a car.” Heiberg said she was “picturing him in a dead-end, in a cul-de-sac in
9 trouble” and needing help from fellow officers.

10 Shadel kept TROYER on the line until officers arrived.

11 **IV. OFFICERS FIND NO EMERGENCY**

12 Tacoma Police Officers Chad Lawless and Corey Ventura were the first officers to
13 arrive at scene at 2:09 AM. They were traveling in a marked police car and pulled up to the
14 left, behind Altheimer’s car.

15 A dispatcher asked for an update. “You have all of county en route if you could
16 advise,” the dispatcher said. Officer Lawless observed that Altheimer’s car and TROYER’S
17 SUV were parked in the middle of the street and situated about 50 feet apart. The headlights
18 were on. Neither car was moving and neither car was preventing the other vehicle from
19 leaving. Altheimer was sitting in the driver’s seat of the Geo Prizm, and TROYER was sitting
20 in his Chevy Tahoe.

21 Officer Lawless told dispatch they only needed one more Tacoma police unit to handle
22 the situation. “We don’t need the whole world coming,” he said.

23 911 dispatchers immediately canceled the officer-needs-help call, allowing officers and
24 sheriff’s deputies who were en route to shut off their sirens and make themselves available for
25 other calls. Ultimately, a total of 14 officers and sheriff’s deputies, including three sergeants
26 and a lieutenant, arrived at the scene.

1 Officers Ventura approached Altheimer from the driver’s side and ordered him to keep
2 his hands on the steering wheel where officers could see them. Officer Lawless stood several
3 feet away, behind Altheimer’s car on the right side.

4 “Is that what you’re here for? I’m suspicious right?” Altheimer asked. Officer Ventura
5 explained that officers were there because TROYER had called.

6 Altheimer responded, “I don’t care what he called for. He’s following me! Go talk to
7 him. I am working! I’m a Black man in a White neighborhood and I am working!” He told
8 officers twice that TROYER was the one following him.

9 TROYER waved his left hand out of the driver’s side window of his Tahoe toward the
10 officers. TROYER put his Tahoe in reverse and drove backward on North 27th Street, further
11 away from Altheimer’s car. TROYER did not appear to have difficulty moving his vehicle.

12 Officer Lawless ordered Altheimer to stop reaching for things and to keep his hands
13 visible. Two additional Tacoma police officers approached the front of the car on the passenger
14 side, pointing flashlights toward Altheimer. Police sirens were blaring in the distance.

15 “He just called saying that someone had threatened his life,” Officer Ventura told
16 Altheimer, referring to TROYER.

17 “Yeah, I threatened his life because I walked up and asked why he was following me,”
18 Altheimer responded.

19 Officer Ventura told Altheimer it was obvious he was a newspaper carrier because of
20 all the newspapers stacked in the backseat of his car. He asked Altheimer to step out and talk
21 with him at the patrol vehicle. Altheimer complied and was frisked for weapons.

22 Asked if there had been a verbal altercation with TROYER, Altheimer told Officer
23 Ventura, “He’s following me.” Altheimer said he saw TROYER’s vehicle “come around the
24 block for the third time” while he was delivering newspapers. Altheimer said he approached
25 TROYER and asked why he was following him.
26

1 As Altheimer and Officer Ventura continued talking, other uniformed officers walked
2 and stood nearby. Officer Ventura told Altheimer, "I'm going to be 100 percent honest with
3 you. The reason there are so many cops here is because he's the Sheriff."

4 Altheimer acknowledged knowing TROYER was a law enforcement officer, but he
5 repeatedly denied making any threats toward him. Altheimer said he felt threatened by
6 TROYER following him. Altheimer repeatedly asked if he could leave so he could finish his
7 newspaper route. "Nobody made no threats," he told Officer Ventura. "That's a lie. If I made
8 it, I'd tell you. But I didn't."

9 In a subsequent interview with AGO investigators, Altheimer denied ever entering
10 TROYER'S driveway or that he had blocked in TROYER's vehicle or vice versa.

11 **V. TROYER'S STATEMENTS TO OFFICER LAWLESS**

12 Officer Lawless, who stood nearby as Officer Ventura interviewed Altheimer, left to
13 speak with TROYER. Officer Lawless reported that he specifically asked TROYER if
14 Altheimer made any threats towards him or displayed any weapons.

15 TROYER told Officer Lawless that Altheimer never threatened him. Further, TROYER
16 said he did not observe Altheimer with any weapons.

17 Asked to explain what happened, TROYER told Officer Lawless that he was home
18 asleep when he heard something outside. He described seeing Altheimer driving his vehicle in
19 and out of driveways in the neighborhood. TROYER said he got into his personal vehicle and
20 tried to talk with Altheimer.

21 TROYER told Officer Lawless that when he confronted Altheimer, it was clear
22 Altheimer "wanted to fight."

23 Officer Lawless informed TROYER that Altheimer appeared to be a newspaper carrier
24 and that he was working his regular route that morning. "TROYER advised that we should let
25 him go if that was the case," Officer Lawless wrote in his report.
26

1 At 2:21 AM, Officer Lawless told dispatch there was no apparent crime, meaning “no
2 victim, no threats to kill, no charges.” Body camera video shows officers releasing Alzheimer
3 from the scene so he could continue his newspaper route at 2:34 AM.

4 After reviewing the evidence in this case, AGO investigators attempted to interview
5 TROYER about the events of January 27, 2021. TROYER declined repeated requests for an
6 interview.

7 **VI. PROBABLE CAUSE**

8 The above information establishes probable cause that in Pierce County, Washington,
9 on or about January 27, 2021, EDWARD TROYER committed the crimes of FALSE
10 REPORTING, in violation of RCW 9A.84.040, and MAKING A FALSE OR MISLEADING
11 STATEMENT TO A PUBLIC SERVANT, in violation of RCW 9A.76.175.

12 The charge of FALSE REPORTING is supported by evidence described above that on
13 or about January 27, 2021, TROYER (1) initiated a report that included statements by Troyer
14 that someone—now known to be Alzheimer—had just threatened to kill him and had Troyer
15 blocked in with his vehicle, (2) knew the information was false, and (3) knew the report would
16 likely cause an emergency response.

17 The charge of MAKING A FALSE OR MISLEADING STATEMENT TO A PUBLIC
18 SERVANT is supported by evidence described above that on or about January 27, 2021,
19 TROYER (1) made false and/or misleading statements to a public servant, 911 dispatcher
20 Shadel, including that someone—now known to be Alzheimer--had threatened to kill him and
21 had Troyer blocked in with his vehicle, (2) the false and/or misleading statements were material,
22 i.e., Shadel likely relied on the false or misleading statements in the course of his duties as a
23 police dispatcher, and (3) knew the statements were material and false or misleading.

24 ///

25 ///

26 ///

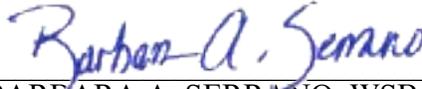
1 WE DECLARE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY UNDER THE LAWS OF THE
2 STATE OF WASHINGTON THAT THE FOREGOING IS TRUE AND CORRECT TO THE
3 BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE.

4 DATED: October 19th, 2021, at Seattle, WA.

5
6 ROBERT W. FERGUSON
Attorney General

7 

8
9 MELANIE TRATNIK, WSBA #25576
Assistant Attorney General

10 

11
12 BARBARA A. SERRANO, WSBA #47461
Assistant Attorney General